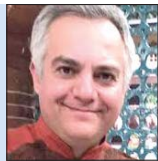




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Human society needs to embrace diversity: Zarif

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that human society is in desperate need of embracing the enriching diversity within and between civilizations.

During his speech at the Ancient Civilizations Forum in Athens, Greece, he said, “The inheritors of ancient civilizations have a historic responsibility to be in the forefront of promoting dialogue and inclusion to usher in a new paradigm of global relations.”

Following is an excerpt of his speech published by the Iranian Foreign Ministry’s website:

As the inheritors of ancient civilizations, with the necessary depth of understanding and historical reflection to appreciate that triumphs as well as trials and tribulation are but short moments in the millennial historical retrospect, we need to challenge the prevalent paradigm of “might makes right”, the paradigm of exclusion, which in its various forms has invariably brought bloodshed and devastation to human society throughout history and has given rise to violence, underdevelopment and extremism. This paradigm has governed the relations among communities and nations for far too long, resulting in wars, atrocities, occupation, oppression, discrimination and displacement. The rampant terrorism and extremism currently faced by countries and regions across the globe, including in West Asia, the cradle of many ancient civilizations, are heinous products of this outdated paradigm.

We need to reflect on the factors that have shaped our past civilizations and have sustained them, as dynamic, living entities. We need to be able to draw general lessons from the past and learn from their ebbs and flows along the historical continuum.

There are formidable common challenges that the human community is currently facing; ranging from the elusive goals of sustainable development, protection of the environment, and eradication of poverty for the larger part of the international community to effective combating of such rather new twin phenomena of extremism and terrorism as universal plagues.

U.S. review of nuclear deal contrary to its spirit, words: Iran

Iran, 5+1 hold Joint Commission meeting in Vienna

POLITICS TEHRAN — Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Tuesday that Washington’s policy of reevaluating the nuclear agreement is creating an atmosphere of distrust and confusion among world countries, noting this is contrary to the text and spirit of the agreement.

The remarks by Araqchi came before the seventh meeting of the Iran-5+1 Joint Commission, which monitors the implementation

of the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries, convened in Vienna on Tuesday.

According to Press TV, Araqchi and other top Iranian diplomat Majid Takht-e-Ravanchi, along with the Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS) Helga Schmid, as well as senior diplomats from other 5+1 group attended the meeting.

Araqchi said the U.S. is failing to fully hon-

or the July 2015 nuclear accord.

According to Araqchi, all cases regarding the issue were to be raised during the Joint Commission meeting.

U.S. President Donald Trump has recently claimed that Iran has not lived up to “the spirit” of the nuclear agreement. This is while Secretary of State Rex Tillerson earlier confirmed Iran was compliant with its commitments under the deal. **→13**

Broken politics and a fragile world economy

The global economy is gathering momentum, the International Monetary Fund has declared. That’s probably correct and undeniably encouraging, but there’s an ominous discord between this economic expansion and what’s euphemistically called “political uncertainty” -- that is, the stresses caused by surging anti-trade, anti-market, anti-immigrant populism.

This “uncertainty” could be the prelude to some seriously bad policies, enough to derail one or more leading economies and stall the global expansion. And there’s another danger, less obvious but no less important: the prospect of chronic underperformance. Even if the new politics doesn’t bring the ceiling down, it threatens to block

the longer-term policies that would promote growth.

The current expansion is steady but unspectacular. The IMF’s new forecasts say global output will rise by between 3 percent and 4 percent this year and next -- slightly better than in 2016. So far, investors haven’t taken fright over President Donald Trump’s anti-market rhetoric, or the implications of Brexit for the U.K. and the European Union, or any of the other new sources of global instability. That could change in an instant, of course.

Yet even if all goes well, there’s a problem. Advanced and emerging economies are settling into a pattern of growth that’s disappointing by historical standards.

This shortfall means persistent poverty, diminished opportunities and stagnant incomes for hundreds of millions of people. It helps explain the current state of politics.

This longer-term slowdown is starting to look permanent. Growth in productivity had already weakened in many advanced economies -- under pressure from demographic trends, fewer breakthrough innovations and other forces. Then came the crash. Roughly a decade later, economies still haven’t shaken it off. Lenders and investors are more cautious; governments are more heavily indebted; and central banks are still wrestling with unconventional monetary policy. **→13**

Tolerance historically practiced in Iran: Jewish lawmaker

By Ali Kushki

Exclusive — Not like in the Western world where it was belatedly introduced, tolerance has been practiced in the historically multicultural context of Iran, where the Jewish community have been living in peaceful coexistence with other populations for centuries, the Jewish community representative in Majlis (Parliament) says.

Siamak Moreh Sedgh, also the director of the Dr. Sapir Hospital and Charity Center, says that anti-Semitism and Zionism are “identical twins”, both sharing the idea that Jews are different from other human beings.

“Anti-Semitism considers Jews as inferior to others, and Zionism as superior,” he tells the Tehran Times.

Situated on Mostafa Khomeini Street, named for the son of the Islamic Republic’s founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Sapir hospital sits across from the Imam Reza Seminary school, one of the oldest Shiite seminaries in Tehran.

In what follows, a transcript of the first part of the interview has been given.

■ Could we start with a brief history of the Dr. Sapir Hospital and Charity Center?
A: The Sapir Hospital and Charity Center started here (in Tehran) as a **→2**

Iraqi forces liberate largest neighborhood in western Mosul

Iraqi security forces have pushed deeper into western Mosul, liberating the largest neighborhood in the area in a major blow to the ISIL (Daesh) terror group.

Lieutenant General Abdul Amir Yarallah, the commander of ‘We Are Coming, Nineveh Operations,’ said Iraqi forces have completely recaptured the neighborhood of al-Tanak from Daesh on Tuesday, al-Sumaria news website reported.

He added that Iraqi forces inflicted heavy losses on the terrorists during the operation. To the east of Tanak, Iraqi armed forces have been facing tough resistance from Daesh in Mosul’s Old City, an area stretching along the Tigris River, which divides Mosul into its eastern and western half.

The Old City’s narrow alleys and densely-populated areas have made it hard for Iraqi troops to move forward.

The development comes a day after Iraq’s Joint Operations Command had said Iraqi forces have so far liberated 70 percent of western Mosul from the control of Daesh terrorists.

Meanwhile, Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also known as Hashd al-Sha’abi, said its fighters managed to liberate the village of Tal Helalah, north of the al-Hatra city in Nineveh Province, of which Mosul is the capital. **→13**

Turkey targets Kurdish fighters in Iraq and Syria

Turkish military jets have carried out air strikes against Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) fighters in northern Iraq and northeast Syria, killing at least 24 people, Turkey’s state-run Anadolu news agency said.

A statement released by Turkey’s air force said that it carried out the air strikes against PKK targets located in the Sinjar Mountain region in northern Iraq, and in Karachok mountains in northeastern Syria on Tuesday.

The targets were hit to prevent the PKK from sending “terrorists, arms, ammunition and explosives to Turkey,” the statement said, adding that the operation was conducted “within the scope of the international law”.

The PKK are Kurdish fighters operating in Turkey, while the Rojava Defense Units (YPG) are Kurdish fighters operating in Northern Syria and the Peshmerga fighters are in charge of security in Iraqi Kurdistan. The three groups are currently fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group.

At least six people were killed, five from the Peshmerga and a sixth from Asayish (Rojava),” Lieutenant General Jabbar Yawar, secretary-general of the Peshmerga ministry in Iraq’s autonomous Kurdish government, told AFP news agency.

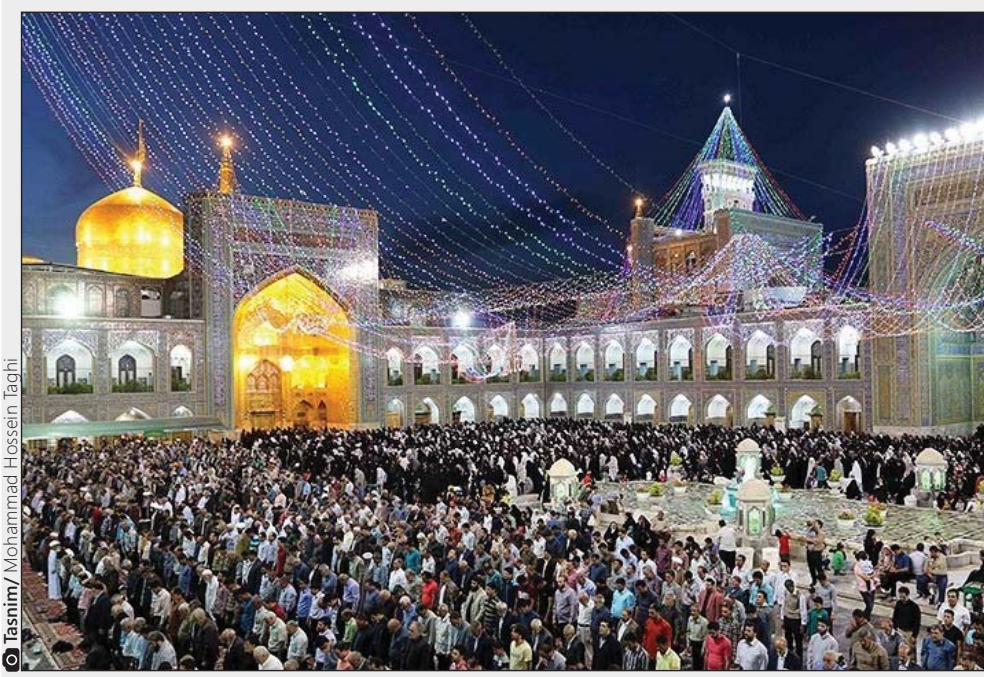
The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a monitoring group which tracks the Syrian war, said that at least 18 YPG fighters were killed in the air strikes in Syria’s Hasakah province.

The YPG in Northern Syria, said on their Twitter account that Turkish war planes targeted the headquarters of the General Command of the YPG in Mount Karachok near the city of Derik in Hasakah province.

The YPG also reported that a media center, a local radio station, communication headquarters and some military institutions were also hit.

The group forms a key component of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and have been closing in on ISIL in Raqqa.

The PKK established a presence in Iraq’s Sinjar after coming to help the region’s Yazidi population when ISIL overran the area in the summer of 2014. **→13**



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Prophet’s first revelation celebrated

Thousands of Iranians gathered in the religious city of Mashhad in the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza (AS) on Monday to celebrate Eid al-Mab’ath, the anniversary of the day Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received his first revelation and was chosen as Allah’s final messenger.

The revered occasion, which falls on the 27th of the month of Rajab on the Islamic lunar calendar, is a public holiday in Iran.

Many head to holy cities and sites, including Mashhad and Qom, to participate in religious festivities.

ELECTION COUNTDOWN



Promising money in campaigns is illegal: Larijani

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — It is illegal that some candidates claim in their campaigns that they will distribute money, the Majlis speaker said on Tuesday, IRIB reported.

Ali Larijani questioned the objectives to be achieved by handing out money to people, asking: "Does such distribution of money create jobs or help production (sector)?"

"If someone says the country's energy revenues go into making factories then one can say it is the word of an honest politician," he said.



Rouhani appoints campaign director, protests debate timing

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday appointed Morteza Haji, a member of the reformists policy-making council, as director of his presidential campaign, Mehr reported.

Elsewhere, the news agency also said Rouhani and Es'haq Jahangiri, his vice president as well as a presidential candidate, have protested to the timing of the first live presidential debate.

The two candidates on Monday said they would not be able to attend the debate because they will be on an official provincial trip.



Raisi visits South Khorasan, to head to Sistan-Baluchestan

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ebrahim Raisi, one of the six presidential candidates of Iran, on Tuesday morning took a trip to South Khorasan Province, Fars reported.

During his short stay in the provincial capital city of Birjand, Raisi visited people from all walks of life to know their concerns better and assess the province's capacities.

The candidate's campaign headquarters announced that he was going to make a similar trip to the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan.



Judiciary chief: Candidates should avoid false promises

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's judiciary chief has said that the presidential election candidates should avoid making false promises to people.

"False promises are able to cast one out of the line of justice," Sadeq Amoli Larijani said on Tuesday, adding that another highly important thing for the candidates to consider is to avoid slanders and damaging each other's reputation, Fars reported.

"Some sorts of criticism is okay, but criticism should not verge on undermining or insult."



Registering for presidency sign of freedom: ex-minister

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Former health minister Kamran Baqeri Lankarani has said the chance to sign up for presidential candidacy is a sign of freedom in Iran.

In an interview with ISNA published on Tuesday, he also said people's participation in election is much more important than who becomes president.

He also commented on the formation of the Popular Front of Revolution Forces, saying, "It meant that some people revised the way they behave in society."



Iranians to cast vote in 101 countries

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Preparations have been made for Iranian nationals in 101 countries to cast their vote in the May presidential elections, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

269 polling stations are being readied for the purpose, said Ali Pourali Motlaq, secretary of the election headquarters.

Security preparations have also been made and there is no special concern in this regard, he added.

Leader: Candidates should not look abroad



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Tuesday that the presidential candidates should set sights on the people and not pin hopes on outsiders.

"It is essential for the candidates to pledge the people not to set sights on outside borders for the country's progress and solving problems," the Leader said during a meeting with a group of officials and ambassadors from Islamic countries on the occasion of the Eid al-Mab'ath, which marks anniversary of appointment of Muhammad (pbuh) to the prophethood.

Iran will hold election and presidential elections on May 19.

The Leader also said that people are duty bound to participate in elections in the Islamic republic system. He added participation in the elections is an example of people's "status, power and right" to choose head of government.

"Faith, unity, resistance and participation in the arena should be maintained and

the system's domestic structure should be strengthened through using capabilities

and capacities in a way that the enemy becomes disappointed with its plots and

Iran-Turkey co-op needed to defeat terrorism: official

By Mohammad Homaeefar

TEHRAN — An Iranian Foreign Ministry official underlined on Tuesday the necessity of cooperation between Iran and Turkey in order to defeat terrorist groups and extremist ideologies in the Middle East.

"Iran and Turkey have the might and capacity to battle terrorism and extremism in the region as well as across the world," said Mohsen Roohi-Sefat, the Foreign Minister deputy chief for political and international studies.

Roohi-Sefat further called for dialogue between important regional actors, including Iran and Turkey, in order to overcome the widespread threat of terrorism.

Tehran and Ankara disagree on some regional issues, including the Syrian crisis, in which the two counties support opposing sides, with Iran backing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Turkey calling for his immediate disempowerment.

As to settle the Syrian crisis, the two regional powers, along with Russia, put their disagreements apart and launched a peace initiative in Astana, Kazakhstan in late 2016. Yet following the recent U.S. military aggression

against the Syrian government, Turkey returned to its anti-Assad stance and again called for his ouster.

"It is necessary to oust this regime as soon as possible from the leadership of Syria," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters on April 7, after expressing support for the U.S. airstrikes which targeted an airfield in Syria.

However, Iran said the Astana negotiations won't be influenced by the attack, calling for further cooperation between the three countries to find a political solution to the Syrian war.

Tension between Tehran and Ankara was at its highest level in February, when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during his recent visit to Bahrain, accused Iran of seeking to destabilize Iraq and Syria.

Cavusoglu also criticized Iran while speaking at the Munich Security Conference on March 19, saying Iran's "sectarian policy" is aimed at undermining Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. "Turkey is very much against any kind of division, religious or sectarian," he said.

Following the anti-Iran remarks, Tehran hit back at Ankara and said Turkey and certain other "delusional" countries are responsible for instability and insecurity in the region.

"Those who have carried out meddlesome, illegal and illegitimate measures, supported terrorist groups and caused bloodshed and escalation of tensions and instability in the region cannot evade liability for such moves by playing a blame game," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said.

The two countries, despite their latest war of words, have had friendly relations for many decades. Iran was among the first countries sympathizing with the Turkish government after a failed coup attempt was staged on July 15, 2016.

Also, following Turkish constitutional referendum which was held on 16 April 2017, Iran said it respected the Turkish people's vote, expressing hope that the referendum "would help peace, stability and security in Turkey."

"The issue of referendum in Turkey is an internal affair of the neighboring country. What has happened and will happen will be related to the Turkish government and people and we respect the Turkish people's vote," Qassemi said.

Commenting on the effects of the Turkish referendum on the region, he said, "We should wait and see."

Tolerance historically practiced in Iran: Jewish lawmaker

Anti-Semitism, Zionism 'identical twins'



© Tehran Times/Mohammad Moheimani

1 → small clinic in the yard of the small synagogue back in early World War II when there was a Jewish quarter here and most of the people leaving close to the hospital were Jewish.

Step by step, the hospital was expanded mainly through donations from Jews. A main goal was to improve health and hygiene via preventive and therapeutic methods nearly seventy years ago when preventive medicine was not a common practice. For instance, pregnant women received treatment right from registration time till two years after delivery.

It's interesting to know that one of the founders of the hospital died in the hospital during the Typhoid fever epidemic. He was a young, single physician who got infected with Typhoid fever and part of the hospital was named after him as the Dr. Sapir Hospital. He deserved it as he donated his life for the health of others.

Another important point bout the hospital is that we are not permitted to ask about the origins of the patients referring to the center. All of the patients must be admitted to the hospital regardless of their nationality and religion.

Today, nearly 95 percent of the patients admitted to the hospital as well as 95 percent of the staff are non-Jewish. It's the only Jewish charity hospital in the world that works on a charity-basis for all patients who refer to the center. Of course there are other Jewish charity hospitals in the world that exclusively provide services to the Jewish community.

■ **What is the philosophy behind it?**

A: The philosophy is written on the hospital's gate. It's a Hebrew proverb and part of the Torah, meaning that you must love others as yourself. It doesn't say love a fellow Jew as yourself. Even during the 1979 Revolution many of the people who were attacked by military forces of the Shah were admitted in the hospital for treatment. One night, the officer of the military service came to arrest the patients. But he was denied access by the manager of the hospital, then a Jewish lady, because the patients were undergoing treatment.

One more interesting point to know is that at that night, some Jews had contacted Ayatollah Taleghani and from

"The Sapir hospital staff include Zoroastrians, Jews, Muslims, all working together regardless of their religion."

a backdoor, all the patients had been evacuated overnight just hours before security forces came the day after to arrest the patients injured during anti-Shah demonstrations. For this reason Imam Khomeini, who was then in exile in Neauphle-le-chateau, wrote a letter to the hospital staff to hail the action.

And during the Iraqi invasion of Iran, half of the hospital's beds were allocated to war victims. Even during the Israeli attack against the Palestinian people, we announced that we were completely ready to provide free-of-charge medical services to the Palestinian victims.

During the sanctions era, a European official told me that they weren't able to help the hospital considering the sanctions hurdle. I told him that we are part of the Iranian nation and whenever the sanctions are removed and you were ready to help the Iranian nation, we would be with you.

I told him that it was unacceptable for us to be treated exceptionally. It is

in line with our long-standing belief from centuries ago that we the Jewish community and all other Iranians have the same national interests. So, any harm to the Iranian people will be harm to the Iranian Jews, as well.

And everything that's okay for the Iranian people is okay with us, too. That's because we're one nation and have been living together since more than three thousand years ago. If you have a look at Iran's history, it's always been a multicultural one and you can't find one moment in the Iranian history that all the Iranian people have spoken the same language. This mosaic culture of the Iranian people helps Iranians to be highly tolerant and allows them to establish better relations between different monistic religions in Iran.

■ **So, you mean you see no contrast between different religious practices and Iran's national unity?**

A: The world should know that Iranian Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians and Muslims

"During the Israeli attack against the Palestinian people, we announced that we were completely ready to provide free-of-charge medical services to the Palestinian victims."

abandon animosity," he explained.

Elsewhere, the Leader said that the U.S. and Zionist regime of Israel seek to counter Islam through forming terrorist groups and creating division among Muslims especially in Iraq, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen.

He noted that officials in Islamic countries are duty bound to understand the main reason behind the arrogant powers' animosity with Islam.

"Islamic governments should know that the U.S. seeks to undermine unity in the Islamic world and prevent Muslims from reaching a common understanding about the Islamic communities' interests..." Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out.

The world of Islam should demonstrate "unity" and "resistance" in order to make advancement, he said.

The Leader also said, "The U.S. has done anything to harm Iran. All should know that anyone who aggresses the Iranian people will, undoubtedly, harm himself, because the Iranians respond will be hard."

are all part of the same nation. So all of us are ready to stand up to those who may be crazy enough to damage our country.

After Saddam Hossein attacked Iran, all worked together to defend the country. Twenty Jews were killed during the war. Also, there were Christians and Zoroastrians who lost their lives during the war to defend Iran. Let me give an example. During the wartime, more than five of the Jews living then in Kermanshah (western Iran) who were a small community of nearly 200 hundreds were killed.

■ **After the 1979 revolution in Iran, many Jewish people left Iran. Yet, many of the Jewish community preferred to stay. Even your wife left the country. But you stayed. Why did you make the decision not to leave?**

A: After every revolution, immigration rate is high. Of course, part of Iranian Jews immigrated. But two points are important here. First, most of them went to the U.S. and UK. It shows that the Zionism propaganda cannot attract Iranian Jews.

And it is important to remember that all through the Iranian history you cannot find anti-Semitism. Zionism is active and can succeed in a country where anti-Semitism is high and I think anti-Semitism and Zionism are identical twins because both claim Jews are different from other human beings. Anti-Semitism considers Jews as inferior to others, and Zionism as superior. So, both fractionalize Jews in different ways. But I think Jews are like other people. One cannot categorize people on the basis of their race, religion, language, or nationality. It may be interesting to know that tolerance in Iran dates back to centuries ago.

Something which is called tolerance in the West started after secularism and laicism. But in Iran tolerance is the product of our religious beliefs. Muslims and Jews accept and respect each other. So tolerance in Iran is totally different from its Western version. In Iran, for instance, there are cases were churches, temples, synagogues and mosques are located very close to each other. Abadan (southern Iran) and Shiraz are instances. Even in this hospital, staff include Zoroastrians, Jews, Muslims, all working together regardless of their religion.

North Korea stages large-scale artillery drill as U.S. submarine docks in South

North Korea conducted a big live-fire exercise on Tuesday to mark the foundation of its military as a U.S. submarine docked in South Korea in a show of force amid growing concern over the North's nuclear and missile programs.

The port call by the USS Michigan came as a U.S. aircraft carrier strike group steamed toward Korean waters and as top envoys for North Korea policy from South Korea, Japan and the United States met in Tokyo.

Fears have risen in recent weeks that North Korea would conduct another nuclear test or long-range missile launch in defiance of UN sanctions, perhaps on the Tuesday anniversary of the founding of its military.

But instead of a nuclear test or big missile launch, North Korea deployed a large number of long-range artillery units in the region of Wonsan on its east coast for a live-fire drill, South Korea's military said. North Korea has an air base in Wonsan and missiles have also been tested there.

"North Korea is conducting a large-scale firing drill in Wonsan areas this afternoon," the South's Office of Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

The South Korean military was monitoring the situation and "firmly maintaining readiness," it said.

The South's Yonhap News Agency said earlier the exercise was possibly supervised by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

North Korea's state media was defiant in a commentary marking the 85th anniversary of the foundation of the Korean People's Army, saying its military was prepared "to bring to closure the history of U.S. scheming and nuclear blackmail". "There is no limit to the strike power of the People's Army armed with our style of cutting-edge military equipment including various precision and miniaturized nuclear weapons and submarine-launched ballistic missiles," the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper said in a front-page editorial.

North Korea's growing nuclear and missile threat is perhaps the most serious security challenge confronting U.S. President Donald Trump. He has vowed to prevent North Korea from being able to hit the United States with a nuclear missile and has said all options are on the table, including a military strike.

Trump sent the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier strike group for exercises off the Korean peninsula as a warning to North Korea and a show of solidarity with U.S. allies.



South Korea's navy said it was conducting a live-fire exercise with U.S. destroyers in waters west of the Korean peninsula and would soon join the carrier strike group approaching the region.

China, North Korea's sole major ally which nevertheless objects to its weapons development, has repeatedly called for calm, and its envoy for Korean affairs, Wu Dawei, was in Tokyo on Tuesday.

"We hope that all parties, including Japan, can work with China to promote an early peaceful resolution of the issue, and play the role, put forth the effort, and assume the responsibility that they should," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters in Beijing.

Japan's envoy on North Korea, Kenji Kanasugi, said after talks with his U.S. and South Korean counterparts that they agreed China should take a concrete role to resolve the crisis and it could use an oil embargo as a tool to press the North.

"We believe China has a very, very important role to play," said the U.S. envoy for North Korea policy, Joseph Yun.

South Korea's envoy, Kim Hong-kyun, said they had also discussed how to get Russia's help to press North Korea.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

is expected to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin on April 27, the Kremlin said. It did not elaborate.

■ Rare senate briefing

Matching the flurry of diplomatic and military activity in Asia, the State Department in Washington said on Monday U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson would chair a special ministerial meeting of the UN Security Council on North Korea on Friday.

Tillerson, along with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats and Joint Chiefs chairman General Joseph Dunford, would also hold a rare briefing for the entire U.S. Senate on North Korea on Wednesday, Senate aides said.

A North Korean foreign ministry spokesman said those meetings called by U.S. officials clearly reflected the U.S. pressure that could "ignite a full-out war" on the Korean peninsula.

"The reality of today again proves the decision to strengthen nuclear power in quality and quantity under the banner of pursuing economic development and nuclear power was the correct one," the unidentified spokesman said in a statement issued by the North's state media.

On Monday, Trump called for tougher

UN sanctions on the North, saying it was a global threat and "a problem that we have to finally solve".

"The status quo in North Korea is also unacceptable," Trump told a meeting with the 15 UN Security Council ambassadors, including China and Russia, at the White House. "The council must be prepared to impose additional and stronger sanctions on North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile programs."

The official China Daily said it was time for Pyongyang and Washington to take a step back from harsh rhetoric and heed calls for a peaceful resolution.

"Judging from their recent words and deeds, policymakers in Pyongyang have seriously misread the UN sanctions, which are aimed at its nuclear/missile provocations, not its system or leadership," the newspaper said in an editorial.

"They are at once perilously overestimating their own strength and underestimating the hazards they are brewing for themselves."

The nuclear-powered submarine the USS Michigan, which arrived in the South Korean port of Busan, is built to carry and launch ballistic missiles and Tomahawk cruise missiles.

(Source: Reuters)

Yemen's week-long 'march for bread' reaches Hudaydah

Yemeni demonstrators have reached the western port city of Hudaydah following a week-long rally that started in the capital, Sana'a, in an attempt to draw the world's attention to the dire humanitarian situation in the country amid the Saudi aggression.

The demonstrators made the 225-kilometer walk, dubbed the "march for bread," to demand unrestricted aid deliveries to Yemen.

Waving flags emblazoned with loaves of bread, the protesters said Hudaydah should be declared a humanitarian zone and spared in the Saudi war on the impoverished country.

"The Hudaydah port has nothing to do with war... leave the port alone. The port is for our women, children, our old people," said protester Ali Mohammed Yahya.

Hudaydah is a major lifeline for imports into Yemen, a country that is 80-90 percent dependent on imported stuff for its survival.

Saudi Arabia has threatened to attack the port city and retake it from the Houthi Ansarullah movement.

Last week, the United Nations urged the Riyadh regime not to bomb Hudaydah and take humanitarian concerns into account.

■ Yemen aid summit kicks off in Geneva

Separately on Tuesday, a pledging conference to raise funds for Yemen started in the Swiss city of Geneva.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and high-ranking government officials from dozens of countries are meeting in the summit.

"Our humanitarian appeal for 2017 is \$2.1 billion and only 15 percent has been met until the present moment," Guterres said in his opening remarks to the gathering.

Geert Cappelaere, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s director for Mideast and North Africa also said at the event, "Without further action from parties to the conflict and the international community, Yemen is at a serious risk of plunging into famine - with even more children's lives hanging in the balance."

Some two thirds of the population or 18.8 million people are in need of assistance, according to the latest

UN figures.

In another development on Tuesday, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), an independent humanitarian organization, warned that the survival of millions of Yemeni civilians is at risk if the Hudaydah lifeline is cut.

"The world needs to ramp up aid to Yemen at this critical moment, when millions of people are at risk of dying of hunger," said NRC Secretary General Jan Ege-land.

Saudi Arabia has been leading a brutal military campaign against Yemen since March 2015. The kingdom has also imposed an aerial and naval blockade on its southern neighbor.

Turning a blind eye to the plight of Yemeni civilians, Britain and the US have provided huge amounts of arms and military training to the Saudi forces.

The war by Saudi Arabia, which seeks to reinstate Yemen's former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, has killed over 12,000 Yemenis, according to recent tallies.

(Source: Press TV)



country as the Pentagon's chief, said sending any weapons to Afghanistan is illegal and Washington would raise the issue with Moscow.

"Any weapons being funneled here from a foreign country would be a violation of international law unless they were coming to the government of Afghanistan," Mattis said.

"We'll engage with Russia diplomatically," he added. "We'll do so where we can, but we're going to have to con-

front Russia where what they're doing is contrary to international law or denying the sovereignty of other countries."

Mattis' surprise visit to Kabul came concurrently with the resignation of his Afghan counterpart Abdullah Habibi and Army Chief of Staff Qadam Shah Shahim following a Taliban attack on a military base that killed some 140 soldiers last week.

"2017 is going to be another tough year," Mattis warned. The U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and currently has around 10,000 troops there. Washington claims that the massive military presence is only aimed at maintaining security across the country until Afghan military forces are ready to take over the responsibility.

Russia fought its own war in Afghanistan in the 1980s and lost thousands of its forces in the battle with insurgent groups that were armed with advanced U.S. weaponry and later on formed the Taliban.

Back then, the U.S. openly provided the militants with such weapons as shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles.

The Kremlin has denied similar accusations in the past, saying the claim was "a lie" aimed at covering Washington's own policy failures in Afghanistan.

(Source: agencies)

Le Pen's father criticizes her presidential campaign as she steps back from party

French far-right veteran Jean-Marie Le Pen said his daughter Marine, who faces centrist Emmanuel Macron in a May 7 presidential runoff, should have campaigned more aggressively for Sunday's first round, following the example of Donald Trump.

With 7.5 million votes, Marine Le Pen beat the National Front party's previous election record on Sunday but failed to pip pro-EU Macron to the first place.

The intervention by her father follows her announcement on Monday that she plans to step back from day-to-day management of the far-right party he founded ahead of the runoff and marks the latest tussle between the two of them over its future direction.

"I think her campaign was too laid-back. If I'd been in her place I would have had a Trump-like campaign, a more open one, very aggressive against those responsible for the decadence of our country, whether left or right," 88-year-old Jean-Marie Le Pen told RTL radio.

The two have been at odds since Marine Le Pen launched moves to clean the National Front's image of xenophobic associations in the run-up to the campaign for the 2017 presidency.

Jean-Marie Le Pen shocked the world in 2002 by qualifying for the second round of the presidential election and then went on to lose in a landslide to conservative Jacques Chirac.

He was frequently accused of making xenophobic and anti-Semitic statements and Le Pen expelled him from the party in 2015, though as the party's founder he remains a well-known figure and represents a body of opinion in the party.

In another sign of his influence, the National Front has borrowed about 6 million euros from a political fundraising association he heads.



Marine Le Pen's decision to take a leave of absence from the day-to-day management of the party appeared to be an attempt to portray herself as being above the narrow world of National Front politics and broaden her appeal to the wider electorate ahead of the crucial runoff vote.

Her program calls for sharp curbs on immigration and on the rights of immigrants living in France, as well as the expulsion of foreigners under suspicion of having militant extremist links.

But she is seeking all the same to distance herself from the toxic legacy of her father and the xenophobic and anti-semitic undertones of his previous campaigns.

Under France's Fifth Republic, the president is the head of state, very much like a monarch in other countries, a role described by founder Charles De Gaulle as being above party politics - something Le Pen may have had in mind in her Monday night statement.

She may also be seeking to play Macron at his own game, as the 39-year old centrist has refused to join mainstream parties, and consistently described his "En Marche!" (Onwards!) party structure as a "movement" transcending the left-right divide.

(Source: Reuters)

Paraguay 'millions' stolen in 'robbery of the century'

A gang of dozens of armed robbers have stolen several million dollars from a vault in Paraguay, in what local officials are dubbing the "robbery of the century".

Initial estimates placed the cash haul at around \$40m, but a spokesman for Prosegur, the private security company targeted in the raid, denied these reports. Authorities did not release any information on how much money was stolen.

The culprits, who police said were from Brazil, killed one police officer during the Monday raid in Ciudad del Este, the South American country's second-largest city.

Officials said three civilians were injured in a blaze of gunfire and torched vehicles during the three-hour attack.

Three robbers were killed hours later in an ensuing gun battle with Brazilian police across the border, the Paraguayan Interior Ministry said.

Five members of the gang were arrested in Itaipulandia, 50 kilometers north of Ciudad del Este, the ministry added.

The robbers, armed with assault rifles, used explosives to gain access to the vault at a cash-storage facility in the Paraguayan border city, which is known for its criminal gang activity.

Up to 80 people may have been involved in the attack, said Arsenio Correa, investigations chief in the city, told Associated Press.

"The criminals used snipers to guarantee the escape and torched more than 10 vehicles to distract the police," he said.

Video footage showed burned armored cars outside the crumbling remains of the company's building.

Ciudad del Este sits in the "Triple Border" region, where Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina meet and where contraband electronics, drugs and arms flow across porous borders.

Primeiro Comando da Capital, or PCC, a major criminal organization in Brazil, were suspected of being behind the attack police spokesman Augusto Lima said, according to a report by the German news agency. Armed with assault rifles, the culprits are thought to have made their escape to Brazil by motorboat via the Parana river.

Some of the stolen money was recovered, according to newspaper ABC Color.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Could the IMF’s ‘world currency’ help encourage global unity?

By Mohamed El-Erian

The rise of anti-globalisation political movements and the threat of trade protectionism have led some people to wonder whether a stronger multilateral core for the world economy would reduce the risk of damaging fragmentation. After all, lest we forget, the current arrangements – as pressured as they are – reflected our post-world war two forebears’ strong desire to minimise the risk of “beggar-thy-neighbour” national policies, which had crippled growth, prosperity and global stability in the 1930s.

Similar considerations fuelled the launch, nearly 50 years ago, of the International Monetary Fund’s special drawing right as the precursor to a global currency. And with renewed interest in the stability of the international monetary system, some are asking – including within the IMF – whether revamping the SDR could be part of an effective effort to re-energise multilateralism.

The original impetus for the SDR included concerns about a national currency’s ability to reconcile the need for global liquidity provision with confidence in its role as the world’s reserve currency – what economists call the “Triffin dilemma”. By creating an international currency that would be managed by the IMF, member countries sought to underpin and enhance the international monetary system with a non-national official reserve asset.

Legal and practical factors, as well as some countries’ political resistance to delegating economic governance to multilateral institutions, have prevented the SDR from meeting its creators’ modest expectations, let alone the grand role of a truly global reserve currency that anchors the cooperative functioning of a growth-oriented global economy. Information and other market failures have added to the challenges, as have weak institutional infrastructure and inadequate branding. The result is a substantial gap between the SDR’s potential and its performance.

That gap has meant missed opportunities for the global economy – particularly in terms of asset liability management, responsive liquidity, adjustment between deficit and surplus countries – and thus a gap between actual and potential growth. With the SDR providing a stronger glue at the international monetary system’s core, prudential currency diversification could have been made easier, the need for costly and inefficient self-insurance could have been reduced and the provision of liquidity could have been made less pro-cyclical.

So, do today’s anti-globalisation winds – caused in part by poor global policy coordination in the context of too many years of low and insufficiently inclusive growth – create scope for enhancing the SDR’s role and potential contributions?

Addressing this question, were it to gain traction, would involve a focus on an ecosystem of SDR use, with the composite currency – which last year added the Chinese renminbi to the British pound, euro, Japanese yen and US dollar – potentially benefiting from a virtuous cycle. Specifically, the SDR’s three roles – an official reserve asset, a currency used more broadly in financial activity and a numeraire – could ensure greater official liquidity, expand the range of new assets used around the world in public and private transactions, and boost its use as a unit of account.

Of course, given the advanced economies’ embrace of more inward-looking, populist and nationalist politics, a “big bang” approach to reinvigorating the SDR is highly unlikely. Even an incremental approach, starting with practical low-hanging fruit that does not require amendments to the IMF’s articles of agreement, would face political challenges. But it would be worth considering.

Areas of focus would include using the SDR for some bond issuance and trade transactions, developing market infrastructure (including payments and settlement mechanisms), improving valuation methodologies and gradually developing a yield curve for SDR-denominated loans and bonds. This would also help to leverage the inter-connectedness of the SDR’s roles, in order to reach critical mass quickly and have a foundation for further incremental gains.

For the effort to succeed, the IMF’s approach would need to evolve – just like it did on country-specific issues.

When I joined the IMF in the early 1980s, discussions with non-government counterparts, whether on country or policy work, were discouraged. The situation today is very different. Broader national engagement – with NGOs, local media and a broad set of politicians – is now viewed as an integral part of effective country advice and program implementation, as well as being essential for the fund’s “surveillance” function under its article of agreements.

A similar pivot is needed if the IMF is to deliver better on the supranational issues that are now migrating up its policy agenda. Specifically, the fund would need to complement its traditional core constituency of governments and other multilateral institutions (particularly the World Bank) with systemically influential sub-national and private counterparts. The resulting public-private partnerships would enhance issuance, the development of market infrastructure, and liquidity provision for the SDR.

While it is not easy to combine developmental and commercial activities, the implications for global growth and stability of not doing so suggest that it is an effort that should be explored. Moreover, the IMF could start small, focusing on interactions with other official multilateral and regional institutions, sovereign wealth funds, and multinational financial companies – all anchored by an active coalition of the willing among the G20.

In an ideal world, the SDR would have evolved into more of a reserve currency during the era of accelerated trade and financial globalisation. In the world as it is today, the international monetary system faces two options: fragmentation, with all the risks and opportunity costs that this implies, or an incremental approach to bolstering the global economy’s resilience and potential growth, based on bottom-up partnerships that facilitate systemic progress. (Source: The Guardian)

Iran’s cross border trade improved in 2017: World Bank

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The **d e s k** World Bank in its recent report titled “Doing Business 2017” said that Iran has improved its trading across borders through applying the national single-window system.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran made exporting and importing easier by improving and expanding the services offered by the national single window”, the report said.

The single-window system is a trade facilitation idea enabling cross-border traders to submit regulatory documents such as customs declarations, applications for import/export permits, certificates of origin, and trading invoices at a single location.

According to the World Bank’s report, Iran has improved electronic submission and processing of documents for exports and imports which has in



turn made it easier to trade across borders.

The data presented in the report also

indicates that Iran’s position among the world economies is improved in terms of “ease of doing business”.

Iran to receive 3 ATR airplanes in 3 weeks

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran’s national flag-carrier airline Iran Air signed a contract for purchasing 20 turboprop passenger planes from the French-Italian aircraft manufacturer ATR in mid-April and three planes of the kind will be delivered to the country in three weeks, Managing Director of Iran Air Farhad Parvaresh announced, Mehr news agency reported on Tuesday.

The agreement was signed in Tehran between Parvaresh and the CEO of ATR Christian Scherer.

According to the contract, four of the accorded 70-seat ATRs were supposed to be delivered to Iran within



a month from the date of the signing agreement and five ones of them were to be received by 2017 yearend.

Zinc ingot production increases above 22% in a year

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran **d e s k** could produce 80,000 tons of zinc ingots during the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended March 20, 2017) registering 22.5 percent rise compared to the preceding year, IRNA quoted the CEO of Iran Zinc Mines Development Company on Tuesday.

According to Ardeshtir Sa’d-Mohammadi, the country’s zinc ingot output stood at 65,000 tons in the year 1394.

“Above 90 percent of the produce



zinc ingots is exported to 14 countries,” he added.

Luxembourgish trade delegation due in Tehran on Saturday

ECONOMY TEHRAN — A **d e s k** 50-member trade delegation from Luxembourg will discuss enhancement of economic ties with Iranian tradesmen in Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on Saturday, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

As reported the members of the visiting delegation are active in food industry and beverages, financial affairs and accounting, financial consulting, investment, construction, infrastruc-



ture, banking, insurance, marketing, industry, and recreational services.

Trump slaps duty on Canada lumber, intensifying trade fight

U.S. President Donald Trump intensified a trade dispute with Canada, slapping tariffs of up to 24 percent on imported softwood lumber in a move that drew swift criticism from the Canadian government, which vowed to sue if needed.

Trump announced the new tariff at a White House gathering of conservative journalists, shortly before the Commerce Department said it would impose countervailing duties ranging from 3 percent to 24.1 percent on Canadian lumber producers including West Fraser Timber Co.

“We’re going to be putting a 20% tax on softwood lumber coming in -- tariff on softwood coming into the United States from Canada,” Trump said Monday, according to a tweet by Charlie Spiering, a White House correspondent for Breitbart News. A White House official confirmed the comment.

The step escalates an economic battle among neighboring countries that normally have one of the friendliest international relationships in the world. U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross amplified Trump’s remarks in a statement afterward that also referenced a fight over a new Canadian milk policy that U.S. producers say violates Nafta.

“It has been a bad week for U.S.-Canada trade relations,” Ross said, adding “it became apparent that Canada intends to effectively cut off the last dairy products



being exported from the United States.” He said the Commerce Department “determined a need” because of unfair Canadian subsidies to the lumber industry to impose “countervailing duties of roughly one billion dollars.”

In a dig at the North American Free Trade Agreement, which Trump has said he wants to renegotiate, Ross added, “This is not our idea of a properly functioning Free Trade Agreement.”

■ Canada response

Canada fired back, saying the tariff is an “unfair and punitive duty” imposed on “baseless and unfounded” allegations, according to a joint statement from Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland and Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr. The measures will hurt workers on both sides of the border and will raise U.S. home prices, they said.

Canada “will vigorously defend the interests of the Canadian softwood lumber industry, including through litigation,” the ministers said, adding they nonetheless “remain confident that a negotiated settlement is not only possible but in the best interests of both countries.”

The Canadian dollar dropped to a 4-month low against the U.S. dollar after Trump announced the tariff, trading down 0.40 percent to C\$1.356. The loonie traded at 73.8 U.S. cents.

In the latest chapter of a trade dispute that has been simmering for decades, the U.S. Department of Commerce in a preliminary determination Monday said it has calculated that Canada subsidizes Canfor Corp. by 20.26 percent; West Fraser Mills Ltd. by 24.12 percent; Tolko Marketing and Sales Ltd. and Tolko Industries Ltd. by 19.5 percent; Resolute FP Canada Ltd. by 12.82 percent and J.D. Irving Ltd. by 3.02 percent. It set a preliminary subsidy rate of 19.88 percent for all other producers in Canada. (Source: Bloomberg)

Turkey will keep pumping money into infrastructure

Turkey will boost economic growth by finding creative ways to reduce financing costs and redirect resources to large infrastructure projects, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said in an interview in Ankara on Monday.

The interview was Yildirim’s first since an April 16 referendum, which was preceded by massive government-backed stimulus for lending after the nation’s slowest growth rate since a contraction in 2009. The referendum, backed by Yildirim, hands President Recep Tayyip Erdogan enhanced executive authority and by 2019, will lead to the abolishing of Yildirim’s current job.

“We’ll continue to take such measures,” Yildirim said of the economic stimulus program, speaking in a ballroom at the Cankaya Palace. “The revival of the domestic economy will increase even more.”

Investors have so far welcomed the outcome of the referendum, even as questions remain about how Erdogan will use his enhanced powers to revive growth, bring inflation under control and support the currency, which has lost almost a quarter of its value against the dollar in the past year. The benchmark

Turkish stock gauge closed at a record high on Monday, while the lira has appreciated 1.8 percent against the greenback since the vote.

■ Infrastructure Spending

A former transportation minister, Yildirim’s attention focused largely on infrastructure investment. Turkey plans to spur spending of about 100 billion liras (\$28 billion) in rail projects over the next 10 years, as well as pouring money into new highways, hospital developments, airports, shipping, student dorm facilities, electric energy and urban regeneration.

“This is why Turkey’s economy tripled in size and exports quadrupled” since the ruling AK Party came to power in 2002, he said. “While the world was running from crisis to crisis, Turkey carried out some of the largest projects in the world.”

Urban regeneration, which includes destroying and rebuilding structures that are insufficiently earthquake-proof, will help to drive domestic consumption and employment over the next decades, he said. Many of those projects will be moved off the government budget through partnerships with the private

sector, he said.

“Large projects can’t be done out of the state’s general budget because first you’re going to do your spending on people’s health, education and defense,” he said. “If there’s money left over, you’ll do big infrastructure projects.” Because in the past that wasn’t possible, Turkey turned to public-private partnerships and build-operate-transfer models, and plans to continue investing in that way, he said.

■ Interest Rates

The government maintains its commitment to lowering borrowing costs -- as well as its unorthodox view that higher interest rates cause inflation -- and is finding creative ways to reduce financing costs without interfering with the central bank, he said. The newly established Turkey Wealth Fund, whose strategic plan has not yet been revealed, will also be used for that purpose, he said.

“The Wealth Fund is a structure that is aimed at lowering the interest rate burden in financial transactions mainly in areas of investment as well as providing added value to the country,” he said. The fund could take over financing for

existing projects from banks and offering investors lower rates, he said. “That way the banks can use the resources they have for new projects, and this is a serious possibility,” he said.

Turkey will probably approach its 4.4 percent growth target this year, Yildirim said. The government has no current plans to enlarge its 250-billion-lira credit guarantee fund, which helped push loan growth in the first quarter to above 20 percent. An interest-free loan program for small businesses targets 12 billion liras in usage from 460,000 companies, compared with 157,000 companies that have so far used 5 billion liras, he said.

Yildirim said the government has no plans to call for early elections to allow a full switch to the presidential system to happen earlier than the current Nov. 2019 timeframe. Investors shouldn’t be confused by competing messages on economic policy coming from the cabinet and from some of Erdogan’s economic advisers, he said.

“The advisers can say whatever they want, but the responsibility is with us,” he said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil exports from Kharg terminal up 80% yr/yr

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran exported 780 million barrels of crude oil from Kharg Island terminal in south part of the country during the last Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20), which indicates an 80 percent rise compared to the preceding year (1394).

According to the head of Iran Oil Terminals Company (IOTC)'s Export Department Gholamhossein Gerami, the figure stood at 432 million barrels in 1394, Shana reported.

Gerami further noted that during the last Iranian calendar year more than 800 oil tankers harbored in Kharg Island for loading crude oil while in the previous year the number hardly reached 540.

According to the official, IOTC plans to modernize the country's fleet in the current Iranian calendar year.

Renting and building new vessels, subsea repairs, training human resources, construction of floating docks, updating certificates, descaling of tanks, signing swap contracts and exporting oil extracted from West Karoun fields (in southwest Iran) through Kharg Oil Terminal are among measures to be taken in this regard, he added.

Due to its close distance to oilfield regions, its good offshore position and suitable depth for gigantic oil vessels berthing, Kharg Island Oil Terminal has been recognized as one of the country's most suitable place for crude oil export and loading sites.



Russia's oil cuts won't be so easy if OPEC deal is extended

For Russian oil companies, the historic agreement to boost prices by cutting output in conjunction with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries was an easy win. Extending the deal will be less straightforward.

Cuts so far this year came alongside the traditional seasonal stagnation in Russian production, meaning the country made relatively few sacrifices in exchange for an increase in crude prices of more than 10 percent. For the powerful Russian oil bosses who plan to discuss the OPEC accord with Energy Minister Alexander Novak this week, a decision by the government to extend the cuts beyond June would stymie plans to boost output, creating many more headaches than the initial agreement.

After two years of low oil prices and competition for market share, OPEC and Russia made a surprise agreement late last year on the first coordinated production cuts in more than a decade. While the deal lifted international crude futures above \$58 a barrel in January -- double the level a year earlier -- stubbornly high inventories and rising U.S. production have dragged prices back toward \$50. That's prompted producers to consider extending the curbs beyond their initial six-month term.

Novak will hold talks with Russian oil

companies this week before his meeting with OPEC and non-OPEC counterparts in Vienna on May 25. The minister said on April 21 that the issue of whether to prolong the deal was "under discussion" within Russia and would depend on "the market situation by the time when the current half-year agreement expires."

Analysts predict Russia will double down and prolong the cuts, despite the problems it could cause for its largest producers.

■ Winter freeze

Russian production is typically flat or lower in the first half of the year, according to a report from analysts at Sberbank CIB. Compared with October 2016 levels, the nation would have seen an average decline of about 40,000 to 50,000 barrels a day during the first four months of 2017 even without the OPEC deal, the bank said.

Current output is down 250,000 barrels a day from October and the nation's pledged cut of 300,000 will be fully implemented by the end of this month, Novak said last week.

While drilling falls during the icy winter, companies do take advantage of frozen roads through the swampy Siberian landscape to transport drilling rigs. That sets up the industry for increased activity later in the year when output

typically rises, according to Sberbank.

■ Expansion plans

Until recently, Russian oil companies were saying they would ramp up production after the agreement expires in June. The Energy Ministry's current outlook for 2017 implies average output of about 11.02 million barrels a day in the second half, some 75,000 barrels a day higher than its target under the OPEC deal.

Rosneft PJSC, the largest producer, is due to start the Yurubcheno-Tokhomskoye field in East Siberia, which should pump about 6 million barrels in total this year. Lukoil PJSC is planning to ramp up new wells at the Filanovsky field in the Caspian Sea, where it started production last summer. Gazprom Neft PJSC is in the middle of an investment boom that should see its Russian oil output increase 7.8 percent this year, according to Sberbank.

The Russian tax system -- which imposes lower rates on new fields -- reduces the likelihood that such projects will be delayed. Producers are more likely to cut back on drilling at their more highly taxed West Siberian assets, according to analysts and executives. Still, an extra six months of cuts would have a significant effect.

Rosneft's Russian oil production -- including Bashneft, which it acquired at

the end of last year -- would be 0.5 percent lower in 2017 than 2016, said Ildar Davletshin, an analyst at Renaissance Capital. Output at Lukoil would be reduced by 1.4 percent, Surgutneftegas OJSC by 2.1 percent, and Gazprom Neft would be restricted to growth of 4.4 percent, he said.

■ Budget boost

While the Russian oil companies -- which declined to comment for this story -- may face some thwarted aspirations, the positive impact of the OPEC deal on the Russian government's finances is ultimately more significant.

The rally in oil prices boosted budget revenue from oil and natural gas above 500 billion rubles (\$8.9 billion) in February for the first time in almost two years, Finance Ministry data show. Energy taxes accounted for about half of overall budget revenue in the first quarter, up from an average of 36 percent last year, according to Energy Minister Novak.

As President Vladimir Putin seeks to ensure stability ahead of elections in March, that provides a forceful argument for continuing cooperation with OPEC.

Extending the cuts is "a disappointment for the oil companies but as far as the government are concerned they're still well in the money," said Henderson of the OIES.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iran ranks as No.2 oil supplier to South Korea 1st time for a quarter

Iran ranked as South Korea's second-biggest oil exporter over the first three months of 2017 as it ramped up output to regain market share after sanctions were lifted last year, the first time ever it has claimed the No.2 spot for a quarter.

South Korea's March imports from Iran more than doubled from a year ago to a record of 18.54 million barrels, or 597,935 barrels per day (bpd), data from state-run Korea National Oil Corp (KNOC) showed on Monday.

For the January-March period of 2017, Iran seized the No.2 spot with shipments of 46.73 million barrels, also more than doubled from the same period last year and the highest on record for a quarter.

In the first quarter of 2016, Iran was South Korea's fifth-biggest oil supplier behind Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar, according to KNOC data.

This year's surge in Iranian crude



supply came after Tehran was exempted from production cuts led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting

Countries (OPEC) to clear a global glut. Iran's jump to the No.2 spot is also

due to solid condensate demand from

South Korean refiners such as SK Energy and Hyundai Oilbank.

Saudi Arabia held onto its spot as South Korea's top oil supplier for both March and the full quarter.

Shipments from Saudi Arabia rose 10.8 percent in March from a year ago to nearly 26 million barrels, or 838,387 bpd, from 23.46 million barrels last year.

In the first quarter, the world's top oil exporter shipped 77.12 million barrels of crude to South Korea, up 4.4 percent from about 74 million barrels in the same period of 2016, according to the data.

Overall, South Korea's March imports increased 11.7 percent from a year ago to 95.9 million barrels, or 3.09 million bpd, the data showed.

The world's fifth-largest crude importer brought in 278.18 million barrels of crude in the first three months of 2017, up 4.9 percent from 265.3 million barrels last year.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil edges up, breaking six-day stretch of losses

Oil rose on Tuesday, breaking a six-day streak of price falls, but with doubt swirling over OPEC's ability to force global crude inventories to drop, sentiment has turned more bearish.

Brent crude was up 8 cents at \$51.68 a barrel by 0940 GMT, while U.S. crude futures were up 10 cents at \$49.33 a barrel.

Brent is down 10 percent since late 2016, despite efforts led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and Russia to cut output by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) in the first half of 2017.

Given that oil supplies remain at re-

cord highs, Stephen Schork of the Schork report said on Tuesday that "OPEC has failed miserably in its endeavor to balance the oil market".

JPMorgan said in its latest weekly market note to clients that "it is evident that ... crude markets are still struggling to clear (oversupply)".

The bank said it was closing its "August Brent long position at a loss."

JPMorgan said that to reduce the supply overhang, OPEC "will be forced to renew, and possibly deepen the agreement if they wish to keep prices much above \$50 per barrel".

Russia said on Monday its oil output

could climb to the highest rate in 30 years if OPEC and non-OPEC producers do not extend their supply reduction deal beyond June 30.

Extreme weakness in physical crude, where prices in the North Sea market have fallen to their lowest this year, is also acting as a drag on futures.

However, with refinery maintenance around Europe and Russia set to peak in May at an estimated 1.5 million bpd, according to one analyst, crude demand will pick up and the long-awaited draw in global inventories should begin in earnest.

"If you look at the last six weeks, when

you include the U.S., Europe, Singapore and floating storage, (inventories) have been going down on average by 8 million barrels a week. If you extend that to the end of the year, at that kind of pace, you would draw down 250 to 300 million barrels," SEB commodities strategist Bjørne Schieldrop said.

"With refineries out, you have a lot of crude oil sloshing around, creating weakness in the spot price ... we still have the OPEC meeting ahead of us on May 25 and it's always uncertain. But it doesn't make sense to sell down to \$45 ahead of that," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

Russia reemerges as China's top oil supplier before OPEC meet

Russia retook the top spot from Saudi Arabia in crude supplies to China last month as OPEC producers are flirting with the possibility of extending a deal to curb production.

The world's largest energy consumer increased imports from Russia by about 9.3 percent to 4.69 million metric tons in March from February, according to data released Tuesday by the General Administration of Customs. That's also up 0.9 percent from a year earlier. Saudi Arabia, the biggest crude exporter, retreated to the third-biggest seller last month from No. 1 a month earlier as shipments fell 4.6 percent to 4.55 million tons.

Russia and Saudi Arabia along with other major producers have been competing for a bigger slice in China amid the output cut deal led by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. The Asian nation imported a record amount of crude last month, topping the U.S. as the world's biggest buyer during the first quarter. While some of OPEC members are considering prolonging the historic agreement beyond June when the group and its allies meet next month, it will be closely watched whether the non-OPEC producer Russia will join again.

Energy Minister Alexander Novak will hold talks with Russian oil companies this week before his meeting with OPEC and non-OPEC counterparts in Vienna on May 25. Russian production is typically flat or lower in the first half of the year, according to a report by Sberbank CIB.

Angola, the third-biggest seller to China in February, rose to No. 2 in March, boosting sales by 43 percent from a month earlier to 4.67 million tons, customs data showed. China's total crude imports climbed 11 percent to a record 9.21 million barrels a day last month from February, according to customs data released April 13. Shipments during the first quarter rose 15 percent to almost 105 million tons, or about 8.5 million barrels a day.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Saudi Arabia to offer 1GW of renewable contracts in 2017

Saudi Arabia will offer as much as 1 gigawatt of contracts to buy renewable electricity by the fourth quarter of this year, a government official said, putting more detail on a program designed to stimulate the kingdom's wind and solar industry.

The government will auction power-purchase agreements covering 620 megawatts of photovoltaic installations and 400 megawatts for wind farms in its second round of tenders for the technologies, said Turki al-Shehri, head of renewable energy project development at the Ministry of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources.

The oil exporting nation's goal is to install 3.45 gigawatts of renewable by 2020 and 9.5 gigawatts by 2030, about 10 percent of its current electricity generation capacity. With a growing population, the kingdom is consuming more of its own oil and natural gas resources to feed its utilities.

Al-Shehri said there would be local-content requirements in the program designed to encourage manufacturers to build capacity in Saudi Arabia. Those rules will be raised in successive years.

Earlier this month, the ministry said it cleared 27 companies to bid for a 300-megawatt solar plant and 24 firms for a 400-megawatt wind farm. That revived a process that was held up by a suspension of the tender process in March announced by the national utility, Saudi Electricity Co.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil and mining giants detail road map to reduce carbon by half

A group of companies and non-profit agencies that includes energy giants Royal Dutch Shell Plc and BHP Billiton said global greenhouse gas emissions could be cut in half by 2040 without impeding economic development, in part by converting grids to use mostly renewable power.

The declining costs of wind, solar and batteries will make it possible within 15 years to build power networks that get as much as 90 percent of their power from renewable sources while providing electricity at a cost that's competitive with fossil-fuels, according to a report released Tuesday by the Energy Transitions Commission, a group of energy companies, investors and non-profit organizations including the Rocky Mountain Institute.

"The really good news is the potential on renewable electricity," Adair Turner, chairman of the Energy Transitions Commission, said in an interview. "It is really credible to say we can decarbonize electricity."

Converting grids to green power and running cars and heating buildings on electricity would account for half of the emission cuts outlined in the report, which details how to slash carbon from 36 gigatonnes a year to 20 gigatonnes by 2040. The group said governments and companies must boost investments in hydrogen, bioenergy, waste heat and carbon-capture technologies, which would reduce emissions in aviation, shipping and heavy industries.

Fossil fuel use will also need to fall by 30 percent by 2040 as energy-efficiency measures accelerate to meet international climate goals, according to the report.

The group said policies including putting a price on carbon, phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, and encouraging more research into low-carbon technologies will be needed to hit the targets, along with more public investment in transport and city infrastructure.

Investments will also need to shift, including a \$3.7 trillion reduction in spending on fossil fuels, a \$6 trillion increase for low-carbon technologies and a \$9 trillion boost for energy-efficient equipment and buildings.

(Source: Bloomberg)

What Turkey's referendum reveals

By Robert W. Merry

The outcome of the Turkish vote on constitutional changes, notwithstanding lingering allegations of fraud, represents further evidence of a crumbling global status quo. When Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared victory in the narrowly divided referendum, it wiped away 93 years of Turkish history and nearly 70 years of Turkey's prevailing concept of its place in the world. Add that to today's global flux, along with the rise of China, the Mideast conflagration, the fraying European Union, the threat to Europe from a rising tide of immigrants, intensifying U.S.-Russian tensions, and America's lurch into rightwing populism, and it becomes clear that the Old Order is disintegrating.

Turkey's latest 93-year status quo replaced an earlier status quo stretching back to the 14th century, when the Asia Minor principality of Osman, vying for dominance over other Turkish principalities, gained hegemony over that vast peninsula. Then it pushed to fill the void left by the decaying Byzantine Empire. That Osman force — or Ottoman, as it became known — emerged as one of the world's great empires, lasting more than six centuries. At its zenith, around 1670, it encircled the Red and Black seas, stretched down to the Persian Gulf, encompassed



much of the Middle East, including Egypt and large portions of Arabia, and controlled through vassal states the southern Mediterranean coastline. It gobbled up much of Europe, including Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Transylvania, and Hungary. Twice it laid siege to Vienna.

Then it entered a slow, agonizing decline. It became, as they said, the "sick man of Europe." Finally, with World War I, the sick man died.

That's when Mustafa Kemal, known as Atatürk, emerged to fashion a new Muslim country upon the ashes of empire — a modern, secular nation-state looking westward and moving beyond even the vestiges of the old theocratic empire. He rejected multinationalism in favor of a homogeneous nation, intolerant of Armenians or Greeks in its midst. He deposed the sultan, abolished his caliphate, and established a Western-style republican form of political authority. He ended Islam as the state religion, abolished religious schools, terminated religious ministries, even prohibited the wearing of the fez because it symbolized Islamic traditionalism.

The late Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard described his next move: "Having redefined the national, political, religious, and cultural identity of the Turkish people, Kemal in the 1930s vigorously attempted to promote Turkish economic development. Westernization went hand-in-hand with and was to be the means of modernization."

This push to modernization through westernization gained momentum with the Cold War. Soon Turkey was seen by the West, and came to see itself, as the West's eastern bulwark of containment against the Soviet Union. After gaining NATO membership in 1952, Turkey received billions of dollars in Western aid to bolster its defense. Its military was integrated into NATO's command structure, and the country allowed American military bases to be constructed upon its soil. Eventually, Turkey sought membership in the European Union.

President George Bush endorsed that idea in June 2004 as he stood on the banks of the Bosphorus in Istanbul. "As a European power," he declared, "Turkey belongs in Europe."

But Turkey wasn't — and isn't — a European power. It is an Asian power and a Muslim nation, culturally distinct from Europe. And all of Atatürk's bold and implacable efforts to fashion it into a Western nation were ultimately doomed to fail.

■ Torn country

Huntington, writing in 1996, saw that failure coming. He called Turkey a "torn country" — one whose predominant culture places it in one civilization while its leaders seek to shift it to another. This process of "identity redefinition," he wrote, is always prolonged and painful — politically, socially, and culturally. He added: "It also to date has failed." He didn't mean just in Turkey, but everywhere it has been tried.

The unraveling of Turkey's Kemalist secular identity began after the end of the Cold War, when Turks increasingly wondered about their national and cultural identity. And, noted Huntington, "religion was there to provide an answer." By 1993, reported Eric Rouleau in Foreign Affairs, Islamic-style beards and veiled women were proliferating, and bookstores were "overflowing with books and journals, cassettes, compact disks and videos glorifying Islamic history, precepts and way of life and exalting the Ottoman Empire's role in preserving the values of the Prophet Muhammad."

That was the beginning of a process that culminated in this month's referendum outcome. It was a near thing, with the Erdogan forces capturing only 51 percent of the vote to 49 percent opposing the autocracy now in prospect under Erdogan. The president's tenure in office, 14 years thus far, could be extended under the new structure for up to a decade. During that time he can rule with a minimum of parliamentary interference, as that check on his authority has been gutted. Erdogan will be permitted to impose decrees at will, appoint vice presidents and cabinet officials without legislative approval, and dominate judicial appointments. A human rights organization in Europe says that Erdogan's vision is a "one-person regime."

Erdogan's declaration of victory also kills any prospect of Turkey seeking membership in the EU or otherwise pursuing a western identity. The Kemalist experiment is over. Turkey no longer is a torn country, in Huntington's term. But it remains a split country, as the close referendum outcome attests. In that, it reflects the unsettled nature of global geopolitics as well as today's ongoing assault on the status quo.

(Source: The Washington Times)

Frontrunner Macron can take nothing for granted in French election runoff

Well ahead in the polls, centrist candidate must come out of his comfort zone to show he understands France's divisions

By Angelique Chrisafis

The independent centrist Emmanuel Macron, who is now favorite to win the French presidential election against the far-right Front National's Marine Le Pen, spent much of his first day of the final-round campaign behind closed doors, fine-tuning strategy. His triumphant victory speech after topping the first-round vote had given way to discussion across France of the difficult challenge he now faces.

The election map of France was a reality check. Far from an outright victory for Macron's moderate centrist brand of business-friendly, internationally minded, socially liberal values, it showed a country more fractured than ever. The Front National cemented its place on the French political scene, winning swaths of the de-industrialized north and east, as well as the south, while Macron took the west. He was strong in cosmopolitan cities, while she was strong in small towns and rural areas that felt abandoned.

The anti-immigration, anti-EU Le Pen took nine of the 10 departments with France's highest unemployment rates. Macron's vote was particularly high in the capital, Paris, a thriving island that seemed more than ever cut off from the pessimism of much of the rest of the country that surrounds it.

■ Real social divides

The results of the first round revealed striking parallels with what the philosopher Raphaël Glucksmann warned were the "real social divides" that had appeared in the UK's vote to leave the European Union and Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. There was a strong message from voters struggling to make ends meet, who felt forgotten and left behind, and an anger towards the traditional political parties, which were booted out of the race.

While Macron topped the poll with 23%, more than 40% of voters chose candidates at the furthest ends of the political spectrum, from the far-right Le Pen to the hard-left Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Euro-sceptic candidates made their strongest gains ever, winning the support of more than 46% of voters.

Macron, 39, is a tech-savvy former senior civil servant who talks about "harnessing the energy" of startups; who smiles at all times and wants to inject some Barack Obama-style "hope" and optimism into France. His platform is progressive and pro-European, economically liberal and socially leftwing on issues such as immigration — he had praised Angela Merkel for her generous policy on asylum seekers that has led to more than a million new arrivals in Germany since 2015.

He is a former investment banker, a millionaire who was appointed as econo-



Politicians on the traditional right and left have already lined up behind Macron in an attempt to prevent Le Pen from winning.

my minister to a Socialist government and had no political experience before deciding to strike out on his own and found a new movement that was "neither left nor right" to revolutionize the tired old ways of French politics. He calls his policy plans more "pragmatic" than catchy: loosening the strict rules on businesses and lightening corporation tax, streamlining the pensions system, providing unemployment benefits for more people but being stricter by suspending benefits from qualified workers who refuse two "decent" job offers.

He says he can bring a positive outlook to one of the most pessimistic countries in the world, where more than 230 people have been killed in terrorist attacks in the past two years and, after decades of mass unemployment, more than 3 million people are without jobs.

■ Reconcile France

But Macron must come out of his comfort zone to show he understands the country's divisions and can, as his campaign team promised, "reconcile France". Even if the first final-round poll forecast he would beat Le Pen by 62% to 38%, nothing can be taken for granted in this unpredictable French presidential race.

Politicians on the traditional right and

left have already lined up behind Macron in an attempt to prevent Le Pen from winning. But this default vote against Le Pen rather than in favor of Macron is no longer seen as enough to set up a French leader for a successful term in office — the nation did it once, for the rightwing Jacques Chirac against the far-right Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002, and disappointment and unpopularity dogged Chirac's time in office.

Le Pen has made no secret of the fact that her ideal final round would be a showdown with Macron. She has already styled herself as the "candidate of the people", depicting him up as a globalist former banker from the "arrogant elite" where "money is king", cut off from the everyday experience of voters.

As a political novice, Macron's first challenge in the next two weeks is to reassure voters that he could actually govern the country. If he is elected president, he will need a parliamentary majority in order to carry out his policies. Without that majority in the 577-seat parliament, he would be relegated to a symbolic head of state, hosting state dinners but with his hands tied.

His fledgling political movement, En Marche, is barely one year old. He has to prove that it can run candidates in the

parliamentary elections in June and win enough seats, or else France would be left in a murky hinterland of coalition politics. Le Pen would face the same problem: she currently has only two members of parliament and without a majority would not be able to put any of her policies into place.

Macron's first gaffe was to be photographed holding a celebration party at a Paris brasserie on the night of the first round. It wasn't only that it sparked comparisons to the unpopular Nicolas Sarkozy's celebrations at a luxury restaurant in 2007 — Macron argued that his party was much cheaper. It was that a celebration was taking place at all after the first round and before the whole election was over. "This party at La Rotonde is shameful in a political situation when the far right is qualified for the second round," tweeted David Cormand, the head of France's Green party.

To look as if the race was already run was seen as a dangerous thing in the current political climate. "We need to be humble," said Richard Ferrand, the secretary general of En Marche. "The election hasn't been won and we need to bring people together to win."

(Source: The Guardian)

On North Korea: Bluster in search of strategy

Every American administration takes a while to settle into a basic approach to the world. President Trump's team has had a rockier start than most, with many important positions in every key agency still unfilled. More worrying, the administration's basic foreign policy is coming into view and it is not a reassuring sight — bellicose rhetoric, hollow threats, contradictory voices and little coordination with allies. The approach is being tested on the most difficult foreign policy problem of all: North Korea.

There is a pattern to Trump's approach so far. It begins with bravado, the repeated use of rhetoric that is not backed up by much. The president constantly insists that if China doesn't help deal with North Korea, America will. Really? How? A military strike is close to impossible. South Korea would vehemently oppose any such move, as it would face the brunt of North Korea's retaliation; Seoul is only about 35 miles from the border. Japan would also oppose a strike, and, of course, any military action would enrage China. Plus, a bombing campaign would be ineffective since North Korea's nuclear sites are scattered, buried deep and, in some cases, underwater.

■ Strategic patience

Trump has not been alone in his bravado. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced that America's historical policy of "strategic patience" with North Korea had ended, and that the United States now had a new policy. The danger of this kind of rhetoric is that it is becoming readily apparent that Washington does not in fact have a new policy. And if it does, Washington's key allies, especially the South Koreans, are terrified by it. Between the administration's bluster, its mistake with the USS Carl Vinson, and Trump's repetition of Beijing's line that Korea was once a part of China, South Korea has become deeply uneasy.



U.S. Vice President Mike Pence in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), South Korea, April 17, 2017.

Threatening North Korea without the ability to carry out that threat only makes Washington look weak.

Tough talk is supplemented by aggressive military reflexes. Whether that means using bigger bombs in the Middle East or sending ships — eventually — into East Asian waters, these tactics can be useful if there is a strategy behind them. So far, however, they look more like tactics in search of a strategy, the flexing of military might in the hope that this will impress the adversary. But all the shock and awe in Iraq did not help when there was a faulty plan to secure the peace. More bombs in Syria will not answer the question of how to defeat Daesh (ISIL). Threatening North Korea

without the ability to carry out that threat only makes Washington look weak.

The United States has had roughly the same strategy toward North Korea for decades. It is a policy of sanctions, threats, intimidation, pressure and isolation. And it has not worked. Even the brief effort at cooperation during the Clinton years was half-hearted, with Washington failing to fulfill some of its promises to North Korea. In any event, the rapprochement was quickly reversed by the George W. Bush administration. The results have been clear. North Korea has continued to build its nuclear program and engage in provocative tests. As isolation and sanctions have increased in recent years, Pyongyang has only become more confrontational.

■ Try another approach

In a recent essay in Foreign Affairs, John Delury wonders if it is time to try another approach. "If the United States really hopes to achieve peace on the Korean Peninsula, it should stop looking for ways to stifle North Korea's economy and undermine Kim Jong Un's regime and start finding ways to make Pyongyang feel more secure. This might sound counterintuitive, given North Korea's nuclear ambitions and human rights record. But consider this: North Korea will start focusing on its prosperity instead of its self-preservation only once it no longer has to worry about its own destruction. And North Korea will consider surrendering its nuclear deterrent only once it feels secure and prosperous and is economically integrated into Northeast Asia."

We tend to view North Korea as an utterly weird country. And there's evidence to support this characterization. But it is also a regime that wants to survive. So far, all these predictions have proved wrong. It might be worth trying a new policy with North Korea. It might not work. But the old one certainly hasn't.

(Source: The Daily Star)

Erdogan's Victory in Referendum

By Mina Ahmadi

Turkish people voted in a referendum which could greatly impact their future. A victory for the 'Yes' campaign means that the office of the prime minister shall be abolished in favor of more executive powers for the currently largely ceremonial position of the president.

The reforms changed Turkey's parliamentary system into a presidential one; the office of the prime minister would be removed; the president would appoint the cabinet and an undefined number of vice-presidents, and would be able to select and remove senior civil servants without parliamentary approval.

The changes would also potentially keep Recep Tayyip Erdogan in power until 2029.

■ 'Nay-sayers'

On April 15, Erdogan censured the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for reporting that "no" campaigners in Turkey's upcoming referendum on extending presidential powers have faced crackdown by Ankara.

"Now the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe says if the result is 'yes', that means there are a lot of problems. Who are you? First of all, you should know your place. This is not your duty", said Erdogan in a strongly-worded speech at a rally in Konya, the capital city of the Turkish province of Konya.

Erdogan's comments referred to a recent interim report published by the OSCE, which will monitor the April 16 referendum, on the campaign atmosphere in the Anatolian country between March 17 and April 7. The report concluded that "no" supporters had faced bans, police interventions, violent scuffles at their events and arrests in several cases.

It also alleged that Ankara's senior officials, including Erdogan himself and Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, equated "no" campaigners with the mid-July 2016 failed coup plotters or terrorist organizations, noting that the referendum would be conducted under an extended state of emergency imposed following the attempted putsch.



The referendum was marred by divisive rhetoric, with the government equating no voters with terrorist groups and the opposition accusing the ruling party of seeking to install a dictatorship.

By Olivia Alperstein

No one ever expected Donald Trump to be a peace-loving president. On the campaign trail, he endorsed torture, said he'd bomb the families of alleged terrorists, and spoke gleefully about the president's power to launch nuclear weapons.

But threatening war with multiple countries over a few weeks goes beyond even that. Tough-guy, hit-them-before-they-hit-us foreign policy is back with a vengeance.

Under Trump's orders, earlier in April the military dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb in its arsenal — known as MOAB, or the "Mother of All Bombs" — on Afghanistan. Outside of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there's simply no precedent for the use of such a large weapon, which carries grave risks of civilian casualties.

Shortly before that, Trump ordered a military strike on Syria, apparently without informing either Congress or the State Department. Meanwhile, the White House is rattling its saber at North Korea and pondering an expanded military role in both Somalia and Yemen.

In all of these situations, Congress has not only the right but the responsibility to carefully review any authorization of military strikes. Yet so far this president, like others before him, has taken pains to keep the people's representatives com-



The Turkish referendum on presidential powers took place on an "uneven playing field" and in a political environment where fundamental freedoms were curtailed, European observers have said.

■ "Thirst for power"

A senior analyst with Foreign Policy in Focus Ian Williams believes that Erdogan has arranged the referendum only to satisfy his thirst for power and consolidate his position as president, PressTV wrote.

"It is going to give him [Erdogan] absolute power. He is showing increasing signs of power hunger and one might almost say megalomania over the last few years. This [referendum] would consolidate the presidency as a token figure even if he controls the actual party that dominates the parliament. So, what he wants now is to consolidate it," he noted.

According to Williams, subjecting a country's constitution to such a fundamental change requires consensus among all segments of the society, and a Yes/No referendum does not seem to be the appropriate apparatus for bringing about that change.

"I am not convinced about referendum as a means of affecting change. Because the only answer is yes or no. And the real question here is not why they're going to change the constitution. It is going to abrogate any constitutional responsibility



for the president," the analyst said.

■ "Uneven playing field"

The Turkish referendum on presidential powers took place on an "uneven playing field" and in a political environment where fundamental freedoms were curtailed, European observers have said.

The observer mission said voting had proceeded in a largely orderly fashion on Sunday, but it criticized as illegal a controversial last-minute decision by the country's election board to count unstamped ballots, saying this lifted an important safeguard against fraud, Guardian reported.

"The 16 April constitutional referendum took place on an uneven playing field and the two sides of the campaign did not have equal opportunities," said the preliminary report of the mission, a combined effort of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

"Under the state of emergency put in place after the July 2016 failed coup attempt, fundamental freedoms essential to a genuinely democratic process were curtailed."

■ Installing dictatorship

The referendum was marred by divisive rhetoric, with the government equating no voters with terrorist groups and the opposition accusing the ruling party of seeking to install a dictatorship.

Since Erdogan declared victory in the

referendum, protests have been held in the country.

On April 19, Turkish police detained 16 leftist activists involved in protests against the result of a recent referendum on the expansion of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's powers; Press TV quoted a lawyer as saying.

The Freedom and Solidarity Party (ODP) said police detained its Istanbul chairman, Mesut Gecgel, on the accusation of "agitating the public" by claiming that the win for the 'Yes' campaign was illegitimate.

The head of the left-wing ODP movement, which is not represented in the Turkish parliament, had himself said in a message on Twitter that he was being detained for demonstrating against the 'Yes' victory.

Deniz Demirdogen, Gecgel's lawyer, said anti-terror police raided the houses of suspects in Istanbul in the early hours of Wednesday, adding that 16 people had been detained so far but arrest warrants had been issued for a total of 38 people.

Demirdogen said the accusation was "strange", adding, "they are accused of provoking people to question the legitimacy of the 'Yes' in the referendum."

"But there's no such crime definition in the penal code," the lawyer said.

Demirdogen said the 16 detainees were being questioned by police and were awaiting a decision by prosecutors on the case.

Meanwhile, Turkey's two main opposition parties officially submitted an appeal against the referendum results.

Representatives of the Republican People's Party and the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party presented their applications to the Supreme Electoral Council in Ankara on Tuesday (April 18).

■ Trump's congratulatory message

Following Erdogan's controversial triumph, U.S. President Donald Trump has called his Turkish counterpart, to congratulate him on victory in a referendum that boosts his power and plays a key role in the future of the country and the rest of the region.

Trump's congratulatory tone appears to run counter to an earlier statement by the State Department, asserting that the referendum took place in an environment where "fundamental freedoms essential to a genuinely democratic process were curtailed."

These aren't programs with extravagant budgets. They represent barely a drop in the ocean of our already enormous (\$600 billion-plus) military budget, not to mention the \$21.6 billion appropriated to fund Trump's border wall.

These cuts would only make sense if we were still fighting the Second World War, with every family rationing staple food items and planting victory gardens while scraping money together to buy war bonds to support the troops.

We are not — at least not yet — on the verge of World War III. But with recent acts of aggression and military strikes in several diplomatically precarious regions, Trump seems determined to take us close to the ledge.

From backtracking on calling NATO "obsolete" to deciding not to accuse China of currency manipulation, we've already seen Trump completely reverse his policy positions after (presumably) thinking things over a bit more thoroughly. It's time for him to also rethink this more-military-conflicts-than-you-can-shake-a-big-stick-at foreign policy.

As our president, Donald Trump is responsible for our safety. He cannot risk launching us into still more endless wars; the cost is simply too high, and ordinary American families will pay the heavy price.

(Source: FIFP)

What kind of sarin poisoned the political will of world leaders?

By Sophie Mangal

'War is peace', 'Freedom is slavery', 'Ignorance is strength' and 'Lying is the truth',

"Nineteen Eighty-Four", George Orwell

The statements of some Western politicians about the chemical attack on April 4, occurred in the Syrian province of Idlib, once again confirmed that the modern world is suffering a severe and chronic crisis of political will.

The lack of a clear and independent position on the issue (and also on most of the global problems) by the governments of Western powers is a serious obstacle in the fight against such threats as terrorism, organized crime, the struggle against hunger, global warming, the proliferation of nuclear weapons etc. This raises serious doubts about whether some politicians are competent and whether the opportunity to make the world safer under the leadership of such leaders is real.

UN experts have not yet published any objective conclusions about anybody's involvement in the use of chemical weapons in the city of Khan Sheikhun. It wasn't proved that it is play-by-play report. The result of the samples' analysis isn't released. It was not even determined what war gas and kind of weapons (munitions) were used. The investigation initiated by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in Syria has just started and the experts have so far refused to comment on what had happened without having at least preliminary information on the issue.

But how is all of it may be important for Western politicians and diplomats, when the world community wants a speedy reaction to what had happened. The main thing is to do its best to earn political capital, without waiting for the results of investigation and without making well-considered decisions. When the world community forgets to think about the tragedy, the situation in the world can dramatically change. One of the main conditions of a political success is a storm of hysteria in the mainstream media and an attempt to adopt a rough-and-ready UN resolution.

While using such tough retaliation measures as pinpoint strikes and organizing a splendid little war any weak politician can turn the world on its head, rekindle glory, become once again the history-maker, divert people's attention from Obamacare and other problems within its own country.

Hundreds of Syrian children brutally thrown to the wolves and murdered in the narrow interests of others' have nothing to do with the political leaders. Are diplomats from different countries really getting to the bottom of the truth? An analysis of the statements about the chemical attack in Syria makes it possible to give answers that are close to reality to these questions.

The events that took place within a week after the air strike attack on Khan Sheikhun divided the world community into two camps. Some seek to establish the truth, while the latter require immediate action, not caring about the truth.

■ A list of supporters of Orwell's strategy:

1. The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces one of the first claimed that at least 80 people were killed, and 200 injured as a result of the attack. The armed opposition accused the Syrian Army of the action.

2. U.S. President Donald Trump put the responsibility for the alleged chemical attack in Syria on the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Though D. Trump might also be poisoned. Some Trump specialists from Quemado Institute state Khan Sheikhun's false flag might also be designed to overthrow Trump, by proving Trump is an impulsive and dangerous leader who is unfit for office.

3. Turkish Foreign Ministry called on all the parties whose influence on the Syrian government is high, to "immediately stop the barbaric attacks, which grossly violate the truce and are directed against civilians."

4. British Foreign Minister, Boris Johnson, went much further. Despite the investigation didn't even begin, Johnson stressed that he had personally seen the evidence of using chemical weapons by the Syrian Army.

5. Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister, Chrystia Freeland, said that the chemical attack in Khan Shaykhun coincided with other Syrian government's actions.

6. France's Foreign Minister, Jean-Marc Ayrault, also blamed Damascus for the incident in Idlib.

7. Qatar is confident that the Syrian authorities are only responsible for the attack in Syria's Idlib. This was stated by Qatar's Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani.

8. Germany's Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel refrained from accusing the Syrian authorities, but expressed fears that in the fight against terrorism, the bid for Syrian President Bashar Assad shouldn't be made.

... This list can be easily continued.

■ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst the truth"

1. Staffan de Mistura called on the OPCW to launch an investigation on the chemical attack, and demanded to find guilty for the attack in Syria's Idlib. De Mistura also proposed to organize a meeting of the UN Security Council.

2. Even warhawk Federica Mogherini has condemned Trump's actions. The head of EU diplomacy, Federica Mogherini, said those who are responsible for using chemical weapons in the Syrian Idlib, should be punished.

3. Shock, but NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, called for bringing the perpetrators to justice, refraining from accusations against Bashar Assad.

4. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, called for an objective and fair investigation.

... Is it easy to continue this list?

Apparently, it does not make sense whether the second camp can establish the truth or not. The will of most of the Western leaders and diplomats is poisoned by political, financial and personal interests. The Syrian people, who have been suffering from the war, received a slap by the missile strikes from the American destroyers. The process of re-establishing relations with the opposition in Geneva and Astana is again under the threat. The United States implied that they intend to be a leader of the whole world, that they have the only right to appoint the 'enemies of democracy'. The situation in the Middle East has reminded the theory of controlled chaos. So, the strategic goals have been achieved. Who needs to know the truth about the murdered Syrian children in such circumstances?



What the U.S. State Department can learn from the musical 'Hamilton'

By Peter Van Buren

It hasn't been a good 100 days for the U.S. Department of State. Like the musical Hamilton's orphaned title character, called out in song for being a "Founding Father without a father," State is now something of an agency without agency.

Not much of substance seems to be happening at Foggy Bottom. America's top-level foreign policy tasks remain, but someone else – Jared Kushner? H.R. McMaster? – is tending to many of them. The bad news includes President Donald Trump's hope of slashing State's budget, with no sign of objection from Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. Half the positions in the agency's organizational chart are vacant or occupied by acting officials.

There is some good news in what isn't happening. The predicted exodus of staff never came to be. In fact, only one State official publicly resigned, and that was in protest of

Trump's anticipated gutting of the Constitution, which also hasn't happened. January's stories of senior management quitting en masse turned out to be a handful of Hillary Clinton-era loyalists nudged into retirement.

Meanwhile, press briefings resumed, and a ruffle over not bringing pool reporters on Tillerson's official aircraft for a visit to Asia was tidied up on the next trip. Media interest outside State and staff attention inside State to a leaked dissent memo opposing Trump's so-called Muslim Ban 1.0 fizzled away.

■ Apocalyptic predictions

Outside the office, despite 100 days of near-apocalyptic predictions, America has not gone to war with China, Russia, Iran or North Korea. It has not formally backed away from NATO, the Paris climate accords or the Iranian nuclear deal. Tillerson has started to do some Secretary of State-ish representational things, joining Trump and Chinese Premier

Xi Jinping at their Mar-a-Lago summit, making prepared remarks, and attending international meetings, most notably with Russian President Vladimir Putin on April 12.

But neither Trump nor Tillerson has articulated much of any foreign policy vision. Overall, despite limited military action in Syria and Afghanistan, Trump's first 100 days have been largely a foreign policy of stasis, with the State Department and its leader largely bystanders to even that.

And that's the problem. Looking forward, the real issue at State is not dealing with the changes of the Trump era, it is that things at the State Department have not changed much at all.

Former colleagues (I worked 24 years at State as a diplomat) say they still spend time in meetings like a forgotten cargo cult, worried about furniture for a new ambassador who hasn't yet arrived. Memos and cables and briefing books and think pieces and reports and foreign press com-

mentaries and official-informal emails are laboriously prepared, rewritten, cleared and then transmitted to be summarized and filed. The atmosphere can remind a person of an elderly widow who still lays a tablecloth and sets out the good china, even though no guests have stopped by for many years.

■ Neckless government

This is not unexpected – State is an extremely vertically-oriented bureaucracy, with layers below the Secretary that wait for bits of policy to fall so as to inform them of what their own opinions are. One academic referred to this as "neckless government," a head and a body missing an active, two-way, connection. State is indeed so vertical in mindset that employees have traditionally referred to the Secretary by their location on the physical top of the building, the Seventh Floor, as in "The Seventh Floor needs that memo sent up or trouble will come down." ➔13

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Waist size, not weight, may be key to life span

That spare tire you're toting around could be increasing your risk of an early death, a new study suggests.

What's more, the increased risk associated with having a larger waistline occurs even if a person's body-mass index (BMI) indicates a healthy weight, said lead researcher Emmanuel Stamatakis. He's an associate professor with the University of Sydney in Australia.

People who carry extra weight around the middle -- also called "central obesity" -- but have a normal BMI have a 22 percent higher risk of death than people whose fat is stored elsewhere in their bodies, the study found. In folks with a BMI that indicates obesity, the risk of early death was 13 percent higher for those with central obesity.

The study also found that a large gut poses an even greater hazard for heart health. The risk of heart-related death is 25 percent higher for someone with central obesity and a normal BMI. It's 26 percent greater for those with an overweight BMI and extra abdominal girth, and 56 percent higher for an obese BMI and central obesity, the study found.

BMI is a rough estimate of a person's body fat based on height and weight measurements. Normal BMI is 18.5 to 24.9, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overweight is 25 to 29.9, and obese is 30 and over. Someone who's 5 feet, 9 inches tall is considered normal when weight is between 125 and 168 pounds. Overweight is 169 to 202 pounds. Obese is 203 pounds or higher.

Waist-to-hip ratio is a measurement used to determine if there is excess belly fat. Stamatakis said waist-to-hip ratio is calculated by dividing your waist measurement by your hip measurement.

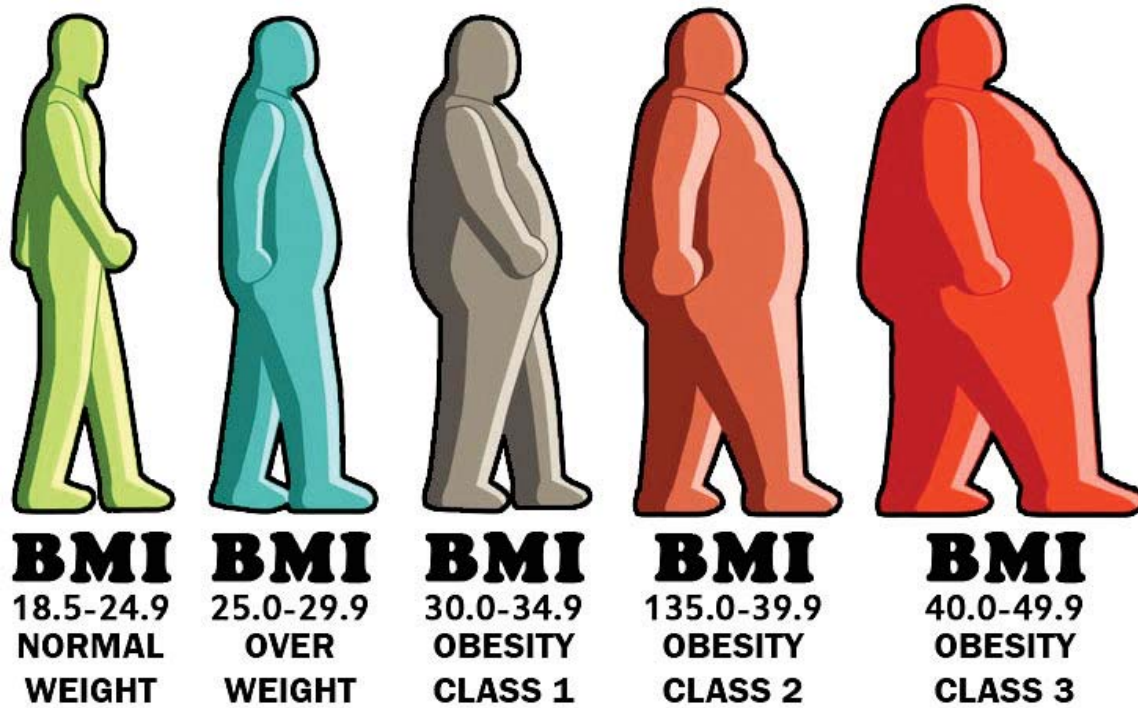
"If a person's waist-to-hip ratio is over 0.85 if they are female, or over 0.90 if they are male, then they should be concerned and look into ways to alter their lifestyle to lose or reduce the 'paunch,'" Stamatakis said.

Ruth Loos is director of the genetics of obesity and related metabolic traits program at the Charles Bronfman Institute of Personalized Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City.

She said these findings jibe with previous studies indicating that belly fat may be more detrimental to a person's health than fat stored elsewhere in the body.

"Studies have been fairly consistent in showing that waist-to-hip ratio contributes to disease," Loos said.

For this latest study, researchers looked at almost 43,000 participants in the Health Survey for England and the Scottish Health Survey. Each person's BMI and waist-to-hip ratio was compared against their health history during 10 years of follow-up.



The study participants' average age was 58. And, just over half had central obesity. Forty four percent were overweight. One quarter were obese. Folks who were overweight and obese were much more likely to have central obesity than people with a normal BMI.

Researchers found that the risk posed by a big belly was the same for men and women, Stamatakis noted.

However, men are more likely to store fat around their middle, which could mean they are more likely to develop this risk, Loos said. Women tend to store fat in their hips and buttocks.

"It is indeed true that men have more of the one type of body shape, and women the other," Loos said.

Excessive fat around the waist has been linked to insulin resistance, high cholesterol and increased inflammation, Stamatakis said. These are all risk factors for heart disease.

A high waist-to-hip ratio also can indicate less muscle mass in the legs, which also increases heart disease risk, Stamatakis added.

"In fact, people who have high BMI often have larger amounts of fat stored in the hips and the legs, and this ap-

pears to be better for metabolic and cardiovascular health for reasons we cannot fully understand," he said.

Loos said belly fat might be more harmful than fat stored in the hips because it more directly affects the central organs of the body.

"If you store fat around your belly and around your organs, it's going to affect your liver function, it's going to affect your heart function," Loos said.

Both Stamatakis and Loos said people with belly fat should take steps to improve their health, by eating right, exercising and cutting out other risk factors like smoking or drinking.

Unfortunately, weight loss efforts will not necessarily eliminate your spare tire. Weight loss tends to occur evenly across the entire body, and cannot be directed toward any exact store of fat, Loos noted.

"There's no way of specifically targeting that belly fat," Loos said. "Even exercises like doing sit ups are not going to specifically help you lose fat in your belly."

(Source: HealthDay News)

Understanding malaria with mathematics

Mathematical formulas that model how deadly mosquito-borne diseases spread can help medical researchers accurately predict how real-life outbreaks develop and find countermeasures.

Malaria is just one of many potentially fatal illnesses that spread through the same mechanism: mosquitoes draw blood from infected humans during blood meals then inject that infection into other humans during later meals. In 2015, the World Health Organization estimated that about 214 million people in the world contracted malaria, killing nearly half a million.

For just over a century, epidemiologists have used increasingly complex and accurate mathematical models to try to predict how diseases such as malaria spread. Now, Malaysian computer scientists are designing a 'generic mosquito model' that promises to improve the way medical authorities can track the spread of many types of epidemics.

The researchers liken what they call the 'random walks' of mosquito and human populations moving through space and time to a large-scale form of Brownian motion, a physics term that describes the random movement of tiny solid particles suspended in a fluid. The collection of formulas they used to model these random walks is described as a 'spatio-temporal' model because it incorporates the space- and time-related movements of mosquitos and humans.

Using the formulas, the team modelled predictions of the spread and density of malaria over time in four districts in Sarawak, Malaysia using more than a dozen variables ranging from diffusion times for insects and humans, to how long a mosquito took to bite someone. They then compared the models with the actual spread of the disease as documented by medical authorities. They found the model to be extremely accurate in two districts and slightly less so but still useful in the other two.

The research team has tested the generic model with malaria, but say it should also apply to other serious mosquito-borne illnesses that include dengue, yellow fever, filariasis, Japanese encephalitis and the Zika virus. Mosquitoes spread each of these diseases while moving randomly through time and space, infecting humans that are doing much the same thing.

Mathematical models based on understandings of these time and space factors, and a disease's host and pathogens, can be used to forecast the spread and prevalence of infections. They can also help to analyse control measures, such as vaccinations or mosquito nets, to find out which ones best control a particular disease's spread.

The results of this study are encouraging, and the researchers say they will now test their model further on other diseases, beginning with dengue fever. They also plan to refine two elements of the model: a module that accounts for spacing between disease subjects and another that can be used to help identify which measures best control particular diseases.

(Source: ScienceDaily)



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10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

1 Bill Gates barred his kids from using cell phones until they were 14.
“We don’t have cellphones at the table when we are having a meal, we didn’t give our kids cellphones until they were 14 and they complained other kids got them earlier,” revealed Microsoft’s founder in a recent interview.

2 Three Pixel phones could be launched in 2017, all packing Snapdragon 835 CPUs.
The Android Open Source Project reveals new information about Google’s new Pixel phones. The details have been uncovered in the code and confirm Google is working on three phones that are codenamed Walleye, Muskier, and Taimen.

3 Spotify could be building its own wearable device.
Spotify has posted a job listing for a “Sr Project Manager – Hardware” on its site. According to the listing, Spotify is looking for someone who would be in charge of delivering hardware from Spotify to “new and existing customers.”

4 Sony is now getting ready to start selling other two new mid-range smartphones stateside - the Xperia XA1 and Xperia L1.

5 Samsung Display is expected to start the production and shipments of OLED panels for the iPhone 8 without any delays by the end of this month, according to The Bell.

6 A job posting reveals Blizzard might be working on a new mobile game.
According to a job posting on the company’s website, it’s looking for Software Engineer to work on some tools for game developers.

7 Siri can now read out your WhatsApp messages when asked.
A new update for the iOS version of the popular messaging app is rolling out now, expanding it’s with the AI assistant by allowing it to read out WhatsApp texts when asked.

8 Analyst: Samsung to sell 50M Galaxy S8 units this year with the larger S8+ taking 53.9% of sales.
An analyst from Yuanta Securities says that he expects 50.4 million units of the flagship models to be sold globally this year.

9 Huawei admits using different memory chips on the P10 and P10 Plus, blames shortage in supply chain.
Basically, the sequential read speeds of the P10 and P10 Plus significantly vary between 700MBps and lower than 300MBps.
The reason behind these discrepancies is the fact that Huawei had used different combinations of LPDDR3 or LPDDR4 for the RAM, as well as eMMC 5.1, UFS 2.0 or UFS 2.1 for the storage.

10 Google Maps now automatically translates local reviews into your preferred language.
Google has pushed out a new update to its Maps app. The update brings along a major feature: the app now automatically translates local reviews into the language you’ve set on your device.

New cyber-security research Centre launches at Cardiff University

Cardiff University and Airbus have launched a new Centre to provide world-leading research into cyber-security.

As the first Centre of its kind in Europe, the Centre of Excellence in Cyber-Security Analytics will be located at Cardiff University’s School of Computer Science and Informatics.



aim to protect IT networks, intellectual property and critical national infrastructure.

In an attempt to fill the skills gap that currently exists in the cyber-security field, the Centre will also develop industry-relevant academic programs in cyber-security.

Together, Cardiff University and Airbus have received more than £1 million of funding for research into cyber-security including studying risks to the systems that underpin critical national infrastructure.

“Cyber-security analytics is about improving our resilience to cyber-attacks through data modelling to detect and block malicious behavior before it causes its full impact, but also about understanding what motivates the behavior, what its likely impact will be, and how to communicate security alerts among decision and policy-makers,” said Dr Pete Burnap, director of the Centre of Excellence for Cyber-Security Analytics.

(Source: scmagazineuk)

Alibaba founder: AI will cause people ‘more pain than happiness’

By Olivia Solon

Artificial intelligence and other technologies will cause people “more pain than happiness” over the next three decades, according to Jack Ma, the billionaire chairman and founder of Alibaba.

“Social conflicts in the next three decades will have an impact on all sorts of industries and walks of life,” said Ma, speaking at an entrepreneurship conference in China about the job disruptions that would be created by automation and the internet. A key social conflict will be the rise of artificial intelligence and longer life expectancy, which will lead to an aging workforce fighting for fewer jobs.

Ma, who is usually more optimistic in his presentations, issued the warning to encourage businesses to adapt or face problems in the future. He said that 15 years ago he gave hundreds of speeches warning about the impact of e-commerce on traditional retailers and few people listened because he wasn’t as well-known as he is now.



“Machines should only do what humans cannot,” he said. “Only in this way can we have the opportunities to keep machines as working partners with humans, rather than as replacements.”

Even so, Ma acknowledged that in

the future companies will likely be run by robots.

“Thirty years later, the Time magazine cover for the best CEO of the year very likely will be a robot,” he said. Robots can make calculations more quickly

and rationally than humans, Ma added, and won’t be swayed by emotions, for example by getting angry at competitors.

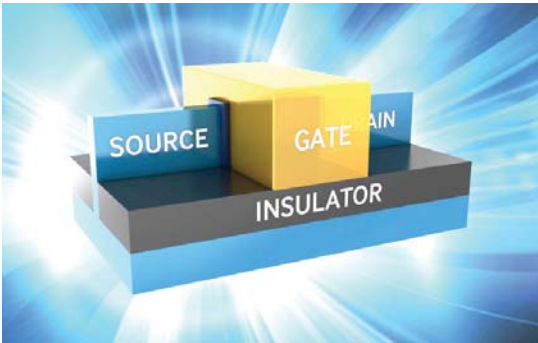
Leaders who don’t understand that cloud computing and artificial intelligence are essential for business should identify young people in their companies to explain it to them, he said.

His comments echo a number of studies suggesting that automation will eliminate jobs, including a Forrester study that suggested 6% of all jobs in the US would be eliminated by 2021. The job displacement will start with customer service representatives and eventually move to truck and taxi drivers, the report read.

Current technologies in this field include virtual assistants, such as Alexa, Cortana, Siri and Google Now, as well as chatbots and automated robotic systems. For now they are quite simple, but over the next five years they will become much better at making decisions on our behalf in more complex scenarios, which will enable mass adoption of breakthroughs, such as self-driving cars.

(Source: Guardian)

Samsung and Qualcomm in talks over Snapdragon 845 for the Galaxy S9



Samsung is already looking towards the future - the Galaxy S9. A report from Aju Business Daily states that Samsung Electronics and Qualcomm are in talks to develop the Snapdragon 845 chip that will power the 2018 S flagship.

Samsung is building the current Snapdragon 835 chipset on its 1st gen 10nm process, but the new one promises a 15% power reduction or a 10% increase in performance.

(Source: theinvestor)

LG X power2 to be launched in June



LG has revealed that the handset’s launch is set for “early June with a price tag of KRW 300,000 (around \$265).

It has a capacity of 4,500 mAh, which allows you to watch videos for around 15 hours or surf the web for 18 hours on a full charge, according to LG.

Some key specs of the X Power2 include octa-core 1.5GHz chipset, 5.5-inch HD display, 13MP/5MP camera combo, and Android Nougat.

(Source: etnews)

Waymo testing self-driving car ride service in Arizona



Alphabet Inc’s Waymo autonomous vehicle group will begin testing a self-driving car program for hundreds of families in Phoenix, Arizona and is buying 500 Chrysler minivans to do so, the companies said on Tuesday.

The vehicles include human operators from Waymo behind the wheel, in case intervention is required and to take feedback.

(Source: reuters)

Wikipedia co-founder launches Wikitribune to fight fake news

By Nick Summers

Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales hopes to tackle fake news with a journalism outfit of his own. Wikitribune will be free to access and use crowdfunding to hire experienced reporters. They’ll work alongside volunteers who can sub-edit articles, fact-check stories and suggest new topics for the site to pursue. “This will be the first time that professional and citizen journalists will work side-by-side as equals writing stories as they happen, editing them as they develop, and at all times backed by a community checking and rechecking all of the facts,” Wales said.

Wikitribune’s existence (and success) will depend on donations from people who believe in its mission and the journalism it’s producing. The site will cover traditional news beats, such as UK and international politics, as well as science, technology and specialist subjects chosen by subscribers. “If you take as an example the bitcoin community,” Wales said, “they’ve a very active and obsessed community. There’s a lot of news that comes



out in the field, and I think they’d love to be able to raise money to hire a journalist and put them on the bitcoin/blockchain beat.”

Wikitribune articles will include detailed sourcing and link out to full transcripts, video and audio recordings of interviews. Reader submissions will also need to be approved by a full-time editor before they appear on

the site. These two mechanisms will, Wales hopes, create a news culture that is both transparent and accurate, leveraging the expertise of reporters and the news gathering, fact-checking scale of the crowd. Controlling such a large group of people will be tricky, however.

Plenty of technology companies are trying to tackle the ‘fake news’ epidemic. YouTube is holding workshops in the UK to teach young people how to spot bogus stories. Google is showing fact-checkers such as PolitiFact and Snopes more prominently in search results. Facebook bought a bunch of full-page newspaper ads in Germany with basic reader fact-checking tips. Despite these efforts, the problem persists.

Wales thinks the answer is a new, better-funded and creatively organised newsroom. Joshua Benton, director of Harvard University’s Nieman Journalism Lab, isn’t so sure. “There are a variety of people who - if he does this right - will view it as a trusted platform,” he told the BBC.

(Source: engadget)

Ericsson makes expected hefty loss



Swedish telecom giant Ericsson reported a net loss of 10.9 billion kronor (\$1.2 billion) in the first quarter of 2017.

By comparison, the networking and telecommunications company reported a net income of 2.1 billion kronor in the first quarter of 2016.

The loss, which was bigger than analysts had expected, is largely explained by provisions, writedowns and restructuring costs.

In October 2016, Ericsson announced 3000 job cuts in Sweden, with significant staff reductions on its manufacturing sites in Borås and Kumla.

(Source: thelocal.se)

ABB, IBM team up on industrial artificial intelligence



ABB has sealed a collaboration agreement with International Business Machines Corp, the Swiss engineering company said on Tuesday, the latest step in its efforts to ramp up its presence in digital technology and the internet of things.

In a joint statement ABB said it would combine its digital offering, which gathers information from machinery, with IBM’s expertise in artificial intelligence featured in its Watson data analytics software. The two companies will jointly develop and sell new products.

(Source: reuters)

Hitachi, UK fund partner on \$1.8bn bid for Toshiba’s Swiss unit



Hitachi has made an acquisition proposal for Swiss smart meter maker Landis+Gyr, a Toshiba subsidiary, sources told The Nikkei. The offer, put forth with U.K. private equity firm CVC Capital Partners, is believed to be worth around 200 billion yen (\$1.82 billion).

The Swiss company is likely to be a target for other suitors as well.

Toshiba, together with the Innovation Network Corporation of Japan, purchased Landis in 2011 for \$2.3 billion. Toshiba and the public-private fund currently own 60% and 40% stakes, respectively.

(Source: nikkei)

Global warming blamed for record-breaking weather worldwide

Record-breaking weather events, especially heat waves but also downpours and droughts, can be linked to man-made global warming, a new study says.

"Our results suggest that the world isn't quite at the point where every record hot event has a detectable human fingerprint, but we are getting close," said study lead author Noah Diffenbaugh, a climate scientist at Stanford University.

It's the first research to look specifically at the link between record weather events of the past several decades and climate change. Diffenbaugh and his team found that in over 80% of the heat records — which included both record hot days and months — there was a clear-cut signal of global warming.

Man-made climate change, aka global warming, is caused by the burning of fossil fuels such as gas, coal and oil, which release greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO2) into the atmosphere. This extra CO2 causes temperatures of the atmosphere and oceans to rise, allows the atmosphere to hold more water vapor (which can add extra fuel to storms), and causes global sea levels to rise.

Diffenbaugh also found that record-breaking extremes of precipitation can be tied into global warming, but the signal wasn't as strong: For the driest and wettest events, human influence on the atmosphere has increased the odds about half of the area that has good data.



In those areas, the "odds of the extremes are greater with global warming than without it," he said. "One of the clearest signals that we do see is an increase in the odds of extreme dry events in the

tropics," he said.

■ Extreme weather attribution
The research also found that with the record low Arctic sea ice in 2012, "it would have been extremely unlikely to achieve

Man-made climate change, aka global warming, is caused by the burning of fossil fuels such as gas, coal and oil, which release greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO2) into the atmosphere.

Should polar bears be locked up in zoos?

Earlier this year, when SeaWorld announced that it would separate longtime polar bear companions Szenja and Snowflake so the latter could be shipped off to Pittsburgh to breed whether she wanted to or not, thousands asked the theme park not to do it. Unmoved, SeaWorld sent Snowflake on her way.

The pair had been together for 20 years. Is there any doubt that Szenja's heart was broken at the loss of her only companion? Maybe it just felt easier to give up and let go.

Polar bears are particularly ill-suited to life behind bars. This is a species that can thrive only in enormous Arctic expanses with vast open water — which no zoo can come close to providing. They need to roam and hunt and swim.

An Oxford University study found that typical polar bear enclosures are about one-millionth the size of their minimum home range in nature.

■ Polar bears

Polar bears are designed for the cold. Their thick fur prevents almost all heat loss. They are adept swimmers, and their forepaws act as large paddles, and their hind paws serve as rudders.



Mothers are fiercely protective of their cubs, and during the first months after cubs are born, mothers don't eat or drink. Their only purpose is to provide for their little ones.

Dozens of polar bears have died in U.S. zoos (not including those who died in utero), many far short of their expected life spans. The causes have ranged from fights with cagemates to bad reactions to anesthesia.

Some have perished in agony after eating debris thrown into their cages. One died after contracting the mosquito-borne West Nile virus, and another died of salmonella poisoning. Like the gorilla Harambe, one bear was shot and killed after a visitor climbed into the animal's cage.

Captive polar bears quickly develop abnormal and neurotic behavior in captivity, from swimming endless laps day and night to nonstop pacing. For those who are provided with some kind of natural substrate rather than just concrete, one can see the actual paw impressions in the soil where they step in the same spot over and over again.

Who can forget Gus, one of the polar bears in the Central Park Zoo, who started compulsively swimming figure eights in his pool for up to 12 hours a day, every day, for months? After his companion died, a depressed Gus nearly shut down. He was finally euthanized.

How can zoos justify continuing to imprison a species that requires drugs to mask the evidence of their unhappiness?

(Source: Newsweek)

Stubborn plastic may have finally met its match: the hungry wax worm

Here's a caterpillar that thinks plastic tastes fantastic. Scientists have discovered that the larvae of the wax moth will easily munch through a common plastic known as polyethylene, turning it into back into a useful compound found in all kinds of consumer products.

The findings, published in the journal Current Biology, reveal an unlikely ally in the fight to reduce and reuse the enormous amounts of plastic waste that humans produce every year.

Plastic, made from oil, is the product of fossil fuels. Roughly 92% of it falls into two main categories: polyethylene and polypropylene. According to the study authors, polyethylene is widely used for packaging and so makes up about two-fifths of the plastic product demand — in fact, more than a trillion plastic bags are used each year.

Some of that plastic is recycled, but not much — out of 33.25 million tons of plastic generated in 2014, just 9.5% in the United States was recycled, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. (An additional 15% was burned for energy, which is not the cleanest process, and a whopping 75.5% ended up in landfills.)

The problem is that such plastics are difficult to break down, study co-author Christopher J. Howe, a biochemist at

Cambridge University, said in an email. Polyethylene molecules have straight backbones of linked carbon atoms whose bonds are very stable. This means that plastic doesn't biodegrade easily in landfills, and it can form garbage patches in the ocean and pose deadly threats to marine wildlife.

Scientists have noticed a few modest instances of polyethylene biodegradation, but they're slow going.

Researchers got a liquid culture of *Penicillium simplicissimum* fungus to break down some polyethylene — but it took three months.

■ Producing ethylene glycol

A bacterium, *Nocardia asteroides*, took four to seven months. Both appeared to produce ethylene glycol, a compound used in all kinds of products, including brake fluid, paints, plastics and even cosmetics.

This new study of the wax moth, an insect that inhabits bee hives and other places, changes that. The discovery was something of a happy accident, Howe said: Lead author Federica Bertocchini, a developmental biologist at Institute of Biomedicine and Biotechnology of Cantabria in Spain, is a beekeeper as well as a scientist. It was Bertocchini who noticed that if hive material containing moth



larvae was wrapped in plastic bags, the caterpillars appeared to degrade tough plastic.

Could these little caterpillars really do something that few critters are known to do? To find out, the researchers set wax worms loose on a polyethylene film, watching holes appear after just 40 minutes — at an estimated rate of about 2.2 holes per worm per hour. And when the researchers put roughly 100 wax moth larvae on a commercial shopping bag, they ate a total

of 92 milligrams in about 12 hours.

Still, it was possible these wax worms were simply munching up material rather than actually digesting it into simpler products. So the scientists made a slurry of some worms and smeared the dissociated cells on polyethylene films. After 14 hours, the researchers found that 13% of the polyethylene mass had been lost — a degradation rate of 0.23 milligrams per square centimeter.

(Source: LAT)

PBI Offers Foreign Exchange Loans to Ind. & Production Units

POST BANK IRAN (PBI) will pay foreign exchange facilities and loans to industrial and production units working in the fields of IT (information technology) and ICT (communications and information technology).

Member of Board of Directors of the Bank Eng. Fallahfar announced the above statement and said: "To provide working capital of IT- and ICT-based production units, the bank offers foreign exchange loans top these economic enterprises."

Speaking at the 4th Nationwide Seminar of IT and ICT Managers, he said: "Given the contracts concluded between the Bank and National Development Fund of Iran (NDFI), giant steps were taken to provide working

capital of production units in the field of IT and ICT with fair and reasonable interest rate."

The bank has many customers across the provinces in the field of opening Letter of Credit (L/C, Visible and USANCE), he said, adding: "Fortunately, the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has allowed POST BANK IRAN in opening long-term Letter of Credit (L/C) to import relevant equipment and machinery."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he expounded on the credit policies of payment and stated: "Mechanizing retail banking, commissioning credit card to remove many problem facing microcredit in line with removal of bureaucracies, granting facilities and other services for offering to cus-

tomers are salient programs taken by the bank."

Granting these types of facilities will be allocated merely to the industrial and production units, he said, adding: "It is necessary to make effort for marketing plans with economic justifications in order to compete with others."

In the end, Member of Board of Directors of the Bank Eng. Fallahfar pointed to the consecutive supervision on the branch offices of the bank and said: "Effective supervision and monitoring measures have been taken in order to materialize most objectives of the bank in the current year named after resistance economy, production and job creation."

Weird clouds may have inspired 'The Scream': scientists

The psychedelic clouds in Edvard Munch's iconic "The Scream" have alternatively been interpreted as a metaphor for mental anguish or a literal depiction of volcanic fallout.

On Monday, scientists hypothesized that the Norwegian painter's inspiration may in fact have been rare clouds which form in cold places at high altitude.

The first version of "The Scream" was released in 1893. It depicts a dark humanlike figure clutching its head in apparent horror against the backdrop of a swirling, red-orange sky.

In 2004, American astronomers theorized that Munch had painted a sky brightly colored by particle pollution from the 1883 Krakatoa volcanic eruption.

But the new paper, presented at a meeting of the European Geosciences Union in Vienna, said he more likely depicted a rare sighting of "mother-of-pearl" clouds over Oslo.

A volcanic outburst does not account for the "waviness" of Munch's clouds, Helene Muri, a researcher at the University of Oslo, told journalists in Vienna.

Furthermore, volcano-tinted sunsets tend to be common for several years after an outburst, "whereas Munch's scary vision was seemingly a one-time experience, the way he described it in his journal," she said.

In his diary, Munch wrote of the sky turning suddenly blood red.

Mother-of-pearl or "nacreous" clouds, require unusual conditions to form -- very cold temperatures in the atmosphere, in a high altitude band of about 20-30 kilometers (12-19 miles).

They tend to appear at high latitudes in winter. Because they are thin, these clouds are typically not visible during daytime, but before sunrise or after sunset.

"We do know that there were mother-of-pearl clouds in the Oslo area in the late 19th century," said Muri.

At least one scientist documented the phenomenon and wrote "they are so beautiful you could believe you are in another world", she added.

Similar sightings of nacreous clouds over southeast Norway in 2014, and their striking resemblance to Munch's painting, is what sparked the latest research.

(Source: AFP)

Why people drink tomato juice on planes

Have you ever noticed why tomato juice is such a popular drink on planes?

There is a scientific reason behind it and it's all to do with the impact of cabin pressure on our senses. It's about 30 percent more difficult to detect sweet and salty tastes, according to a 2010 study by the Fraunhofer Institute for Building Physics in Germany.

In other words, at altitude, our sense of taste is dulled.

Business Insider spoke with Professor Charles Spence, Head of Crossmodal Research Laboratory at Oxford University and author of "Gastrophysics, The New Science of Eating," about the subject.

He said: "You see them shooting off the trolley here there any everywhere and when you do these surveys you find that there are about a quarter of people who will order a tomato juice or Bloody Mary in the air and would never order it on the ground."

"If you give people tomato juice on the ground and on the air and say 'well how does it taste different to you?' On the ground, it will tend to taste more earthy. Whereas up in the air people will often report that it taste a bit fresher a bit more acidic and is more liked as a result."

(Source: Business Insider)



Hundreds of meltwater streams found flowing across Antarctica

Huge swaths of Antarctica are awash in draining meltwater during the summer months, the first-ever continent-wide survey of meltwater shows.

Although past studies revealed that portions of Antarctica's Western Peninsula were melting at an alarming rate, most scientists believed the rest of the continent did not face extensive melting during Antarctica's ephemeral summer months.

"This is not in the future — this is widespread now, and has been for decades," lead author Jonathan Kingslake, a glaciologist at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, said in a statement. "I think most polar scientists have considered water moving across the surface of Antarctica to be extremely rare. But we found a lot of it, over very large areas."

This new evidence of continent-wide meltwater during summer (the Northern Hemisphere's winter) suggests that the entire continent could be more vulnerable to small rises in temperature that are likely to be seen in the coming decades due to climate change.

For the new survey, Kingslake and his colleagues went through historical catalogs of photos taken from military aircraft from 1947 onward, and from satellite imagery going as far back as 1973. The team found that a threaded network of 700 pools, ponds, channels, rivers and streams flowing across the ice fed outflows on all sides of the continent. Some of those flows are occurring at latitudes so far south that many scientists thought it was impossible for liquid water to flow there, the researchers reported.

(Source: Live Science)

"He who adopts greed as a habit devalues himself; he who discloses his hardship agrees to humiliation; and he who allows his tongue to overpower his soul debases the soul!"
Imam Ali (AS)

Correspond to your temperament, traditional medicine underlines

By Mehdi Mirghazanfari

Physiologist & traditional medicine specialist

The Iranian-Islamic traditional medicine (hereafter called traditional medicine) specialists have classified everything comprising all objects, materials, states and even events by their Mizaj (temperament) with regard to kinetic energy (warmness) and fluidity (humidity).

Accordingly, human beings' and animals' bodies, foods, and medicines also have a Mizaj. So without a through grasp of the Mizaj one can never fully appreciate the value of the traditional medicine.

■ Warmness, coldness



Once consumed or applied topically, food stuff or a materials which are warm (have a warm Mizaj) would raise the body temperature, lead to an increase in exuberance and energy level, boost speech speed, and accelerate thinking and mental process.

For instance pepper, cinnamon, and spicy foods are of warm Mizaj and consuming copious amounts would cause the body to overheat.

On the other hand consuming food stuff or drinks which are cold (have a cold Mizaj) such as Yogurt, sour foods, and lettuce would cause lethargy, drowsiness, fatigue, dizziness, decrease in learning capacity, and memory loss.

■ Wetness, dryness



From traditional medicine point of view wetness means flexibility, for example, when someone has a wet Mizaj it means that their body parts are more pliable, they are more prone to gain weight, have better skin, silky and smooth hair which would usually fall limp after styling it, and soft fingernails.

Flexibility is also traceable in the way they behave meaning they are flexible both physically and mentally since they can cope with problems with much less difficulty, rarely show dogged determination and stubbornness, and accept the situation more readily.

Therefore wetness does not mean being covered or saturated with water or other liquids. Some food items and drinks have wet Mizaj and consuming large quantities of such stuff would raise moist in human bodies. Water, lettuce, all dairy products, sour foods, citrus fruits, watermelon and in general all drinks and foods that have characteristics similar to that of water such as being colorless, odorless, tasteless and take up the shape of its container are considered as wet.

Dryness, on the contrary, is described by features such as stability, consistency, inflexibility, and maintaining the current condition. Dry materials are likely to cause dryness in the body, for example, the skin or mucous membrane would become scaly which result in cracking and bleeding with a gentle pressure. They also cause the hair to get dry as well. Constipation and trouble emptying bowls are also common among those who have dry Mizaj.

Mentally speaking they are inflexible, obstinate, and reluctant to budge an inch.

■ Correspond to your Mizaj



Human bodies, similar to other components of the universe have Mizaj. Actually Mizaj is a spectrum and everything in the universe, regarding its humidity and warmness, is placed somewhere across the spectrum. Therefore, Mizaj is a relative concept. One person's Mizaj can be warmer, colder, wetter, or dryer compared to another person's.

Human health depends on the maintenance of the Mizaj in a balanced state and one of the best ways is to eat and drink in accordance with the Mizaj which contribute to both healthy physical and mental functions.

If someone who has a warm Mizaj consume too much food items with warm Mizaj would reveal symptoms such as arrhythmia, insomnia, constipation, rage and irritability and in other words the person suffers mal-temperament or Sou-e Mizaj which could somehow lead to illness. This is true for other people with other Mizaj as well.

Recognizing and corresponding to your Mizaj would lead to maximum health.



Have an idea?
Be in touch!

lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com

INTERVIEW

By Setareh Behroozi

"One should do cooking with love since it is a daily work of art. Maybe one out of a thousand is a professional painter but most of people do cooking," Chef Saman Golriz said during an interview with the Tehran Times.

"Due to its repetition, you simply ignore cooking as an art. What is the difference between making a sculpture and cooking Qormeh-Sabzi? The difference is that the latter is edible so you forget to regard it as a piece of art," he said.

Golriz said that he has recently received a cookbook wrote by Surrealist Spanish artist Salvador Dali "Les Dinners de Gala".

"As a surrealist painter he understood that cooking is not separated from art and life so he wrote a book with his wife," he added.

■ Cooks are happier, more hopeful!

"I am a professional cook for 25 years and I do believe that those who cook are happier and more hopeful during their life. They don't get tired of life and do love it," he said.

"The sense of responsibility about life begins with cooking," he said.

The way of cooking is never separable from the way of your life and lifestyle. There is a difference between a person who cooks and who do not cook and you understand it when you travel with someone or live with somebody, he added.

■ The way you cook, the way you live

The lifestyle of different people also affects the way they cook as well.

"Some people should always eat fast and cold food or eat their meal in restaurants due to their occupational status. Some do not eat certain ingredients like meat due to the geographical characteristic of the place they live in," he said.

The background and even the birthplace of a person has an impact on his or her desired tastes and the way of cooking, he added.

"The daily life of people is intertwined with what they eat. It is an important fact which should not be ignored," he added.



"Disregarding these simple facts leads to diabetes, obesity, and other diseases we encounter these days," he said.

In his opinion, Abgusht - an Iranian mutton soup thickened with chickpeas - is not a suitable meal for a person who sits in front of computer all day long!

"May be cooked vegetable and some protein food groups is preferred for this person," he said.

He named hospitality and warm hosting as the main characteristic of the Iranian culture. Golriz called it as 'sociology of hospitality'.

"In their cooking, Iranian families always consider extra guests in their meals," he said.

How to make mayonnaise in few seconds!



■ What you need:

*A tall and narrow jar glass jar with an opening that's just wide enough to accommodate your stick blender

*An immersion blender. It must absolutely be a stick blender

Ingredients:

*One whole large or extra-large fresh egg / add an extra one

*One cup extra light tasting olive oil, not full flavor

*2-3 teaspoon of lemon or lime juice/ any vinegar

*A generous pinch of salt

*Any flavor like grainy mustard, minced garlic, fresh herbs and pepper is optional!

Let the fresh egg comes to room temperature. Break it into jar and add the lime juice, salt and other flavorings. Pour in one full cup of light tasting olive oil. Now let that sit for a few seconds.

Insert your immersion blender and push it all the way to the bottom of the jar. Push the power button and do not move the blender for a full 20 seconds.

Almost instantly, the magic will start to happen.. This is when you want to slowly start raising the blender until you get to the very top. Continue blending for just a few more seconds.

And there you have it. Beautiful, creamy, tasty and healthy mayo!

(Source: The Healthy Foodie)

What does Iranian Kurd women wear?



Iranian kurds mainly live in Kordestan Province. It is 28,817 km² in are and is located in the west of Iran. It bounds by Iraq on the west, the province of West Azarbaijan to its north, Zanjan to the northeast, Hamedan to the east and Kermanshah to the south.

The major activities of the inhabitants are agriculture and modern livestock farming. Wheat, barley, grains and fruits are the major agricultural products. The chemical, metal, textile, leather and food industries are the main industrial activities in this province.

The costume of Iranian Kurd women

is composed of gowns, base layers, head covers, and some ornaments.

Jafi: A loose trousers, like what men wear.

Kolonjeh: A vest either made from plain fabric, velveteen fabric, or sequin fabric.

Gown: This is usually the dazzling masterpiece of the outfit. The dress is ornamented with many beads, sequins, or both. The embroidery can be the same color as the fabric, or multicolored to create a bright dress.

Shawl: A beautiful colorful piece of cloth, which is used as waistband.

Kelaw: A scullcap, which is decorated with colorful sequins.



LEFT TO SAY

To: Working moms

Subject: Choose the right path and be determined!

A working mom can always be a case of sympathy, regret and blast for everyone who is aware of her career! A huge number of comments offer to you, while you are not in mood of hearing a word.

An interesting thing you find once you return to work after your maternity leave is that there are several people who feel more responsible about the poor baby you sacrifice for your work, they are worried and you just can't understand them!

However, just take a deep breath and seclude yourself for some minutes and think. Does your work make you better and happier? Does your payment makes your life easier?

A happy and content mother is a great model for her baby. In fact, it is not the matter of working, it is the matter of life! And even stay-at-home mothers are not an exception! As a mother, you should learn to assess your life every now and then, choose the right path and be determined!



#IRANIANLIFESTYLE



© Instagram/ Fatemeh Alizadeh

Trays of fruit leather are put on the wall to be dried. Some Iranian families traditionally make fruit leather during spring and summer for their personal consumption.

Turkish top court rejects opposition's appeal against referendum results

Turkey's highest administrative court has declined to hear an appeal by the main opposition party against the acceptance of unstamped ballots in the recent referendum on expanding President Tayyip Erdogan's powers.

On Tuesday, the Council of State, which handles complaints and appeals against state and public institutions, said it had no jurisdiction over the case.

According to the state-run Anadolu news agency, the court's decision was taken on a majority of votes, but the Council of State was not immediately available for comment.

In the April 16 referendum, the "Yes" campaign won over 51 percent of the vote, while the "No" campaign gained nearly 49 percent.

The Republican People's Party's (CHP) lawyer Atilla Kart formally submitted the petition with the Council of State on Friday afternoon over the last-minute decision by the High Electoral Board (YSK) to accept unstamped ballots as valid.

The news comes after Turkey's highest electoral authority, the YSK, on Wednesday rejected an appeal, which had been made by the main opposition parties over allegations of vote-rigging.



Earlier, CHP's deputy leader, Bulent Tezcan, said the party would file a case urging the annulment of the YSK's decision to allow the rule change.

He had earlier called for the outcome of the referendum not to be finalized until the case was concluded. The results are expected to be confirmed on April 27 or 28.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim

slammed the moves as "futile" and said there was "no point in wasting more of everyone's time."

Yildirim told reporters in Ankara that it was "not the democratic way to go to court, to make complaints to fix the people's decision."

The CHP is also assessing whether to take the appeal against the referendum result to the European Court of Human

Rights (ECHR).

On Thursday, Turkey's Justice Minister Bekir Bozdogan said the ECHR has no jurisdiction to rule on appeals against the result of the recent referendum in the country.

Major Turkish cities have been the scene of anti-government protests since the results of the referendum have been announced.

Supporters of the fresh constitutional changes argue that they will modernize the country, but opponents fear a possible authoritarian rule.

Under the new system, the office and position of prime minister would be scrapped in Turkey and the president would be granted executive powers to directly appoint top public officials, including ministers, and assign one or several vice presidents.

Under the amendments, Turkey's next presidential and parliamentary elections will be held simultaneously on November 3, 2019 and the head of state would have a five-year tenure, for a maximum of two terms.

The constitutional changes would mean that Erdogan could stay in power for another two terms until 2029.

(Source: Hurriyet)

3 more people killed in Venezuela unrest

Three more people have been killed in western Venezuela as protests continue against embattled President Nicolas Maduro.

The deaths occurred on Monday, bringing the death toll since the eruption of anti-Maduro protests three weeks ago up to 24, officials said.

Two of the victims died in the city of Merida. At least one of them was a government supporter.

Public defender Tarek William Saab said several other people were seriously wounded on Monday and were "between life and death."

Referring to the government supporter killed in Merida, Saab said he "was demonstrating peacefully when he apparently received a gunshot." It was not clear who shot him.

The third victim was killed in the nearby town of Barinas, a source in the prosecutor's office said, without explaining whether he had been an anti-Maduro protester or a pro-government activist.

But an opposition party, Justice First, said the man had been participating in an anti-Maduro protest and had been targeted by armed pro-government groups.

Large-scale protests were held against Maduro on Monday, when demonstrators blocked major roads in the country. While most of the demonstrations were peaceful, there were instances of violence, including the three deaths, too.



In the capital, Caracas, riot police fired tear gas at stone-throwing protesters.

Massive anti-government rallies have been held in Venezuela in recent weeks. They began after Venezuela's Supreme Court stripped the opposition-controlled parliament of its powers.

That move unleashed long-simmering anger and sparked the fiercest protests against him in three years. While that decision was later revoked under pressure, protests have only gained momentum.

The opposition, which blames Maduro, the army, and the national guard for the recent violence in the country, has called for an early presidential election. Currently, a presidential election is scheduled to take place in Venezuela next year.

Maduro claims that the protests are incited by the Unites States to remove him from power.

(Source: Daily Star)

Palestinian hunger striker's health critically worsening: committee

Palestinian leader Marwan Barghout's health conditions have been critically deteriorating during the past week after he joined a hunger strike with over a thousand other Palestinian inmates in Israeli jails, a Palestinian committee says.

Head of the Palestinian Committee of Prisoners' Affairs Issa Qaraqe announced the news on Monday, adding that Barghouti, 57, was suffering from a severe drop in blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

Since April 17, over 1,500 Palestinian prisoners from across the political spectrum have gone on a mass hunger strike, initially called for by Barghouti, in protest at the conditions of Israeli prisons.

The Israeli regime has sentenced Barghouti, a top leader of the Palestinian Fatah Movement, to serve five life terms in prison over his role in the Palestinian Intifada (Uprising). The Israel Prison Service (IPS) has placed him in solitary confinement following the initiation of the strike eight days ago.

On last Wednesday, IPS spokesman Assaf Librati announced that Barghouti had been transferred from Hadarim Prison to the Kishon Prison, near Haifa.

The IPS has continued to punish the hunger-striking detainees by placing them in solitary confinement and denying family and legal visits by their lawyers since the strike began on Palestinian Prisoners' Day.

Earlier on Monday, dozens of fami-



lies and supporters of hunger strikers marched through the streets of the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, to express their dissent against the IPS authorities and to express their solidarity with the inmates and praise their strike. Dozens of others flew kites and balloons, carrying photos of Palestinian inmates, in the vicinity of the Ofer prison in the West Bank.

"This activity was organized near the (Israeli) occupation's Ofer prison to send a message to prisoners telling them that our people are supporting them," said one of the organizers.

Israeli prisons hold around 6,500 Palestinians, including 300 minors. Some of the inmates are held under Tel Aviv's policy of administrative detention, which enables confinement without charge.

Palestinian inmates regularly stage hunger strikes in protest at the administrative detention policy and their harsh prison conditions.

(Source: Press TV)

Trump tells UN to prepare new North Korea sanctions

U.S. President Donald Trump has said the UN Security Council must be prepared to impose new sanctions on North Korea.

Trump met the 15 UN Security Council ambassadors, including from China and Russia, at the White House on Monday.

"The council must be prepared to impose additional and stronger sanctions on North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile programs," he said.

U.S. officials have told Reuters tougher sanctions could include an oil embargo, banning North Korea's airline, intercepting cargo ships and punishing Chinese banks and other foreign doing business with Pyongyang.

Trump said North Korea "is a real threat to the world".

"North Korea is a big world problem and it's a problem that we have to finally solve," he said. "People put blindfolds on for decades and now it's time to solve the problem."

The comments came as Japan conducted exercises

with a U.S. aircraft carrier strike group headed for Korean waters.

Angered by the approach of the USS Carl Vinson carrier group, a defiant North Korea, which has carried out nuclear and missile tests in defiance of successive rounds of UN sanctions, said the deployment was "an extremely dangerous act by those who plan a nuclear war to invade".

"The United States should not run amok and should consider carefully any catastrophic consequence from its foolish military provocative act," Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party, said in a commentary.

South Korean and U.S. officials have feared for some time that a sixth North Korean nuclear test could be imminent and speculation has grown that this, or another missile test, could coincide with the 85th anniversary of the foundation of North Korea's army on Tuesday.

But South Korean defense officials said no suspicious

moves by North Korea were detected on Tuesday morning.

■ Tokyo meeting

Trump has vowed to prevent North Korea from being able to hit the United States with a nuclear missile and has said all options are on the table, including a military strike, although officials say tougher sanctions are the preferred route.

Envoys on the North Korean nuclear issue from the United States, South Korea and Japan are meeting in the Japanese capital, Tokyo, on Tuesday.

Al Jazeera's Scott Heidler, reporting from Tokyo, said no policy change announcements are expected from the meeting, which is an opportunity for the three countries to plan and coordinate their response to any potential action by North Korea.

"It's not unprecedented that they sit down like this, but obviously with this current situation, it's much more important," he said.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Turkey targets Kurdish fighters in Iraq and Syria

Al Jazeera's Hashem Ahebarra, reporting from Gaziantep on the Turkey-Syria border, said the air strikes come at a moment of strained ties between Turkey and Iraq.

"The Turkish ministry says the air strikes were precise and successful. The Turkish military tipped up its campaign against the PKK on the border area and said it killed a dozen PKK fighters in the past days."

Turkey sent tanks into the town of

Bashiqa in northern Iraq in 2015, saying it was providing military assistance and training for the Peshmerga fighters against ISIL, Ahebarra explained.

"The Iraqi government, on the other hand, has been asking the Turkish government to pull out the tanks threatening more confrontations," he added.

The PKK is designated a "terrorist group" by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

U.S. review of nuclear deal contrary to its spirit, words: Iran



Araqchi also said that talks are underway for purchase of 950 tons of yellow cake from Kazakhstan.

"Consultations for purchase of 950 tons of yellow cake from Kazakhstan are not yet over and will continue," Araqchi said ahead of the joint commission.

Iraqi forces liberate largest neighborhood in western Mosul

Iraqi forces have launched an operation from three directions to liberate Hatra. During the battles, the volunteer fighters found a cache of weapons and equipment north of the city, which lies to the south of Mosul.

Hatra is home to a UNESCO World Heritage site of the same name that was destroyed by Daesh.

In another development, Iraq's Federal Police Forces said on Tuesday that some 260,000 civilians have been freed from the clutches of Daesh in the Old City.

Lieutenant General Raed Shaker Jawdat said Daesh was using the civilians as human shields there.

Iraqi army soldiers and pro-government popular fighters have made sweeping gains against the Takfiri elements since launching the operation to retake Mosul.

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

(Source: Press TV)

Broken politics and a fragile world economy

Smart economic policy can still help increase long-term growth -- but it requires deliberate intelligent action of the kind that the new politics makes far more difficult.

There are no quick fixes. Promote innovation. Add to human capital by improving schools and widening access to higher education. Create programs that help workers relocate across regions and industries. Build well-chosen infrastructure. Encourage competition. All these things take years to yield benefits. Patience is the watchword -- and populism is, above all, impatient.

One more thing. Persistent tepid growth is especially difficult for central banks, because it implies correspondingly low interest rates. In the U.S., the normal interest rate -- the one expected to prevail at full employment -- used to be roughly 4 percent. Today it might be 2 percent or less. This means the Federal Reserve will have less room to cut interest rates when the next recession hits. It makes macroeconomic stability harder to achieve. The same logic applies in most other advanced economies.

In the future, either central banks will have to resort to unconventional measures more often or fiscal policy will have to shoulder more of the burden of managing aggregate demand. In either case, economies will have greater need of competent policy makers, trusted by voters and insulated from the turbulence of daily politics. Again, populism pushes the other way.

It's good that the global economy is gathering momentum. But with politics this broken, don't expect miracles.

(Source: Bloomberg)

What the U.S. State Department can learn from the musical 'Hamilton'

This wait-for-the-boss-to-speak-first mindset applies all the way to the bottom of the org chart. Acting officials are loath to initiate new programs or bring on new staff, preferring to passively hold down the fort until their new political-appointed boss arrives. Same for the bureaucracy below those in "acting" positions, until you have an organization of some 70,000 people waiting for someone else to make the first move. One diplomat explained the early weeks of no press briefings at State were particularly troublesome, since they're vital for U.S. officials abroad, who listen in for cues on shifts in policy happening inside their own organization.

When the expected prime mover is a secretary of state who appears to lack initiative, the agency has no sense of urgency. The idea promoted by some in the media that Tillerson is a general with a dwindling number of troops to lead seems to have it backwards.

If Tillerson remains a mostly passive head of State, there exists room for those below him to fill some of the void in foreign policy niches, perhaps by pushing forward issues Tillerson may wish to embrace, or by taking the lead on the inevitable restructuring budget cuts will compel, instead of sitting around the cafeteria.

What State's diplomats and civil servants need to try is laid out in the opening lyrics of Hamilton: "The ten-dollar Founding Father without a father got a lot farther by working a lot harder, by being a lot smarter, by being a self-starter ..."

A lesson for State? It may be worth a try, because absent those efforts by Alexander Hamilton, it could have been Aaron Burr today on the ten dollar bill.

(Source: Reuters)

Netanyahu cancels meeting with German minister after dispute

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cancelled talks on Tuesday with German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel after the visiting diplomat declined to call off meetings with rights groups critical of Israel's government, an official said.

The Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed the meeting was cancelled after Gabriel decided to go ahead with talks with Israeli rights groups Breaking The Silence and B'Tselem.

(Source: AFP)



Serena fires back at Nastase for ‘racist’ comments

Serena Williams on Monday called the alleged comments about her unborn child made by former world number one Ilie Nastase “racist” and applauded the International Tennis Federation for launching a probe into the remarks.

Former tennis bad boy Nastase, who won two grand slam titles in the 1970s, was quoted by Romanian and some British media as saying in response to William’s pregnancy announcement: “Let’s see what color it has. Chocolate with milk?”



“It disappoints me to know we live in a society where people like Ilie Nastase can make such racist comments towards myself and unborn child, and sexist comments against my peers,” the women’s world number one wrote on her Instagram account.

“I am not afraid unlike you. You see, I am no coward. Does my sassiness upset you? Why are you beset with gloom? You may shoot me with your words ... you may try to kill me with your hatefulness, but still like air I will rise.”

It would not be the first time Williams has been stung by racism as player.

The world number one boycotted the Indian Wells tournament for 14 years after she and sister Venus and her family claimed they were victims of racial taunts while Serena played in the 2001 final.

Nastase, 70, has been provisionally banned from all International Tennis Federation (ITF) events following his verbal abuse of British players last weekend in his role as Romanian Fed Cup captain.

Williams thanked the ITF and said they would have her full support as they investigated the matter.

“(The investigation) is ongoing. At this point, one of the principles that is important is that we want a rigorous process that is fair,” ITF President David Haggerty said on Monday.

“We will also hear Nastase’s side of the argument. It will be a thorough process conducted in an efficient manner. I do not think you will be hearing any final decisions in the next two weeks.”

British captain Anne Keothavong, who said she was made to feel “uncomfortable” by comments made by Nastase at the official pre-match dinner, said the abuse during play had been unacceptable.

“We expected a patriotic crowd for the Romanian team but we don’t expect abusive language to be used ... what he said directed to both Johanna (Konta) and myself is ... language that is not appropriate for anyone to speak to any other human,” she said.

Konta was reduced to tears at one stage.

(Source: Reuters)

Maria Sharapova: Stuttgart opponent Roberta Vinci questions wildcard

Maria Sharapova’s first opponent following her 15-month doping ban has questioned the decision to give the Russian wildcards on the WTA Tour.

Sharapova plays Italy’s Roberta Vinci in the first round of the Porsche Grand Prix in Stuttgart on Wednesday.



The 30-year-old’s wildcard entry has already been called “disrespectful” by ex-world number one Caroline Wozniacki.

“I don’t agree about the wildcard here and about the wildcard in Rome and the other tournaments,” said Vinci, 34.

Sharapova was given a two-year ban last year, backdated to 26 January 2016, after testing positive for heart disease drug meldonium at the Australian Open.

Her suspension was reduced to 15 months in October, following her appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Sharapova will also receive wildcards for upcoming tournaments in Madrid and Rome.

World number 36 Vinci added: “She made her mistakes for sure, but she paid and I think she can return to play - but without any wildcards.” Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland, who could meet Sharapova in the second round in Stuttgart, has also been among those to question the treatment of the former world number one, saying she should not be invited to Grand Slams.

Those views were met with a scathing response by Sharapova’s agent Max Eisenbud, who labelled Radwanska, 28, and 26-year-old Wozniacki of Denmark “journeyman” rivals who wanted to prevent the Russian playing at next month’s French Open because it is their “last chance to win a Slam”.

Sharapova, twice a winner at the French Open, is unranked and will require a wildcard to compete at Roland Garros when the tournament starts next month, with France’s tennis federation yet to announce its decision.

(Source: BBC)

Murray ready to work overtime in Barcelona to stay at top

World number one Andy Murray returns to the Barcelona clay courts that launched his career this week as he puts in some overtime ahead of the French Open.

Murray, who played and lost his first professional match as a 17-year-old at the tournament in 2005, against Jan Hernych, took a late entry into the Barcelona Open after an early defeat to Spain’s Albert Ramos-Vinolas in Monte Carlo last week.

While giving him some crucial match time on a surface he has grown to love, it also offers the 29-year-old the chance to consolidate his position at the top of the ATP rankings.

Murray accumulated a barrel-load of ranking points during last season’s claycourt swing, winning the Rome Masters and reaching the French Open final, where he lost to Novak Djokovic.

With those points to defend and the effects of an elbow injury still lingering, Murray knows the pressure is on to keep the number one ranking he secured in November.

“I hope to stay there for a long time, but it’s hard,” Murray, who spent two years at the Sanchez-Casal Academy in Barcelona as a junior, told the ATP’s website.

“It took me 12 years to get there, and the physical and mental effort it took to do it last year was enormous. It’s not easy to stay there, but I hope I can.

“It’s always hard to maintain your ranking at the top of the game. A lot of the young ones are starting to play better and better, so it’s going to be tough.”

Surprisingly, Murray’s first ATP title on the red dirt did not arrive until 2015 in Munich. He quickly followed that by beating king of clay Rafael Nadal in the Madrid final.

Last year was even better, and he won



18 of his 21 matches during the European claycourt season.

The transition from the hardcourts to the clay can still be tricky though, even for a player now so at home on the surface.

“The best way to adapt to new surfaces [is] playing naturally against the best players in the world,” he said.

Stepping back out on the Barcelona clay for the first time since 2012 is also something of a trip down memory lane for Murray.

“I have great memories, not only from training and living here, but also because I played my first professional match on one of these courts and I remember it well,” he said.

“The last time I came here I hadn’t won a claycourt tournament, nor been in big finals, nor beaten some of the best players on this surface. But in the past few years I’ve had great wins against Rafa (Nadal) and Novak (Djokovic).”

The top seed will face Australian Bernard Tomic on Wednesday.

(Source: Reuters)

Ex-heptathlete to get Beijing Olympic bronze upgrade



Britain’s Kelly Sotherton is set to be upgraded to an Olympic bronze medal for the second time in five months after retrospective drug tests.

Russian Tatyana Chernova has been stripped of the heptathlon bronze she won at Beijing in 2008 after testing positive for a steroid.

Sotherton won heptathlon bronze in 2004 and had already been moved to third in the Beijing 4x400m relay after Belarus and Russia’s disqualification.

She was fifth in the 2008 heptathlon.

However, the 40-year-old has now climbed to third after the previously announced doping ban of Ukrainian Lyudmila Blonska and now Chernova.

Sotherton retired five years ago after failing to recover from a back problem in time to qualify for the heptathlon at London 2012.

After finding out she was to become a three-time Olympic medallist, Sotherton posted an emotional video

on social media showing her reaction.

“Yes I had tears. Happy ones this time,” she said.

Sotherton’s compatriot, Jessica Ennis-Hill, belatedly won the 2011 World heptathlon title last year when Chernova was similarly stripped of gold for doping.

Former UK Athletics performance director Dave Collins, who oversaw the 2008 Games, said that British athletes receiving their medals was an “essential step for the sport”.

Collins’ contract was not renewed after Britain fell one short of their medal target in Beijing.

“It’s great to see but clearly it’s a disappointment they didn’t get their day in the sun,” he said.

“It’s great to see the teams getting recognition late, because it’s better late than never. But by gosh, it would have been a lot better at the time.”

(Source: BBC)

Arsenal manager planning transfer targets for next season



Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger says he is working on transfer targets for next season, despite no confirmation that he will be staying with the club.

Wenger is out of contract at the end of the season and has been offered a new two-year deal, although he is yet to announce whether he will continue. “I work until the last day of the season for the present and future,” said the 67-year-old.

“Transfer targets are the future of the club and are very important.”

He added: “That (my future) is secondary, what is important is the future of the club.”

Wenger said in February that he would decide on a new deal in March or April and later revealed “I know what I will do” and “you will soon know”.

However, no announcement has yet been made as Arsenal, sixth in the league, challenge to finish in the top

four to secure a Champions League berth - during Wenger’s 21 years as manager, Arsenal have not finished outside the top four in the Premier League.

The Gunners have, however, reached the FA Cup final after beating Manchester City at Wembley on Sunday.

When asked about if there was an update on his future, when he would reveal his decision or whether events in the rest of the season would have an influence, Wenger said: “It’s a triple no.”

He also played down the prospect of striker Olivier Giroud leaving after the France international, who signed a new deal with the Gunners in January, was linked with Marseille.

“I had no approach from Marseille and we want to keep Olivier Giroud at the club,” said Wenger.

(Source: BBC)

Notes found by ex-NFL star Hernandez’s body turned over to family

Three handwritten notes found by the body of former New England Patriots star Aaron Hernandez following his suicide in a Massachusetts prison cell last week were handed over to his family on Monday, an official said.

The order by a state judge in New Bedford, Massachusetts, to turn over the notes to the former National Football League player’s family came on the same day as Hernandez’s funeral, which was held in his hometown of Bristol, Connecticut, a spokesman for the Worcester County district attorney’s office said.

Some of the notes “could be considered suicide notes,” Daniel Bennett, Massachusetts’ secretary of public safety, told reporters.

The notes, found near a Bible, were handed over in full, the district attorney’s spokesman said. Officials have not released the notes publicly or provided details on their contents.

Hernandez was found hanged by a bed sheet in prison last Wednesday in what Massachusetts officials have ruled a suicide. Hernandez had been a rising



star with a \$41 million NFL contract when he was arrested in June 2013 and charged with murdering an acquaintance in an industrial park not far from the Patriots’ stadium.

He was serving a sentence of life in prison without possibility of parole after being found guilty of that murder when he hanged himself, according to state officials. Hernandez’s death occurred just days after his acquittal of a separate 2012 double murder.

“We wish to say goodbye to Aaron in a private ceremony and thank everyone in advance for affording us a measure of privacy during this difficult time,” the family said in a statement ahead of the funeral. The lawyer who successfully defended the 27-year-old former athlete in the double-murder trial has vowed to conduct his own investigation into the circumstances of Hernandez’s death at the Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center in Lancaster, Massachusetts, west of Boston.

(Source: Reuters)

Ahmadzadeh: Iran are aiming for Beach Soccer World Cup semis

The scorer of 17 goals in as many games on the big stage, he admitted to being "astonished" at that figure, as he explained in an interview with FIFA.com: "It makes me want to kick on and shine at the next World Cup and to score even more goals. I've got the experience to make that happen."

Recalling his happiest world finals memory to date, he said: "Tahiti [2013] was the tournament I've enjoyed the most so far. We reached the last eight for the very first time and I had a big part to play in that success."

Ahmadzadeh has seen enough and learned enough along the way to gauge how far Iran have come in recent times: "We were just amateurs 11 years ago. But in the last five years professional players have come into the Iran team and we've played a lot of games against other top-level national sides."

"When we went to Tahiti, we lacked experience and our only thought was to get past the group phase. We went on to reach the quarter-finals, though. And in the Bahamas, we'll be giving our all to make the last four."

Thinking big

If they are to reach that objective, Ahmadzadeh and his team-mates will need to negotiate a tough group that also features Mexico, Italy and Nigeria. El Tri will provide Iran's first opponents on Thursday, with Gli Azzurri up next two days later, and the Nigerians last on Monday 1 May.

Despite the scale of the task awaiting the team from the Middle East, Ahmadzadeh is confident about their chances of success: "I think we're going to win the group. We're going to do everything we can to beat Italy and Mexico. We know both of them well because we've played them before in competitions and friendlies."

Two years ago in Portugal, Ahmadzadeh told FIFA.com that Iran's goal was to make the second round at least, one they fulfilled by advancing to the last eight for the second world finals running. At Bahamas 2017, however, they are aiming to go further.

"Iran are one of the top teams in the world and we're



not inferior to anyone," said the skipper. "I'm convinced that if we can make the second round, then we'll go on to the last four."

In trying to make that happen, Ahmadzadeh will have the support of a core of equally seasoned players: "There are five or six of us who've played at five World Cups. That's half a team with a lot of experience."

Wrapping things up, the goalscorer looked back on his previous appearances on the global stage and pointed to what he can bring to Iran's bid for glory at Bahamas

2017: "I've played in a lot of Beach Soccer World Cup matches and I've seen the highs and lows. The team has pulled together whenever things have gone against us, and I'm going to draw on all my experience to help my team-mates and make sure we can go as far as we can."

Ahmadzadeh's confidence in Iranian success is well founded. A passionate exponent of beach soccer and a veteran of five World Cups, he has every right to dream of big things on Bahamian sand over the next few weeks.

(Source: FIFA)

Iran to partake at 2017 INAS World Athletics Championships



For para-athletes with an intellectual disability

S P O R T S Iran will participate in the 2017 INAS World Athletics Championships with five para-athletes.

INAS is the International Federation for sport for para-athletes with an intellectual disability.

The event will be hosted by the Sport Association for Intellectual Disability of Thailand from 12 to 19 May 2017.

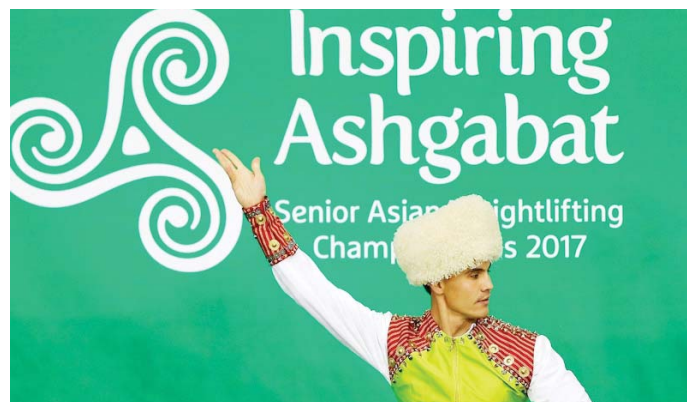
Korosh Farhadi will participate at long jump and triple jump, Hossein Dehghani will represent Iran at javelin throw and shot put, Kambiz Taremi will

take part at 100 and 200 meters, Ahmad Ghaffari will partake at 800 and 1500 meters and Vahid Shahabi will compete at 5000 meters.

Over 150 athletes from more than 20 countries are expected to compete across the full athletics programme, making it the biggest athletics event for elite intellectually disabled athletes globally. For many the INAS Athletics Championships is the pinnacle to their athletic career and a chance to compete against the best intellectually disabled athletes in the world.



Iran to participate at Asian Weightlifting Championships with eight athletes



S P O R T S A total of eight lifters will represent Iran in the 2017 Asian Weightlifting Championships in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

The prestigious competition has started on April 23 and will run until April 28.

Jaber Behrouzi in 77kg, Morteza Biglari and Saleh Cheraghi in 85kg, Ayyub Mousavi in 94kg, Ali Hashemi and Mohammadreza Barari in 105kg and Homayoon Teymouri and Ramin Rabiei in +105kg are Iranian weightlifters in the competition.

Behrouzi will open the competition for

the Iranian delegation on Wednesday.

"After the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, we decided to inject new blood in our team to strengthen for the upcoming events. We are going to field youngsters in Ashgabat and because of this we will participate with a young team in the Asian Weightlifting Championships and Islamic Solidarity Games in Baku," Iran coach Sajjad Anoushirvani told Iran Weightlifting Federation website.

The 2017 Asian Weightlifting Championships are the 47th men's and 28th women's championship.

Pars Jonoubi Jam make history to seal promotion to IPL

S P O R T S Pars Jonoubi Jam made history after sealing promotion to Iran Professional League (IPL) on Monday.

In the penultimate week of the Iran First Division season, Pars Jonoubi Jam beat Esteghlal Ahvaz 2-1 in Ahvaz's Takhti Stadium.

Pars Jonoubi Jam, led by former Persepolis player and

coach Mehdi Tartar, won the promotion with 62 points.

"I would like to thank our fans and players because they believed in their team. It is a great achievement because we have qualified for the Iran Professional League for the first time," Tartar said.

Machine Sazi were relegated to the First Division in mid-April with three games left.

Martin Atkinson to referee crucial Manchester City vs. United derby

Referee Martin Atkinson has been selected to take charge of the Manchester derby on Thursday, the Premier League has confirmed.

Atkinson, 46, will be the lead official when United visit City at the Etihad Stadium, where the latter look to jump ahead of their city rivals in the Premier League standings with a win.

The West Yorkshire official has refereed three United fixtures this season -- the 4-0 defeat at Chelsea on Oct. 23 and the 3-1 home win over Sunderland on Dec. 26 in the Premier League, plus Feb. 19's FA Cup victory at Blackburn Rovers.

Atkinson has taken charge of two Manchester City games in the Premier League this term -- Dec. 18's 2-1 home



win over Arsenal and the 2-0 victory at Sunderland on March 5.

(Source: Soccernet)

Bayern Munich enter Sanchez race

Much of the talk surrounding the future of Arsenal star Alexis Sanchez has centred on Manchester United, Manchester City and Chelsea as potential destinations, despite reports that the Gunners could offer him £300,000 a week to stay at the Emirates.

Paris Saint-Germain have also been linked with the Chile international, who scored the extra-time winner as Arsenal defeated City to reach the FA Cup final, and the Mirror wrote that fellow European giants Bayern Munich have entered the picture.

It reported that Bayern technical director Michael Reschke was at the semifinal after his club made Sanchez, who is out of contract next summer, "their main transfer target." It added that because Sanchez is "stalling" on a new



deal, Bayern "look set to test both the player's and Arsenal's resolve."

(Source: Soccernet)

Draw keeps Persepolis hopes alive in ACL

Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal secured their place in the knockout phase of the 2017 AFC Champions League on Monday night as Ramon Diaz's side picked up a point with a 0-0 draw against newly crowned Iranian champions Persepolis.

The point earned moves the Saudi Arabia champions onto nine points in Group D and, thanks to the goal scored in the 1-1 draw in their first meeting with Persepolis on Matchday One, the club from Riyadh cannot be passed by Branko Ivankovic's team.

Persepolis remain in third place in the group with six points with their hopes of a place in the Round of 16 growing increasingly slim after they failed to score for the second game in a row.

(Source: AFC)



ACL Matchday 5: Zob Ahan 0 – 3 Al Ain

Al Ain guaranteed themselves a place in the Round of 16 of the 2017 AFC Champions League on Monday with a 3-0 win over Zob Ahan that ensures Zoran Mamic's team cannot finish outside the top two in Group C.

Danilo Asprilla gave Al Ain the lead in the 25th minute before Jerry Bengtson's missed penalty saw last year's beaten finalists hold onto their advantage going into the half-time interval.

A fine solo effort from Omar Abdulrahman doubled Al Ain's advantage 12 minutes into the second half and Mohammed Abdulrahman added a third nine minutes from time to seal all three points.

The win moves Al Ain into first place in the group with nine points, one ahead of Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli and a further point clear of Zob Ahan. With Al Ahli and Zob Ahan due to meet on Matchday Six, Al Ain are assured of a place in the top two positions.

(Source: AFC)



Shahrdari Tabriz Basketball Club signs Croatian Puljko

Shahrdari Tabriz Basketball Club of Iran signed Croatian guard Hrvoje Puljko.

The 34-year-old player has played recently at KK Zabok in Croatian A1 league.

Puljko averaged 22.5 points in 8 games.

He also played earlier the season for Spartak in Serbian KLS where in 9 A1 games he had 11.1 points, 2.1 rebound and 1.3 assist.

Puljko has played also in Austria (Timberwolves), Bosnia (Borac Banja Luka and Siroki Primorka), Germany, Greece (Peristeri GS Athens), Hungary (Kaposvari), Kosovo (Peja) and Slovakia.

Tabriz based club has 3-4 Iranian guards and now signed another guard.

(Source: Tasnim)



FIFA President Infantino congratulates Persepolis over winning IPL title

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has sent a congratulatory message to the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) and congratulated Persepolis FC over winning its 10th Iran Professional League (IPL) crown.

Persepolis football team claimed the title last week with three games to spare.

"On behalf of the entire football community, I would like to congratulate Persepolis since it's a great achievement for the team. My congratulation goes to players, head coach, coaching staff, medical staff, and the club's fans," Infantino wrote.

"I would like to thank Persepolis over sending positive message to the world," FIFA president added.

(Source: Tasnim)



“Sis” actress Golab Adineh crowned best at Beijing festival

A R T TEHRAN — Golab Adineh won the best actress award for her role in “The Sis” by Iranian director Marjan Ashrafizadeh at the 7th Beijing International Film Festival (BJIFF), the organizers announced on Sunday.

The film is about Tala and Ati (Sis), a mother and daughter who have lived together for many years. This relationship, however, does not last forever, and the days of separation finally arrive.

Fan Wei from China received the best actor award for his role in “Mr. No Problem” by Mei Feng.

Georgian director George Barabadze’s “Luka” was named the best film while Rusudan Gluridze from Georgia was awarded the best director award for her film “House of Others”.



Golab Adineh accepts the best actress award for her role in the Iranian film “The Sis” during the closing ceremony of the 7th Beijing International Film Festival on April 23, 2017. (Xinhua/Hou Dongtao)

Tehran museum to review French films

A R T TEHRAN — The cinemathèque of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art is scheduled to screen seven French films in a six-day program that will start today.



“Zero for Conduct” (1933) by Jean Vigo, “Naked Childhood” (1968) by Maurice Pialat, “The 400 Blows” (1959) by Francois Truffaut and “Jacquot de Nantes” (1991) by Agnes Varda are among the films.

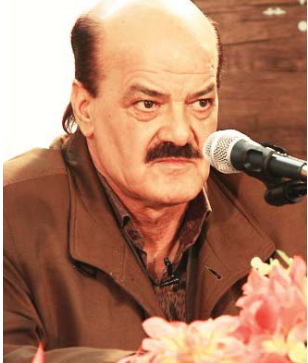
“Mouchette” (1967) by Robert Bresson, “Chocolate” (1988) by Claire Denis and “To Be and to Have” (2002) by Nicolas Philibert will also go on screen during the program.

The screenings will be followed by review sessions by French critic, historian of cinema and former chief editor of Cahiers du Cinemas Jean-Michel Frodon.

The films’ plots are mostly about children. Therefore, the organizers of the program plan to make a comparison between French cinema and Iranian films by screening the films along with Abbas Kiarostami’s “Where Is the Friend’s Home”.

Iranian author Firuz Zonuzi-Jalali dies at 66

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian author Firuz Zonuzi-Jalali died at a Tehran hospital on Tuesday at 66 after battling lung cancer for about two years.



He was the author of the acclaimed novel “The Rule of the Game” that won the award for best novel at the 26th edition of the Islamic Republic of Iran Book of the Year Awards in 2015.

He is the writer of several plays, short stories and novels including “Tower 110” and “Creature”.

He also pursued a teaching career in several educational centers.

Tom Hanks jokes Twitter CEO inspired his character in “The Circle”

SAN FRANCISCO (Reuters) — Oscar-winning actor Tom Hanks, who plays a Silicon Valley tycoon in the new film “The Circle” about a powerful social media company, teased Twitter Inc Chief Executive Officer Jack Dorsey on Monday that he may have been inspiration for the part.

Hanks appeared alongside Dorsey on Periscope, Twitter’s service for live broadcasts, to promote the film that premieres today at New York’s Tribeca Film Festival.

“I played you,” Hanks said, as co-stars including Emma Watson laughed. “I’m not in as good a shape. I didn’t exercise or eat as well as you did, but I played you.”

Dorsey, laughing along, held up a hand and said, “Not me.” Earlier, while telling the bearded, T-shirt-wearing Dorsey about the executive he portrays in the film, Hanks deadpanned: “You know that he’s a diabolical genius because he’s got a beard. Do you find that to be the case, Jack?”

The film, which opens widely in the United States on Friday, is based on a Dave Eggers novel. The book sparked debate about the rise of social media when it was published in 2013.

The fictional company at the center of the film and the book is obsessed with getting people to share their daily activities publicly. Reviewers have made comparisons to Alphabet Inc’s Google, Facebook Inc and Twitter.

The film’s cast members said they were conflicted about technology that encourages people to share online, torn between its ability to shine a light on injustice and its threat to privacy in everyday affairs.

“The world that we live in now, with the level of transparency that we’re seeing, you get everything - every unkind word, every criticism,” Watson said.

Patton Oswalt, who plays a tech executive in the film, asked whether people would become burned out over the next 10 years and start a mass retreat from social media.

“It’s the opposite of Andy Warhol’s thing. In the future, everyone will be allowed to be anonymous for 15 minutes,” Oswalt said.

German violinist Susanne Zapf to hold master class in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN — German violinist Susanne Zapf will be holding a master class for a number of Iranian musicians in Tehran on April 29.

The master class is scheduled to be held at Tehran’s Da Theater House, the organizers announced in a press release on Tuesday.

Earlier in summer 2015, Zapf held a workshop in Tehran.

In addition, Zapf will accompany the Tehran-based ensemble Yarava in a concert at the Da Theater House early May.

Works by Iranian musicians Mehdi Jalali, Shahrokh Khajeh-Nuri and Farzia Fallah, and German



composers Helmut Zapf and Sven-Ingo Koch will be performed at the concert.

Born in 1979 in Thuringia, Germany, Zapf particularly enjoys playing chamber music. In 2006, she founded a string quartet named “Sonar Quartet”, which specializes in playing contemporary music.

“Like Someone in Love” portrays Kiarostami’s critical look at capitalism: Samadian

A R T TEHRAN — Documentarian and photographer Seifollah Samadian has said that the legendary Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami revealed his critical look at capitalism in his 2012 movie “Like Someone in Love”.

The film was directed in Tokyo in 2012 about a young sex worker who develops an unexpected connection with a widower over a period of two days.

Some members of the of film’s crew came together on the second day of the commemoration organized by the 35th Fajr International Film Festival at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex on Sunday to share their memories of their collaboration with Kiarostami.

Among them were program producer Kenzo Horikoshi, cinematographer Katsumi Yanagishima, assistant editor Shogo Yokoyama and assistant director and interpreter Shohreh Golparian.

“We see his bitter view, which is expressed in a peaceful way with no sign of sloganeering, on capitalist society,” said Samadian who is the manager of the commemoration program.

“This is what distinguished Kiarostami from other filmmakers,” he noted.

He made comparisons of Kiarostami and Japanese filmmakers and said, “Japan has many great filmmakers who are close to Kiarostami in their styles.”

“He used to work with groups with fewer members and this poses the question that, as an Iranian filmmaker in the industrialized Japanese society, how could he deal with the cultural differences,” he asked.

Kiarostami’s method was very different from what Japanese filmmakers followed, Golparian answered.

“His Japanese colleagues were absolutely amazed when they saw that Kiarostami was making his film without a screenplay,” she added.

“He asked the film’s crew to reveal nothing about the scenario to the members of the cast, and this was really amazing to them,” she said.

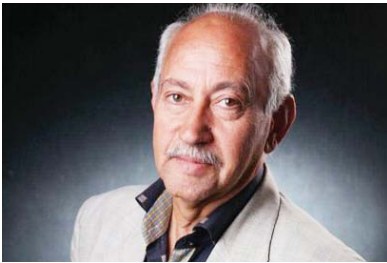
Horikoshi who was also the distributor of all Kiarostami’s films in Japan talked about his interest in Japan.

“Kiarostami made about 15 trips to Japan and stayed there past what was planned each time; he was interested in Japan and enjoyed his stays there,” he said.

“I also visited him in Venice, Berlin and several other places, but when he was in Japan he was much happier,” he added.

The closing day of the commemoration of Kiarostami was held on Monday with a speech by Colombian film expert Estephania Bonnett Alonso.

She is the cofounder of the Black Factory Cinema,



“Lizard” actor Naqi Seif-Jamali dies at 59

TEHRAN — Naqi Seif-Jamali, the actor of director Kamal Tabrizi’s acclaimed comedy “Lizard”, died of a heart attack on Monday at the age of 59.

“Seif-Jamali was taken to the hospital several times over the past week and he died of a heart attack at Tehran’s Shahid Rajai Hospital,” stage director Behzad Farahani said in a statement.

He was rehearsing with Farahani’s troupe these days to perform “Love Performer” in Tehran in the upcoming weeks.

He played the role of Fazli, the caretaker of the mosque in “Lizard”.

Among his credits are also “I, Taraneh, Am 15” by Rasul Sadr-Ameli, “Unfinished Tales” by Purya Azarbaijani, and “Canaan” and “Modest Reception”



Documentarian Seifollah Samadian attends the second day of a meeting organized by the 35th Fajr International Film Festival at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex on April 23, 2017 to commemorate filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami. (IRNA/Marzieh Soleimani)

a production house devoted to film production and filmmaking training, which also organized Kiarostami’s workshops in the Spanish-speaking countries.

In addition, Negar Eskandarfar, the director of the Karnameh Art and Cultural Institute in Tehran, also delivered a lecture. Kiarostami arranged his workshops in Iran under the auspices of the institute.

Apple delays release of first original series ‘Carpool Karaoke’

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Apple Inc’s Apple Music has delayed the release of its first original video series, an adaptation of comedian James Corden’s popular “Carpool Karaoke” segment, the company said.

At the Code Media conference in February, Apple said the show would debut in April and be available only to Apple Music subscribers. Apple’s senior vice president of internet software and services, Eddy Cue, showed a trailer for the series featuring celebrities such as Will Smith, John Legend, Ariana Grande and Alicia Keys.

A premiere party for “Carpool Karaoke” scheduled for March in Los Angeles was postponed without explanation days before it was to take place. This week, the company again postponed its launch party, which had been rescheduled for Monday.

Apple, a company known for its precisely coordinated product launches, declined to explain the delays, but said in a statement that “Carpool Karaoke: The Series will premiere on Apple Music later this year.”

The series is an adaptation of a segment than runs during CBS’ “The Late Late Show with James Corden”

period of failing health.”

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Robert M. Pirsig, author of the influential 1970s philosophical novel “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance”, died on Monday at the age of 88, his publisher said.

William Morrow & Co executive editor Peter Hubbard said in a statement that Pirsig’s wife Wendy had confirmed his death at his home in Maine “after a

Published in 1974 after being rejected by more than 100 other publishers, “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance”, was the father-son story of a motorcycle trip across the western United States. Loosely autobiographical, it also contained flashbacks to a period in which the author was diagnosed as schizophrenic.



Show host James Corden speaks at the 59th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California, U.S. on February 12, 2017. (Reuters/Lucy Nicholson)

and sees him driving with a celebrity and singing a medley of songs.

A representative for CBS Television Studios said in an email on Monday: “We’re excited about our ‘Carpool Karaoke’ for Apple Music, and look forward to everyone

The book quickly became a best-seller. Pirsig said its protagonist “set out to resolve the conflict between classic values that create machinery, such as a motorcycle, and romantic values, such as experiencing the beauty of a country road.”

Born in Minneapolis, Pirsig had a high IQ and graduated high school at the age of 15. He earned a degree in philosophy

and also worked as a technical writer and instructor of English before being hospitalized for mental illness in the early 1960s.

His philosophical thinking and personal experiences during these years, including a 1968 motorcycle trip across the U.S. West with his eldest son, Christopher, formed the core of the narrative of the novel.

seeing it later this year.”

In January, Corden told reporters at a Television Critics Association panel that he was “incredibly proud” that it would be Apple Music’s first show.

Launched in mid-2015, Apple Music has struggled to gain traction. The company said that the service, which sells for \$9.99 a month and is heavily promoted to iPhone users, had 20 million subscribers at the end of 2016.

Rival streaming platform Spotify, which offers both a free version and a \$9.99 monthly subscription, said in March it had 50 million subscribers.

Apple Music has primarily offered streaming music to its subscribers, but hoped additional exclusive video content would lure new customers.

Apple has said that each of the 16 half-hour episodes it is planning of “Carpool Karaoke” would pair two celebrities spending the day driving around together.

Apple Music has also announced plans for a reality show, “Planet of the Apps”, which Cue said was due this spring.