# TERNATIONALDAILY

16 Pages | Price 10,000 Rials | 38th year | No.12815 | Saturday | APRIL 29, 2017 | Ordibehesht 9, 1396 | Sha'aban 2, 1438



Presidential candidates hold first live debate 2







Special guest Italy announces programs for Tehran book fair 16

### Fajr Golden Simorgh remains at home for "The Home"

**A** R T TEHRAN — The d e s k Golden Simorgh for best film at the 35th Fajr International Film Festival remained at home as Iranian drama "The Home" by producer/ director/writer Asghar Yusefinejad won the award on Thursday.

Yusefinejad received the award from Cinema Organization of Iran (COI) director Mohammad-Mehdi Heidarian during the closing ceremony of the festival at Tehran's Vahdat Hall

In his acceptance speech, Yusefinejad dedicated his award to world-renowned Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami and his homeland Tabriz.

In announcing the best film winner, Iranian actress Fatemeh Motamed-Arya, who was a member of the jury, said that all seven members of the panel were amazed by "The Home"

The film, which is Yusefinejad's directorial debut, also brought him the Silver Simorgh for best screenwriter.

The movie tells the story of Sayeh, who has broken off relations with her family after marriage. Her father dies and she returns home to attend his funeral, but in his last will and testament, he has asked that his remains be donated to an academic center for autopsy. However, Sayeh is diametrically opposed to the idea.  $\rightarrow$ 16



### Resolving the Afghanistan crisis

**¬**he U.S.-led war in Afghanistan has not only continued unabated for over 15 years, making it America's longest war, but has no

Since their 2001 overthrow of the Taliban government, America and its allies have more than struggled to put the country back together. By early 2017, the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that the Afghan cenjust 52 percent of the country, with a resurgent Taliban and now even ISIS dominating the rest of the war-torn country. The depth of Afghanistan's vulnerability was demonstrated on Saturday, when the Taliban launched their deadliest attack ever on an Afghan military base, killing more than 140 unarmed soldiers and injuring over 60 and leading Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to declare a national day of mourning. More than 6,700 Afghani security forces were killed in just 2016 — about three times American casualties for the war.

While former President Obama opted for a "surge" of U.S. troops in his first term — with numbers reaching a peak of around 100,000 — his attempt at a military solution to the conflict proved unviable and by the end of his presidency U.S. troop numbers had dwindled to roughly 9,000. Rather than attempt a new strategy centered on inclusive diplomatic solutions, the Trump administration has seemingly opted for renewed military escalation. Trump National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster traveled to Afghanistan shortly after the "mother of all bombs" was dropped to deliver assurances of increased U.S. military

support to the Afghan government. Now is the time for global and regional powers to implement a comprehensive plan for peace in Afghanistan. "Everywhere you look, if there is trouble inside the region you find Iran," U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis recently declared. However, →13

# **Rouhani writes to Pakistan** PM over dead soldiers



### Iran to resume Hajj pilgrimage late July after 2016 boycott

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran has ans k nounced it will resume sending hajj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia in July after boycotting the 2016 ritual in objection to Riyadh failing to soothe safety concerns.

"Flights will start on July 23 and will continue until August 26," Tasnim news agency quoted Hamid Mohammadi, the head of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization, as saying on Friday.

"Nineteen Iranian airports will be engaged during the Hajj period," Mohammadi said.

Last year, Iran did not dispatch any of its citizens to the Hajj, first such decision in nearly three decades, after 464 of its nationals lost their lives in a crush in Mina in September 2015.

In March, Saudi Arabia announced that Iranian pilgrims would participate in this year's annual Hajj, ending lengthy negotiations between the two countries over the issue.

Iran was the last Muslim country that signed the Hajj contract with Riyadh, making it difficult for the country to book "standard" hotel rooms, Mohammadi added.

More than 64,000 Iranians performed Hajj in 2015 as compared to 86,000 pilgrims standing in queue this year, up 35 percent.

More than 1,350,000 Iranians have filled out forms to make pilgrimage to Islam's holiest sites in Mecca and Medina over the next few years, the Iranian officials explained.

Iranian pilgrims will be carrying smart handcuffs in addition to IDs for easier tracking in emergency situations, the official further said.

Mohammadi said, "More than half of our pilgrims are in their fifties who are likely to

More than 1,350,000 Iranians have filled out forms to make pilgrimage to Islam's holiest sites in Mecca and Medina over the next few years.

forget their IDs and get lost in the crowd.

So, our experts concluded that we use handcuffs and IDs both, what other countries also do." Additionally, more medical service centers will be made available, he said, adding pil-

grims have been given training on how to react in emergency It took Tehran and Riyadh more than two years to bury the hatchet over the sticking

point after the Mina crush The incident infuriated Tehran. Soon after, ties between the two regional rivals worsened further when Saudi Arabia executed a

pro-democracy Shiite cleric. Iran boycotted the hajj for three years between 1988 and 1990 after Saudi police killed

around 400 Iranian pilgrims. "The ministry of hajj and the Iranian organization have completed all the necessary measures to ensure Iranian pilgrims perform naji 1438 according to the procedures fol lowed by all Muslim countries," the official Saudi Press Agency reported in March.

### Iran, Russia review recent development in Syria

POLITICS TEHRAN - Top Iranian d e s k and Russian officials met each other on Thursday in Tehran to discuss the latest developments in the region particularly in Syria, which came under an air airstrike by the Israeli regime on the

The meeting was between Alexander Lavrentiev, President Putin's point man on Syria, and Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

Shamkhani is also senior coordinator for political, military and security affairs with Syria

The two discussed the latest developments regarding the conflict in Syria and stressed the importance of further political and field coordination in the Arab country.

The meeting happened right on the same day as a warehouses near Damascus airport that the Israeli news media claimed housed weapons bound for the Lebanese Hezbollah were bombarded by Israel's precision guided

Both Russia and Iran, which back the Syrian government, strongly condemned the airstrike. →2



# **Tabriz hosts** Ashiqlar Music **Festival**

A group performs during the 3rd Ashiqlar Music Festival at the Tabriz Culture House in the northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz on April 26, 2016.

Ashiqlar is a unique style of traditional music, which is mainly common in Iran's Azarbaijan region, the Azerbaijan Republic and Turkey.

Ashiqlar music is performed by an ashiq, also spelled ashik and ashug. He is a mystic troubadour or traveling bard, who blends together instrumental and vocal music, dance, poetry and storytelling in his performances.

# Asia's March imports of Iranian oil rises 27% yr/yr

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iran's d e s k four main Asian oil buyers imported nearly 27 percent more oil from the country in March 2017 compared to March 2016 as Iran took advantage of its exemption from a production cut agreed by OPEC and some other major producers.

According to a report by Reuters, Iranian crude's top four Asian buyers - China, India, South Korea and Japan - imported 1.97 million barrels per day (bpd) last month, government and ship-tracking data showed.

This is marginally below February, when Iran sold the highest volumes overseas since at least 2010, International Energy Agency data showed.

Japan's trade ministry on Friday released official data, showing Iranian imports were at 224,604 bpd last month, up 13 percent from a year earlier and slightly down from the previous month.

Also, in the first quarter, these four countries imported 1.87 million bpd, a 47 percent rise from the same period in 2016.

Iran was exempted from a deal between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers, including Russia, to reduce output by 1.2 million bpd from January 1.

It was a victory for Tehran which had argued it needs to regain the market share it lost under Western sanctions over its nuclear program.

### **Netanyahu: German minister** refuses to take his call

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday slammed Germany's foreign minister as "insensitive" over refusing to cancel meetings with rights groups critical of Israel's government, amid rising tensions between the two

Netanyahu had scrapped talks with Sigmar Gabriel at the last minute, after Germany's top diplomat pressed on with plans to meet with Israeli rights groups Breaking The Silence and B'Tselem.

Netanyahu said he tried to telephone Germany's foreign minister to clear the air after cancelling talks during Gabriel's visit to Israel but the German minister would not take the

"I wanted to telephone Foreign Minister Gabriel to explain my position and to clear things up, but he would not take the call," Netanyahu told German mass-selling daily Bild.

"I hope Gabriel meets me on his next trip to Israel rather than a radical fringe group that undermines Israel's security."

In an interview with Germany's biggest selling Bild daily, Netanyahu defended his decision.

"Foreign diplomats are welcome to meet with civil society activists and members of the opposition and anyone else they'd like," he said.

"But my red line is that I will not meet diplomats who come to Israel and lend legitimacy to fringe radical groups that falsely accuse our soldiers of war crimes and undermine Israeli security," he added.

Netanyahu's decision to cancel the meeting with Gabriel was a rare step, but in line with the current right-wing government's stance against groups it accuses of having political agendas and unfairly tarnishing Israel.

Tensions have grown as Netanyahu has irked Berlin by pressing on with colony building in the Palestinian territories despite repeated warnings from world powers that it would harm any prospects for peace.

(Source: AFP)

### **ELECTION COUNTDOWN**



It is haram to undermine system: cleric

POLITICS TEHRAN — The interim Friday prayer destruction of Tehran cautioned presidential candidates that it is haram (religiously forbidden) to undermine the Islamic system in their debates.

"The debates should resemble debates of clergymen, be logic-oriented, reasoned, and free of grudges and complexes," Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami said, IRIB reported.

"The candidates should take care that their word is documented and there is no trace of slandering and undermining in it. They should not turn the atmosphere into one of disunity."



'Popular Front has no substitute candidate'

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — The Popular Front of d e s k Revolution Forces on Friday issued an announcement in which it stated that it has no substitute candidate in the presidential election.

"Qalibaf and Raisi have a shared objective, which is to save people and the economy from the current circumstances," the statement read, Mehr news agency reported

Both of the endorsed candidates are valuable assets of the Islamic Revolution who have acted successfully in the past and left bright records each, the statement continued.



Rouhani to visit Kerman, Yazd, Hormozgan

**POLITICS**d e s k planning visits to Kerman, Yazd, and Hormozgan provinces as part of his presidential campaign.

The presidential candidate will start his three-leg trip on Saturday and end it on Sunday evening, the Iran Students News Agency reported on Friday.

Rouhani's trip to Hormozgan province had been planned for Friday, but was postponed as he had to attend the live presidential debates.

Rouhani's election headquarters has said this trip will not include any project inauguration.



Larijani urges candidates present plans for employment of the educated

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — The Majils speaker has described estables said the presidential candidates should present carefully studied plans about how they will create jobs for the educated people

Ali Larijani, who was speaking in a conference in Fars province on Friday, also said that the election should be held as magnificently as possible and turn the hopes of enemies into dismay, Mehr reported.

The Majlis speaker also advised the candidates to avoid slanders in their debates and stage a good show of unity.



Guardian Council completes study of candidates for midterm parliamentary election

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — The Guardian Council has desk completed its probe of candidates for the midterm parliamentary election and reported the results to the Ministry of Interior.

Guardian Council spokesman Abbasali Kadkhodaei told ISNA on Friday that this was the first stage of the investigation and included study of the protests by those who had been disqualified.

He also said those candidates who still fail to be endorsed in this stage will have three days (Saturday, Sunday, and Monday) to protest the results once more.



Seven Tehran Council members disqualified

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Seven members of the d e s k incumbent Tehran Council who had sought reelection have been disqualified, the head of the supreme body on council elections said on Friday.

The candidates have submitted their protests, but their protests have not been addressed yet, Alireza Rahimi told the Iran Labor News Agency, ILNA.

He added the body will have until May 6 to address the pleas and on May 7 it will announce the results to governorates.

# Presidential candidates hold first live debate

POLITICS TEHRAN — The first debate among desk the six candidates of the May 19 presidential election was held on Friday afternoon.

The six candidates are Mostafa Aqa-Mirsalim, Mostafa Hashemi-Taba, Es'haq Jahangiri, Hassan Rouhani, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi.

There will be three live televised debates in total.
Friday's debate focused on social issues while the next

Friday's debate focused on social issues while the next two will revolve around economic and political matters, Press TV reported.

The candidates drew lots to determine their seating arrangement for the debate, not to leave any room for accusations of partiality.

The first candidate to answer the first question was Mirsalim. He said immigration inside the country should be curbed before it gives rise to social crises and added that 350,000 illegal wells have wasted the country's water resources and intensified immigration to cities. The candidate said social facilities must be distributed evenly in cities and villages. He added that suitable housing must be provided in small towns and villages to prevent immigration.

Raeisi was next up on the podium. He said joblessness and shutdown of production units are major problems facing the country's economy. He added that the next administration must make plans to narrow social gaps in a bid to promote justice.

Hashemi-Taba was the third candidate who took to the podium. He said bank loans and mass construction would be good ways to tackle the housing problem, adding that job creation would help resolve the issue.

Rouhani was the next hopeful taking to the podium to respond to a debate question about his plans to encourage the youth marriage. He said unemployment was the main hurdle to youth marriage and added that boosting "hope" and avoiding "unnecessary limitations" in the society are key to solve problems. He said hope for future has increased in the Iranian society and employment rate has improved. Hope for future



and employment are the best ways to promote youth marriage in the country, Rouhani added.

Jahangiri was the fifth presidential candidate to use his four-minute time to outline his plans on reducing bureaucracy in executive bodies. He said the current administration has managed to change the security-based approach to social issues and added that most of the Iranian people are not satisfied with municipalities and banks. The current first vice president said the establishment of an e-government was the major step to reduce bureaucracy.

Jahangiri said forceful measures would fail to solve social problems and added that he took part in the presidential election as a representative of the reformist camp. The current first vice president emphasized that the current administration has managed to increase petrochemical production by nine million tons.

Qalibaf was the last hopeful taking to the podium to answer a question about his plans to tackle the environmental challenges if elected president. He said the dust storm problem is currently plaguing 20 Iranian provinces and added that inappropriate measures taken inside the country has led to the crisis.

Qalibaf defended the performance of Tehran Municipality in the environment-protection sector, saying it has used garbage to generate power and produce compost. The mayor of Tehran added that over 20,000 hectares have been planted with trees around the capital.

### Rouhani writes to Pakistan PM over dead soldiers

### Iran summons Pakistani ambassador over terrorist attack

### By Ali Kushki

**TEHRAN** — Iran's president followed up with a letter to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif the killing of nine Iranian soldiers by terrorists in an attack launched from neighboring Pakistan.

Hassan Rouhani on Friday demanded a quick probe into the attack by the Pakistani government.

"I ask the Pakistani government to act responsibly and identify, introduce, and punish the terrorist-Takfiri groups that committed this crime," Rouhani's letter to Sharif read.

Reportedly, the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan has delivered the letter to Sharif.

The terrorist ambush came just hours after Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq left Iran, calling for more security at the Pakistani frontier with Iran.

In the meantime, the Iranian police recognized Islamabad for bearing responsibility for wobbly security that allowed the terrorists to launch the attack.

On Thursday nine Iranian border guards were killed by terrorists in an ambush at the Pakistani border's zeropoint, near the Iranian town of Mirjaveh in the province of Sistan-Baluchestan.

The soldiers were reportedly killed with long-range guns shot from inside Pakistan.

The militant group called Jaish al Adl (meaning the Army of Justice) claimed responsibility for the attack.

Jaish al Adl has carried out several attacks before against Iranian security forces with the aim of destabilizing southeastern Iran.

utheastern Iran. The group claimed responsibility for attacks that killed

eight border guards in April 2015 and 14 border guards in October 2013, as well.

In 2013, some sources linked to the terrorist group with the Pakistani and Saudi intelligences.

In his letter to the Pakistani prime minister, Rouhani made no explicit reference to any certain country, but accused regional countries of launching "proxy wars" and backing "terrorist acts, violence, and insecurity" to damage the Islamic world unity.

Previously, Iranian officials had rapped Riyadh for stirring up trouble among Iran's Sunni ethnic minorities like the Baluch in the southeast of the country as well as among Arabs in the southwest.

Rouhani also ordered the Supreme National Security Council and Foreign Ministry to follow up on the issue. The Foreign Ministry said on Friday it had summoned

the Pakistani ambassador to protest the attack.

"The ambassador was told that Tehran expects the

Pakistani side to take serious measures to capture the terrorists and punish them," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghassemi said.

"Countries which seek joining anti-terrorist coalitions

"Countries which seek joining anti-terrorist coalitions must answer how they are incapable of countering armed bandits and terrorist groups on their own soil," Ghassemi stressed.

Jaish al Adl has carried out several attacks before against Iranian security forces with the aim of destabilizing southeastern Iran.

In making the comments, he was hinting at Islamabad's decision last week to send a former army chief to lead a Saudi-led alliance against Yemeni dissidents.

Also, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said his ministry "will spare no effort in following up the case through diplomatic channels to punish the terrorist thugs."

Iran's continuous concern over borders with Pakistan

Iran's border with Pakistan has long been plagued by terrorist incursions in spite of security agreements with Islamabad, including one memorandum of understanding signed in 2014.

While Tehran says it honors its commitments to provide Islamabad with secure borders, it laments that the Pakistan side is falling short of its reciprocal commitments.

"Unfortunately, the Pakistani border with Iran is the most insecure one. This is while we have tried to provide most secure borders for them," the Foreign Ministry said on Friday.

In a visit to Pakistan in 2016, president Rouhani highlighted the importance of "implementing" bilateral security agreements, months after Sharif underscored in Tehran that his country was "resolute" to cooperate with the Islamic Republic to soothe its concerns over the border.

In 2016, there were unconfirmed news that Tehran and Islamabad had reached an agreement on a joint military effort to assure closer border monitoring.

Following a 2014 attack by the Jaish al Adl terrorist group, Iran announced it would deploy unmanned aerial vehicles over its border for streamlined security throughout the area.

### Iran, Russia review recent development in Syria

1 → Tehran, Moscow and Damascus have been in close contact over their joint activities in regard to the ongoing conflict in Syria.

On Wednesday night, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan sat down for talks with his Russian and Syrian counterparts, Sergei Shoigu and Fahd Jassem al-Freij, in Moscow.

During the meeting with Lavrentiev, Shamkhani said while the Islamic Republic will spare no effort in its fight against terrorism in Syria. However Shamkhani said Tehran was committed to exploring a political solution to the conflict in the Arab country.

"We deem the military approach as effective only against those groups that refuse to lay down arms," he said.

A nation-wide ceasefire deal has been in place in Syria since late last year. The deal, facilitated by Iran, Russia, and Turkey, excludes internationally-designated terrorist groups and other armed outfits that refuse to engage in a reconciliation process with the government.

Iran, Russia, and Turkey, which together act as the guarantor states for the Syrian ceasefire, have also been organizing political talks between the Syrian conflicting sides in a peace process in the Kazakh capital of Astana.

Turkey is a defender of the opposition groups in the talks.



Alexander Lavrentiev (L), who is Russian President Vladimir Putin's point man on Syria, shakes hands with Ali Shamkhani, the secretary general of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), before their meeting in Tehran, Iran, April 27, 2017.

Referring to those negotiations, Shamkhani said the armed opposition in Syria — which is a party to the Astana talks — should not be allowed to shrink from participating in the talks by inventing pretexts or as a result of incitement by certain countries opposed to peace.

The Iranian official also censured a recent U.S. missile strike on a Syrian airfield and said the case of that violation

of Syrian territory must be duly pursued. The U.S. fired a salvo of missiles at the Shayrat air base in Syria's Homs Province in the early morning of April 7, alleging that the base had been used to launch what it said was a chemical raid on a militant-held town that killed over 70 people days earlier. Damascus, which has turned over its stockpile of chemical

weapons under a deal between Russia

and the U.S., denied having carried out such an attack, saying that a conventional airstrike had hit a chemical arms depot run by the militants, causing the leak of the chemical agents and the deaths.

Shamkhani said the U.S. missile attack dimmed the prospect of reconciliation between Syrian sides and worked to encourage the terrorist groups in Syria.

He said an independent fact-finding mission had to be established to detect the paths through which chemical arms are delivered to the militants in Syria and in Iraq.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said European countries, too, had to be concerned about the ongoing terrorism in Syria because, "like a dangerous virus, terrorism passes through borders and can't be used instrumentally."

Lavrentiev commended Iran's "constructive" role in the peace process for Syria. He also stressed Moscow's commitment to fight those groups that shun the political process and continue to angage in armod activities.

to engage in armed activities.

He said Russia would however continue to work on the political channels on a parallel basis.

Lavrentiev also met with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Jaberi-

Ansari later in the day.

Jaberi-Ansari and Lavrentiev head the
Iranian and Russian delegations at the

# Syria in talks to buy Russian air defense systems: Assad

Syria says it is negotiating with Russia to buy state-of-the-art Russian missile defense systems to help defend the country against Israeli and American

President Bashar al-Assad made the remarks to Venezuelan channel Telesur. A transcript of the interview appeared on the official Syrian Arab News Agen-

"It's natural that we should have such systems," said the Syrian leader. "Israel has been committing aggressions on the Arab states surrounding it since its creation in 1948," he said.

He made the comments as Israel struck an area near the International Airport in the Syrian capital, Damascus.

Tel Aviv has conducted many such attacks in the past. The forays, however, have increased in number since the outbreak of the foreign-backed militancy in the country in 2011.

On March 18, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu surprisingly admitted to a series of the attacks by the regime, which had hit several targets near the ancient city of Palmyra (Tadmor) in the central part of the country the previous day.

He said the attacks had been aimed at targets belonging to the Lebanese resistance movement of Hezbollah, and said Israel would continue hitting the group. Hezbollah has been efficiently assisting Damascus in its anti-terror struggle.

Assad also said, "It is natural for us to negotiate with the Russians now with a view to strengthening (our) systems, whether to face any Israeli threats from the air or the threats of American missiles."

"That has become a real possibility after the recent American aggression on al-Shayrat airbase in Syria," he added.

The U.S. attack southeast of the western Syria city of Homs in early April saw a barrage of 59 Tomahawk missiles launched against the Shayrat Airfield in the western Syrian province of Homs, causing some 15 fatalities, including civilians.

Russia's military said a day after the attack that Syria's air defenses would be boosted.



Assad also accused the Israeli regime of providing weaponry and logistical support for terrorists wreaking havoc in the country, saying its proof could be easily accessed on the inter-

Assad said Tel Aviv's role in the war on Syria included its involvement in a "direct aggression" against Syrian army positions by using warplanes, artillery or missiles.

"Second, it is supporting terrorists in two ways: first by providing direct support in the form of weapons, and second by providing logistic support, i.e. allowing them to conduct military exercises in the areas it controls. It also provides them with medical assistance in its hospitals," he added.

The Syrian president stressed that those allegations against Israel "are not mere claims or assumptions."

Rather, "they are facts, verified and published on the internet which you can easily access as proven evidence of the Israeli role in support of the terrorists in Syria," he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Syrian president said terrorists have used chemical materials "more than once and in more than one region" in Syria.

He accused the United States of can politicians: they lie on a daily basis, having obstructed a probe by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) into a suspected chemical attack in Syria, which the West blamed on the Damascus government.

At least 87 people were killed in the purported gas attack on the town of Khan Shaykhun in Syria's Idlib province on April 4. Damascus said the incident was a "fabrication" to justify the subsequent U.S. missile strike on Shayrat Airfield in Homs province.

"We still insist on an investigation, and we and our Russian and Iranian allies are trying to persuade OPCW to send a team to investigate what happened, because if it doesn't, the United States might repeat the same charade by fabricating the use of false chemical weapons in another place in Syria in order to justify military intervention in support of the terrorists," Assad said.

### U.S. lies about Syria possessing chemical weapons

Furthermore, the Syrian president rejected Pentagon claims that Syria had chemical weapons, saying the Americans lie for their own interests.

"This is what characterizes Ameri-

and say something and do something different," he said.

"That's why we shouldn't believe what the Pentagon, or any other American institution says, because they say things which serve their policies, not things which reflect reality and the facts on the ground," he added.

Assad also stressed that the West draws a difference between the socalled moderate and extremist terrorists just for its own political agenda.

"For the United States, all those who serve its political agenda against other states are classified as moderate opposition and not as extremist and terrorist, even if they commit the worst acts of terrorism," he said.

Asked about Syria's initiative to put an end to the conflict gripping the country, Assad said Damascus follows both the combat and political paths.

"We said that there are two axes: the first is fighting the terrorists.... The other axis, the political one, includes two points: first, dialog with the different political forces over the future of Syria; and second: local reconciliations," he added.

(Source: SANA)

# Britain on heightened alert after terror arrests

British police warned on Friday they were facing an "increased level of terrorist activity", the day after a knifeman was arrested near parliament and a woman was shot in a separate police raid.

Just weeks after the attack on the Houses of Parliament that left five people dead and scores injured, London is once again on high alert as Britain prepares for a snap election

"Yesterday was an extraordinary day in London," Deputy Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu said, after confirming six arrests overnight.

"I wanted to reassure the public that this increased level of terrorist activity is being matched by our action... We are making arrests on a near daily basis."

A 27-year-old man remains in custody after being arrested near parliament on suspicion of terrorism offences and possession of knives, in what police confirmed had been an ongoing investigation.

Just hours later, armed police raided a

property in north London as part of an unrelated counter-terrorism investigation, firing CS gas as they entered and shooting a woman in her 20s.

Six people have been arrested as part of the probe, while the woman -- who is also suspected of involvement -- remains in a serious but stable condition in hospital

"Due to these arrests that have been made yesterday, in both cases I believe we have contained the threats that they posed,"

Britain's national terror threat level has been at "severe", meaning an attack is highly likely, since August 2014 -- and remained unchanged after the attack on parliament on March 22.

Khalid Masood drove a car through pedestrians on Westminster Bridge before crashing into the gates of parliament. He ran inside and knifed to death a policeman, before being shot.

Police have said they may never know

The man arrested on Thursday, meters from parliament and Prime Minister Theresa May's Downing Street residence, had reportedly been tracked by police and the domestic intelligence agency MI5.

Newspaper reports said he had been followed as he traveled into Westminster, in an investigation that originally began with a tip-off by someone close to him.

"They stopped and searched him as part of an ongoing counter-terrorism investigation," Basu said, without giving further details.

An AFP photographer saw firearms officers surrounding the bearded man and pinning him to the ground, before putting him in handcuffs.

Construction worker David Wisniowski, who was working on a building site next to the incident, told AFP he saw "three knives on the floor, one big one and two small".

Hours later in Harlesden, a suburb in north London, armed police launched an unrelated counter-terrorism operation that resulted in six arrests overnight, five in the

area and one in Kent, southeast England.

The address had been under observation and the woman who was shot was one of the subjects of the investigation, Basu said.

"Her condition is serious but stable. Because of her condition she has not yet been arrested. We are monitoring her condition closely," he said, adding that the police watchdog had been informed.

During an election campaign speech on Thursday evening, Prime Minister Theresa May paid tribute to the police and security services, saving they were owed "a huge debt of gratitude".

Terrorism has yet to feature heavily in the campaign for the June 8 vote, although May's Conservatives have sought to exploit the anti-nuclear stance of opposition Labor Leader Jeremy Corbyn.

British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson claimed the leftist leader "seems to have no grasp of the need for this country to be strong in the world".

(Source: AFP)

### Macedonia: Opposition leader Zoran Zaev hurt as protesters storm Skopje parliament

Protesters have stormed Macedonia's parliament and attacked legislators after an ethnic Albanian was elected as parliament speaker.

Clashes over several hours on Thursday injured 77 people, including 22 police officers and several MPs, authorities said.

Dozens of protesters, some of them masked, broke through a police cordon after the opposition Social Democrats and parties representing Macedonia's ethnic Albanian minority voted to name Talat Xhaferi as parliament speaker.

Shouting, hurling chairs and grabbing camera tripods abandoned by startled journalists, the protesters attacked parliamentarians, including opposition leader Zoran Zaev, who was seen bleeding from the forehead.

TV footage showed a bloodied Zaev and other Social Democrat politicians surrounded by protesters waving national flags, shouting "traitors" and refusing to allow them to leave.

Many of the protesters were supporters of former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, whose nationalist party won elections in December but did not get enough votes to form a government on its own.

He has been struggling to put together a coalition government and his supporters have been holding nightly street rallies for two months across the country



to protest against the political situation.

A tense standoff lasted for three hours, and hundreds of protesters swarmed through the parliament building.

Police said 30 legislators and a number of journalists who had been trapped inside were eventually evacuated safely.

After being initially overwhelmed, police fired flash grenades and clashed with protesters, expelling them from the building

Neighboring Albania's foreign ministry reacted to the violence, saying it was monitoring "the escalation of the situation in Macedonia with great concern".

Greece's foreign ministry said it was concerned its neighbor Macedonia may be "sliding into deep political

A ministry statement expressed "sadness and concern" and called on Macedonia's political rivals to show a "spirit of compromise and collaboration".

Gruevski called for people to "calm down" after Thursday's incident.

Gruevski and his nationalist VMRO-DPMNE party ruled Macedonia for a decade until December last year when the election saw VMRO-DPMNE secure 51 seats in the 120-seat parliament - two more than the SDSM - but the conservatives failed to reach a deal with king making Albanian parties.

Although Zaev reached an agreement with the Albanian groups, President Gjorge Ivanov refused to give him a mandate to form a government, leaving the country without a functioning leadership.

An ally of Gruevski, the president expressed concern over the controversial demand of Albanian parties that Albanian be made an official language across Mace-

Critics of the demand feared it could lead to the break-up of the country of about two million people - a quarter of whom are ethnic Albanians.

(Source: agencies)

### Trump: 'Major, major' conflict with **North Korea possible**

The United States President Donald Trump said on Thursday a major conflict with North Korea is possible in the standoff over its nuclear and missile programs, but he would prefer a diplomatic outcome to the dis-

"There is a chance that we could end up having a major, major conflict with North Korea. Absolutely," Trump told Reuters in an Oval Office interview ahead of his 100th day in office on Saturday.

Nonetheless, Trump said he wanted to peacefully resolve a crisis that has bedeviled multiple U.S. presidents, a path that he and his administration are emphasizing by preparing a variety of new economic sanctions while not taking the military option off the table.

"We'd love to solve things diplomatically but it's very

In other highlights of the 42-minute interview, Trump was cool to speaking again with Taiwan's president after an earlier telephone call with her angered China.

He also said he wants South Korea to pay the cost of the U.S. THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) anti-missile defense system, which he estimated at \$1 billion, and intends to renegotiate or terminate a U.S. free trade pact with South Korea because of a deep trade deficit with Seoul.

Asked when he would announce his intention to renegotiate the pact, Trump said: "Very soon. I'm announcing

### Xi 'trying very hard'

Trump said North Korea was his biggest global challenge. He lavished praise on Chinese President Xi Jinping for Chinese assistance in trying to rein in Pyongyang. The two leaders met in Florida earlier this month.

"I believe he is trying very hard. He certainly doesn't want to see turmoil and death. He doesn't want to see it. He is a good man. He is a very good man and I got to know him very well."

'With that being said, he loves China and he loves the people of China. I know he would like to be able to do something, perhaps it's possible that he can't," Trump

Trump spoke just a day after he and his top national security advisers briefed U.S. lawmakers on the North Korean threat and one day before U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will press the United Nations Security Council on sanctions to further isolate Pyongyang over its nuclear and missile programs.

The Trump administration on Wednesday declared North Korea "an urgent national security threat and top foreign policy priority." It said it was focusing on economic and diplomatic pressure, including Chinese cooperation in containing its defiant neighbor and ally, and remained open to negotiations.

U.S. officials said military strikes remained an option but played down the prospect, though the administration has sent an aircraft carrier and a nuclear-powered submarine to the region in a show of force.

Any direct U.S. military action would run the risk of massive North Korean retaliation and huge casualties in Japan and South Korea and among U.S. forces in both

Trump, asked if he considered North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un to be rational, said he was operating from the assumption that he is rational. He noted that Kim had taken over his country at an early age.

"He's 27 years old. His father dies, took over a regime. So say what you want but that is not easy, especially at that age."

'I'm not giving him credit or not giving him credit, I'm just saying that's a very hard thing to do. As to whether or not he's rational, I have no opinion on it. I hope he's rational," he said. Trump, rebuffed an overture from Taiwan President

Tsai Ing-wen, who told Reuters a direct phone call with Trump could take place again after their first conversation in early December angered Beijing. China considers neighboring Taiwan to be a rene-

gade province. "My problem is that I have established a very good

personal relationship with President Xi," said Trump. "I really feel that he is doing everything in his power to help us with a big situation. So I wouldn't want to be causing difficulty right now for him." "So I would certainly want to speak to him first."

Trump also said he hoped to avoid a potential gov-

ernment shutdown amid a dispute between congressional Republicans and Democrats over a spending deal with a Saturday deadline looming.

(Source: Reuters)

### **India urged to stop** violence against Muslims

A human rights group has expressed concern over rising brutal attacks in India by self-appointed "cow protectors" against Muslims and lower castes over rumors that they sold, bought or killed cows for beef.

Human Rights Watch said on Friday that Indian authorities should promptly investigate the attacks and prosecute those responsible.

Many critics allege the vigilantes are linked to extremist Hindu groups affiliated with the ruling Bharatiya Ja-

Human Rights Watch says that since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government came to power in 2015, at least 10 Muslims have been killed in mob attacks related to allegations over cows. Modi has condemned the

Eighty percent of India's 1.3 billion people are Hindu, who consider cows to be sacred. The selling of beef is banned in several Indian states.

(Source: AP)

### **Japan inflation stagnant** at 0.2%

Japan's labour market reached its tightest in 26 years but weakness in wages and consumer spending led to stagnant prices, according to a deluge of economic data for March.

The ratio of open jobs to applicants rose 0.02 points to 1.45 times, the highest since November 1990 and within a fraction of the peak hit during Japan's bubble economy of the 1980s.

Yet core consumer prices, excluding fresh food, were up only 0.2 per cent on a year ago, similar to the previous month, as worsening labor shortages prove slow to turn into higher pay and greater spending at the shops.

The figures suggest Japan remains locked in a holding pattern, with the economy growing faster than its long-run potential, but still not reaching the point of a self-sustaining rise in consumption.

"The Bank of Japan's 2 per cent [inflation] target remains far distant, reflecting the continued oversupply of consumer markets, recent oil price and currency movements, and this year's wage settlements," said Yasunari Ueno, chief market economist at Mizuho Securities in Tokyo.

The BoJ kept monetary policy on hold this week, signalling it was too early to consider any move away from the massive monetary stimulus under which it is buying ¥80tn (\$720bn) a year of govern-

Rising employment confirmed the strength of the labor market, with the unemployment rate holding steady at 2.8 per cent, compared with analyst expectations for 2.9 per cent.

Unemployment is at its lowest since the early 1990s. Despite weakness in the yen, however, there was little sign of an acceleration in prices towards the BoJ's goal.

The central bank's preferred definition of inflation, excluding fresh food and energy, fell 0.1 per cent compared with a year ago. "As a whole, there were no signs of aggressive price hiking at the retail level," said Barclays analysts Yuichiro Nagai and Yukito Funakubo.

"However, there were also no signs of a retreat into deflation. "We retain our outlook for year-on-year nationwide core CPI inflation to strengthen gradually with an increasing contribution from (Source: Financial Times) energy components."

### Trump's trade approach 'a step back,' AmCham group says

U.S. President Donald Trump's move to chuck the trade rulebook for a maverick style has been "a step back" for global commerce, said Steve Okun, vice chairman for the Asia Pacific Council of American Chambers of Commerce.

"[For] the four presidents preceding Donald Trump, we had a focus on a multi-lateral system that was rules based, and that evolved over time and it went from FTAs (free-trade agreements) and WTO (World Trade Organization) and up to the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership)," Okun told CNBC's "Street Signs" on

U.S. President Donald Trump's move to chuck the trade rulebook for a maverick style has been "a step back" for global commerce, said Steve Okun, vice chairman for the Asia Pacific Council of American Chambers of Commerce.

"[For] the four presidents preceding Donald Trump, we had a focus on a multi-lateral system that was rules based, and that evolved over time and it went from FTAs (free-trade agreements) and WTO (World Trade Organization) and up to the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership)," Okun told CNBC's "Street Signs" on

"The Trump administration seems to be shifting that from a multilateral to a bilateral and from a rules-based to a transactional," Okun said. "It is certainly a step back."

As an example, Okun cited Trump's indication that China's help with North Korea would lead to changes to any bilateral investment treaties or trying to use foreign policy over the THAAD missile defense system to pressure South Korea on trade.

Okun compared bilateral trade deals to a spaghetti bowl in their complexity.

"The U.S. has 14 different FTAs right now. The U.S.-Singapore FTA has slightly different provisions than the U.S-Korea FTA, which has slightly different provisions than the U.S.-Australia FTA, but that doesn't include countries like Malaysia and Vietnam," he said.

'If you're a business and you have a global supply chain and you trade across borders, how are you going to put all this together to take advantage of those bilaterals? You can't," Okun said. "The multilateral system eliminates the spaghetti bowl problem. And it also brings a set of rules that you can craft your business around and you can craft your supply chain around."

The Trump administration has created an eventful week on

Late Thursday, Trump said he will either renegotiate or terminate a "horrible" trade deal with South Korea and he wanted the country to pay for the \$1 billion THAAD missile defence system the U.S. deployed there, according to a Reuters report.

Trump also told Reuters on Thursday that he had been "psyched" to terminate the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, between the U.S., Mexico and Canada, but that he had reconsidered

Multiple media reports had circulated Wednesday saying Trump was considering an executive order to remove the U.S. from NAFTA, but later Wednesday evening, Trump agreed in phone calls with the leaders of Mexico and Canada that he

wouldn't terminate the treaty and would re-negotiate it instead. The U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross seconded plans to tinker with NAFTA

"The rules of origin in NAFTA need some tightening. The rules of origin are what let material outside of NAFTA to come in and benefit from all the taxes and tariff reductions within NAFTA," Ross told CNBC on Thursday.

"It was a silly idea to let a lot of outside stuff in. The whole idea of a trade deal is to build a fence around the participants inside and give them an advantage over the outside. So there's a conceptual flaw in that."

To an extent, Okun agreed that NAFTA needed renegotiation. "What Secretary Ross was talking about was one of the biggest issues that was negotiated in the TPP," Okun said. "All of that was negotiated at length in that agreement."

Previously, Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, a broad 12-nation trade deal, which the U.S. president claimed was a "disaster" that would hurt U.S. manufacturing.

Okun added, "I wouldn't be surprised if the negotiations start with where we were on the TPP on rules of origin and then apply

# Sanctions war: Russia loses \$50b, West Ioses \$100b

The sanction war has painfully backfired on the Western countries, UN Special Rapporteur Idriss Jazairy said.

Western countries have lost over \$100 billion over three years from the sanctions applied against Russia over the Ukrainian crisis, compared with up to \$55 billion lost by Russia, UN Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures Idriss Jazairy said Friday.

"The sanctioning countries lose more income from sanctions than the targeted country over \$100 against \$50-\$55 billion. The loss of income of Russia from the sanctions, a very rough rule of thumb to apply would be to say that the GDP of Russia has lost about 1 percent as a result of sanctions. Since the GDP of Russia is about \$1.7 trillion, the GDP loss of income over three years is about between \$50-\$55 billion," Jazairy said during a press con-

According to Jazairy, the cost in terms of income loss for source countries resulting from the sanctions is about \$3.2 billion per month.

"If you apply it to three years you get about the loss of income for the sanctioning countries over \$100 billion,"

Jazairy said he would ask in his upcoming report the Western countries and Moscow not to increase sanctions and countermeasures in the future.

"I will ask the sanctioning counties and the recipro-



cating country to make sure that they don't increase the sanctions or the countermeasures. They [should] pledge not to make a situation worse," Jazairy said.

Since 2014, relations between Russia and the European Union and the United States, deteriorated amid the crisis in Ukraine. Brussels, Washington and their allies introduced several rounds of sanctions against Russia on the pretext of its alleged involvement in the Ukrainian conflict, which Moscow has repeatedly denied. In response to the restrictive measures, Russia has imposed a food embargo on some products originating in countries that have targeted it with sanctions.

### Investors are pouring money into European stocks like it's 2015

The evaporation of political risk in Europe is seeing money managers rush into the region's stocks at a clip not seen since the year the equities last surged to an alltime high.

Buoyed by relief over the outcome of the French first-round vote, investors poured \$2.4 billion into European equity funds in the week through April 26, the most since December 2015, according to a Bank of America Merrill Lynch note citing EPFR Global data. The Stoxx Europe 600 Index is poised for its best weekly jump of the year, and strategists at banks including Citigroup Inc. and Barclays Plc predictmore stock gains driven by an acceleration in inflows.

"There has been a buyers' strike over the last year," Citigroup strategists including Jonathan Stubbs wrote in a note this week. "Various investor groups are likely to raise exposure in European equities as political risks fall," they said, including international investors, hedge funds and multi-asset funds.

Money managers are returning to European stocks after a lull in the first quarter, with flows gathering momentum this week as polls signal a victory for centrist Emmanuel Macron in the May runoff against anti-euro candidate Marine Le Pen. The trend reflects a shift in sentiment for investors who pulled out \$113 billion from the region's equity funds last year, with the the April 23 French vote proving bears wrong yet again on political risks.

Underpinning stock gains have been optimism over economic and earnings growth. Data this week showed euro-area economic confidence jumped to an almost 10-year high, while analysts forecast a 10 percent profit increase for Euro

Stoxx 50 members in 2017. European Central Bank President Mario Draghi on Thursday called the region's economic recovery "solid," while maintaining monetary stimulus.

There's optimism about other markets as well. Investors poured \$21 billion into global stocks in the week through Wednesday, the most since the U.S. election and twice the inflows seen in bonds, the Bank of America note shows. U.S. equity funds saw inflows of \$13.8 billion amid optimism that President Donald Trump will cut taxes. (Source: Bloomberg)

### India's economy to become 3rd largest, surpass Japan, Germany by 2030

India is well poised to become the third-largest economy by 2030, surpassing four developed nations Japan, Germany, Britain and France, according to projections by a US government agency.

The estimate by the United States Department for Agriculture Economic Research Service (USDA) assumes the Indian economy will expand annually at an average 7.4% to \$6.84 trillion by 2030. This will make it bigger than that of the economies of Japan (\$6.37 trillion) and Germany (\$4.38 trillion).

What's more, India's annual economic output will be almost double that of Britain (\$3.6 trillion) and France (\$3.44 trillion) in the next 15

International Monetary Fund's managing director Christine Lagarde, who has repeatedly coined India as a "bright spot", has forecast that the Asia's third largest will surpass Germany by 2030.

India's fast growing young population is perceived to boost economic



activity and help the nation outpace ageing developed nations.

Rising aspirations in the world's second most populous country is driving demand for mobile phones, electronic goods, cars and houses.

The government's apex think-tank Niti Aayog on Sunday projected the Indian economy to grow by an annual average rate of 8% in the next

The future looks extremely bright...There is a very good case that we should over the next 15-16 years grow at 8%," Niti Aayog's vice chairman Arvind Panagariya has said. (Source: Hindustan Times)

### **ECB** maintains ultra-loose monetary policy

European Central Bank (ECB) has left key interest rates at historic lows and mass bond-buying unchanged as inflation continues to undershoot its target. But it explicitly acknowledged the vigor of the Eurozone economy.

Following a meeting of its rate-setting governing council on Thursday, the Frankfurt, Germany-based institution kept its main refinancing rate at 0.0 percent, the rate on the marginal lending facility at 0.25 percent, and the deposit rate at minus 0.4 percent - meaning banks have to pay to park money with the central bank.

It also left asset-buying program untouched under which it buys corporate and government bonds worth 60 billion euros (\$65.3 billion) a month until December this year.

The bank's interventions are designed to encourage banks to lend to the real economy, powering growth and pushing inflation convincing upwards trend." towards its target of just below 2.0



But while policymakers, including ECB president Mario Draghi, see a firming recovery in the 19-nation Eurozone, inflation fell back to 1.5 percent in March after briefly overshooting the goal in February.

"Incoming data confirms that the cyclical recovery of the euro area economy is becoming increasingly solid and that downside risks have further diminished," Draghi told reporters after the meeting, adding: "At the same time, underlying inflation pressures continue to remain subdued and have yet to show a

(Source: Deutsche Welle)

### UK economy slows more than forecast as consumers cut back

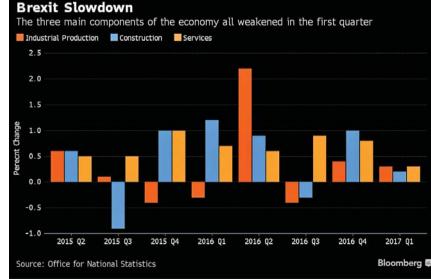
The U.K. economy posted its worst performance in a year as the dominant services industry felt the impact of an intensifying squeeze on living

Growth slowed to 0.3 percent in the first quarter from 0.7 percent in the final three months of 2016, the Office for National Statistics said on Friday. The figure was weaker than the 0.4 percent forecast by economists in a Bloomberg survey. Services grew just 0.3 percent, the least since the start of 2015.

Having made Britain the strongest-growing Group of Seven economy bar Germany last year, consumers are now cutting back in response to rising prices brought on by the depreciation of the pound since the June Brexit vote and higher oil costs.

Households and businesses are also facing a period of heightened uncertainty as Britain prepares for a general election and the start of two years of negotiations to leave the European Union.

Prime Minister Theresa May is hoping to capitalize on her huge lead in polls to increase her Parliament majority in the election, though signs of weakness in the economy will give the opposition parties ammunition to at-



tack her policies.

The downturn in services, which account for 79 percent of the economy, was driven by consumer-focused industries such as retailers, hotels and restaurants. Together, they fell 0.5 percent. Transport, storage and communication declined 0.2 percent. Services overall slowed from growth of 0.8 percent in the fourth quarter.

Industrial production rose 0.3 per-

cent, with buoyant exports -- the result of the weak pound -- helping manufacturers increase output by 0.5 percent. Construction rose just 0.2 percent.

### Consumer squeeze

The data for March are based on estimates and early responses to survey questions. They show industrial production falling 0.7 percent that month -- the third consecutive decline

-- and services output unchanged following a 0.2 percent increase in February. Construction is estimated to have increased 0.3 percent.

The U.K. is the first G-7 nation to report GDP for the first quarter. The U.S. follows later Friday, with economists predicting annualized growth of 1 percent, down from 2.1 percent in the previous three months. The equivalent first-quarter rate for the U.K. was 1.2 percent.

Further evidence of the squeeze on households emerged Friday, with separate surveys showing house prices fell for a second month in April and consumer confidence dipped to the lowest since July.

And the pressure is expected to intensify, economists say. Inflation is pulling ahead of earnings and a record-low saving ratio means people have little room to maintain their spending by setting aside less.

GDP rose 2.1 percent from the first quarter of 2016. Output per head grew just 0.1 percent from the fourth

The first-quarter GDP estimate is the first of three, based on only 44 percent of the information that will ultimately be available.

(Source: Bloomberg)

# 4000MW of new power plants to come online by Mar. 2018

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Energy e s k Minister Houshang Falahatian said that 4000 megawatts (MW) capacity of new power plants is scheduled to be added to the country's electricity network during the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2017- March 20, 2018), Fars news agency

Iran increased its electricity generation capacity by 2.199 gigawatts (GW), boosting it to 76.302GW, in the past Iranian calendar year 1395, which ended on March 20, according to a report by Iran Power Grid Management Company

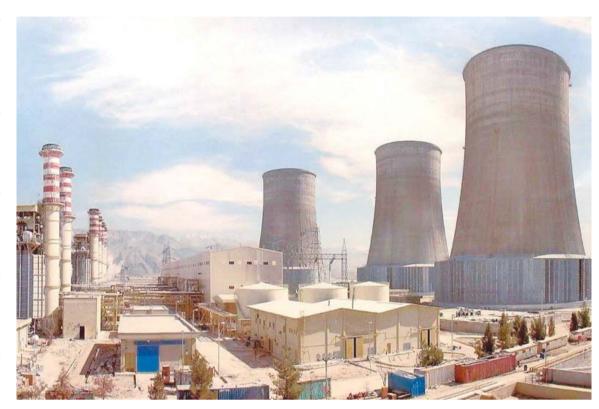
"Adding the new capacity will increase the country's total power generation capacity to over 80,000MW by the end of the current fiscal," Falahatian said.

The official also noted that over the past Iranian calendar year the Energy Ministry attracted more than \$6 billion of investment in this sector.

"We can achieve even more than what is planned, the expected new capacity installation for the last year was 1,800MW and the ministry managed to put 2,200MW capacity of new power plants online, 400MW more than the planned figure," he added.

Iran currently ranks the first in the region and 14th in the world in terms of electricity generation capacity.

In January 2016, Falahatian said that over 95 percent of the country's power transmission equipment are domestically built, adding that Iran is also self-sufficient in manufacturing its power distribution equipment.



### Saudis seen losing market share to Iran on oil cuts

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, is losing market share to Iran and Iraq as a result of OPEC's agreement to curb supplies to bolster prices, according to the head of research at Abu Dhabi Investment Authority.

"If you're talking about winners, you can count Iran and Iraq," Christof Ruehl said at a conference in Dubai.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries agreed to production limits for most of its members at a meeting in November and brought 11 other nations on board with the deal in December. Saudi Arabia, OPEC's biggest producer, agreed to cut output by 486,000 barrels a day while Iraq said it would cut 210,000 barrels a day. Iran was permitted to increase output by 90,000 barrels a day, according to the OPEC accord.

Iran has boosted production in part

due to the end of sanctions restricting its oil sales in January 2016, while Saudi Arabia has made more than its share of output cuts, said Ruehl, who previously worked as BP Plc's chief economist. ADIÁ is the sovereign wealth fund in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates and holder of most of the country's oil

Saudi Arabia knew it would lose share because Iran's production was on the rebound, said Robin Mills, founder of Dubai-based consultant Qamar Energy. "The Saudis agreed to production cuts at a time when Iranian production was at a

Brent crude slipped 20 cents, or 0.4 percent, to \$51.62 a barrel at 9:29 a.m. in Dubai. The global benchmark plunged from its 2014 high of more than \$115 a barrel amid a global supply glut.

There seems to be a consensus that the effort to curb supply should be extended, Saudi Minister of Energy and Industry Khalid Al-Falih told reporters Wednesday in Baku, Azerbaijan. Al-Falih said he'll talk with his Russian counterpart Alexander Novak by phone this week and meet him within the next two weeks.

Saudi Arabia cut production from about 10.5 million barrels a day in December to as low as 9.87 million daily in January and 10 million a day last month, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Iran's output rose to 3.8 million barrels a day in January, the highest since April 2010, the data show. Iran insisted it needed to recover its market share following years of sanctions on its oil industry. Neighboring Iraq pumped 4.43 million barrels a day in March, down 200,000 barrels for the year, according to the data.

The struggle over market share is most pronounced in Asia, according to Mills and Edward Bell, commodities analyst at Dubai-based lender Emirates NBD PJSC. Iran and Iraq increased crude sales to China last month, while Saudi Arabia slipped behind Russia and Angola as the largest suppliers to the nation, data released Tuesday by the General Administration of Customs show.

"The Saudis are losing out because other countries are able to squeeze out more production," Bell of Emirates NBD said. Saudi Arabia is cutting crude pricing to Asia to hold on to its share, Bell said. The kingdom will likely release its official crude pricing for June next week, with most other regional producers following. "The OPEC market share battle hasn't gone away," he said.

.(Source: Bloomberg)

### China oil giants buoyed by higher prices as output stagnates

PetroChina Co., the country's largest 2017," said Laban Yu, an analyst with producer, reported first quarter earnings swung to a profit thanks to the surge in prices, even as total output fell 6.3 percent from a year ago. China Petroleum & Chemical Corp., the refining giant known as Sinopec, saw net income more than double while production dropped 2.4 percent.

Along with Cnooc Ltd., China's biggest offshore explorer, the staterun firms are struggling to halt a drop in domestic crude output that's pushed the country's imports to a record, overtaking the U.S. as the world's largest buyer. And as China's big three raise combined spending for the first time in four years, the focus is beginning to shift to natural gas as the government of President Xi Jinping seeks to cut pollution from

"Higher capital spending may help output in 2018 or 2019, but no rebound is expected to show up for

Jefferies Group LLC in Hong Kong. "Obviously higher oil price did all of them a big favor and helped lift their earnings out of the disaster they experienced a year ago."

Explorers globally are regaining their footing with oil prices stabilizing near \$50 a barrel after a two-year crash as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries leads an international effort to trim output. France's Total SA posted a 56 percent increase in first-quarter profit, also Thursday, beating analyst estimates as prices rebounded and it cut costs while boosting production.

PetroChina rose as much as 0.2 percent to \$5.50 in Hong Kong, compared with a drop of as much as 0.3 percent in the city's benchmark Hang Seng Index. Sinopec lost as much as 0.3 percent to \$6.32 while Cnooc was little changed at \$9.04.

(Source: Bloomberg)

### Total will invest \$500 million to produce shale gas in Argentina

Total SA will spend \$500 million over three to four years to develop a shale-gas field in Argentina as the country's government Tures investors by pledging a minimum price.

"We have giant resources of non-conventional gas under our feet in Argentina," Chief Executive Officer Patrick Pouyanne told reporters at a conference in Paris. "It's the beginning of a nice story."

The French energy giant has given the go-ahead to develop the first phase of the Aguada Pichana Este license in the Vaca Muerta formation. Total also plans to increase its interest in the license, co-owned by YPF SA, Wintershall Energia SA and Panamerica Energy LLC, to 41 percent from about 27 percent, pending approval from local authorities.

To spur drilling at Vaca Muerta, one of the largest shale formations outside North America, the Argentine government has extended a program

that ensures a minimum price for the gas companies produce until 2021. Total, already enjoying lower drilling costs following crude's slump, has highlighted the need to get new projects off the ground to avoid a future shortfall in energy supply.

The announcement on Vaca Muerta marks the first of 10 large final investment decisions on new oil and gas ventures that Total plans for this year and next. The company is budgeting as much as \$17 billion a year in capital expenditure, including resource renewal, through 2020.

Gas from the Vaca Muerta project will be treated at the existing Aguada Pichana plant, which will ramp up to its full daily capacity of 16 million cubic meters, or 100,000 barrels of oil equivalent, according to Total. The company produced 78,000 barrels of oil equivalent a day in Argentina last year, it said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

### Oil rises on potential OPEC cut extension, but still faces second weekly loss

Oil prices rose on Friday but were still on track for a second straight weekly loss on concerns that an OPEC-led production cut has failed to significantly tighten an oversupplied market.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was at \$49.43 per barrel at 0649 GMT, up 46 cents, or 0.94 percent, from their last close. However, WTI is still set

LINGO SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETERS

Your partner in Int'l communications with more than 3 decades experience For more **+989380691300** info pls. call: +2188179289

for a small weekly loss and is around 8 percent below its April peak.

Brent crude was at \$51.91 per barrel, up 47 cents, or 0.91 percent. Brent is almost around 8.5 percent down from its April peak and is also on track for a second, albeit small, week of declines.

Traders said that Friday's rises came on the back of OPEC saying it was keen to find a deal that would ensure a drawdown of excess fuel supplies.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers including Russia originally pledged to cut output by almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) only during the first half of the year. But OPEC has come under pressure to extend the cuts to cover all of 2017 in order to counter bulging supplies elsewhere.

"OPEC...effectively said the production cut will be extended, meeting the reality of the restart of a big Libyan oil field and the continued expansion of

U.S. shale oil," said Greg McKenna, chief market strategist at futures brokerage AxiTrader.

The ongoing supply overhang is in part due to surging U.S. production, which has risen by 10 percent since mid-2016 to 9.27 million bpd.

Consultancy Rystad Energy expects U.S. shale oil output to grow by 100,000 bpd each month for the rest of this year and into 2018, well above estimates by the U.S. Energy Information Administration for monthly gains of about 29,000 bpd in 2017 and 57,000 bpd in 2018.

Outside the United States, rising output in Libya, an OPEC-member exempt from the cuts, was adding to plentiful

ANZ bank said that OPEC was under pressure to extend the cuts.

"Even though inventories have started to fall, they remain at elevated levels...Stocks have settled into the 62-65 days consumption or approximately



2.98 billion barrels," ANZ bank said in a note on Friday

This compares with the five-year average of 55 days' worth of consumption that Saudi Arabia wants to achieve.

In order to achieve this, ANZ said it expected OPEC to extend its cuts beyond the first half of 2017, although it added that "there is some risk that non-OPEC producers (such as Russia) may baulk at the suggestion".

(Source: Reuters)

### **EU** commissioner expected in Tehran today for arranging 1st Iran-EU energy forum

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — European Climate Action and d e s k Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete will arrive in Tehran today to set the ground for holding the first-ever Iran-EU Business Forum on Sustainable Energy,



The EU commissioner will discuss the prerequisites of holding the energy forum in a two-day meeting with Iranian officials namely Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, and other affiliated

As reported, Director-General of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Adnan Z. Amin will also attend

The participants will hash out feasibility of sustainable development of energy in Iran, expansion of Iran-EU trade ties in energy sector, and the country's potentials in developing renewable energies

### Iran expects to sign 1st IPC oil deal within a month

Iran expects to sign its first oil deal under the new Iran Petroleum Contract (IPC) model within a month, a senior Iranian official said on Thursday.

"We expect that very soon, hopefully within a month we will have the first one to be signed," Deputy Oil Minister Rokneddin Javadi told a conference in Paris.

In January, Iran said 29 companies from more than a dozen countries were allowed to bid for oil and gas projects under the IPC, which Tehran hopes will boost production after years of sanctions.

But the IPC model has been delayed several times due to some internal conflictions.

The IPC model ends a buy-back system dating back more than 20 years under which Iran did not allow foreign firms to book reserves or take equity stakes in Iranian companies. (Source: Reuters)

### **Saudi minister: Important** to try to agree on oil cuts deal extension

Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said on Friday that it was important to try and agree on an extension of a global oil cuts deal into the second half of the year, Reuters re-

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, along with Russia and other non-OPEC producers, pledged to cut output by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) in the first half

That deal expires at the end of June. Falih, who was speaking in Astana, said that it was important to agree on an extension with both OPEC and non-OPEC members.

Platts also quoted Iraqi oil minister Jabbar al-Luaibi on Thursday that Iraq believes it would be acceptable for the OPEC-led production cut deal to be continued in its current form.

The producer group meets on May 25 to decide whether to extend the landmark agreement that came into force in

Luaibi was tight-lipped on whether OPEC's second-largest producer would seek an exemption as it attempted last year in the run-up to the OPEC and non-OPEC deal before coming on (Source: Agencies)

### **U.S.** refiners bet on strong exports to balance market

U.S. refiners have come out of maintenance season betting that big exports to Mexico and South America will help alleviate high product inventories and boost margins as the critical summer driving season nears.

The first wave of earnings results from several large independent U.S. refiners showed that they are not chasing U.S. gasoline profits, due to already high inventories and steady-but-not-spectacular demand. Instead, they are taking advantage of demand from places like Mexico and South America, where sputtering local refineries cannot meet cus-

Marathon Petroleum Corp, which just completed its largest-ever quarter of turnaround projects at its three Gulf Coast refineries, expects to process more crude than ever in the second quarter, the company said in its earnings release on

"The export book continues to be strong," Marathon CEO Gary Heminger said, noting that he expects company exports to grow from about 200,000 bpd earlier this year to 300,000 bpd in the second quarter. It is expected to process about 1.82 million bpd in the second quarter.

Valero Energy Corp, the largest U.S. independent refiner by capacity, said it expected its 15 refineries to run up to 96 percent of their combined capacity of 3.1 million barrels per day (bpd) in the second quarter.

There is concern, however, that high run rates might exceed the ability of refiners to export products. U.S. gasoline inventories, which had been drawing down, have rebounded to uncommonly high levels for the season, sapping refining (Source: Reuters)

### **Has France outlived the** traditional role of its president?

When Charles de Gaulle created the role of president of France almost 60 years ago, the job description was not like other heads of state. It required someone who could represent the grandeur and spirit of France, at a time when it was recovering from the wounds of occupation in the Second World War and going through the trauma of the Algerian war of independence.

In brief, the presidency of the French Fifth Republic was tailor-made for the general himself - someone who could claim to be above politics and take the difficult decision to decolonize Algeria, which until then had been considered part of France. That step almost brought France to civil war.

The general's legacy

The general's legacy has weighed on the shoulders of



his successors. The intellectual brilliance of Valery Giscard d'Estaing carried him through one sevenyear term, and the devious Francois Mitterand managed in the course of two terms to keep secret the truth about his declining health and his extra-mari-

Later presidents, serving in times of less deferential media, have had less success, culminating in the fate of the outgoing socialist president Francois Hol-

lande, who has been so unpopular that he did not run for a second term. Most of Europe reacted with relief when the independent centrist Emmanuel Macron came top of the first round of voting in the presidential election, pushing the farright leader Marine Le Pen into second place. But a question mark remains: is the job of president of the French Fifth Republic too big for any politician today?

In de Gaulle's eyes, the victory of a suitably grand president - such as he became - should be followed by a parliamentary landslide in sympathy, even if the head of state did not formally lead a political party. That was the meaning of representing the "spirit of France".

Today the spirit of the country is angry and suspicious of politicians: in the first round, 41 per cent of voters cast their ballots for anti-establishment figures, while Macron won support by appearing as a fresh, new face at the head of a recently minted political movement. This is something of a triumph of image over reality - he is a product of the elite, having served as a Rothschild's banker and in the key position of economy minister in the discredited socialist government of president Hollande.

His great advantage is not being Le Pen. With his charm and financial experience he was able to collect the votes of those who still believe in a strong European Union, in global trading links and open borders – the optimists as opposed to the pessimists in the anti-Muslim, Eurosceptic Le Pen camp. With an electorate that is only weakly committed to him, Macron still faces a high hurdle in motivating the voters to push him over the line in the second round of voting on May 7.

But even in the event of victory for Macron – and he is the clear favorite - he may still find himself short of a majority in parliament when the legislative elections take place in June. His political movement, En Marche!, is barely a year old and has no members of the National Assembly. In a spirit worthy of the general himself, Macron hopes that many sitting deputies in the National Assembly will abandon their party affiliation and defect to his movement. They seem unlikely to do so. The problem here is that a new president who cannot summon a reliable parliamentary majority may become a lame duck on day one. The powerful presidency envisaged by Gen de Gaulle can be reduced to ribbon cutting

Macron is clearly no pushover. But the brutal truth is that he has climbed to prominence on the rubble of the two-party system that has kept French politics stable since 1958. If the politics of left and right reasserts itself, then Macron may find himself squeezed into impotence between these two poles. If the party system remains weak, then his future would be an unending scrabble for votes to get his program through parliament.

### The Fifth Republic

The Fifth Republic has been here before. In 1997, the conservative president Jacques Chirac called an early election to try to increase his parliamentary majority, and found himself facing a socialist-dominated parliament. He was obliged to name the socialist Lionel Jospin as prime minister, ceding to

him leadership in domestic policy. Unlike in the United States, where conflict between the presidency and Congress is built into the constitution, in France, with a long tradition of a significant state role in the economy, the deadlock of cohabitation is a recipe for stagnation.

Macron is labelled a progressive, but this means different things to different audiences. He believes in liberalizing the French economy by making it easier to hire and fire. Unemployment for those under 25 in France is now around 25 per cent compared with about 7 per cent in Germany. But young people find little solace in existing measures - including those favored by Macron – which have meant that more than half of young people in work are perpetually cycling through short-term contracts, deprived of the stable employment enjoyed by their parents.

In a country with a tradition of viewing Anglo-American finance-based capitalism as a threat to France's way of life, Macron has told the voters that "modernity is disruptive" and they have to get used to it. This is the antithesis of Le Pen's diatribes against "wild globalization" which have struck a chord with both young and old in France. Macron's greatest challenge is likely to be after his election. If he proves unable to address the deep-seated problems facing France and the European Union, it may turn out to be the last gasp for de Gaulle's view of the president of the republic as a towering figure behind whom the political class ought to rally.

(Source: The National)

# Will Riyadh's new DC ambassador draw U.S. deeper into Yemen war?

Saudi Arabia is pressing the Trump administration to become more involved in supporting its war in Yemen. Bogged down in a quagmire of their own making, the Saudis want the United States to give them unqualified support. Fifty-five years ago, the Saudis pressed President John F. Kennedy to support them in another war in Yemen; Kennedy wisely deferred.

Riyadh has high expectations that the new U.S. administration will provide significant support for their next major military operation in Yemen to seize Hodeidah, the largest port on the Red Sea, to tighten the blockade on the Houthi fighters and supporters of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

### Diplomatic backing

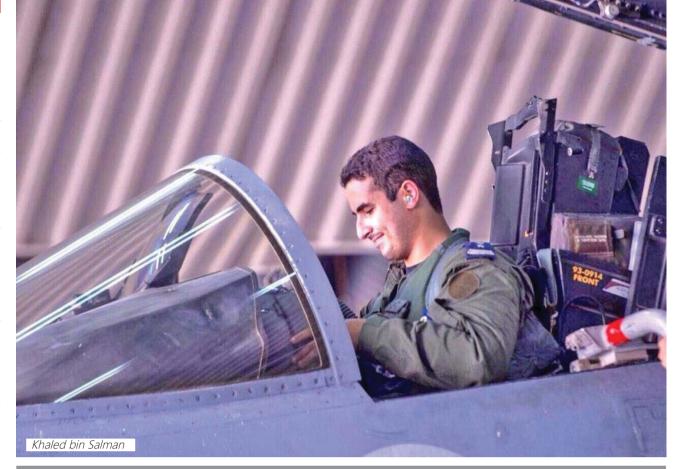
The offensive will be the most complex operation of the war so far, as the Houthis seem determined to fight to keep the port. The Saudis want American help to ensure their offensive does not end in a bloody repulse; they want more intelligence, munitions, naval support and diplomatic backing.

Former U.S. President Barack Obama supported the Saudi war in Yemen, but with limits. Obama was skeptical of the Saudi claims that Iran was determining the Houthis' policy or that the Houthis were the equivalent of Hezbollah. The Obama team pressed for a political solution, especially in the second year

In 1962, an Egyptian-backed coup toppled the Yemeni monarchy in Sanaa. Cairo sent tens of thousands of troops to support the republican government; the Soviets provided air power and hundreds of advisers. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser promised that the Yemeni coup would prompt a revolution in Saudi Arabia and an uprising in the British colony in south Yemen. A new Arab Republic of Arabia would emerge and unite with Egypt under Nasser's

While Saudi Crown Prince Faisal attended the UN General Assembly in New York, the Egyptian expeditionary force poured into Yemen via Hodeidah. Kennedy invited the prince to lunch at the White House, where Faisal pressed Kennedy to support the royalist opposition and help their insurgency in the Saudi borderlands. The Saudis were already getting help covertly from the British. Subsequently, the Israelis joined the campaign to back the royalists and bog Nasser down in a quagmire in Yemen.

Kennedy hesitated to back the Saudis, but committed to defending the



Bogged down in a quagmire of their own making, the Saudis want the United States to give them unqualified support.

kingdom from outside aggression and internal unrest. This was an expansion of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1943 commitment to provide security against external threats. But Kennedy was not prepared to join the clandestine war with the royalists and he recognized the republican government.

Kennedy invited Faisal to the private quarters of the White House to continue the conversation in a more intimate setting without advisers. He told Faisal that the real threat to the kingdom came from its own people who were tired of King Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud's corruption and misrule. The kingdom needed reform or it would collapse like the Yemeni monarchy.

Faisal agreed with Kennedy's assessment. He promised that he would take immediate measures to reform the kingdom and ease his brother off the throne. He would abolish slavery, still legal in the country, and expand education, including for girls. Within a year, Faisal had done all three.

■ Tough challenges

challenges. The Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) had to be grounded three times in the next five years because its pilots kept defecting to Egypt with their jets. The same thing happened to the Royal Jordanian Air Force when King Hussein sent a squadron to Jeddah to show solidarity with the Saudis. In June 1963, Kennedy sent American fighter jets to the kingdom to deter the Egyptians from bombing royalist camps inside Saudi territory. The deployment was called Operation Hard Surface and was Kennedy's only deployment of troops in the Middle East. But the CIA stayed out of the war in Yemen.

The war lasted for over eight years, and the humanitarian damage to the country was devastating. In the end, the royalists lost and the British Crown Colony in Aden became the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the only communist country in the Arab world. By then, Nasser had lost the Six-Day War and King Faisal was firmly on the throne awash in petrodollars.

Kennedy's handling of the Yemeni crisis Saudi Arabia still faced tough came amid his dealings with the Cuban

missile crisis and the Chinese invasion of India; it was a virtuoso performance of diplomacy and statesmanship. He defended the Saudi kingdom, but stayed out of the Yemeni quagmire.

The lesson of Kennedy's Yemeni crisis is that Washington needs to be candid with Riyadh. Kennedy told Faisal his deep threat was from the monarchy's own weaknesses and deficiencies. He agreed Egypt was a danger, but that it should not be exaggerated. Kennedy provided tangible support to defend the kingdom, but stayed out of the quarrels in Yemen. It was a wise decision.

The architect of the current Yemeni war is the Saudi king's son, Deputy Crown Prince and Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman, who is apparently also the darling of the Trump team. On April 23, the king promoted another one of his sons who is a former RSAF pilot, Khaled bin Salman, to be the Saudi ambassador to Washington. He will be the perfect interlocutor for a frank and candid discussion about the future of the Saudi-American entente.

(Source: Al Monitor)

# Obama has a powerful voice. He shouldn't use it for paid speeches

It's still early, but so far Barack Obama's post-presidency has been a disappointment. On Monday – during his first public appearance since Trump's inauguration – Obama touched on income inequality. But as is becoming glaringly obvious to all, Obama is now firmly in the 1% himself thanks in no small part to corporate America.

The optics of some of Obama's decisions since leaving office have been damaging. We learned last week that he would be paid a whopping \$400,000 speaking fee from Cantor Fitzgerald LP, a bond firm known for dealing in credit default swaps, the fancy financial instruments that helped trigger the 2008 financial meltdown.

Then, there are the vacations. Of course, the former president did deserve a holiday. But did it have to be with the Billionaires' Club? There was a widely reported visit to Richard Branson's place in British Virgin Islands for kitesurfing, photos of which went around the globe. In French Polynesia, this was followed by a jaunt on David Geffen's 45ft yacht with celebrities including Tom Hanks, Oprah Winfrey and Bruce Springsteen.

Post-White House greed has become customary and speaking fees have become accepted tips for retiring public servants, tracing back to Gerald Ford. A Japanese communications conglomerate paid Ronald Reagan \$2m for speeches.

The Clintons were the champions of buck-raking, together fetching more than \$158m in speaking fees. They also loved rubbing shoulders with billionaires and sailing on glitzy yachts. George W Bush made 200 paid speeches and received what now seems a paltry \$7m for his memoir, Decision Points.

But we are in a different era right now. On Monday, in Chicago, Obama had his first post-presidential speech and did not utter a single word about his successor, who recklessly and falsely accused Obama of spying on him and has set about reversing almost all of his policies.

Explaining why the former president will remain silent on Trump for the time being, his aides said he was replicating the gentlemanly behavior of W, who refrained from criticizing him. (W reportedly resented that Jimmy



A Wall Street firm will pay the former president \$400,000 for a speech. This kind of kowtowing to the billionaire class has left the Democrats morally bankrupt.

Carter criticized his father after losing to the Reagan-Bush ticket.) But these are not gentlemanly times and these customs should all be broken.

### Morally bankrupt

The habitual kowtowing of senior Democrats to the billionaire class has left their party close to morally bankrupt. Bernie Sanders was right to hammer Hillary during the primaries for her speaking fees from Wall Street. Even her most ardent supporters found these speaking fees indefensible. They were certain to be fodder for her

It was misguided of Obama to have signed on with the same DC speakers' bureau as the Clintons, the Harry Walker Agency. For sure, it's easy money. This giant of the speaking circuit has enriched the Clintons to the tune of \$158m. During her campaign, Hillary explained that she

took all that money because "it was what they offered".

But do the Ohamas really need the effor One of the most attractive things about having Barack and Michelle Obama in the White House was the absence of ethical conflicts. They seemed to have impeccable moral judgment and real family values. And, thanks to a \$65m book deal with Penguin Random House, and a pot of money from the former president's previous books, they are not in bad shape financially.

They deserve to be grandly feted in Berlin by Angela Merkel and, with all the work Michelle did in her garden, to appear at an Italian food conference. But both European stops will also include paid speeches, according to the New York Times.

Bernie Sanders is right that the Democrats need to become a grassroots party again and represent the interests of working people, not billionaires. He is right that the Obama administration's failure to prosecute the major Wall Street figures responsible for the financial crash is a scandal. More buck-raking on Wall Street will make the lax enforcement seem even more suspect

Obama needs to be the leader of the Democratic party right now. There is no one else. That's why Sarah Kovner, a Clinton supporter and longtime Democratic activist, told the Times: "We've got to hear from him."

Hillary Clinton has been discredited by her unexpected loss of the election, a political mortal wound. While the loser of an election is sometimes viewed as the leader of the out-of-power party, Clinton, at 69, is not positioned to make a third run for the White House and no longer sits atop a money-filled political organization.

Neither Nancy Pelosi nor Chuck Schumer, the congressional minority leaders, can fill the void. The new DNC chairman, Tom Perez, is almost a complete un-

With the Republicans in total control of the government, the Democrats need their brightest star. It's going to take a long time for new leaders to emerge, and Bernie and Elizabeth Warren cannot be the only loud voices speaking out against this new regime. Speak, Obama, speak. Just not for money.

(Source: The Guardian)

# Worst 100 days ever

### By John Feffer

If I were a Trump supporter, I'd be furious at the coverage of the president's first 100 days. The mainstream media has engaged in a bout of competitive schadenfreude as headline writers and columnists vie for the distinction of deriving the most pleasure from the administration's failures.

Pundits and journalists have made much of the legislation unpassed, the positions unfilled, the appointments unseated, and the promises unmet. It is of a piece with the campaign cov-

This was, after all, the un-president: a man without qualifications to serve, without a popular mandate from the voters, and, once elected, without much interest in the day-to-day slog of governing. At every opportunity, he seems to prefer to decamp to his Florida mansion, retreat to the nearest links, or set off on yet another "victory tour" of the states he won in the elec-

In the lead up to the 100-day mark on April 29, ABC and The Washington Post published a poll demonstrating that Trump, at this juncture in his tenure, is also the most unpopular president in the modern age. Even the administration's last-minute efforts to tap into the more nationalistic sentiments of the electorate by bombing the Syrian Army, bombing the Taliban in Afghanistan, and threatening to bomb the North Koreans seemed to make little difference. Only 42 percent of the country approve of the president's performance (compared to Obama's 69 percent at the same point in his first

At the bottom of The Washington Post article on this poll, however, is a fascinating little tidbit. Pollsters asked the respondents which candidate they supported in the presidential election. Not surprisingly, the figures corresponded more or less to the popular vote. Respondents said that they favored Clinton over Trump by 46 percent to 43 percent.

But then, when asked whom they would vote for if the election were held again today, the respondents delivered a surprise. They actually favored Trump over Clinton, 43 to 40 percent.

That's astonishing. The candidate who lost the popular vote, who has done pretty much nothing since the inauguration other than put his foot in his mouth or on the putting green, who has the lowest approval ratings after 100 days of any president in the modern era, would still beat Hillary Clinton in a rematch — and probably not just in the Electoral College either.

There are three reasons for this cognitive dissonance. First, although her greatest sin is that she's a conventional politician, Hillary Clinton inspires considerable hatred across large tracts of American politics. Second, a certain raction of Trump supporters will stand by their man even if he were to sweep aside his orange comb-over to reveal a pair of devil's horns. According to the same poll, although only 85 percent of Clinton voters pledged their continued allegiance to their candidate, a remarkable 96 percent of Trump voters refused to budge in their support. Talk about brand loyalty.

Which brings us to the third reason. The Trump administration has indeed displayed unprecedented incompetence in its first 100 days. But not everyone in the country views that incompetence the same way that the mainstream media does. Indeed, two separate and opposite theories have emerged to explain away what, according to the common-sense view, looks like a lot of people in high places who just don't know what they're do-

# The uses of incompetence

According to the adherents of the first theory, the administration of Donald Trump is so dedicated to the deconstruction of the state that it's using incompetence as a tool. What better way to tear down liberal social programs and undo the regulatory apparatus than to install the manifestly ill-equipped, like Scott Pruitt at EPA or Rick Perry at DOE, in agencies devoted to missions they either don't understand or don't appreciate?

Meanwhile, President Trump is making contradictory statements, changing his positions on a daily basis, and spouting outright falsehoods in order to throw off his adversaries, both do-



### Are Trump's stumbles a brilliant ploy to "deconstruct the state," a political performance, or actual incompetence?

mestically and abroad. His enemies will underestimate him. They won't be able to predict his actions. They'll be scared into adopting conciliatory positions for fear that, like a ruthless and entirely unprepared narcissist, he'll lash out irrationally and without his country's best interests at heart.

In other words, what might seem like mental illness is in fact deliberate

The second theory holds that the Trump administration is honestly trying to get things done, but a "deep state" — composed either of Obama appointees or national security operatives is opposing him at every turn. Indeed, this deep state is so influential that it's turned Trump's head on Syria (to bomb Assad), China (to make nice), Russia (to destroy the promise of détente), and trade (to back away from a border-ad-

incomprehensible policy maneuvers. It mishandled its travel ban (twice), fumbled the health-care replacement bill, and alienated members of Congress on both sides of the aisle with its initial budget proposal. Trump has had embarrassing interactions with the leaders of Russia, Australia, and Germany (among others). The only obvious victory in its first three months has been the appointment of a Supreme Court justice, but that required Senate Republicans to deploy the "nuclear option" and confirm with a simple majority (rather than the hallowed tradition of the filibuster-proof 60 votes).

Then there have been the self-destructive appointments. The congressional confirmation process weeded out a few of the worst performers, like Labor Department designee Andrew Puzder, while scandal claimed others, like National Security Adviser Michael The "deep state," according to the Flynn and would-be NSC communica-

### Incompetence, in their view, is fake news. The first 100 days, as staged by fading reality star Donald Trump, has been practically a second American Revolution.

more conspiratorial sources, is aligned with a range of international actors, all arrayed against Trump. This list includes international financial institutions, transnational political entities like the UN, and liberal elites (who might not even be liberal, like Angela Merkel of Germany).

Certainly Trump advisers like Steve Bannon are committed to cutting back on all the parts of the government they don't like (while beefing up those parts they do). And certainly the administration has encountered considerable resistance inside the Beltway and in the world at large to its more radical programs. Yet these explanations are not fully satisfactory.

Which leaves the third possibility that the incompetence of Trump and his cronies is neither a strategy nor the result of a counter-strategy. The U.S. government is a tremendously complex mechanism, and even smart policy wonks like Bill Clinton and Barack Obama made big mistakes in their first 100 days. Install an ignorant and incurious president who's brought in a coterie of the narrow-minded and what do you expect?

Thus, the Trump administration has engaged in a stunning display of ham-fisted, tone-deaf, and downright tions head Monica Crowley.

But the Trump administration has also been quite effective in auto-destruction, as James Hohmann points out in the Post. Here are some of the early departures from the Trump team: Chris Christie (head of the transition team), Katie Walsh (deputy chief of staff), Boris Epshteyn (special assistant to the president), Gerrit Lansing (chief digital adviser), Anthony Scaramucci (head of the Office of Public Liaison and Intergovernmental Affairs), K.T. McFarland (deputy national security advisor), Craig Deere (NSC senior director for Western Hemisphere Affairs), and Shermichael Singleton (senior adviser to Ben Carson). Close to the exit door are counter-terrorism advisor Sebastian Gorka (for his ties to a Nazi-affiliated organization) and Sean Spicer (whose incompetence as press secretary has become legendary).

The Trump revolution has been devouring itself at record speed.

### What Americans think

Public opinion pollsters suffered a huge loss of credibility after the results of the 2016 presidential election came in. Up to the last minute, the well-respected FiveThirtyEight site was giving Hillary Clinton a 71.4 percent chance



**Certainly Trump advisers like Steve Bannon** are committed to cutting back on all the parts of the government they don't like (while beefing up those parts they do).

One of the problems with polling is that it doesn't capture the relative fervency of the respective constituencies. Hillary Clinton had fire in the belly, but many of her supporters did not. Trump's supporters, on the other hand, were more fired up than even their candidate.

That's why the latest poll out of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs is somewhat misleading. The headline is that the U.S. public sides more with the mainstream foreign policy establishment than with Donald Trump on issues from trade to NATO. Thus, according to the poll, a clear majority of Americans favor U.S. commitment to existing security alliances, embrace economic globalization and free trade, and support robust engagement in world affairs.

The Council acknowledges, however, that on certain key issues, the public diverges from the elite:

The American public and opinion leaders are in fact divided over several key issues, including the importance of protecting American jobs, U.S. immigration policy, and the importance of protecting U.S. allies' security. Perhaps not coincidentally, these areas where elite-public gaps exist are also the issue areas where Donald Trump's message has resounded the loudest.

Wait a second. These three positions are in fact the flip side of the three issues where the preferences of the public and the Blob supposedly overlap. Americans have a rhetorical commitment to globalization but they actually put American jobs first. They believe in NATO but they actually don't see the important of coming to the defense of allies, which is the essential element of the security alliance. And they want the United States to remain engaged in the world but not to the extent that the world engages with us

by coming to our shores. Then, if you look closer at the supposed overlap, it dissolves into the same problem of fervency that threw off the compasses of pollsters in November 2016. For instance, 41 percent of Republican voters view globalization negatively and 36 percent want the United States to stay out of world affairs. Meanwhile, 79 percent want to 'build a wall" to keep out immigrants, and 75 percent see Islamic fundamentalism as a critical threat. The numbers are even starker for Trump's core sup-

Now take another look at Trump's first 100 days from this perspective. The administration cancelled U.S. participation in the Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement and made an expensive bid to keep U.S. manufacturing jobs. It has continued to press for the "Wall" on the border with Mexico in the face of congressional opposition. It signed executive orders to keep out people from seven (then six) predominantly Muslim countries.

Everything else is noise. Sure, some of Trump's far-right supporters were angry that he bombed the Syrian Army, didn't withdraw the United States from NATO, alienated Moscow, and banished Steve Bannon from the National Security Council. But Trump's core supporters don't care much about these issues. What the liberal media sees as failures, flip-flops, or sheer incompetence comes across, in Trump country, as good-faith efforts to upend the foreign policy consensus and fundamentally reorient U.S. priorities.

Incompetence, in their view, is fake news. The first 100 days, as staged by fading reality star Donald Trump, has been practically a second American Revolution.

But incompetence has very real effects. Domestically, the courts and Congress and civil society can contain the damage to a certain extent. Internationally, the damage could be cata-

This week, Trump invited the Senate to the White House for a briefing on North Korea. Virtually every expert on North Korea from across the political spectrum has called a preemptive strike a very bad idea. A competent administration would heed these words. An incompetent administration might decide to roll the dice because it doesn't understand the game, the odds, or the consequences.

If you thought the first 100 days were bad, prepare yourself for something incomparably worse, something that even Trump country would recognize as an epic fail.

### Turkey's Kurdish agenda

By Dr. Binoy Kampmark

ny doubts that Turkey's involvement in the conflict against Islamic State is purely symbolic were dispelled by a latest round of air strikes against Kurdish positions in northeast Syria and Iraq's Sinjar region, killing at least 20 fighters. (The number from Ankara is a more inflated 70). Iraqi government officials were flawed by the action, infuriated by its audacity; the US State Department was troubled and confused.

"We are very concerned, deeply concerned," claimed spokesman Mark Toner, "that Turkey conducted air strikes earlier today in northern Syria as well as northern Iraq without proper coordination with the United States or the broader global coalition to defeat IS." Toner also explained that such strikes "were not approved by the coalition and led to the unfortunate loss of life of our partner forces in the fight against" Islamic State.

The Pentagon seemed less troubled, concerned more with logistical error and plain bungling among coalition

"We don't want our partners hitting other partners," came a statement from a senior US defence official. 'We've got to figure out exactly who got hit. We don't know yet. We do know where the strikes were, but we don't know exactly who is dead."



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is very much on top of the world - his world, at least. On the home front, he continues a savage campaign against alleged coup plotters through mass detentions. He is beaming from the referendum results held this month that granted him new constitutional powers.

Refuting the suggestion that this latest round of belligerence was an act of introspective, isolated adventurism, he explained that,

"We shared this with the US and Russia and we are sharing it with Iraq as well. It is an operation that (Iraqi Kurdistan President Massoud) Barzani has been informed about." Such an interpretation stretches the meaning of sharing, to say the least.

A statement from the Turkish military justified the strikes on a long grounded and orthodox basis: that the groups in question had links with the Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK, deemed by both Washington and Ankara as a terrorist group. The fighters in question had become targets as a preventative measure against the smuggling of weapons and munitions into Turkey that might end up being used by the PKK against the Turkish state. The agenda for liberation has no borders:

To destroy these terror hubs which threaten the security, unity and integrity of our country and our nation and as part of our rights based on international law, air strikes have been carried out... and terrorist targets have been struck with success."

The PKK presence in Sinjar was yet another consequence of violence and its bitter fruit, a response to the murderous efforts of Islamic State militants against the local Yazidi population that saw genocide and enslavement practiced against thousands. Erdoğan is less sentimental out the reaction to IS exploits, concerned that the PKK presence risks creating a "new Qandil" reminiscent of the organization's base bordering Turkey, Iraq and Iran.

The bloody melange looks all the more complicated for having the US-backed Popular Protection Units (YPG), being targeted by a NATO and US ally, a point that underscores Turkey's ambivalent role in fighting various fundamentalist groups in the conflict. Turkey is keeping its enemies traditional.

The YPG was in little doubt what the actions had done, expressing its anger in a Twitter post.

"By this attack, Turkey is trying to undermine [the] Raqqa operation, give (IS) time to reorganize and put in danger live of thousands of" displaced persons.

For some months now, Ankara has been insisting that Washington adopt a different approach to their YPG allies, one of studied disentanglement from the Kurdish temptation. Preference, at least from the Turkish side of things, is given to closer cooperation with Syrian units, notably in efforts to remove Islamic State forces from

An even more stern tone has been directed at Baghdad, accused of dragging its feet on the issue of dealing with the Kurdish problem. A statement by spokesman Saad al-Hadithi ventured a condemnation, claiming that the raids were "a violation of international law and of Iraqi sovereignty." Much of this will fall on deaf ears, given the porous, contingent nature of the current Iraqi and Syrian borders. Large powers trample and stomp, and the governments in question seem mere caretakers for the next

hostile engagement. The Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs in the Kurdish north had little time to lavish legitimacy on the Turkish assault,

but it had a concession to make: "PKK has been problematic for the people of the Kurdistan region and, despite broad calls to withdraw, refuses to leave Sinjar."

Accordingly, the "PKK must stop destabilising and escalating tensions in the area to allow life to return to the people of the area." A frightful mess and one that Erdoğan has every intention of complicating.



# How many civilians were killed? I'll get back to you

### By Micah Zenko and Jennifer Wilson

Last week, the U.S. military announced an accomplishment that has come to define progress in the war on terrorism the death of yet another senior terrorist leader

These now-routine reports are touted by officials as bringing "justice" to terrorists, delivering a "significant blow" to their ability to maneuver and operate, and even "eradicating" the threats they pose.

On Friday, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), Colonel John Thomas, told reporters that special operations forces had killed a "close associate" of the ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

This announcement came fifteen days after the ground raid that killed him on April 6 — coincidentally, the same day as President Donald Trump's cruise missile strike on an airfield in Homs, Syria.

As the United States ramps up its airstrikes and targeted raids against ISIS in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, there has been a corresponding increase in reported civilian casualties.

At least 3/111 civilians killed

Airwars estimates that at least 3,111 civilians have been

campaign began in August 2014. However, CENTCOM implausibly assess that "at least 229 civilians have been unintentionally killed" in all 19,607 strikes.

CENTCOM publishes a monthly civilian casualty report including reported non-combatant casualties found credible (meaning a strike more likely than not resulted in the death or injury of a civilian), those found noncredible (meaning there is not sufficient information to determine whether a civilian was harmed) and ongoing investigations. There are currently forty-three open investigations, one of which has been going on for over

On average, it has taken CENTCOM ninety-five days to announce whether a coalition strike resulted in a civilian casualty over the past six months. Meanwhile, on average, it has taken just eleven days for the Pentagon to announce that a strike has resulted in the death of a "key leader" of a terrorist organization over the past year.

(We averaged the time elapsed between the alleged incident and the U.S. military announcement of 115 cases of civilian casualties and 19 announcements of killed terrorpassed for both to avoid distorting the mean.)

We can only speculate why there is such a vast disparity between the time it takes to investigate the death of a civilian versus the death of a terrorist. However, what this inconsistency demonstrates is that publicizing the deaths of terrorists is a higher priority for the U.S. military than determining the deaths of civilians.

### Rigorous investigations

For example, last week, a coalition spokesperson, Colonel Joe Scrocca, even acknowledged "we don't have any means of going and searching out people and, honestly, we don't have the manpower" to conduct rigorous investigations of reported civilian casualties.

A U.S. Air Force munitions team member uncases the laser-guided tip for a 500 pound bomb to be loaded onto an unmanned aerial vehicle for airstrikes on ISIS targets on January 8, 2016 at a base in the Persian Gulf Region used to launch airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Micah Zenko and Jennifer Wilson write that publicizing the deaths of terrorists is a higher priority for the U.S. military than determining the number of civilian deaths.

casualties seriously and assesses all reports as thoroughly as possible." If this were the case, though, then there would be sufficient surveillance and analytical resources dedicated to thoroughly and more quickly investigate reported civilian

As the former U.S. Air Force's deputy chief of staff for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, Lieutenant General Bob Otto (ret.), observed in October 2015, "If you inadvertently — legally — kill innocent men, women and children, then there's a backlash from that. And so we might kill three and create ten terrorists.

If Otto's concerns are to be believed, then investigating claims of civilian harm, holding those in the chain of command responsible to account and assuring that past errors are not repeated should be as high a priority as is killing yet another in the seemingly inexhaustible supply of senior terrorist operatives.

Unfortunately, the military is more committed to boasting about killing alleged terrorists than determining when non-combatants are harmed in the process.

(Source: Newsweek)

# Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

DIPLOMA

Holder of

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 10004:2012

ISO 10002:2014

From Oxford Cert Universal

Best Consultation,

Best Services, Best Result

Section Manager "Tina 09128440154"

Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

**Hot Line: 28141** 

info@parsdiplomatic.com

## **Apartment**

Apt in the best area in Farmanieh 4th floor, 220 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., lobby, Full furn & unfurn, nice and cozy, Excellent view \$3500 Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Mahmoodieh 5th floor, 320 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., 2 Balcony, nice View, lobby, Spj & Gym saloon, Diplomatic Tower, excellent view, good Access to high Way, luxury Furn, \$6000 negotiable Ms.Diba: 09128103206

New/luxury Apt in Zafaranieh 3th floor, 105 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., Fully furn, lobby, Spj, quit & Diplomatik Price negotiable Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Niavaran 5th floor, 150 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., Fully furn, parking, nice & cozy, almost new, \$2300 Ms.Diba: 09128103206

**Several Apts in Garden Tower** in Elahieh New, from 150 sq.m to 250 sq.m Apts, 3 Bdrs., garden, Spj, equipped kitchen, could be fully furn and new brand, Lobby, opposite to French school, good access to Sadr highway, Reasonable Price Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa in Shahrak Qarb 800 sq.m Built up, 5 Bdrs., Duplex, renovated, semi furn, Nice & cozy, garden, pool, Parking

Suitable for Residency or Embassy Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa in Niavaran 650 sq.m buil up, 450 sq.m Land, duplex villa with one Extra Apt, indoor pool, Spj, Parking \$7000 Suitable for Residency or Embassy Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa in Shahrak Qarb Duplex villa, 630 Sq.m, 5 Bdrs., One extra Suit with 300 sq.m apt with 3 Bdrs., Garden, outdoor Pool, renovated, too many Parking spaces, Security, furn & unfurn

\$15000 Suitable for Residency & Embassy Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa in Aqdasieh Duplex, 800 sq.m, built up, 7 Bdrs., big salon, nice garden, Outdoor pool, Parking, completely renovated, Servant Quarter Suitable for Residency or Embassy Ms.Diba: 09128103206

## **Building & Office**

**Building in Fereshteh** Ready to rent separately or whole building 3 Apt, 3 & 5 Bdrs. furn & unfurn,, SPJ & Pkg, good access, \$2900 Ms.Sara 0912810320

Whole Building in Elahieh One Villa, duplex with 5 Bdrs., Semi furn, Parking, small Garden & one Whole Building with 4 Apts & 8 Bdrs., completely renovated **Reasonable Price** 

Suitable for Embassy & Companies Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Whole Building in Zafaranieh 5 Unit in 2 level, 750 sq.m built up, renovated, green garden, outdoor pool, parking, quit Place Suitable for Embassies Price negotiable

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Whole Building in Kamranieh 20 unit Apt, 60 Bdrs., each Apt around 210 sq.m, with 3 Bdrs., Lobby, 37 Parkings & more, Spj, Too many Storage Rooms, Com pletely renovated, good access to highway

ready for Renting to foreign Companies & Residency Ms.Diba: 09128103206

New/luxury Apt in Zafaranieh 3th floor, 105 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., Fully furn, lobby, Spj, quit & Diplomatic, Price negotiable Ms.Diba: 09128103206

### **Ideal Offers**

Apt in Zafaranieh 4th floor, 210 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., luxury furn, lobby, spj, high Security, diplomatic Tower, Cozy & quit \$2700 Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Office in Valiasr From 250 sq.m up to 7000 sq.m commercial office, ready for Renting to foreign Companies, Lobby, parking lot, good access to highway Ms.Diba: 09128103206

World's finest serviced and virtual office in Iran 154 locations worldwide Fully furn, dedicated Receptionist, IT support **Located in Jordan Business Area** Packages start from \$120

Apt in Mirdamad 6th floor, 90 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., Fully furn, small Balcony, Lobby, Parking

Ms.Sara 09128103207

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Zafaranieh 260 sq.m, 4 Bdrs., fully furn, Nice & cozy, Diplomatic, Parking, new furniture \$3300 Ms.Diba: 09128103206

مالكين محترم ملک های فروش و اجاره ای خود را (آپارتمان،

ویلا، مستغلات، اداری و تجاری) به ما بسیارید.

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

مالكين محترم املاك مبله و غيرمبله، مسكوني، اداري و تجاري، ويلا و مستغلات شما را جهت اجاره به سفارتخانه ها و شرکت های خارجی نیازمندیم.

مالكين محترم ویلاهای شما را جهت اجاره به منزل سفیر و مدیران شرکت های بین المللی در مناطق شمالی تهران نیازمندیم.

### FIRST CHOICE REAL ESTATE

PROPERTY@FIRSTCHOICECO.COM

WWW.FIRSTCHOICECO.COM



آژانس املاک انتخاب اول در خدمت شماست TEL: 22041212 - 09121081212 APARTMENT – VILLA – OFFICE

### **Don't Waste Your Time**

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www. Delta **HOME**. ir The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

Member of **DELTA** Real Estate Group (021) 88888865



FIRST INDIAN RESTAURANT IN IRAN

PRIVATE PARKING LOT

Jahan Hotel (Exelsior) - Rahimzade Alley - Talegani Crossroads - Valiasr St. Tell: 66476855

### **Properties For Rent**

From simple to luxury From 50 sq.m To 500 sq.m From 1000\$ to 10000\$

Just call Dorna

09122241430

nedasamane@hotmail.com

Iran's Leading International Daily www.tehrantimes.com

**Advertising Dept:** times1979@gmail.com 430 51 450 430 51 405

Property for rent VILLA IN

SHAHRAK-E GHARB

590 sq.m land, 400 sq.m built-up area, furnished, located in the best area

09122241430 Dorna

# **Could smoking in pregnancy** affect a grandkid's autism risk?

When a woman chooses to stop smoking during her pregnancy, the potential effects to her baby are prob-

But a new British study hints that smoking in pregnancy could even affect the health of a woman's grandchildren -- specifically, their risk for autism.

"We already know that protecting a baby from tobacco smoke is one of the best things a woman can do to give her child a healthy start in life," said study co-author Jean Golding of the University of Bristol. "Now we've found that not smoking during pregnancy could also give their future grandchildren a better start, too."

The study can't prove cause-and-effect, but one U.S. autism expert who reviewed the findings said the researchers' conclusion is not farfetched.

While the finding is new, the "mechanism by which it might be occurring has been a focus of study for half a decade," noted Alycia Halladay. She's chief science officer for the Autism Science Foundation.

Halladay believes that when a woman smokes in her pregnancy, this could affect the developing eggs of a female fetus in the womb. And that, in turn, might affect the odds that her daughter's children are at higher autism risk, she suggested.

In the new study, researchers analyzed data from more than 14,500 children born in the United Kingdom during the 1990s.

The study found that people with a maternal grandmother who smoked during her pregnancy had a 53 percent increased risk of developing autism.

The findings also showed that girls whose maternal grandmother smoked during pregnancy were 67 percent more likely to have autism-linked traits -- symptoms such as poor social communication skills and repetitive behaviors.

### Exposure to cigarette smoke

The researchers agreed with Halladay: Exposure to cigarette smoke while in the womb could affect a female's developing eggs, causing changes that may eventually affect the development of her own children.

Still, the study authors stressed that further investigation is needed to determine what those molecular changes might be, and to find out if the same associations occur in other groups of people.

"There are innumerable reasons why people should



not smoke," said Dr. Andrew Adesman. "This study provides more reason: women who smoke during pregnancy put their granddaughters at increased risk of an autism spectrum disorder."

But "the overall increase in risk related to smoking is somewhat modest," added Adesman. He is chief of developmental and behavioral pediatrics at Cohen Children's Medical Center, in New Hyde Park, N.Y.

"Although a woman's exposure to cigarette smoke prenatally appears to be linked decades later to autism spectrum disorder in her own offspring, women who smoke or who were themselves exposed to cigarette smoke prenatally should take some comfort in knowing

that their risk of having a child with an autism spectrum disorder is still very low," Adesman said.

For her part, Halladay said it's typically been tough for scientists to assess how behaviors affect multiple generations of offspring, and so most of the research in this area "has been done in animal models."

Because the database the researchers drew on was so detailed, the researchers said they were able to rule out possible other factors that might account for the link.

Autism spectrum disorder affects about one in 68 children in the United States, with boys affected far more often than girls.

(Source: philly.com)

# Building simple habits for healthy weight loss

Lasting, healthy weight loss demands that you transform your eating and exercise habits. But many other choices you make each day, such as how much time you spend sleeping or surfing the Internet, can also make a difference.

### Set small, specific, and realistic

Perhaps you'd like to be the same size you were in high school or when you got married, but that would mean dropping more than 50 pounds. Don't go there not yet, at least. Set a more realistic goal of losing 5% to 10% of your weight, and give yourself plenty of time and some flexibility to reach that goal, keeping in mind that most people take at least six months to achieve that degree of healthy weight loss. Also try to avoid generalized goals, such as "I should eat less at dinner and exercise more." Instead, set specific and short-term (that is, daily or weekly) goals, such as these:

I will choose a few dinner recipes and shop for the ingredients on Sunday.

• I will bring a healthy lunch from home instead of going out at least three times next week.

- I will call a friend to take a walk after work on Monday and Wednesday.
- I will decrease exposure to problematic food ("stimulus control") to avoid temptation, such as keeping cookies away from sight in the kitchen.

### Eat breakfast slowly — and mindfully — every morning

Many people skip breakfast because they're too rushed or they aren't hungry. Try getting up 15 minutes earlier (which means going to bed earlier so you don't sacrifice sleep time) to make time for breakfast. Practice eating slowly by putting down your utensil or sipping water, coffee, or tea between bites. Ideally, you should spend at least 20 minutes on each meal, but that may be more realistic during your midday or evening meal; choose one to get started. Set a timer to check yourself.

From these habits or others in the Special Health Report, choose the one that seems the most feasible for you, and try to stick with it for a week or so. It's important to make these healthy habits routine. Once you find yourself doing one fairly consistently, add another. Over time you will realize that many of these habits can

Just as there are "good carbs" and "bad carbs," there are good fats and bad fats. Mediterranean-style diets emphasize healthy fats and healthy carbs.

Saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol are the bad guys. Good fats are monoun-

Just as there are "good carbs" and "bad carbs, there are good fats and bad fats. Mediterranean-style diets emphasize healthy fats and healthy carbs.

saturated (found in olive oil, for example) and polyunsaturated (found in such foods as fish, canola oil, and walnuts). The Mediterranean diet advocated by Mollie Katzen and Harvard professor Walter Willett in Eat, Drink, & Weigh Less has a moderate amount of fat, but much of it comes from healthful monounsaturated fats and unsaturated omega-3 fats. It is high in carbohydrates, but most of the carbs come from unrefined, fiber-rich foods. It is also high in fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds, and fish, with only modest amounts of meat

People living in Mediterranean countries have a lower-than-expected rate of heart disease. But the traditional lifestyle in the region also includes lots of physical activity, regular meal patterns, wine, and good social support. It's hard to know what relative role these different factors play but there is growing evidence that in and of itself, the Mediterranean diet can reduce cardiovascular risk and the development of diabetes. (Source: health.harvard.edu)

# 7 ways to prevent oral cancer

Our mouths play a much larger role in our day-to-day life than we think. Your lifestyle directly influences your oral health, and the long-term possibility of disease in the mouth should influence your habits.

Each year, thousands of Americans are diagnosed with oral or pharyngeal cancer. The biggest worry is that the mortality rate of oral cancer is particularly high, with roughly one person per hour dying as a result.

If we're to prevent oral cancer, we need to be mindful of easy-to-follow lifestyle measures that can help you both lower risk of oral cancer and/or increase the likelihood of early diagnosis and successful treatment.

### What is oral cancer?

Cancer that is developed in the oral cavity is called oral cancer and is also known as head and neck cancers. Oral cancers generally develop in the tongue and in the mouth walls. It can spread through the lymphatic system and bloodstream to other parts of the body, including lymph nodes, neck, and lungs.

Early detection of the cancer will give the best prognosis. So we should be alert and observe any changes that are taking place in our mouth like swellings, ulcers, lumps, spots, discoloration, etc., that lasts more than two weeks. If you suspect oral cancer, consult a dentist immediately to check whether these changes could be cancer.

### Causes of oral cancer

Research has found that lifestyle is a major determinant

in developing oral cancer. The following are the risk factors for oral can-

cer: Tobacco: One of the most prevalent causes of oral cancer is the prolonged use of tobacco. More than 80

percent of oral cancer cases occur to those who consume

tobacco. Alcohol consumption may further increase a smoker's risk of oral cancer. This may be because of the dehydrating effect of alcohol on cell walls of the soft tissues, which enables the tobacco carcinogens to penetrate the mouth tissues more efficiently.

- Sun exposure: Prolonged sun exposure without a sun protection factor (SPF) to any part of your body increases the risk of cancer called Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC) that can damage the skin on the face and the lips.
- Diet: A diet low in vegetables can increase the risk of oral cancer. Including more fruits and vegetables into your diet plan can help reduce this risk.
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV): New research has linked HPV virus, which is the virus known to cause genital warts and cervical cancer, to oral cancer. The HPV virus can be sexually transmitted from partners, which could be the reason for an increasing number of young, non-smoking

### Signs and symptoms of oral cancer

The following are the signs and symptoms of oral cancer that we have to be aware of:

- Red and/or white patches spotted anywhere in your mouth
- An ulcer or sore in your lip or mouth that often

One of the most prevalent causes of oral cancer is the prolonged use of tobacco. More than 80 percent of oral cancer cases occur to those who consume tobacco.

bleeds and remain unhealed An uncured blood blister

- A painless lump
- A roughened or crusted area
- Experiencing numbness inside mouth
- Loose teeth/sore gums Taste difference
- Swollen lymph glands
- Ear ache

### 7 lifestyle factors to help prevent oral cancer • Quit smoking – Tobacco contains at least 50 carcino-

gens that are linked to cancer. Studies indicate that there is a definitive link between the use of tobacco products and the development of oral cancer. One study conducted at the University of California, San Francisco, found that more than eight out of 10 oral cancer patients were smokers.

- Eliminate or reduce your intake of alcohol.
- Protect your skin from prolonged sun exposure. Apply broad-spectrum SPF sunscreen to any exposed skin, including your lips. Lip balms with high SPF rating can be used for lip protection.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, especially those with high concentration of antioxidants like mangoes, berries, grapes, apples, watermelon, onion, garlic, pumpkin, eggplant, carrot, spinach, cauliflower, tomatoes, and broc-
  - Keep up with your oral hygiene routine, including
  - Visit your dentist regularly for checkups.
- Consult a doctor immediately if you observe any symptoms developing. Remember, the sooner oral cancer is diagnosed, the better the prognosis can be.

(Source: verywell.com)

### First new drug for liver cancer in a decade: regorafenib

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has expanded the indication for regorafenib (Stivarga, Bayer) to now include treatment for patients with hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) who have previously been treated with the drug sorafenib (Nexavar, Baver).

Expansion of regorafenib's indication marks the first FDAapproved treatment for a liver cancer in almost a decade.

"Limited treatment options are available for patients with liver cancer," said Richard Pazdur, MD, acting director of the Office of Hematology and Oncology Products in the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research and director of the FDA's Oncology Center of Excellence, in a statement.

"This is the first time patients with HCC have had an FDAapproved treatment that can be used if their cancer has stopped responding to initial treatment with sorafenib," said

Regorafenib is an oral multikinase inhibitor that has shown antiangiogenic activity. It is already approved for the treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer and for use in the treatment of gastrointestinal stromal tumors that cannot be surgically removed and no longer respond to imatinib (Gleevec, Novartis) and sunitinib (Sutent, Pfizer).

### Three randomized trials

The expanded approval for use in liver cancer was based on the results of a phase 3 randomized trial that included 573 patients with progressive HCC who had previously undergone treatment with sorafenib.

Median overall survival was 10.6 months in the regorafenib group compared with 7.8 months in those receiving placebo, representing a significant reduction in the risk for death (hazard ratio [HR], 0.62; P < .001).

The median progression-free survival was also significantly longer in the regorafenib group vs placebo; at 3.1 months and 1.5 months, respectively (HR, 0.46; P < .001).

The disease control rate was significantly greater with regorafenib, at 65.2% vs 36.1% for placebo (P < .001); the complete or partial response rate was 10.6% for regorafenib compared with 4.1% for placebo (P = .01).

Adverse events of grade 3 or greater occurred in 79.7% of patients who received regorafenib and 58.5% of those in the placebo group. The most common grade 3 or greater adverse events were hypertension (15.2% vs 4.7%), hand-foot skin reactions (12.8% vs 0.5%), fatigue (9.1% vs 4.7%), and diarrhea (3.2% vs 0.0%).

This application for expanded use in liver cancer was granted priority review designation. This indication also received orphan drug designation, which provides incentives to assist and encourage the development of drugs for rare (Source: Medscape)

### **Using rooster testes to learn** how the body fights viruses

Our bodies are constantly under siege by foreign invaders; viruses, bacteria and parasites that want to infiltrate our cells. A new study in the journal eLife sheds light on how germ cells - sperm and egg - protect themselves from these attackers so that they can pass accurate genetic information to the next generation.

Researchers from the University of Rochester Center for RNA Biology: From Genome to Therapeutics examined the role of piRNA in safeguarding the integrity of the genetic information in germ cells.

It's known that piRNA -- a type of ribonucleic acid (RNA) that's found most readily in the testes and ovaries -- shields germ cells by silencing the genetic sequences of viral intruders. It's



also known that defects or mutations in piRNA lead to infertility in humans and other animals. What's not known is how piRNAs are generated in the first place.

A team led by Xin Li, Ph.D., assistant professor in the departments of Biochemistry and Biophysics and Urology at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, analyzed rooster testes to find out.

### Variety of viruses

Chickens acquire and harbor a wide variety of viruses. When a virus infects a host, like a chicken, it does everything it can to survive. One method of survival is inserting its genetic material into the chicken's genome. Over generations, the inserted virus accumulates mutations and eventually becomes harmless to the animal, but it's still a part of the chicken's genetic material.

Li's team focused on avian leukosis virus, which commonly infects and can lead to cancer in domestic chickens. Through molecular and genetic analysis, they discovered that chickens turn these old, existing viruses into piRNA-producing machines. When faced with a new avian leucosis virus (there are many different viruses in the family), the old viruses pump out piRNAs that defend the germ cells, ensuring the passage of intact genetic material to the next round of offspring.

'Our study shows how a host can turn a virus into a weapon to fight future viruses," says Li, whose work is partially funded by a National Institute of Health grant designed to support the early careers of new scientists. "Better understanding piRNA may help us target more viruses, both in chickens and in people."

In the United States, 8 billion domestic chickens are consumed each year, and more knowledge of how these birds defend themselves against viral infections could increase the productivity of the poultry industry around the world. Because other viruses trapped in the chicken's genetic code are related to similar viruses in humans, future discoveries in this area could help guide research benefiting human

(Source: EurekAlert)

### 10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

Google's umbrella company Alphabet brought in \$24.75 billion in revenue and \$7.73 earnings per share in the first quarter of 2017, according to the company's earnings release out today.

Analysts expected less from Alphabet: about \$24.19 billion in

revenue and \$7.40 earnings per share.

Intel reported earnings that beat analysts' earnings for the first quarter ended March 31. Revenues for the guarter were \$14.8 billion and non-GAAP earnings were \$3.2 billion, or 66 cents a share.

Apple started rolling out the fifth beta version of iOS 10.3.2, a point update to iOS 10.3 that will be going out to everyone in the next few weeks.

The worldwide digital gaming market grew 7 percent year-over-year in March, according to research firm SuperData. This brought it to a new high of

The long-awaited update by Win 10 fans named Windows 10 Mobile Redstone 2 started rolling. The main accent, per Microsoft, is that anyone will be able "to create, share and experience in 3D and mixed reality, connect people faster and empower every gamer to be a broadcaster.

Samsung Electronics reported its financial results for Q1 2017 and the results look quite well. The company generated KRW50.55 trillion or about \$45 billion in revenue.

Microsoft and Harman Kardon are working together to bring a personal assistant powered by Cortana. The device, named Harman Kardon Invoke, will support Spotify and other music platforms, according to an update of the Cortana app.

Amazon said that its Amazon Web Services (AWS) public cloud business brought in \$890 million in operating income on \$3.66 billion in revenue during the

That means AWS revenue was up 42 percent year over year.

Huawei and Google team up for the first Android development board, similar to the Raspberry Pi. The community wanted an ARM-based development platform for quite some time now.

Apple is once again rumored to start a P2P money transferring network similar to Venmo and PayPal.

### LG Q1 fiscal results: profit is good, but mobile division still lagging

LG Electronics posted its Q1 financial numbers and it had the best result in almost a decade. Sadly, the Mobile Communications division wasn't a big part of that as its revenue only rose 2% YoY.



Total smartphone shipments were up 10% on a yearly basis to 14.8 million units. It was mostly mid-range smartphones like the K-series that bumped those numbers. Because of the slow LG G5 sales and the niche LG V20, the division still lost KRW200 million or \$176,000 between January and March. That's still huge progress over the previous quarter that saw the mobile division bleed over \$1 billion.

LG's expects to post profits in Q2 2017 thanks to the LG G6. The company realizes that the competition in the midend class is fierce, but it expects to maintain its position there.

Consolidated operating profit reached an 8-year peak of KRW921.5 billion, or about \$811 million, so it's great news for the company. Here's hoping that the Mobile division goes back in the black next quarter as well.

(Source: LG)

### **Google Home's Assistant** now knows 5 million recipes, will help you cook

Google has announced that the Assistant inside the Home is going to learn 5 million recipes over the coming week.

Once this rollout is complete, the device will be able to help you cook, by giving you instructions for any of those recipes. To use the functionality, go to Google Assistant on your Android phone or use Google search to find a recipe. Pick what you like and hit the "Send to Google Home" button.

(Source: google)

## Microsoft reports \$23.6 billion in Q3 2017 revenue: Azure up 93%, Surface down 26%, and Windows up 5%

### By Emil Protalinski

Microsoft reported earnings for its third fiscal quarter of 2017, including revenue of \$23.6 billion, net income of \$5.7 billion, and earnings per share of \$0.73. The company's Intelligent Cloud and Productivity and Business Processes operating groups countered the decline from its More Personal Computing unit.

In Q3 2016, Microsoft saw \$22.1 billion in revenue, net income of \$5.0 billion, and earnings per share of \$0.62. For Q3 2017, analysts had expected Microsoft to earn \$23.6 billion in revenue and earnings per share of \$0.70. In short, the company surpassed results for last year's quarter, met analyst expectations for revenue, and outperformed estimates for earnings per share.

The company's stock was up 0.65 percent in regular trading, but was down about 1 percent in after-hours trading (likely because revenue was not beaten and because Surface seriously suffered). Microsoft also said it returned \$4.6 billion to shareholders in the form of share repurchases and dividends during the quarter.

"Our results this quarter reflect the trust customers are placing in the Microsoft Cloud," Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said in a statement. "From large multi-nationals to small and



medium businesses to non-profits all over the world, organizations are using Microsoft's cloud platforms to power their digital transformation."

Personal Computing, which includes results for Windows licensing and devices (Surface, phones, and Xbox), declined 7 percent to \$8.8 billion.

Windows OEM revenue increased 5 percent. Breaking that down further, Pro revenue was up 10 percent and non-Pro revenue was down 1 percent, though both outperformed the overall market.

Surface revenue decreased 26 percent, from \$1.11 billion in Q3 2016 to \$831 million in O3 2017. The Surface Pro 4 and the Surface Book aren't cutting it anymore. The Surface Book i7 wasn't enough to move the needle — buyers want a Pro 5 and a Book 2.

Phone revenue declined by \$730 million. Microsoft is not calling out a percentage anymore because the company wants to de-emphasize the division

Advertising revenue from search, excluding traffic acquisition costs, grew 8 percent. Microsoft has previously attributed this to Windows 10, which includes tighter Bing integration.

Gaming revenue grew 4 percent, thanks to Xbox Live. This is surprising given that many gamers are waiting for Project Scorpio.

Intelligent Cloud, which includes results from server products and services (including Windows Server and Azure), grew 11 percent to \$6.8 billion.

Server products and cloud services revenue grew 15 percent. But the big highlight as always was Azure revenue, which grew 93 percent. Azure compute did not double year over year as in past quarters.

Two quarters ago, Microsoft's commercial cloud business exceeded a \$10.0 billion annual run rate. This quarter, the company shared it now sits at \$15.2 billion. The projection for this number is still \$20 billion by 2018.

Productivity and Business Processes, which includes results from Office and Office 365 (commercial and consumer customers), grew 22 percent to \$8.0

Microsoft also broke out LinkedIn, which it acquired for \$26.2 billion last year. The social network contributed \$975 million in revenue (which is not bad, given expectations were around \$950 million).

This was a solid quarter for Microsoft, but investors clearly want to see more from the company's devices. 2017 will see a lot of focus on new Surface and Xbox products, while Azure and Office continue to keep the company plowing ahead.

(Source: venturebeat)

### Samsung says nature of **AMOLED** displays causes red tint



Samsung has shared some more details about the red tint on some Galaxy S8 units. In a conference call the company said it has inspected the device and is confident about the product's quality.

Here's what the tech giant said regarding the display issue: "Due to the nature of Super AMOLED displays, there can be natural differences in color. Users can optimize the color depending on their preferences."

(Source: theandroidsoul)

### Nintendo sells 2.74M Switches, 10M more expected in 2018



Nintendo posted its results for the fiscal year 2016, which for the company ends in March. Numbers revealed that the company sold 2.74 million units of the new console Switch. Interestingly enough Zelda: Breath of the Wild for Switch reported 2.76 million sales. Yep, some people bought the game even before owning the console. Another 1.1 million people bought it for Wii U, totaling to 3.84 million.

(Source: nintendo)

### **Instagram proudly** announces it's got 700 million users



Instagram now has 700 million users, 100 million more than it did last December. So those last 100 million users were added in just four months. That number is amazingly almost equivalent to Snapchat's entire 161 million user base. The recent growth is the fastest in Instagram's history. Going from 500 million to 600 million took five months in 2016.

(Source: instagram)

### Vivo launches V5s with 20 megapixel front camera

vivo has launched a new smartphone in the Indian mar ket, the V5s. The phone is priced at INR 18,990 (\$296) and can be pre-ordered on Flipkart.

The vivo V5s has a 5.5-inch 720p IPS display and a MediaTek MT6750 chipset with 4GB of RAM. It only has a 13 Megapixel rear camera, but a 20 megapixel front one with flash, suggesting that selfies are its forte.

The smartphone comes with 64GB of storage, finger print sensor and a 3000mAh battery. It runs on Android 6.0 skinned with the company's own Funtouch OS 3.0

The phone will be available in Rose Gold and Matte Black online as well as in retail outlets.

(Source: gsmarena)

### **Casio Pro Trek F20 with Android Wear 2.0 is now** available for \$500



The new F20 is finally up for grabs in either black or

orange for \$500.

The Casio F20 runs Android Wear 2.0 out of the box, and it's water resistant up to 50m and complies with the MIL-STD 810G spec for durability. Its circular 1.32-inch touchscreen is of the dual-layer variety, with both a monochrome mode for high visibility and low power use, as well as a color mode for full functionality.

The F20 has a power sipping GPS sensor, a digital compass, altimeter, and barometer. It features 512MB of RAM and 4GB of storage, and it's 0.8 mm thinner than its predecessor. (Source: androidauthority)

### **Facebook Messenger** Lite is now available in 150 additional countries



Facebook has now finally decided to expand

Messenaer Lite.

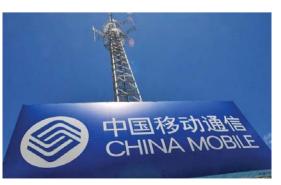
It's now out in 150 additional countries, including Germany, Colombia, Italy, Vietnam, Algeria, Morocco, Nigeria, Peru, Turkey, Japan, Taiwan and the Netherlands.

Messenger Lite needs less memory and processing power to operate, and it even uses less data than the full-fledged app.

If you use this you'll be missing out on certain features, such as Messenger Day, the camera effects, as well as the entire third-party dev platform.

(Source: facebook)

### 836M people in China use 4G



836 million people use 4G in China according to local authorities. That's 10.85% more than the quarter ending in December 2016.

Chinese users today consume 1.28 GB data/ monthly, which is 28% increase over Q4 2016. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology plans to add 2 million 4G base stations in rural areas by 2018.

By the end of Q1 2017 China also had 310 million users of fixed-line broadband network, almost 80% of them using fiber broadband products, said an official from the MIIT.

(Source: xinhuanet)

# Vinegar offers hope in Barrier Reef starfish battle

Coral-munching crown-of-thorns starfish can be safely killed by common household vinegar, scientists revealed Thursday in a discovery that offers hope for Australia's struggling Great Barrier Reef.

The predatory starfish is naturally-occurring but has proliferated due to pollution and run-off at the World Heritage-listed ecosystem, which is also reeling from two consecutive years of mass coral bleaching.

Until now other expensive chemicals such as bile salts have been used to try and eradicate the pest -- which consumes coral faster than it can be regenerated -- but they can harm other marine organisms.

Tests by James Cook University, in collaboration with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), showed vinegar was safe, effective and cheap.

Study head Lisa Bostrom-Einarsson said crown-of-thorns were injected with vinegar at four sites on the reef over six weeks, causing them to die within 48 hours with no impact on other life.

### Coral cover

"We recorded live coral cover, abundance of coral disease, fish abundance and diversity, fish diseases and the abundance of closely related invertebrates before, during and after the six-week study period and found no detrimental effects," she said.

Keeping crown-of-thorns under con-



trol however is a tough ask, with dive teams needing to individually inject each starfish before it dies and breaks-up.

But despite the labor-intensive job, it is far more efficient than extracting them from the water before killing them.

A major study of the reef's health published in 2012 showed cover had halved over the past 27 years and attributed 42 percent of the damage to crown-of-thorns starfish.

"Culling crown-of-thorns starfish is a

The predatory starfish is naturally-occurring but has proliferated due to pollution and run-off at the World Heritage-listed ecosystem, which is also reeling from two consecutive years of mass coral bleaching.

critical management activity to protect coral cover and boost reef resilience, particularly in the wake of coral bleaching," he said.

Earlier this month, scientists revealed the 2,300-kilometre (1,400-mile) long Barrier Reef was suffering its second consecutive mass bleaching event due to warming sea temperatures, and said some coral had "zero prospect" of recovery.

The reef contributes more than Aus\$7.0 billion (U.S.\$5.2 billion) a year to Australia's economy, supporting the livelihoods of some 70,000 people, and there have been warnings that dying coral could cost the region more than a million tourists a year.

Bostrom-Einarsson said while the innovative new method was good news, it would be tough to wipe out starfish altogether.

"There are millions of starfish on the Great Barrier Reef and each female produces around 65 million eggs in a single breeding season," she said.

"It would take a massive effort to try and cull them all individually, but we know that sustained efforts can save individual reefs."

Vinegar has now been added to the GBRMPA's list of approved control chemicals, meaning operators can apply for permits to start controlling the

(Source: AFP)

### Flying cars aren't real yet, but these supersonic vehicles already exist

This week, Google co-founder Larry Page unveiled his plans for a Kitty Hawk Flyer that can hover above the water. Sergey Brin, the other Google co-founder, is reportedly building a giant dirigible inside a NASA hangar.

Uber, naturally, has its own plans for flying cars, which it touted earlier this week at its Elevate Summit in Texas. And a German aircraft builder says it's planning to create an Uber-style self-driving system with its own passenger "vehicle," which is really a small, ultra-light jet.

One major advantage of such designs — should they ever become reality — is the ability to zip from Point A to Point B, unencumbered by bumper-to-bumper traffic or 65-mile-an-hour speed limits.

The Bloodhound SSC vehicle, a supersonic car designed to beat the current land speed record of 763

### Jet-propelled car

Back in October 1997, a British jet-propelled car became the first land vehicle to officially break the sound barrier. The car, called ThrustSSC, reached a speed of 763 miles per hour over one mile, earning it the Outright World Land Speed Record, a title the car still holds.



Andy Green, the driver, screeched across the Black Rock Desert in Nevada, a fact that Silicon Valley's flying car fanatics probably already knew. The semi-arid region is home to the annual Burning Man Festival, the beloved rustic networking event of entrepreneurs.

According to Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, the global governing body of motor sports, pre-

vious well-known holders of the Outright World Land Speed Record include:

Thrust II, driven by Richard Noble, a Scottish entrepreneur who was the project director for ThrustSSC. Noble achieved a best speed of 633.468 miles per hour in 1983. He held the top honor until Andy Driver claimed the mantle in 1997

Blue Flame, driven by Gary Gabelich, who was the first to exceed 1,000 kilometers an hour (621.4 miles per hour) in 1970. He achieved 630.388 miles per hour in his rocket-powered vehicle, which raced across the Bonneville Salt Flats in northwestern Utah — the world's preferred venue for land-speed record attempts.

The original Sunbeam car, which beat the 1925 land speed world record of 150.76 mph.

One thing that all of these vehicles have in common is their shape, with the need to reduce aerodynamic drag in order to maximize forward speed.

It remains to be seen how fast the new air transports will be, or if a new air race will supplant the land speed one-upmanship.

(Source: Mashable)

### Cassini probe completes first daring dive between Saturn and its rings

In the early hours of Thursday morning, NASA's Cassini space probe re-established contact with Earth after a risky dive between Saturn and its rings and began to transmit data collected during the maneuver back to the space agency. The probe's communication dish had been purposely directed to orient itself away from Earth to act as a protective shield against any particulates the probe might have encountered during the dive, which could have damaged the spacecraft prematurely.

The successful completion of the maneuver on Wednesday is the latest in a long string of historic firsts for the probe. But the completion of the dive was also a bittersweet moment marking the initiation of the final phase of

Cassini's almost 20-year space odys-

Cassini was launched in October 1997 to explore Saturn and its moons, reaching Saturn's orbit in July 2004. But after so many years of research and data collection, Cassini is finally starting to show its age; and with fuel running low, the probe will conduct a series of final close passes to the solar system's second-largest gas giant, before finally plunging into the atmosphere of the very planet that it has orbited for the past 12 years.

"NAŚA and the Cassini team's devotion to the mission are an example for all of us," Harold C. Connolly Jr., chair of the department of geology at Rowan University in New Jersey, tells The Christian Science Monitor in an email. "I remember as a child living in southern New Jersey being glued to the TV when the Voyager images came back to Earth, and now I am an upper manager of a NASA space mission — I hope Cassini-Huygens has (similarly) motivated a new generation of future scientists and explorers."

### Collecting asteroid samples

Dr. Connolly is currently working on the OSIRIS-REx program, NASA's first mission to collect an asteroid sample and return it to Earth for analysis. He tells the Monitor that Cassini – along with its companion lander, Huygens, which landed on Saturn's moon Titan, in 2005 – have revolutionized scientific understanding of the gas giants and its system of moons. But that only scratches the surface of the achievements the Cassini probe represents

"Cassini has provided a better understanding of Saturn's ring system, why it exists, the weather conditions on Saturn, and the mysteries of its largest moon, Titan: A truly primitive world potentially similar to what Earth was like in the earliest days of its life," Connolly adds.

The latest dive is one of the most difficult challenges the probe has ever faced – but it won't be the last. Cassini's final stage, referred to as the "Grand Finale" by NASA, entails a series of weekly dives – 22 in total – into the 1,500-mile gap between Saturn and its rings.

(Source: The CSM)

### Research sheds new light on forces that threaten sensitive coastlines

Wind-driven expansion of marsh ponds on the Mississippi River Delta is a significant factor in the loss of crucial land in the Delta region, according to research published by scientists at Indiana University and North Carolina State University.

The study found that 17 percent of land loss in the area resulted from pond expansion, much of it caused by waves that eroded away the edges of the pond.

The findings add to scientists' understanding of the processes that shape the Delta and present new challenges for scientists and engineers seeking ways to protect sensitive coastlines.

The "Mississippi Delta is undergoing collapse as land disappears from the coast and marshes," said study co-author Douglas Edmonds, assistant professor and the Malcolm and Sylvia Boyce Chair in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at IU Bloomington. "Yet we know surprisingly little about what processes are driving land loss."

River deltas are ecologically important and highly productive, and they are home to about 5 percent of the world's population. Under naturally occurring processes, coastal land is created in deltas when river sediment is deposited. But sea-level rise and human engineering of river channels have starved the Mississippi Delta of sediment, creating widespread land loss. Any hope of



reversing the trend, Edmonds said, requires a clear understanding of the processes at work.

### Satellite images

To conduct the study, the researchers analyzed satellite images taken from 1982 to 2016 across the Delta.

"In total, we looked at 10,000 images and classified approximately 1.29 billion pixels into land or water," said Samapriya Roy, a doctoral student at IU in geography and another co-author on the paper. "To do this we took advantage of the supercomputing resources at Indiana University."

Much of the pond expansion the researchers observed was in a southwesterly direction, driven by prevailing winds from the northeast. Expansion was significantly greater in ponds larger than 300 meters in diameter, where larger waves were more likely to erode the edges.

"Our analysis shows that ponds across the deltaic plain are moving and expanding in the same direction as the wind," said Alejandra Ortiz, the study's lead author and an assistant professor of civil, construction and environmental engineering at North Carolina State University. "That such evidence emerged over this expansive study area was surprising, because we thought sea-level rise would be the dominant control on pond expansion. We were also surprised by how important pond expansion is to total land loss on the Mississippi River Delta."

The study points to the importance of river-borne sediment. Because scientists thought sea-level rise and storm surges were dominant threats to coastlines, coast-al protection has largely focused on building walls, embankments and other structures to combat rising seas and adding land to replace what's lost or left underwater. But the expansion of ponds would take place even if sea levels weren't rising.

(Source: EurekAlert)

# Scientists solve mystery behind Antarctica's blood falls

The case of the flowing red waterfall has finally been solved, more than a century after it was discovered.



Exploring the frozen beauty of Antarctica — a.k.a. the White Continent — often involves sights of, well, white. But at Taylor Glacier, a 34-mile-long polar glacier, you'll find startling sights of red — a blood-like deposit of iron-rich, salty water flowing into West Lake Bonney.

For years, Blood Falls (as the area has been aptly named) has been a mystery of nature to scientists.

When a geologist named Griffith Taylor first discovered the frozen falls in the early 1900s, he thought algae was to blame for the red color (proof, perhaps, that life really can exist anywhere). But in 2003, researchers determined that red hue actually came from iron and water pulling from a super old (like, 5-million-year-old) lake.

The flow would turn red when the iron came into contact

Now, a new study from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Colorado College adds the final piece to the century-old puzzle: Using radio-echo sounding (read: no drilling necessary!), researchers were able to track exactly where the water was flowing from

Turns out Taylor Glacier doesn't just have a lake under it, it also has its own unique, briny water system that has likely been in action for a million years. The research smashes the idea that flowing water can't exist in a freezing cold glacier at the end of the world — the saltiness of the water means it has a lower freezing temperature, making that continuous flow possible.

"Taylor Glacier is now the coldest known glacier to have persistently flowing water," co-author Christina Carr, a doctoral student at University of Alaska Fairbanks, said in a release about the study.

(Source: cntraveler.com)

# Sea creature from 507 million years ago discovered

Mandibulates are all organisms from the very large and hyperdiverse group that include, among others, ants, flies, centipedes, crabs and insects. It refers to creatures that have mandibles — a specialized pair of appendages used for grabbing and cutting/crushing food. And a new discovery is shedding light on how organisms in the group — the most abundant and diverse on Earth — evolved.

Paleontologists from the University of Toronto and the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada have found an "exceptionally well-preserved" fossil of a sea creature that lived 507 million years ago. Named Tokummia katalepsis by the researchers, the arthropod's fossil was found in sedimentary rocks near Marble Canyon in Kootenay national park, British Columbia.

Arthropods are a widely-found group of invertebrate animals that have hardened exoskeletons and segmented limbs, and mandibulates are a sub-group. For its time in the Cambrian, T. katalepsis was among the largest predators in a tropical sea full of life. It exceeded 10 centimeters (almost 4 inches) when fully extended, and preferred to live on the floor rather than swim. Along with broad serrated mandibles, it also had specialized pincers — typical of modern mandibulates — that were shaped like modern can-openers.

This is a life reconstruction of Tokummia katalepsis showing a pair of large pincers (maxillipeds) at the front for capturing prey, with much of the multisegmented body protected by a broad carapace.

(Source: IBT)

# Scientists found a no-frills way to build on Mars

A group of engineers found a way to build on Mars using nothing but the Red Planet's soil, a discovery they said could be used to eventually build structures on the Red Planet.

The University of California San Diego team discovered Martian soil can be made into bricks stronger than steel-reinforced concrete by simply using the right amount of pressure. That means no oven to bake the bricks or any other additional incredients.

The "people who will go to Mars will be incredibly brave," lead author Yu Qiao pronounced. "They will be pioneers. And I would be honored to be their brick maker."

Originally, the team sought to reduce the number of polymers needed to create bricks. Instead, they found pressure equal to a 10-pound hammer falling one meter was enough to form a small sample of hardened Mars soil.

Researchers said the soil's iron oxide, which gives the planet its reddish color, acts as a binding agent. In theory, building on Mars could work this way: A person could use pressure to create small soil pallets, which could then be cut into the shape of bricks and stacked. The researchers now aim to make bigger bricks.

It's an important find as Mars exploration remains a White House priority. NASA said it hopes to send a human to Mars sometime in the 2030s. But President Trump has said he'd like a manned mission to Mars by the end of his first term, or "at worst," during a prospective second term.

(Source: USA Today)

### 911 call: Man wants police dog to search for stolen heroin

AKRON, Ohio (AP) — Police say an Ohio man called 911 to request a police dog to help track down heroin allegedly

WEWS-TV reports a 20-year-old man in Bath Township, near Akron, made the call in January. The recording was

When the call operator asks why the caller needs a police dog, he replies that a female stole heroin from him.

Bath Police Chief Mike McNeely says it's among the most bizarre things he's heard in four decades of policing.

McNeely says the man is expected to face a drug charge after he pulled a brown, waxy substance from his pants while being interviewed by police.

The substance was seized and sent to a lab for testing. The caller was released pending the test results.

### **Sickly snake slithers** into elementary school classroom

A sickly snake that slithered into a classroom at a New Jersey elementary school has been turned over to a rescue center.

Third-graders at Riverside Elementary School in Princeton found the 4-foot-long (1.22 meter) boa constrictor on Tuesday.

Principal Valerie Ulrich tells NJ.com the snake was in poor health and lucky to be alive.

The students are taking care of a female boa named "Cuddles" and the school believes Cuddles' scent might have attracted the stray boa from a home in the neighborhood.

The snake will be put up for adoption if no one claims it in seven days.

(Source: Yahoo News)

### LEARN ENGLISH

### **Health Food**

John: Ok darling, got some pizzas, potato chips, hot dogs

Kelly: Oh John, I thought we said we would start eating right! Remember? Our new healthy lifestyle? That's all junk

John: Hrumph! Right, so what did you get?

Kelly: Well, healthy food, of course! I got some whole wheat bread, skimmed milk, fresh fish and organic carrots. . .

John: Organic? What's organic? Do we need organic carrots? Kelly: They were grown without using any chemicals that are harmful to our health. And yes, John, we need organic

John: Oh, so organic vegetables are the 'green' option,

Kelly: Yup, better for the environment and better for us! John: Wait a minute, that? . . . **Doughnuts**? Are they organic

doughnuts, Kelly? Kelly: . . . . I like doughnuts.

Key vocabulary eat right: have healthy food

lifestyle: the way people live

junk food: a high-calorie food and low in nutritional value whole wheat bread: a type of bread made using flour that is partly or entirely milled from whole or almost-whole wheat grain, it is one kind of brown bread

skimmed milk: milk that has had all the fat and cream

removed from it

**organic:** without using any chemicals **green:** healthy to the body

doughnut: small ring-shaped fried-cakes

Supplementary vocabulary

consciousness: to be aware of something

health nut: someone concerned with living a healthy lifestyle environmentalist: someone who is concerned with the environment

support: to be of help

resolution: the commitment to do something differently or

begin to do something

(Source: irlanguage.com)

# **World Day for Safety and Health at Work:** Optimize the collection and use of OSH data

Every day, 6,300 people die as a result of occupational accidents or work-related diseases – more than 2.3 million deaths per year. 317 million accidents occur on the job annually; many of these resulting in extended absences from work. The human cost of this daily adversity is vast and the economic burden of poor occupational safety and health practices is estimated at 4 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product each year.

The International Labor Organization's (ILO) campaign for the 2017 World Day for Safety and Health at Work focuses on the critical need for countries to improve their capacity to collect and utilize reliable occupational safety and health (OSH)

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted on September 25, 2015 encompasses a global plan of action with specific targets to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. With its



adoption, the capacity to collect and utilize reliable OSH data has also become indispensable for countries to fulfil their commitment to implement and report on some of the agenda's 17 sustainable development goals and their targets.

The World Day for Safety and Health at Work is an annual international campaign to promote safe, healthy and decent work. It is held on 28 April and has been observed by the International Labor Organization (ILO) since 2003.

A national occupational safety and health culture is one in which the right to a safe and healthy working environment is respected at all levels where governments, employers and workers actively participate in securing a safe and healthy working environment through a system of defined rights, responsibilities and duties, and where the highest priority is accorded to the principle of prevention.

(Source: un.org)

### Signs you'll never be rich

Contrary to popular belief, "everyone has the same opportunity to acquire wealth," says Steve Siebold, a self-made millionaire.

But not everyone seizes the opportunity. To find out if you're doing all that it takes to set yourself up for a rich future, we've rounded up 10 signs that you're not on the

From living beyond your means to failing to establish financial goals, check out the 10 signs below.

### You only work hard, not smart

In school, we learn that hard work will get us ahead in life. But "that's only half the story," says Ric Edelman, a top financial adviser.

"If all you do in life is work really hard, you're never going to get wealthy," he said "Because it's not enough that you work hard to make money to set some of it aside."

Edelman says that to ensure future wealth, you must equally work smart. One way he suggests working smart is investing your money in the stock market or a retirement fund — that is, taking advantage of compound interest so that your money earns money

"You can do this without taking a huge amount of risk. You can do this without a lot of effort. You can do this without a lot of

### You put too much emphasis on saving — and not enough on earning

Another way to work smart? Increase your earnings, not just your savings.

Saving is crucial to building wealth, but you don't want to focus so much on saving that you start neglecting earning, which is what rich people focus on.

"The masses are so focused on clipping coupons and living frugally they miss major opportunities," Siebold said.

There's no need to abandon practical saving strategies. However, if you want to start thinking like the rich, "stop worrying about running out of money and focus on how to make more," Siebold said.

A common thread among millionaires is huge returns in the long run. that they develop multiple streams of income and adopt smart savings habits.

### You buy things you can't afford

If you live above your means, you won't

Even if you start earning more or get a

hefty raise, don't use that as justification to chasing someone else's dream — such as give yourself a lifestyle raise.

"I didn't buy my first luxury watch or car until my businesses and investments were producing multiple secure flows of income," Grant Cardone, a self-made millionaire, wrote for Entrepreneur. "I was still driving a Toyota Camry when I had become a millionaire. Be known for your work ethic, not the trinkets that you buy."

### You're content with a steady

Average people choose to get paid based on time — on a salary or hourly rate — while rich people choose to get paid based on results and are typically self-employed.

"It's not that there aren't world-class performers who punch a time clock for a pavcheck, but for most, this is the slowest path to prosperity promoted as the safest," Siebold said. "The great ones know selfemployment is the fastest road to wealth."

While the world-class continue starting businesses and building fortunes, "the masses almost guarantee themselves a life of financial mediocrity by staying in a job with a modest salary and yearly pay raises," Siebold said.

### You haven't started investing

One of the most effective ways to earn more money over time is investing it, and the earlier you start, the better.

"On average, millionaires invest 20% of their household income each year," Ramit Sethi wrote in his New York Times best-seller, "I Will Teach You to Be Rich." "Their wealth isn't measured by the amount they make each year, but by how they've saved and invested over time."

You don't have to be an expert on personal finance or use fancy economic jargon to start investing. You don't have to come from an affluent family, and you don't even have to earn a massive paycheck.

Start by investing in your retirement or a low-cost target-date fund, and you'll see

You're pursuing someone else's dreams — not your own

If you want to be successful, you have to love what you do — that means determining and pursuing your passion.

رنگ های تهران

Too many people make the mistake of

their parents' — says Thomas Corley, who spent five years researching self-made millionaires.

"When you pursue someone else's dreams or goals, you may eventually become unhappy with your chosen profession," he wrote in "Change Your Habits, Change Your Life." "Your performance and compensation will reflect it. You will eke out a living, struggling financially. You simply won't have the passion that is necessary for success to happen."

### ■ You rarely step outside of your comfort zone

If you want to build wealth, be successful, or get ahead in life, you're going to have to get used to uncertainty or discomfort.

Rich people, in particular, find comfort in uncertainty.

"Physical, psychological, and emotional comfort is the primary goal of the middle-class mindset," Siebold said. "World-class thinkers learn early on that becoming a millionaire isn't easy and the need for comfort can be devastating. They learn to be comfortable while operating in a state of ongoing uncertainty."

Likewise, rich people have learned that overcoming fear and taking calculated risks are key elements to achieving success.

### You don't have goals for your If you want to build wealth, the process

will be easier — and more enjoyable — if you have a clear, specific goal in place before forming a financial plan.

Do you want to buy a house? Live abroad? Travel once a month? Enjoy a cushy retirement? Write down these goals.

Rich people choose to commit to attaining wealth. It takes focus, courage, knowledge, and a lot of effort — but it's possible if you have precise goals and a clear vision, says T. Harv Eker, a self-made millionaire.

"The No. 1 reason most people don't get what they want is that they don't know what they want," he said. "Rich people are totally clear that they want wealth."

### You spend first and save what's left

If you want to get rich, pay yourself first.

"What most people do when they earn a dollar is pay everyone else first," David Bach, a self-made millionaire, wrote in "The Automatic Millionaire." "They pay the landlord, the credit card company, the telephone company, the government, and on and on."

Rather than spending and then saving whatever is left over, save first. Set aside an hour a day of your income — in an emergency fund, 401(k), or other savings account — and make the process automatic, Bach says. This takes the effort out of manually saving and ensures your money will grow exponentially over time, thanks to compound interest.

### You believe getting rich is out of

"The average person believes being rich is a privilege awarded only to lucky people," Siebold wrote. "The truth is, in a capitalist country, you have every right to be rich if you're willing to create massive value for others."

Start asking yourself, "Why not me?" he says. Next, start thinking big. Rich people set high expectations. Why not \$1 million?

(Source: Independent)



	Item	DESCRIPTION	Quantity
	01	LINE PIPE APL 5L GRADE X52 PSL 2, SEAMLESS BLACK ACCORDING TO IPS-M-P1-190(3) SUPPLEMENTED TO AP 5L, 45 th	12/391 LE
		EDITION2012, BASIC OXYGEN ORELECTRIC FURNACE PROCESS	
		FULLY KILLED & FINE GRAIN IN RANDOM LENGTHS OF. M,	
		FROM MIN. 10M TO MAX 12.8, AVG 11.6M.	
		6IN, 168.3MM. OD. WT 7.92 MM	
	02	LINE PIPE APL 5L GRADE X52 PSL 2, SEAMLESS BLACK	8/620 LE
		ACCORDING TO IPS-M-P1-190(3) SUPPLEMENTED TO AP 5L, 45 th	
		ED ITION 2012, BASIC OXYGEN ORELECTRIC FURNACE	
		PROCESS FULLY KILLED & FINE GRAIN IN RANDOM LENGTHS	
		OF. M. FROM MIN. 10M TO MAX 12.8, AVG 11.6M.	
		6 IN, 168.3 MM. OD.SCH.40 WT.7.1 MM	
_			

Company intends to purchase the following goods:

vendors who intend to participate in the A/M tender are requested to send their resume & tendency letter via fax / mail to the following address not later than 14 days after the second announcement.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide a bid bond of Euro ....../ Rls ..... in favor of NISOC.

Iranian vendors shall submit their resume acc. to forms nos. 01,02 and 03 which are

Available at www.shana.ir and www.nisoc.ir

Foreign Purchasing Dept.

Kouy – e – Fadaeian Islam (New site) Bldg No. 104, ahwaz Iran Tel / Fax No.: +98-61-34457437,2263256

**Public Relations** 

WWW.NISOC.IR WWW.SHANA.IR http://IETS.MPORG IR

### **ENGLISH IN USE**

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

### Villagers, nomads get together at **Tehran festival of colors**

At the second exhibition on capabilities of villagers and nomads in Tehran they have put their handicrafts, agricultural products, traditional and local foods on display. The outer space of the fairground is comprising of various pavilion selling local food stuff and breads. The inner space is also filled with villagers introducing their hometown souvenirs, products and tourism attraction.

There are also nomadic tents set up in different parts of the halls with people performing tribal rituals, playing folk music, weaving carpets and baking bread in them.

### Chip in

For example: We all chipped in to buy Amy a graduation present.

### **ENGLISH IDIOM**

گردهمایی روستائیان و عشایر در جشنواره

در دومیـن نمایشـگاه توانمندی های روسـتائیان و عشـایر در تهـران نمایندگان اقـوام و ایلات،

صنایع دستی، محصولات کشاورزی و غذاهای محلی و سنتی خود را عرضه می کنند.

در محوط به بیرونی نمایشگاه غرفه هایی از غذاه آی سنتی و نان های محلی به

بازدید کنندگان ارائه می شود و درغرفه های داخلی روستاییانی حضور دارند که

سوغاتی ها، محصولات و مکان های گردشگری شهر خود را معرفی می کنند.

همچنین چادرهای عشایر در قسمت های مختلف سالن برپا شده است و در

هركدام از این چادرها عشایر در حال اجرای موسیقی محلی، آیین های قومی و

### **Beat someone to the** draw

محلى، بافت قالى و پخت نان هستند

**Explanation:** to react more quickly and manage to do something before someone

the first to arrive. He managed to beat the others to the draw.

### **ENGLISH PROVERB**

### Still tongue makes a wise head

**Explanation:** you are wise, you do not talk very much For example: Kathy really offended Mr.

Parker by talking so much about his ex-wife. She needs to learn that a still tongue makes a

# PHRASAL VERB

■ Meaning: if each person in a group chips in, they each give a small amount of money so that they can buy something together

For example: Ross was determined to be

# **Trump complains Saudis not paying** fair share for U.S. defense

The United States President Donald Trump complained on Thursday that U.S. ally Saudi Arabia was not treating the United States fairly and Washington was losing a "tremendous amount of money" defending the kingdom.

In an interview with Reuters, Trump confirmed his administration was in talks about possible visits to Saudi Arabia and Israel in the second half of May. He is due to make his first trip abroad as president for a May 25 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) summit in Brussels and could add other stops.

"Frankly, Saudi Arabia has not treated us fairly, because we are losing a tremendous amount of money in defending Saudi Arabia," he said.

Trump's criticism of Riyadh, the world's top oil exporter, was a return to his 2016 election campaign rhetoric when he accused the kingdom of not pulling its weight in paying for the U.S. security umbrella

"Nobody's going to mess with Saudi Arabia because we're watching them," Trump told a campaign rally in Wisconsin a year ago. "They're not paying us a fair price. We're losing our shirt."

Saudi Arabia's deputy crown prince Mohammed bin Salman met with Trump last month in a meeting that was hailed by a senior Saudi adviser as a "historical turning point" in relations.

Asked about the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/



Daesh) terrorist group, which the House of Saud regime and other U.S. allies are confronting as a coalition, Trump said the militant group had to be defeated.

"I have to say, there is an end. And it has to be humiliation," Trump said, when asked about what the endgame was for defeating violent extremism.

"There is an end. Otherwise it's really tough. But there is an end," without detailing a strategy.

A visit to Israel would reciprocate a White House visit in February by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is

due to meet Trump next Wednesday in

Washington DC. Trump has set a more positive tone with Israel than his Democratic predecessor, Barack Obama, who often clashed with the right-wing Israeli leader, and has raised concerns among Palestinians that their leaders may not get equal treat-

Trump has also asked Israel to put unspecified limits on its building of Jewish settlements on land the Palestinians want for a state, and has promised to seek a

Middle East peace deal that eluded his predecessors. However, he has offered no new diplomatic prescriptions.

"I want to see peace with Israel and the Palestinians," he said. "There is no reason there's not peace between Israel and the Palestinians - none whatsoev-

Trump brushed aside a question of whether he might use a possible trip to Israel to declare U.S. recognition of the entire city of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's capital, a reversal of longstanding U.S. foreign policy likely to draw international condemnation.

"Ask me in a month on that," he said, without elaborating.

If Trump ties an Israel visit to next month's Brussels trip, it would be around the time Israelis are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the reunification of al-Quds, when Israel captured Arab East al-Quds in the 1967 Middle East war.

Successive U.S. administrations as well as the international community have not recognized Israel's annexation of the eastern part of the city, and the future status of al-Quds remains one of the thorniest issues in the Israeli-Palestinian

Israel claims all of al-Quds, which contains sites sacred to the Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths, as its capital. Palestinians want East al-Quds as the capital of a future state of their own.

(Source: Reuters)

### Belgium 'regrets' helping elect Saudi Arabia to UN women's rights panel

Belgium's vote in favor of appointing the House of Saud regime to a United Nations women's rights commission was due to a regrettable diplomatic mix-up, said Prime Minister Charles Michel, after the decision sparked a firestorm of criticism at home

"If we could do it again and if we would have the chance to discuss it at government level, I of course would have argued that we not approve this," Michel told parliament.

"I regret the vote," he added. The Saudi regime was expected to have its accession to the 45-member commission rubber stamped as the number of nominees matched the exact number of

But when the United States called for a sudden vote, Michel explained that Belgium's United Nations representative did not have sufficient time to consult with Brussels, and pushed through Riyadh's bid.

While the House of Saud regime managed to easily gain a place with 47 votes out of 54, the election of a state that does not even allow women to drive, treats

their evidence as less valuable in court, and forces them to obtain a permission from a male guardian to travel or undergo a medical procedure, caused a resonance.

"There is a regret but there is a missed opportunity to make a strong gesture for the right of women today trampled on by an act that has dishonored our country," said Gwenaelle Grovonius of the opposition Socialist Party, who also demanded that foreign minister Didier Reynders, who had said he was unaware of the vote at the time, resign for the imbroglio.

"Human rights activists everywhere ought to accept this rare apology," said Hillel Neuer, executive director of the non-profit UN Watch, "provided that it is matched with a real commitment to ending the UN's routine elevation of gross human rights abusers to influential human rights bodies, which only empowers the regimes, not the victims."

UN Watch, whose coverage drew attention to what may otherwise have been a quiet backroom vote, called on other democratic states that voted for the Saudi regime in what was a secret ballot, to reveal their decision,



and follow Belgium's example.

'Saudi Arabia may have a large part of the world's oil wealth, but their contempt for the basic rights of women should never be legitimized by UN bodies or by liberal democracies such as Belgium," said Neuer.

(Source: RT)

### Manama regime forces detain another Shia cleric in Bahrain

Bahraini regime forces have arrested another Shia Muslim cleric as the ruling House of Khalifah regime presses ahead with its heavy-handed crackdown and persecution of the members of the religious community in the tiny Persian Gulf

Masked Bahraini troopers stormed the house of Sheikh Abdulzahra Karbabadi in northern village of Karbabad early on Friday, and arrested the cleric and his wife, Arabic-language Lualua television network reported.

Regime forces later raided the village of Karrana, and arrested the cleric's sister. On August 10, 2016, Bahraini forces detained four Shia clerics, identified as Sheikh Imad al-Sho'leh, Sheikh Aziz al-Khazran, Sheikh Monir Ma'toog and Sayyid Mohammad al-Ghoraifi, on charges of organizing anti-regime protests in the northwestern village of Diraz, situated about 12 kilometers west of the capital Manama.

Bahraini troopers also arrested Sayed Yassin al-Mosawi and Sheikh Jassim Kayyat on July 25, 2016 over their participation in a sit-in outside the residence of distinguished religious figure Sheikh Issa Qassim in Diraz to denounce the regime's decision to revoke his citizenship.

The pair was taken to a police station of Khalifah regime relinquish power and

in the northwestern coastal town of Budaiya, located just 10 kilometers southwest of Manama, and security personnel prevented their lawyer Jassim Sarhan from reaching out to them.

Separately, Bahraini regime forces arrested Sheikh Aziz al-Khaddran on charges of incitement of hatred against the ruling House of Khalifah.

Thousands of anti-regime have held numerous demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the state on February 14, 2011.

They are demanding that the House

a just system representing all Bahrainis be established.

Manama has spared no effort in clamping down on dissent and rights activists. On March 14, 2011, troops from the House of Saud regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were deployed to Bahrain to assist the Manama government in its crackdown on peaceful pro-

Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the House of Khalifah regime's crackdown on anti-regime activists.

(Source: Press TV)

### Resolving the Afghanistan crisis

1-> he should not forget that the chief reason for the successful 2001 overthrow of the Taliban was largely due to Iranian cooperation. At the time, in response, Iran was slapped with the "axis of evil" designation and the U.S. sought to marginalize it from Afghanistan, which only served to contribute to the country's deteriorating sit-

While Mr. Mattis traveled to Kabul this week to discuss America's new strategy in Afghanistan, however, a lasting peace in Afghanistan can be reached if regional and global powers abide by the following 10 principles:

- Afghanistan should not be a proxy battleground for outside powers. For its part, the Afghan government must maintain a balance in its foreign relations.
- Extremism and violence in Afghanistan, both indigenous and foreign-inspired, foreign-supported, must be viewed as the main threat to the country's stability, and the Afghan government must be strongly supported in confronting terrorism.
- The Ashraf Ghani-Abdullah Abdullah unity government in Afghanistan must be upheld and political differences prevented from intensifying. Outside powers can play a critical mediation role, and promote reconciliation and national dialogue.
- Geopolitical tensions between Pakistan, India and Afghanistan must be addressed by the international community. The India-Pakistan rivalry and dispute over Kashmir has long spilled over into Afghanistan, where the two South Asian powers have vied for influence. In December 2016, Afghan President Ghani accused Pakistan of waging an "undeclared

war" against Afghanistan and giving sanctuary to the

 Afghanistan's drug and corruption challenges, which have served to stifle the creation of a strong state, must be seriously confronted. In 2016, the amount of bribes in Afghanistan astonishingly surpassed the Afghan government's revenue estimates. Poppy cultivation and opium production also rose in 2016 by 10 percent and 43 percent, re-

• For many neighboring countries, Afghanistan is a water reservoir. Afghanistan's water resources and infrastructure must be developed in a way so that the water shares of its neighbors are not diminished. Effective water-sharing policies will be indispensable to ensuring future peace and stability in the region.

· Afghanistan's economic development should be viewed in a positive-sum way by neighboring countries, and efforts to make Afghanistan an economic hub connecting South Asia and Eurasia must be realized. One major initiative in line with this vision is the trilateral agreement between Afghanistan, India and Iran on the development of the Iranian port of Chahbahar, which will give Afghanistan access to world markets via the Gulf of Oman.

· Humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan must be maintained. For decades, Afghanistan was the world's largest source of refugees, with Iran and Pakistan hosting 95 percent of them as of 2013. Iran alone has long hosted an Afghan refugee population numbering more than 3 million. A major voluntary repatriation and reintegration strategy is necessary in regards to the Afghan refugee crisis, with efforts focused on overcoming the challenges of reintegration.

 Any sustainable solution to the Afghan crisis must bring peace, comfort and dignity to the Afghan people. As such, the end state to the crisis cannot include the continued presence of foreign troops.

• Instead of different countries taking measures by themselves or forming different coalitions, there should be a cohesive, synchronized international approach on assistance to Afghanistan. The U.N. can act as the vehicle to coordinate outside efforts to enact positive change in Afghanistan.

One potential overarching formula to address the Afghanistan crisis is through a major regional and global diplomatic initiative that includes the Afghan government and regional stakeholders in Afghanistan, namely India, Pakistan and Iran, along with the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. This diplomatic process should be aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict, not just its byproducts of combating specific insurgent groups, and resolve the underlying contentions between the main warring parties. Peace in Afghanistan requires regional and global buy-in, not more bombs.

 Seyed Hossein Mousavian is a Middle East security and nuclear policy specialist at Princeton University, a former Iranian diplomat and author of "Iran and the United States: An Insider's view on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace" (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

### **Seoul rejects Trump demand** to pay for missile system

South Korea's government has brushed aside the United States President Donald Trump's suggestion that it should pay for a \$1bn missile defense system the two allies are installing in South Korea to guard against threats from North Korea. The first components of the Terminal High Altitude Area

Defense (THAAD) system have already been delivered and set up at a former golf course in South Korea - infuriating China – at a time of heightened tensions over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs. Top U.S. officials have said THAAD will be operational "within days".

"I informed South Korea it would be appropriate if they paid. It's a billion-dollar system," Trump said in an interview with the Reuters news agency. 'It's phenomenal. It's the most incredible equipment

you've ever seen - shoots missiles right out of the sky," said Trump. "And it protects them and I want to protect them. We're going to protect them. But they should pay for that, and they understand that."

The two countries have been in a security alliance since the 1950-53 Korean war, and more than 28,000 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea.

Seoul retorted that under the Status of Forces Agreement that governs the U.S. military presence in the country, South Korea would provide the THAAD site and infrastructure while the U.S. would pay to deploy and operate it.

There is no change to this basic position," South Korea's defense ministry said in a statement.

The row comes with tensions high on the Korean peninsula following a series of missile launches by North Korea and warnings from the Trump administration that military action was an "option on the table".

But earlier this week it said it would seek stronger sanctions against Pyongyang and held open the possibility of negotiations, with U.S. Pacific Command chief Admiral Harry Harris saying it wanted to bring Leader Kim Jong-un "to his senses, not to his knees".

The White House also wants China to do more to rein in North Korea, but Beijing has been infuriated by the THAAD deployment, which it fears weaken its own ballistic capabilities and says upsets the regional security balance.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

### **London students protest** Israeli envoy's planned speech

A planned speech by Israel's ambassador to Britain at a university in London has been met with protests by anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian students on the campus.

Mark Regev, the Israeli envoy, who is a former aide to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was on Thursday invited to deliver a lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) a day later.

Hundreds of students thronged at the venue to protest, with many carrying the Palestinian flag and the banner reading "Apartheid off campus."

They expressed their opposition to the decision by the SOAS's management to allow the Israeli diplomat in the school.

"We are out here today to show Mark Regev and the management at SOAS that students and staff will not tolerate apartheid, and that we stand in solidarity with Palestinians, who have had their lives ruined by occupation," said a SOAS student and organizer of the protest.

"I just wanted to protest against Raghev being invited to speak at SOAS. He doesn't stand for the values that the SOAS believes in and he is someone who supports the Israeli regime, which has consistently denied basic human rights to Palestinians," another demonstrator said.

"Here the whole campus is up in arms. It is not an academic event. It is a spokesperson for the Israeli government, someone with a very doubtful public profile, who has tried to justify publicly many actions of the Israeli government which many people think are war crimes," said Jonathan Rosenhead, a university professor.

Anti-Israeli sentiments have risen among people across the world — including in Britain — over Tel Aviv's discriminatory policies in the occupied territories and toward the Gaza Strip.

Over the past years, Israel has launched three wars against Gaza, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Palestinians, including many women and children. The Tel Aviv regime has also had the strip under a blockade since 2007.

Tel Aviv has also faced repeated condemnations and a recent United Nations Security Council resolution over its settlement activities in the occupied territories.

In 2005, Palestinian and international activists initiated the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement to push for "various forms of boycott against Israel until it meets its obligations under international law."

The BDS movement, which also calls for Israel to end its occupation of Palestine, has gradually gained global support, including among the public in Australia, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Romania, South Africa, and the United States.

Two years ago, SOAS students and staff voted for the school to formally endorse an academic boycott of Israeli institutions as part of the BDS movement. (Source: Press TV)

### Merkel, Putin to discuss G20, Syria, Ukraine in Sochi

German Chancellor Angela Merkel will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi next Tuesday to prepare the upcoming G20 summit in July and discuss geopolitical conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, a German government spokesman said on Friday. "The visit serves the preparation of this year's G20 summit in Hamburg," Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert said during a regular news conference.

"In addition to the G20 issue, other current foreign policy challenges will also be discussed, such as the Ukraine conflict or the war in Syria," he added.

Seibert said that Merkel and Putin would give a press conference between two rounds of meetings in Sochi.

(Source: Reuters)

### Alonso says Indy 500 is even bigger than he thought

Fernando Alonso had a hunch that entering next month's Indianapolis 500 was going to be a big deal but on Thursday he confessed to a misjudgement - the race was even bigger than

Speaking to reporters at the Russian Grand Prix after attending an IndyCar race in Alabama at the weekend, the double Formula One world champion expressed surprise at the level of interest in the United States



What is for sure is that the impression of how big is the Indy 500 has increased in my opinion after these days, how the people get super-excited about the race," said the McLaren driver.

"These last three or four days, I walked in the airport in Indianapolis or Chicago and everyone was stopping me and shaking hands and wishing me good luck. It was like being in Spain for a moment."

Alonso is missing next month's showcase Monaco Grand Prix, a race he has won twice before, on May 28 to compete at Indianapolis on the same day in a bid to match the late Graham Hill's 'Triple Crown'.

Britain's Hill, also a double Formula One world champion, is the only man to have won the Monaco Grand Prix, Indy 500 and Le Mans 24 Hours sportscar race.

The 35-year-old said that while he had been surprised by the fan reaction, he had not changed his view on the challenge he faced in adapting to racing on oval circuits.

"I remain very open of how difficult it will be to drive those cars, at those speeds and in traffic," he said. "But I am ready to learn as much as I can and hopefully be competitive."

Alonso has set himself a punishing schedule for the next few weeks, flying to the United States immediately after the Bahrain Grand Prix.

He will heading back across the Atlantic next week for practice before coming back to his home Formula One race in Barcelona. Travel problems last weekend, with his return flight canceled

due to bad weather in New York, had not made life any easier. "A couple of hours in the airport, went through Chicago to Milan and then Milan to here. I arrived this morning and after this press conference I go to bed," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

### Kenya says another 'high-profile athlete' failed doping test

The chairman of Athletics Kenya (AK) has told Reuters that another "high-profile athlete" has failed a doping test, just weeks after it emerged Rio Olympics marathon champion Jemima Sumgong tested positive for performance enhancing drugs.

Jackson Tuwei told Reuters that the IAAF, the sport's global governing body, had found the positive test but said the identity



Kenya's middle and long distance success has been marred by doping cases involving elite athletes. Officials estimate the number of positive tests at about 50 in the past four years.

"There is another high-profile athlete who has also failed a doping test but we have to wait for legal procedures to be followed," Tuwei told Reuters in an interview on Thursday.

"Obviously we cannot say who the athlete is."

News of the test comes after Sumgong, who last year became the first Kenyan woman to win Olympic gold in the marathon, tested positive for the banned blood-booster EPO (erythropoietin) in an out-of-competition test carried out by IAAF.

Doping was made a criminal offence in Kenya in June 2016. Tuwei said the IAAF had rejected Sumgong's explanation about the circumstances that led to her positive test.

"Her explanation has been rejected and she has been ordered to send a more convincing explanation before further action is taken," Tuwei said.

Sumgong's positive test came in the wake of a four-year ban handed to Kenya's multi-marathon champion Rita Jeptoo, Sumgong's former training partner, after she tested positive for

"We also wish to send a very strong message to athletes representatives, doctors, coaches and all athletes support personnel that those found culpable or proved to be encouraging our athletes in this line of sporting subterfuge will be charged as prescribed by the law of the land," AK said in a separate statement on Thursday.

Sumgong, 32, was among the six Kenyan gold medalists in Rio, which was the country's best performance at an Olympics.

(Source: Reuters)

# Jorge Sampaoli is our 'chosen coach' to manage Argentina - AFA president

Jorge Sampaoli is the only candidate for the vacant Argentina coaching position, Argentine Football Association (AFA) president Claudio Tapia has said.

Argentina need a new coach following the AFA's dismissal of Edgardo Bauza on April 10 after eight months in charge that have left the country's 2018 World Cup qualifying hopes in jeopardy.

Sampaoli, who was born in Argentina, is under contract with Sevilla until June 2018 but can leave this summer provided his €1.5 million release clause is met.

Asked about former Chile coach Sampaoli, Tapia told ESPN Argentina: "He is the chosen coach. We have to wait for the contractual terms to discuss things with Sevilla.

"We have chosen a coach that has a contract. We want to be respectful and wait because he has a release clause which is once the tournament ends. We will communicate it to the club and we will sit down and negotiate his departure and release clause. We want things to go well in the final games he has left [Malaga, Real Sociedad, Real Madrid and Osasuna]."

Sampaoli, who is completing his first campaign as a coach in Europe, announced last week he had an offer to manage Argentina, but would only consider it once the La Liga season is over.

Reports in Spain claim Sampaoli will be unveiled as the new Argentina coach on May 22, one day after Sevilla's final game of the season at home to Osasuna, thus allowing the new coach to make the squad announcements for the national team's international friendlies against Brazil on June 6 and against Singapore a week later.

Argentina are fifth in South American World Cup qualifying with four games to play. Only the top four are assured of spots for the competition in Russia with the fifth-placed team heading to a continental playoff.



Sampaoli is hoping to lead Sevilla to a third-place finish in La Liga to clinch direct Champions League qualification for the Andalusian outfit. Sevilla beat Celta Vigo 2-1 on Thursday to move level on 68 points with Atletico Madrid, who are third and hold the last direct Champions League qualifying spot.

"We knew this was a key game for

our fight for third place," Sampaoli told his club's official website after the win. "We were able to move level and now we are thinking about Monday's game [at

Sampaoli says he expects a thrilling end-of-season battle with Atletico, coached by his compatriot Diego

"We know that the fight with this team [Atletico] that is great is going to be very difficult," Sampaoli said. "But we are hopeful of playing our remaining games as we did against Celta. Our duty is to go out and win the last four games. We have to think of ourselves and see what happens at the end."

(Source: Soccernet)

### **London Marathon unveils new half**distance mass race for 2018



London Marathon organizers have want to come back to year after year," announced plans for a mass participation. half-marathon next year as part of a campaign to encourage the city's communities to interact.

A statement on Friday said leading athletes will run with amateurs in a mass participation event across closed roads in London on March 4.

A total of 7,500 places will be reserved for community groups from the four host boroughs in the race.

"We are creating an event that is unique, that is fun, that people will

said event director Hugh Brasher Big Half is a celebration of community

As part of the campaign, plans have also been announced for a run for younger competitors, a relay for community groups and a festival in Greenwich.

The London Marathon was cofounded by Brasher's father Chris, in 1981. Around 40,000 runners took part in last Sunday's race, with an estimated 800,000 supporters lining the route.

(Source: Reuters)

### **Neymar hints at Man United** buyout



a possible deal that would see Neyman make a move to Old Trafford this summer. According to whom, you ask? None other than the Brazilian sensation himself, says the Daily Record.

The outlet suggests that Neymar has told friends that both Manchester United and Chelsea have been asking the Barcelona brass if they might part with the 25-year-old, with Mourinho "particularly persistent in his courtship" as he looks to chart a way forward next season after losing Zlatan Ibrahimovic to a long-

Jose Mourinho has been enquiring about term injury last Thursday in the Europa League

Fantastical? Yes. A long shot? Surely. But consider this: Neymar is still dealing with a court case and possible fines related to his transfer to Barcelona from Santos in 2013, and it's not outside the realm of possibility that a cash windfall from a team like United -- reportedly ready to pay his €200 million release clause and meet any salary requirements -- could help Neymar cover everything he could be forced to pay and a whole lot more.

(Source: Soccernet)

## Injury to Warriors coach Kerr runs deeper than basketball

The back pain that threatens to keep Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr out for the rest of the NBA playoffs is a setback for the team, but colleagues on Thursday said they were more concerned about seeing someone they admire

News that the pain and headaches that kept the 51-year-old coach away from the team for the first 43 games last season had returned earlier this month shocked fans in the Bay Area, where Kerr is a beloved figure.

It is even more difficult for those inside the organization, who have developed a deep bond with the coach who is as well known for his ability to connect with players as he is for his high basketball IQ.

"It's hard to see a friend go through it," Warriors general manager Bob Myers said in an interview with CBS Sports Radio's Jim Rome on Thursday

"When you look at a health issue – with a friend, family member, your own – everything else stops," he said.

"It leaves you feeling a little helpless." The deeply competitive Kerr initially hurt his back during the 2015 NBA championship series.

Kerr did not immediately miss any time and went on to lead the Warriors to their first NBA title in 40 years. But two back surgeries followed during the off season,

as did bouts of unbearable pain.

Myers said it might be difficult for people to realize that even someone as successful as Kerr, who won five championships as a player and has worked as a general manager and television broadcaster, is not immune to life's struggles.

Kerr has certainly known adversity

His father Malcolm was assassinated by Islamic militants in 1984 while he was serving as president of the American University of Beirut, when Kerr was just an 18-year-old college freshman.

Myers said Kerr's resiliency is one reason the Warriors have been able to return to the playoffs after a humiliating loss in the NBA Finals last year, when the team became the first in NBA history to blow a 3-1 lead to the Cleveland Cavaliers in the best-of-seven series.

"Sometimes people don't recover. We're moving on,"

Stepping into Kerr's place is assistant coach Mike Brown. "It's tough. I look at him as a friend first and a guy I work for second," Brown told 95.7 The Game radio show.

'To see him or anyone you care about go through anything that's not good is a tough situation to deal with."

Myers insisted the back issues were "fixable." "Basketball is what provides him with the most

happiness," Myers said. "I'm very, very confident he'll be back coaching, but I

can't say when," he said. "And when he does, I think he'll coach for a long, long time."

(Source: Reuters)

# Iran edge Mexico in FIFA Beach **Soccer World Cup opener**

SPORTS Iran defeated Mexico 3-2 e s k in the first game of the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup Bahamas 2017.

Iran goalkeeper Peyman Hosseini scored the first goal of the tournament and made a crucial save at the end of the match to give the Asian champions all three points in the Group B opening match in Nassau on 27 April 2017.

Amirhossein Akbari and Mohammad Ahmadzadeh also scored for Team Melli.

Mosco and Maldonado were the scorers of

Iran have been scheduled to face Italy on Saturday while Mexico meet Nigeria.

The games are five on five, with unlimited substitutions and three 12-minute periods. There are no draws, no offsides, and direct free kicks only.

According to FIFA, beach soccer has existed officially as a global sport since 1992, and the next year, the first professional beach soccer tournament was held in Miami Beach. In 2005, FIFA absorbed beach soccer and the tournament became the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup. The tournament in its current form consists of 16 teams and is held every two years.



### Peyman Hosseini happy to score FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup first goal

Iran goalkeeper Peyman Hosseini is happy after scoring the first goal of the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup Bahamas 2017.

Iran defeated Mexico 3-2 on Thursday in Group B

Hosseini scored the opener of the competition with and we hold our heads high," he added.

a long-range shot.

"I feel good to score the first goal of the competition but I am also happy to win our first match," Hosseini said.

"We defeated Mexico with a good performance. The first match in each competition is always difficult

Iran will play Italy in Group B on Saturday and the Iranian goalie hopes Team Melli are ready to beat the European team.

"We want to qualify for the competition's semifinal, that's why we've participated in the competition," Hosseini concluded.

### Ex-Iran striker Borhani auctions off his boots

SPORTS Ex-Iran and Esteghlal striker Arash e s k Borhani's football boots have been sold at auction to raise funds for children with Down syndrome.

In the ceremony which was held with the participation of Iranian sportsmen and artists in Tehran on Thursday, Borhan's boots were auctioned.

Last week, Borhani announced his retirement from football after 15 years.

The 33-year-old forward, who played for Paykan this season, started his playing career in 2002 with Pas and won Iran Professional League title in his four-year term in the Tehran based team.

Borhani joined Iranian popular team Esteghlal in 2007 and scored 114 goals for the Blues in 283 matches, making him the all-time top goal scorers of Esteghlal and also the second all-time top goal scorers in Iran's Premier Football League.

He was a member of Iran national football team from 2003 to 2010.

Borhani, who was a member of Iran national team in 2006 World Cup, scored 10 goals for Team Melli in

# **Thiago signs new Bayern Munich**

Bayern Munich have extended Thiago Alcantara's contract, providing more positive news following the permanent signing of Kingsley Coman.

Bayern Munich have announced that midfielder Thiago Alcantara has signed a new contract.

The 26-year-old has agreed to a two-year extension of his deal, which will now run until June 30, 2021.

Thiago joined Bayern from Barcelona in 2013 and has established himself as a key member of the first team thanks to excellent form during the current campaign, having previously been hindered by fitness problems

The Spain international has made 39 appearances in all competitions this term, scoring eight times and registering nine assists.

"Thiago is one of the best and therefore most popular midfielders in Europe," chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge told Bayern's official

"We are very happy that we have been able to tie this outstanding professional to the club for the long term."

Thiago added: "My family and I feel very comfortable in Munich. Everything suits us here. I want to win many trophies with Bayern in the future."

His renewal comes after Bayern confirmed that they had signed winger



Kingsley Coman from Juventus on a permanent three-year deal for a total tee of €35million.

It is another welcome piece of positive news for Bayern during a difficult spell for the Bundesliga

A run of five games without a win has seen them exit the Champions League in controversial fashion to Real Madrid and surrender the defence of the DFB-Pokal, with Borussia Dortmund having come from 2-1 down to win Wednesday's semi-final 3-2.

Consecutive draws in the Bundesliga with Bayer Leverkusen and Mainz has seen their lead at the top of the table cut to eight points, although they remain firm favourites to claim the title with just four games remaining.

(Source: Four Four Two)

### **Chelsea boss Antonio Conte hints at** a return to management in Italy

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte has said that he misses Italy and hinted at a return to managing in his homeland

Conte is on course to win the Premier League in his first season with Chelsea, yet he continues to be linked, particularly in the Italian media, with a return to Serie A next season as coach of Inter Milan.

Problems settling in London have been cited by media as a reason why Conte could return, with Inter reportedly keen on starting a new cycle with him.

'Well, it's not Italy," Conte said as he showed two Italian comedians around his home for Mediaset. "Yes [I miss it]. Italy's always Italy, my heart is there."

When told by the comedians that no Italian club could afford to appoint him anyway, Conte cut them short, saying: "New owners have arrived there too now, so..."

Inter were purchased by Chinese corporation Suning Holdings Group last summer, while Chinese investors have also just taken over at local rivals

Conte won the Serie A title in each of his three seasons as coach of Juventus before leaving the club during preseason ahead of the 2014-



coach of Italy, leading them to the quarterfinals of Euro 2016, where they were knocked out on penalties by Germany.

His reputation has only been enhanced by the job he has done at Stamford Bridge, although he joked that it may no longer be the case after Thursday night's comedy sketch for Mediaset.

"It's taken me six months to earn some appreciation here in England, and now

Chelsea lead Tottenham Hotspur by four points at the top of the Premier League with five games of the season remaining, while they have also reached the final of the FA Cup, where they will face Arsenal next month.

(Source: ESP)

# level they get to."

He was subsequently appointed

you're going to ruin it all," he said.

### Hamilton hopes Zanardi can inspire injured British teen

Triple world champion Lewis Hamilton pointed to Alex Zanardi as a beacon of hope as Formula One teams and drivers showed support on Friday for British teenager Billy Monger, who lost his legs in a Formula Four accident.

Drivers and teams attached stickers for "Billy Whizz" on cars and helmets in Russian Grand Prix practice, with an online fundraising campaign for the 17-year-old's recovery reaching 768,000 pounds (\$993,254.40).

"I think I was affected more by Billy's incident than I probably have been by most, with the exception of what happened in Formula One..." said Hamilton, whose boyhood hero was the late Brazilian Ayrton Senna who died in 1994.

"Just to see a kid...I've been there, been in that position of racing, he was doing well fighting to get to Formula One and then such a horrific incident. It really hit home," added the Briton.

"My mind just shines onto Zanardi and showing what



he was able to do. I have all the belief, or hope, that Billy will be able to do something similar. Zanardi, an ex-Formula One driver, had his legs amputated above the knee after a ChampCar crash at the Lausitzring in Germany on Sept. 15, 2001 The Italian, a two times champion in the U.S.-based

series, lost all but a liter of the blood in his body but returned to racing a year and a half after the accident and competed in the world touring car championship.

He then took up hand-cycling and won three Paralympic gold medals.

Monger, who collided with a stationary car that was unsighted ahead of him during the race at Donington Park on April 16, has had multiple operations since the crash but has already said he hopes to race again.

"His answer to it was 'we'll sort that', it was as simple as that," his JHR team boss Steven Hunter told the BBC.

"He's a very, very positive young lad. The first thing he started to do was work out how he would use a clutch with his hands."

(Source: Reuters)

### Iran's Cheraghi wins silver at **Asian Weightlifting Championships**

Saleh Cheraghi from Iran claimed a silver medal in the 2017 Asian Weightlifting Championships on Thursday.

In Day Five of the competition in the Ashgabat Olympic Complex Weightlifting Arena, Cheraghi claimed a silver medal in the men's 85kg

weight class. Žhao Yongchao from China won the gold medal after lifting 160kg in snatch, 196kg in clean and jerk for a total of 356kg.

finished in Cheraghi second place after winning the snatch event with 162kg and 197kg in clean and jerk. He took the silver medal with 352kg.

Bronze medal went to Japanese Toshiki Yamamoto who lifted 351kg in total.

Cheraghi received his Snatch gold medal from compatriot and 2016 Olympic Champion Kianoush Rostami.

(Source: Tasnim)

### **Former Liverpool captain** to manage club's U18s

Liverpool have appointed club legend Steven Gerrard as their Under-18's manager - with the new boss looking to encourage a more "physical" style.

The ex-England captain replaces Neil Critchley, who will manage the U23s.

Gerrard hopes to curb the "show-boating mentality seen throughout academies".

"A lot of kids think they have to do 10 lollipops or Cruyff turns to stand out. We all love a bit of skill and talent but the other side of the game is huge, it is massive" he added.

Gerrard - who made 710 appearances for Liverpool - says he likes streetwise players but says "too many try to model themselves on players like [Cristiano] Ronaldo". "You have to look at yourself and say, 'What are my

strengths and how can I improve my weaknesses?"' he Gerrard plans to help the "soft" youth players tran-

sition from the "comfort zone" of an academy to the

professional ranks. "The kids in our academy are coming into an unbelievable place to work and there is a case where they get a little bit

too much, too soon," he added. "It is a big shock for them when they move on or get

'That's what you have to drive into the players: while you are here make the sacrifices and give it your best, don't get too comfortable because the hard work starts when you get out of the academy.

"I've seen a lot of players who have come out of the academy with huge reputations and go into the Melwood dressing room and then it is sink-or-swim and a lot of them sink.

"I have to help these players prepare for careers, not all with Liverpool's first team, but I feel if I can help them compete then it will help their careers depending on what

(Source: BBC)

### **2018 Winter Olympics: Tensions 'will not** jeopardise Games'

Tensions between North and South Korea will not jeopardise the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympics, say organisers.

The situation between the two countries has become more strained amid concerns North Korea could be planning further missile or nuclear tests.

But Games officials have said they would welcome a team from North Korea if they become accredited by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). It will be the first Winter Olympic Games to be held in

The president of the Korea Tourism Organisation, Chang

Soo Jung, said the situation between the two countries "looks" a little severe", but believes that the tension "will come down in the near future". The vice president of the local organising committee, Hyungkoo Yeo added: "Many people are worried about

the Korean situation but we have successfully completed "We have had 28 test event games without any problem.

"The North Korean female ice hockey team participated in

the test event, so I'd like to stress that it has been a peaceful and successful case of harmony between North Korea and South Korea," he told BBC Sport's Alex Capstick.

The United Nations Security Council convenes for a ministerial-level meeting in North Korea on Friday, to be chaired by the US secretary of state, Rex Tillerson

The 2018 Games will be held between 9 and 25 February and it is the third time Asia has held a Winter Olympics after Japan hosted both the 1972 Games in Sapporo and

Pyeongchang will be split between the coast and the mountains, similarly to Sochi [2014 Winter Olympics host]. The coastal cluster will host curling, ice hockey, figure skating, short track and speed skating, while the mountain area will host skiing, snowboarding, bobsleigh, skeleton and luge.

The winter Paralympics will run from 9 to 18 March.

(Source: BBC)

### INTERNATIONAL DAILY www.tehrantimes.com

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

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



### "Cracks in the Light" at Stockholm theater

**R TEHRAN** — Iranian director Javad Atefeh is d e s k staging "Cracks in the Light" ("Sprickor i ljuset") at the City Theater in Stockholm.

Written by the Stockholm-based Iranian playwright Nasim Barghashi, the play is on the refugee issue in the world.

It is about a young refugee couple that live with their little daughter underground somewhere in Western Europe.

A cast of Iranian and Swedish actors are performing the play, which premiered on Thursday.

The last performance of the play will be held this evening. "Cracks in the Light" was scheduled to have its premiere at Tehran's City Theater in January 2016, but it was canceled.

### WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

### **Painting**

Paintings by Shahla Shilatifar are on display in an exhibition at Naqsh-e Jahan

The exhibition runs until May 3 at the gallery located at 9 Ayatollah Mahmudi St. in the Niavaran neighborhood.



An exhibition of paintings by Fatemeh Nadrlu is underway at Sayeh Gallery.

The exhibition named "Black, White and Between" will run until May 3 at the gallery located at 3 Aqakhani Alley, Omidvar St. in the Niavaran neighborhood.

■ Hoor Gallery is currently playing host to an exhibition of paintings by late Iranian artist Davud Emdadian.

The exhibit runs until May 23 at the gallery, which can be found at 12 Naeimi Alley, North Mirza Shirazi Ave., off Motahhari



Paintings by Faramarz Mokhtarpur are being shown in an exhibition at Shokuh Gallery.

The exhibition runs until May 3 at the gallery located at 19 Amir Nuri Alley, North Salimi St. near Andarzgu Blvd.



A collection of photos entitled "Tehran Land" by Sara Sanai is on display in an exhibition at Arte Gallery.

The exhibit runs until May 4 at the gallery that can be found on Molla Sadra St. near Vanak

Square.

■ Photos by Kamran Gharbi are on display in an exhibition at Jorjani Gallery.

collection "Parasite" will be shown until May 1 at the gallery located at 4 Khayyam Alley off Vali-e Asr Ave.

near the Parkway Intersection.

### **Ballet great Baryshnikov** granted Latvian citizenship

**RIGA (Reuters)** — Latvia has granted citizenship to ballet great Mikhail Baryshnikov, who left more than 50 years ago when the Baltic country was still under the Soviet rule.

The 69-year-old Baryshnikov, born in Riga to Russian parents, will have two passports as he is also a U.S. citizen.

"When I received invitation from Latvian government to accept honorary citizenship, my heart quivered," Baryshnikov said during a ceremony in parliament where he was given the Latvian passport by deputy parliamentary speaker Inese Libina-Egnere.

"I thought how wonderful it would be to return to my childhood (country) no longer as an outsider, but as a native, to visit my mother's grave, to cherish those whom I loved and respected as a child. ... I am grateful for that."

Baryshnikov, considered one of the greatest ballet dancers alongside Vaslav Nijinsky, Rudolf Nureyev and Vladimir Vasiliev, left Latvia in 1964 to begin his career in Leningrad.

He defected to Canada in 1974 before moving to the United States to join the New York City Ballet.

"My childhood in Riga was not necessarily easy, as the son of Russian parents," Baryshnikov wrote in a letter to lawmakers ahead of parliament's vote to grant him citizenship.

# Fajr Golden Simorgh remains at home for "The Home"

1 -> Yusefinejad also received the NETPAC Award, which is presented by a jury assigned by the Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema (NETPAC).

The best director award went to Iván D. Gaona for his debut "Guilty Men" from Colombia.

Stefan Denolyubov was selected as best actor and his co-star Margita Gosheva won the best actress award for their roles in "Glory" by Bulgarian directors Kristina Grozeva and Petar

The special jury award was shared by art director Wang Tou and cinematographer Jinjing Zhu for their collaboration in "Mr. No Problem", a joint Chinese-French production by director Feng Mei.

"Online Shopping" by Iranian filmmaker Qasideh Golmakani won the best short film award.

"Babai" by Mozaffar Hosseinkhani won the Muhammad Al-Ameen Award, which is presented to films promoting Islamic ethics and morality.

COI director Mohammad-Mehdi Heidarian, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Reza Salehi-Amiri, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad-Javad Zarif and actor Reza Kianian were called to the stage to present the award.

Kianian called Zarif a "national hero who has maintained Iranian's national pride" and asked him to present the award.



Iranian producer/director/writer Asghar Yusefinejad accepts the Golden Simorgh for best film during the Fajr International Film Festival for his drama "The Home" at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on April 27, 2017. Jury member Fatemeh Motamed-Arya is also seen in the photo. (Tasnim/Hamed Malekpur)

The best film award in the Eastern Vista, which screens movies from Asian filmmakers, went to "Returnee" by Kazakh director Sabit Kurmanbekov.

Sharbanoo Sadat from Afghanistan was named best director for her movie "Wolf and Sheep" in this section.

"Not Yet" by İranian director Aryan

In the Inter-Religion section, "Knife in the Clear Water", Chinese director Wang Xuebo's debut that focuses on Uighurs and their separatist Vazir-Daftari was picked as best short. movement, won the best film award.

### **Winners of International Quran** Competition honored

**A R T TEHRAN** — The d e s k winners of the International Quran Competition were announced during a special ceremony at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla on Wednesday.

Reciters and memorizers from 83 countries took part in the 34th edition of the competition, which opened on April 19, the State Endowment and Charity Affairs Organization announced on Thursday.

In the Adults' Recitation category, Saeid Parvizi from Iran was first, while Falah Zalif from Iraq placed second and Rahmatollah Bayat from Sweden came

The winners of the memorization section were Musa Motamedi from Iran, Yasser Al Ahmad from Syria and Abdullah



Mohammed Adam from Sudan.

24 female participants competed in the Quran memorization section, and the winners were honored in this section.

The first award was given to Zeinab Mohammadnejad from Iran, the second award went to Sylvia Narodet from Indonesia, and Zainab Adnan from Iraq was the third winner in the female

A jury panel including 24 Iranian and 16 foreign jurors judged the competition.

### Center for Great Islamic Encyclopedia honors Italian scholar Carlo Cereti

R T TEHRAN — The e s k Director of Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia in Tehran, Kazem Musavi Bojnurdi, has honored Italian Cultural Attaché Carlo Cereti for his lifetime cultural achievements over the past eight years

The eight-year mission of Professor Cereti in Iran has been accomplished and the center honored Cereti for his efforts in boosting cultural relations between Iran and Italy.

"The ceremony has been arranged in honor of Professor Cereti, who has served in Iran for the past eight years. He has been cooperating with the center for eight years and this collaboration will continue," Bojnurdi said at the ceremony held at the center

on Monday last week.

"He is currently collaborating with the center in a joint project compiling a three-volume book on the history of ancient Iran," Bojnurdi added. "We Iranians are grateful to those

who have helped Persian culture flourish and grow," Bojnurdi said, handing a copy of Ferdowsi's masterpiece Shahnameh to Cereti.

For his part Cereti expressed thanks to Bojnurdi and called the center his second home.

A professor of Iranology at the Sapienza University of Rome, Cereti has authored several books and articles including "An 18th Century Account of Parsi History", "Avestan Quotations in Pahlavi Books", and "Copulative Compounds in Iranian Onomastics".

### Special guest Italy announces programs for Tehran book fair

**TEHRAN** — Italy as the special guest d e s k of the 30th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) has announced its programs for the event, which will open on May 3.

A group of 32 Italian cultural figures will be attending the book fair, Italian Cultural Attaché Carlo Cereti said in a press release published by the TIBF on Friday.

"Among the participating figures are novelists Michela Murgia, Alessandro Barbero, Michele Serra, Beatrice Masini and Gianni Biondillo," Cereti said.

The director general of Italy's Libraries and Cultural Institutes, Rossana Rummo, and Alfieri Lorenzon, Director of the Association of Italian Publishers (AIE), are also expected to attend the event, he added.

He also said that representatives from Italy's publishing companies including Mondadori and Ponte will attend the fair.

He also explained that an exhibition of books

selected from the Angelica Library in Rome will be set up at the Iran National Library and Archives (INLA) during the event under the title "Silk Road Books, From Rome to Tehran". Iran Cultural Fairs Institute is scheduled to publish

two bibliographies introducing Iranian books in Italy and Italian books in Iran, Cereti remarked.

A number of meetings and seminars have also been arranged on the sidelines, the cultural attache

Italian historian, novelist and essayist Alessandro Barbero will attend a session on Thursday, while Iranian painter and art critic Aidin Aghdashlu, writer Melania Mazzucco and expert Maria Felicita Ferraro will discuss the topic "Italian Museums, Masterpieces and Their Stories" on the second day of the fair.

The 30th edition of the book fair will open with a number of Iranian and Italian cultural figures in attendance on Wednesday, May 3.



There will be more meetings through the fair, which will be running until May 13 at the Shahr-e Aftab (Sun City) Fairground.

### "Silence of the Lambs" director Jonathan Demme dies of cancer

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — Jonathan Demme, the eclectic movie director whose work ranged from thrillers like "The Silence of the Lambs" to documentaries on leading musicians, died early on Wednesday of complications from esophageal cancer, his publicist The 73-year-old director of ground-breaking AIDS

movie "Philadelphia" died in his Manhattan apartment surrounded by his wife, Joanne Howard, and three children, publicist Annalee Paulo said in a statement. Demme's most recent feature film was the 2015

comedy "Ricki and the Flash", starring Meryl Streep as Streep called him a "big hearted, big tent,

compassionate man - in full embrace in his life of people in need," in a statement on Wednesday. New York-born Demme won a directing Oscar for the 1991 thriller "The Silence of the Lambs", which also won Oscars for best picture and for its stars Anthony

Hopkins and Jodie Foster. Foster said she was heartbroken at his death. "Jonathan was as quirky as his comedies and as deep as his dramas. He was pure energy, the unstoppable cheerleader for anyone creative," she said.

Demme's work was wide ranging, including comedy



U.S. director Jonathan Demme poses for photographers during a photocall at the Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy, September

(Reuters/Denis Balibouse)

and thrillers to bold fare like 1993 film "Philadelphia", one of the first mainstream Hollywood movies to tackle the AIDS crisis. The movie brought an Oscar for Tom

Hanks on Wednesday called him "the grandest of

"Jonathan taught us how big a heart a person can have, and how it will guide how we live and what we do for a living," Hanks said in statement.

Demme also directed concert and music documentaries for Bruce Springsteen, Kenny Chesney and Neil Young, the band Talking Heads, and more

recently, "Justin Timberlake + the Tennessee Kids." Steven Van Zandt, a member of Springsteen's E Street Band, described him on Twitter as "one of the most beautiful souls on the planet."

Barry Jenkins, who directed 2017 Oscar best picture "Moonlight", recalled Demme's support and warmth when that film was first doing the festival rounds. "My man Demme was the kindest, most generous. A MASSIVE soul," Jenkins tweeted.

Demme's other notable films include the 2008 independent drama "Rachel Getting Married", the 2004 version of "The Manchurian Candidate", 1988 comedy "Married to the Mob" and the 1998 adaption of Toni Morrison's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "Beloved".

Paulo said the funeral for Demme would be private and that in lieu of flowers the family had asked that donations be made to the group Americans For Immigrant Justice in Miami.