



Germany, Netherlands, Britain top investment making seekers in petchem sector **4**



Iran lures more travelers from Spain **10**



Iran ready for FIFA U20 World Cup opener against Costa Rica: coach **15**



Nine Iranian companies offer productions at Cannes Film Market **16**

# Rouhani reelected as president



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**TEHRAN — Hassan Rouhani was reelected as president in the Friday election, after a month of heated competition with conservative rivals.**

Rouhani, who represented moderates and reformers in the campaigns, won 23.5 million (57 percent) of the total vote, while his main rival, Ebrahim Raisi, collected 15.7 million (38.5 percent), the Interior Ministry announced on Saturday.

The other two presidential candidates, Mostafa Mirsalim and Mostafa Heshmitaba also collected 478,215 and 215,450 votes, respectively.

Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri and Tehran's Mayor Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf stepped out of the race days before the election. →2

## First VP announces prioritized economic programs

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN —** Iran's First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri has tasked the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs with implementing 14 prioritized programs by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2018).

Improving the country's business environment index by 10 steps, implementing the value added tax law, developing a comprehensive taxation plan, enhancing the country's competitiveness rank, empowering the domestic insurance industry, and creating an intelligent system to fight money laundering are some of the projects, Mehr news agency reported.

In January 2017, Jahangiri said that creating an economic opening won't be viable unless resistance economy guidelines are implemented by all responsible bodies.

"If resistance economy policies are implemented by all, the country's economy has the potential to flourish and enhance living conditions of people," Jahangiri said, "Advancing resistance economy is an important task that demands the participation of all governmental, official, and civil organizations."

The term "resistance economy" was used for the first time in 2013 by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to highlight the importance of domestic production as a tool to reduce dependence on foreign resources.

Also, it brings to the fore the need to support the Iranian private sector and workforce.

## Congratulations pour in for Rouhani from around the world

**POLITICS d e s k** Officials from various countries including Chinese and Russian leaders on Saturday congratulated Hassan Rouhani on his re-election as president.

Incumbent Rouhani, who sought re-election in the Friday election, won a landslide victory in the Friday polls, winning 23,549,616 votes out of a total of 41,22,131.

■ **EU's Mogherini: I congratulate Rouhani for receiving strong mandate**

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini congratulated Rouhani in a Twitter message.

"Iranians took passionately part to political life of their country. I congratulate President Hassan Rouhani for strong mandate received," she tweeted on Saturday.

In another Twitter message, she said, "EU ready to continue work for full JCPOA implementation, bilateral engagement, regional peace, and meet expectations of all people in Iran."

■ **Putin congratulates Rouhani**

Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a statement congratulating Rouhani on the victory in the presidential election. →2

## Iran ditches plan to buy Mitsubishi planes

Deputy Transport Minister Asghar Fakhrieh Kashan says Iran has forgone plans to buy passenger planes from Japan's Mitsubishi.

The official first confirmed back in July 2016 that Iran sought to buy over two dozen planes from the Japanese industrial giant.

Fakhrieh Kashan, however, said on Friday that "there is no chance of reaching an agreement with this company (Mitsubishi) at present and the purchase of aircraft from it is out of question."

Mitsubishi Aircraft – the aviation arm of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries – began market surveys into Iran in September 2015, four months before sanctions were lifted on the Islamic Republic, according to Japan's Nikkei newspaper.

The paper said at the time that flag carrier Iran Air was weighing to purchase 80 70-seat Mitsubishi Regional Jets and using them for domestic routes.

Last week, Iran received four ATR 72-600s as part of a deal with the French manufacturer to buy 20 passenger planes.

Iran Air finalized the deal with ATR last month for 20 twin-propeller aircraft worth \$536 million at list prices, with an option to buy 20 more.

The country has also signed billion-dollar deals with Boeing and Airbus to replace and upgrade its commercial fleet.

Airbus delivered three of the 100 airliners ordered by Iran earlier this year, including two long-haul A330s and a smaller A321, but Boeing's deliveries will not begin before 2018.

Fakhrieh Kashan said Iranian airlines continue their efforts to buy commercial jets from international manufacturers.

"Ministry of Transportation is trying to cooperate with the companies which are open to providing finance possibilities and pave the way for reaching final agreements," he said.

Negotiations with other manufacturers for purchase of planes were also continuing, and there were "great hopes" that the talks would produce a final deal, Fakhrieh Kashan said, without specifying those companies.

(Source: Press TV)

## Iran readiest to engage with world: reelected Rouhani

**By Ali Kushki**

**TEHRAN —** In a live televised address just hours after reelection, President Hassan Rouhani said Tehran is "readier than ever before" to interact with the world.

"Prouder than ever before, Iran is today ready to step up its relations with the world on the basis of mutual respect and national interests," Rouhani said on Saturday.

"Our nation's message (of peace and friendship) was explicitly departed to the world ... and the nation expects this most important message to be correctly heard by all governments, neighbors, and specifically, by great powers."

Rouhani who won a landslide vote on Friday

was making the comments as hostile President Trump was visiting Saudi Arabia, which is at loggerheads with Tehran over a list of issues.

"Our elections indicated to the neighbors and the region that the way to restore security to the region is to shore up democracy and

**The nation expects this most important message of peace to be correctly heard by all governments, neighbors, and specifically, by great powers.**

## Few celebrations as 10th anniversary of global crisis nears

In May 2007, Ben Bernanke, then chair of the Federal Reserve, said the problems in the U.S. subprime mortgage market probably would not hurt the economy or the banking system.

With the admittedly huge benefit of hindsight, that was a misjudgment of epic proportions.

It has taken a full 10 years since the onset of the global financial crisis for the world economy to show clear signs of recovery, and even now progress remains halting.

In the United States, the unemployment rate is at its lowest in a decade, but pay is growing only slowly and a string of recent economic data has been weaker than expected.

In Europe and Japan, growth is picking up speed, prompting the European Central Bank and the Bank of Japan to start sending signals about eventually easing their economies off their huge stimulus program.

But in Europe, Greece's debt crisis remains far from over, even if the rest of the euro zone might help clear the way for more relief at a meeting of finance ministers on Monday.

And although France voted in a centrist leader rather than a far-right populist this month, new President Emmanuel Macron may struggle to command a majority in



parliament after elections in June. Investors remain nervous too about the prospects for euro-sceptic parties in elections in Austria this year and in Italy by May next year.

In Asia, China has smoothed trade tensions with the United States, at least for now, but the world's second-biggest economy is still trying to reign in its shadow banking system.

And while emerging economies may ride on the coattails of global growth, there are glaring exceptions such as recession-hit Brazil and South Africa which are both in the grip of political crises.

Group of Seven finance ministers and central

bank governors sounded only cautiously confident as they wrapped up a meeting on May 13 in Italy.

The most pressing question for most of the G7 was how far U.S. President Donald Trump would go to remove the world's biggest economy from trade deals, water down global banking rules or pump up the dollar by turbo-charging the economy.

That was before media reports that Trump had tried to stop an investigation into ties between his former national security adviser and Russia.

The crisis in Washington triggered a rout in financial markets as investors all but gave up hope of Trump pulling off his ambitious tax cuts and started to consider the odds – still low – of an impeachment process.

Analysts at Nomura said Trump's worsening fortunes might affect the plans of the Federal Reserve which is widely expected to raise interest rates again in June.

On Thursday, Britain also reports its second estimate of first-quarter GDP growth, according to a Reuters poll of economists, is likely to confirm quarterly growth of 0.3 percent, less than half the pace of the previous three months.

(Source: Reuters)

## Militants begin evacuating town in Syria's Homs province

In line with the final phase of implementing a deal between the Syrian government and groups operating against Damascus, foreign-backed militants have begun evacuating a district in Homs province.

On Saturday, at least one bus transporting militants and their families left Waer, a town now under the control of the Syrian army. About 2,500 more people were expected to leave the district within the coming hours.

Thousands of people have left the district in several stages since the deal, which is backed by Russia, came into force in March.

According to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, up to 20,000 people will have left the district by the time it is fully implemented.

Syrian media reports said many of the militants were headed for the northwestern province of Idlib as well as the town of Jarablus along the country's northern border with Turkey.

Some will reportedly stay in Waer and hand over their weapons as the military moves in.

Sergei Druzhin, a Russian officer contributing to overseeing the implementation of the deal, said Russian military police would help with the evacuation. "Russia has a guarantor role in this agreement. Russian military police will stay, and will carry out duties inside the district."

The evacuation of Waer is one of the largest of its kind. It follows a number of similar deals in recent months that have brought many parts of western Syria under the control of the government.

Last December, several thousand civilians were allowed to leave Foua and Kefraya under a separate deal between armed groups and Damascus. The agreement also enabled the evacuation of a militant-held enclave in eastern Aleppo.

Meanwhile, Turkey has reportedly resumed an extensive campaign aimed at training the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA) militants in northern Syria, purportedly to fight Kurdish forces and Daesh Takfiri terrorists. →13

by showing its performance.

Ex-law minister viewed that the huge turnout in the elections will make the Islamic Revolution even stronger.

He strongly believed that who so ever wins presidential elections in Iran, relations between Iran and Pakistan will be strengthened. He added that President Hassan Rouhani in his last tenure took many initiatives to improve ties with Pakistan.

(Source: IRNA)



ELECTION COUNTDOWN



**Tehran council election results to be released Monday**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The final results of council election in Tehran province will be announced on Monday, according to the head of Tehran province's high committee for election monitoring.

Speaking to ILNA on Saturday, Alireza Rahimi said that about 90 percent of the ballots cast for council candidates in the province have already been counted.

He added over 3.5 million ballots were used across the province and that there were over 2,700 candidates, making the counting time-consuming.



**Parliamentary group: Next administration can reap JCPOA fruit**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The pro-reform parliamentary group Omid (Hope) issued an announcement on Saturday following the victory of Hassan Rouhani in the Friday presidential election, where they said the next administration "can reap the fruit of the JCPOA (the official name for the nuclear accord)."

"It can share the fruit with all people," the announcement read, praising the high electoral turnout as sign of people's understanding of the current situation, Fars reported.

The MPs congratulated Rouhani on his clean sweep and further invited him to pay attention to finishing the half-completed projects he embarked on in his first term.



**'Tehran welcomes respectful ties with Riyadh'**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — A conservative advisor to the Iranian Majlis speaker has said Tehran "welcomes respectful ties with Riyadh," Mehr reported.

"Regional circumstances have completely changed," said Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Saturday. "Only through relying on the power of nations, healthy relations, and mutual respect situations can turn in favor of everybody."

He criticized Saudi Arabia for relying on extra-regional forces in its pursuit of a regional position, reiterating that "Iran has always favored mutually respectful relations with Saudi Arabia."



**Rezaee calls on Trump to ask Riyadh about democracy, freedom**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The secretary of Iran's Expediency Council has called on U.S. President Donald Trump, who is on a visit to Riyadh, to ask his hosts about the reason for lack of democracy and freedom in the Saudi kingdom.

"Don't you want to ask your hosts why there is no freedom and democracy in Saudi Arabia?" Mohsen Rezaee wrote on Instagram on Saturday.

"Mr. Trump! You arrived in Riyadh when the Iranian nation did a magnificent job and won the world's admiration," he underlined.



**Iran, Turkmenistan do first ever prisoner swap**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Years after signing a prisoner swap deal, Iran and Turkmenistan exchanged convicts at border areas for the first time, an Iranian Justice Ministry official said on Saturday.

According to Mahmoud Abbasi, the deputy chief for human rights and international affairs at ministry, 27 Iranian convicts kept in Turkmen detention centers were exchanged with three Turkmen nationals in Iranian prisons, IRNA reported.

"While the deal had been signed years ago, this was the first exchange of prisoners between the two nations," Abbasi said.



**Seven Iranians injured in Iraq suicide attack**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Seven Iranian pilgrims were among those injured in a suicide attack that hit an area near Basra, Iraq, on Friday evening, ISNA reported.

The news was announced by Majid Aqababaei, the borders affairs director at the Interior Ministry.

According to the official, the injured pilgrims were carried by ambulance to the city of Khorramshahr in Iran.

He added no Iranian was killed in the blast and that six of the injured had already been released from hospital.

# Leader calls Iranians winner of elections

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Saturday that the Iranian people and the Islamic Republic system are winners of the May 19 presidential elections.

"Your massive and enthusiastic participation who stood in long lines to reach the ballot boxes indicate clearly strength of the Islamic democracy," he said.

He said that people from all walks of life with different political affiliations participated in the elections and voted for the Islamic Republic system.

The Leader urged the people to protect the "unity" which is an important factor in "national power".

Ayatollah Khamenei called on the people to play their part in helping the country move towards achieving its objectives.

He also advised the future president and his cabinet to make efforts to resolve problems with high motivation.

Helping poor people and developing underprivileged regions and fighting corruption should be prioritized, he added.

The Leader also said that "national dignity" should be respected in international relations.

Elsewhere, he said, "I deem it necessary to thank every individual who participated in the elections and also those who played a role in persuading them to participate, particularly religious scholars, and intellectuals from political, cultural and artistic fields."

He also thanked the "presidential candidates who played an influential role in enlightening and creating enthusiasm in the election".

"I feel it necessary to thank all those who were involved in the



**The Leader says: "I deem it necessary to thank every one who participated in the elections and also those who played a role in persuading them to participate, particularly religious scholars, and intellectuals from political, cultural and artistic fields."**

implementation and monitoring of the presidential election, as well as city council elections, as they made tremendous efforts," he stated.

The Leader added it is "necessary

to express my gratitude to those who protected and secured the elections, as well as the national media" which worked round-the-clock and helped make "this great election turnout" to happen.

Incumbent President Hassan Rouhani, who sought re-election in the Friday election, won a landslide victory, winning 23,549,616 votes out of a total of 41,22,131.

## Rouhani reelected as president

**1 →** More than 70 percent of the country's 56 million eligible voters casted their ballots in what became a resounding victory for the self-described moderate president.

In his first remarks after winning re-election on Saturday, Rouhani, who enjoyed the support of the reformists, vowed to deliver everything that he had promised in his campaign trail.

"The great nation of Iran, you are the real winners of the election... I shall remain loyal to my commitments to you," he wrote on his Twitter account.

In the past several weeks, Raisi, a principlist candidate who is the custodian of the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) in Mashhad, and Ghalibaf attacked the Rouhani administration for its inept handling of the economy and for failing to deliver on his promises.

In the 2013 election, Rouhani secured more than 50% of the vote and won the election by a wide margin against five mostly conservative candidates. Ghalibaf, who was his main rival, came a distant second to him with 16.5% of the vote.

During his campaign trail, Rouhani boasted his administration's success in clinching a nuclear agreement with six world powers in 2015, which mostly lifted nuclear-related sanctions against the country.

However, critics say his administration has not been able to fully benefit from the sanctions relief. Rouhani was also strongly criticized during the presidential debates for failing to revive the economy.

The nuclear deal, which is largely viewed positively inside Iran, was among the most important

determining factors in the Friday election. The deal brought hope to millions of Iranians.

Despite the growing tension with the new U.S. administration and fears over President Donald Trump's anti-Iran stance, Rouhani said in the last presidential debate that he will "break all the sanctions against Iran".

The election took place as Trump visited Saudi Arabia, a country which is at odds with Iran over the crises in Yemen, Syria, and popular uprising in Bahrain.

After Trump was elected, the Saudis and some other Arab countries in the region became hopeful that the hardline president will take a harsher tone with Iran than his predecessor, President Barack Obama.

## Congratulations pour in for Rouhani from around the world

**1 →** "Russian President Vladimir Putin has sent a telegram to Hassan Rouhani congratulating him on a convincing victory in the Iranian presidential election," Sputnik reported the statement as reading.

Congratulating Rouhani on reelection, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad issued a statement noting that Damascus would continue to work and cooperate with the Islamic Republic of Iran "in what boosts security and stability in the two countries, the region and the world".

Norwegian Foreign Minister Borge Brende welcomed re-election of Rouhani.

According to ABC News, Brende said he echoes the sentiment of Germany's Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, who said Rouhani's re-election sends a message that Iran could be serious about instituting reforms.

In separate messages, Emir of Kuwait Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Prime Minister of Kuwait Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah congratulated Rouhani.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also insisted that New Delhi will continue to remain committed to strengthening its special relationship with Iran.

**■ China's Xi: Iran has made achievements under Rouhani**

Chinese President Xi Jinping also sent a message to Rouhani congratulating him on re-election.



Mogherini



Putin



Modi



Xi

According to Xinhua, Xi said in the message that Iran has gained new socio-economic achievements over the past four years under Rouhani's leadership, and that the China-Iran relationship has maintained sound momentum of development thanks to the two countries' joint efforts.

**■ 'Confidence in Rouhani'**

Azeri President Ilham Aliyev sent Rouhani a message and congratulated his re-election.

He described Rouhani's re-election as an indication of the Iranians'

confidence on him.

Nabih Berri, the speaker of Lebanon's Parliament, congratulated Rouhani on re-election.

Sultan of Oman Qaboos bin Said al Said also congratulated Rouhani on re-election.

**"Iranians took passionately part to political life of their country. I congratulate President Hassan Rouhani for strong mandate received," EU's Mogherini tweeted on Saturday.**

## Zarif says Iran derives stability from people

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Iran derives stability from the people and not the coalitions.

"We derive stability not from 'coalitions', but from our

people, who -unlike many- do vote. Iranians must be respected & are ready to engage," he tweeted on Friday.

Incumbent President Hassan Rouhani, who sought re-election in the Friday election, won a landslide victory in the Friday polls, winning 23,549,616 votes out

of a total of 41,22,131.

Rouhani is followed by archival Ebrahim Raisi with 15,786,449. Mostafa Mirsalim and Mostafa Heshmitaba also collected 478,215 and 215,450 votes, respectively, according to the Interior Ministry.



# Trump arrives in Saudi Arabia, seeks relations 'reset'

U.S. President Donald Trump has arrived in Saudi Arabia on the first leg of his first foreign trip since taking office, in a crucial test abroad as political scandals mount at home.

In a red-carpet airport welcome, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud greeted Trump, his wife Melania and his entourage shortly after they landed in the capital, Riyadh, around 06:50 GMT on Saturday.

Trump held a series of meetings with the king and other Arab and Muslim leaders, before jetting off to Israel, the occupied Palestinian Territories, the Vatican, Belgium and Italy in a nine-day tour across the Middle East and Europe.

During the two-day visit to the kingdom, Trump is expected to sign a major weapons deal, give a speech on Islam and discuss the battle against "terrorism" with more than 50 leaders.

It is the first time a U.S. president has chosen Saudi Arabia as the first stop on a maiden trip.

Trump's visit is seen as highly symbolic, as he looks to repair Washington's ties with its closest Arab ally.

During the final years of Barack Obama's U.S. presidency, "relations had undergone a period of difference of opinion", according to Saudi officials. These differences were largely centered around the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and the Obama administration's cautions to the kingdom about the civilian toll of the war in Yemen.

Al Jazeera's Washington editor James Bays, reporting from Riyadh, said the Saudis were very "proud and excited" that the U.S. president chose the Persian Gulf country as his first stop.

"They want a reset of the relationship with the US. They were not happy with Obama, and they were not happy with the U.S. policy in Yemen and in Syria," Bays said.

Ahmed Alibrahim, a Saudi political analyst, told Al Jazeera that the Saudis see this as a "great day" for relations with the U.S.

"We think President Trump's cabinet does understand the Saudi challenges and does understand the challenges the GCC [Persian Gulf Cooperation Council] faces".

He added that the kingdom would like to see more "decisive statements, actions and sanctions on the Iranian regime".

Prior to the trip, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, said the visit will "bolster the strategic partnership between the two countries".

He added, that "several agreements will be signed, including political agreements ... and big economic agreements".

Marwan Kaban, an analyst at the Doha Institute's Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, told Al Jazeera the U.S. and Saudi Arabia will discuss a strategic plan aimed at countering "extremism" as an ideological battle.

"I think both sides have high expecta-



tions of this summit, as they are expected to discuss the most pressing issues for both of them like the conflict in Yemen, the war in Syria and the war on ISIL," Kaban said, referring to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant terrorist group, also known as ISIL.

"Trump is expected to address the entire Islamic world while trying to establish this sort of a strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia, particularly concerning groups like ISIL."

## ■ Arms deal

Trump is expected to announce an arms deal with Saudi Arabia worth more than \$100bn, in what could be the biggest such agreement in history.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, U.S. officials familiar with the package told The Associated Press news agency that the deal would include Abrams tanks, combat ships, missile defense systems, radar and communications and cyber security technology.

Much of the package builds on commitments made before Trump took office, although some elements are new, including weapons designed to help Saudi Arabia in an air campaign it has led in war-torn Yemen, officials said.

The Trump administration separately informed Congress on Friday that it will sell some \$500m in precision-guided munitions to Saudi Arabia. These include laser-guided Paveway II bombs and JDAM kits for converting unguided bombs into "smart

bombs".

## ■ 'Historic summit'

Also on the agenda in Riyadh is a summit of more than 50 Arab and Muslim leaders, including those from the six nations that form the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), to discuss the fight against "extremism".

Announcing the meeting, the Saudi foreign ministry said the "historic summit" should be the start to "building a partnership between the Arab and Muslim worlds and the United States at various levels".

Trump is expected to give a speech on Islam, calling for unity in the fight against "radicalism" and characterizing the effort as a "battle between good and evil", the AP reported, citing a draft of his speech.

The U.S. president will avoid tough anti-Muslim rhetoric from his presidential campaign, as well as mentions of democracy and human rights, according to the draft of the speech, which remains subject to revision, AP said.

According Al Jazeera's James Bays, the meeting will also include talks on Trump's promise to restart peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis.

"Everyone agrees that a fresh approach could be helpful in solving this long-running conflict and President Trump certainly brings that - but Arab leaders will want to hear more than optimism, they'll want to know the U.S. president's plan to move forward," Bays said.

After the visit in Saudi Arabia, Trump will head to Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories where he will meet his "friend" Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Bethlehem.

There are no plans for Trump to bring the two leaders together, a senior U.S. official told the Reuters news agency, saying the administration does not believe it is the "right time just yet".

Trump will then fly to the Vatican to meet Pope Francis, who has said he will give the U.S. president an open-minded hearing, despite differences in belief on everything from climate change to policies towards refugees.

Trump will later meet members of NATO in Brussels and attend a G7 summit in Italy.

The foreign trip comes as Trump faces growing criticism at home.

As the U.S. president jetted off to Saudi Arabia, reports by U.S. media emerged that a senior adviser to Trump was a "person of interest" in a probe of possible collusion with Russia during last year's election campaign and that the U.S. president had boasted to Russian officials after firing former FBI Director James Comey earlier this month.

On Thursday, Trump also denounced the announcement of special counsel to conduct an independent investigation into the alleged Russia meddling in the election and possible collusion with Trump's team.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## 'State terrorism carried out against Syria'

Syria's Ambassador to the UN Bashar al-Ja'afari has announced the end of the latest round of Syrian peace talks, while stressing that "state terrorism" is still being carried out against his country.

"We have just concluded the last session with the UN special envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, within the framework of the current Geneva round, which we agreed to call it the 6th round of Geneva," Ja'afari said in the Swiss city.

"We would like to remind the attendees that state terrorism is being practiced against our country," he added in reference to a U.S. airstrike that targeted anti-ISIL (Daesh) forces in Syria on Thursday.

"The important thing is that our political ambition is higher because we want to focus on fighting terrorism represented by armed groups and the state and government terrorism happening against our country. This includes the American aggression, French aggression and British aggression, whether on civilian or military targets," he added.

According to a Syrian government military source, the U.S. strike killed several people and caused material damage.

The source said the attack hampered efforts by the Syrian army and its allies to fight Daesh terrorists who have been wreaking havoc in Iraq and Syria for years.

Meanwhile, De Mistura also confirmed that the latest round of talks has come to an end, noting that there had only been "incremental progress" with no major discussions held on topics on the main agenda.

He expressed hope that talks would recommence in June, without giving any specific date.

The sixth round of the Syria peace talks began under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva on Tuesday.



Since March 2011, Syria has been gripped by militancy it blames on some Western states and their regional allies that have long pushed for the ouster of the Damascus government.

Several rounds of peace talks have been held in Geneva and the Kazakh capital Astana.

The Astana talks, brokered by Iran, Russia and Turkey, have most recently produced a memorandum of understanding on de-escalation zones in Syria, sharply reducing fighting in the country.

## ■ U.S. strike against Syrian forces 'unlawful': Russia

Meanwhile, Russia condemned the US airstrike on pro-Syrian government forces in the Arab country as "illegal and unlawful".

"The American command explained the strike on pro-government Syrian forces, saying that these forces represented a threat to opposition which cooperates with the US-led coalition," said Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

(Source: SANA)

## Bahrainis protest in support of Shia cleric Sheikh Qassim

People in Bahrain have poured onto the streets of the northern village of Abu Saiba to express their solidarity with prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim ahead of his trial by the regime.

Demonstrators carried posters bearing the pictures of Sheikh Qassim during the march, urging the Manama regime to end its persecution of the clergyman and other pro-democracy activists in the country.

Qassim, the spiritual leader of Bahrain's dissolved opposition bloc the al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, was stripped of his nationality last June over accusations that he used his position to serve foreign interests and promote sectarianism and violence.

The cleric, who is in his mid-70s, has denied the allegations. He faces up to 15 years imprisonment if convicted, however. His trial will begin on Sunday.

The village of Diraz, where Qassim's home is situated, has witnessed numerous sit-ins in solidarity with him.

## ■ Bahrainis gather in mosques on eve of Qassim's trial

In a relevant development on Friday, Bahraini scholars called on citizens to gather in mosques across on the country on the eve of Qassim's trial.

"Be prepared, for any moment, a religious appeal is issued in the event of any unjust judgment [against Sheikh Qassim]," the scholars said in a statement.

They further voiced hope that "all the mosques of Bahrain in all areas [would] be filled with men and women" on the eve of Qassim's trial.

Bahrain's tyranny and its insistence on Qassim's trial had strengthened the people's resolve to oppose the regime, they added.

Bahrain has been the scene of anti-regime protests on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in February 2011.

People have been demanding that the Al Khalifah dynasty relinquish power and let a just system representing all Bahrainis be established.

Scores of people have been killed and hundreds of others wounded or detained amid Manama's crackdown on dissent and widespread discrimination against Bahrain's Shia majority.

(Source: Press TV)

## War with North Korea would be tragic: U.S. military chief

U.S. defense chief James Mattis delivered a somber caution on North Korea saying any military attempts to resolve the crisis would be "tragic on an unbelievable scale".

Mattis was speaking to reporters at the Pentagon, days after North Korea test-fired what analysts say was its longest-range rocket yet.

Despite tough talk from top U.S. officials in recent weeks and the deployment of an aircraft carrier strike group to the region, Mattis said the best option for North Korea is finding an international solution to effectively apply pressure on Pyongyang.

"As you know, if this goes to a military solution, it is going to be tragic on an unbelievable scale, and so our effort is to work with the UN, work with China, work with Japan, work with South Korea to try to find a

way out of this situation," he said.

North Korea is accelerating efforts to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to the continental United States.

Though Mattis said Pyongyang isn't listening to cautions from the international community, he credited China's efforts to apply pressure as having some limited influence.

"There appears to be some impact by the Chinese working here," he said.

Mattis said the rocket tested Sunday had gone extremely high and North Korean scientists likely learned a lot from the test. But he would not say if it was clear the missile made a controlled re-entry from outside the atmosphere.

In North Korea on Friday, thousands of

residents lined the streets to give the scientists and workers behind Sunday's missile test a hero's welcome, state media reported.

Even without its missiles, North Korea has amassed artillery units along its border with South Korea and any military action from Pyongyang could be devastating.

The capital, Seoul, is only about 55km away and the North could rain shells onto the city of 10 million.

North Korea's deputy UN envoy said on Friday the United States needed to roll back its "hostile policy" towards the country before there could be talks between the pair.

"As everybody knows, the Americans have gestured [toward] dialogue," North Korea's Deputy UN Ambassador Kim In-ryong told reporters. "But what is important is not words, but actions."

(Source: agencies)

## Turkey's pro-Kurd party elects new co-leader to replace jailed predecessor

Turkey's pro-Kurdish party elected a new co-leader Saturday to replace Figen Yuksekdog, who has been in jail on terrorism charges since November and was stripped of her parliamentary status three months ago.

At a Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) congress held amid tight security, Serpil Kemalbay was chosen as joint leader, alongside Selahattin Demirtas, who is also in prison over terrorism-related charges but remains a member of parliament.

In a statement from his jail cell in northwest Turkey, Demirtas called for the HDP to prepare "a plan to fight for democracy and peace" in the face of a "political purge".

"We are experiencing the virtual shutdown of all democratic political channels," he said in a statement read out at the congress to applause from delegates.

"But whatever happens ... the HDP will not abandon democratic politics, it will insist on non-violent methods to find a solution to political problems," he said.



Photos of 10 jailed HDP deputies, including Demirtas and Yuksekdog, were displayed on the congress stage. Their arrest handicapped the second-largest opposition party before April's referendum in which Turks approved constitutional changes sharply boosting President Tayyip Erdogan's powers.

The HDP, which opposed the political overhaul, says as many as 5,000 of its members have been detained as part of a crackdown which rights groups say targets dissent.

Prosecutors want Demirtas jailed for 142 years and Yuksekdog for up to 83 years on charges of terrorist group propaganda. Demirtas was sentenced in February for "insulting the Turkish people, the government and state institutions".

Their arrests, along with tens of thousands of others since an abortive putsch in July, drew international condemnation.

The government says the HDP is an extension of the militant Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged an insurgency in Turkey's largely Kurdish southeast for more than three decades.

The HDP denies direct links to the PKK, deemed a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and European Union.

(Source: Reuters)



NEWS IN BRIEF



**Drinking water to be supplied to 1200-1600 villages by Mar. 2018**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — In line with completing drinking water supplying projects in the country, Iran's Energy Ministry plans to supply drinking water to 1200-1600 new villages by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2018), Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday.

Iran has allocated over \$639 million to building modern water distribution networks and implementing water projects in the country's rural areas by the end of this calendar year.



**ICCIMA to host French agro delegation today**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — A French agricultural delegation will discuss agriculture, foodstuff, and poultry cooperation with Iranian entrepreneurs at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) today, IRNA reported.

The members of the visiting delegation are active in manufacturing machineries, research, production of fisheries, milk and meat, quality testing, technology development and etc.

GE announces \$15 billion of business deals with Saudi Arabia

U.S. technology and engineering conglomerate GE said on Saturday it had signed \$15 billion of business deals with Saudi Arabia as part of the kingdom's drive to diversify its economy beyond oil.

It came as dozens of senior U.S. business executives met Saudi counterparts at a conference coinciding with the visit of President Donald Trump to Riyadh.

The agreements, which involve almost \$7 billion of goods and services from GE itself, range from the power and healthcare sectors to the oil and gas industry and mining, GE said. Some of the deals are memorandums of understanding which would require further agreements to materialize.

Among the projects, GE will help make Saudi power generation more efficient and provide digital technology to the operations of oil firm Saudi Aramco, aiming to create \$4 billion of annual productivity improvements at Aramco. It will cooperate in medical research and training.

(Source: Reuters)

U.S. trade rep Lighthizer says Japan agrees on fighting trade barriers

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Japan's economy minister, Hiroshige Seko, expressed an interest in strengthening bilateral trade and fighting trade barriers on Saturday, a statement from the U.S. trade representative said after the meeting.

The statement said they had a cordial first meeting, on the sidelines of the meeting of trade ministers from Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries in Hanoi, Vietnam.

It said they: "agreed to promote mutually beneficial trade, fight trade barriers and trade distorting measures, foster economic growth, and help establish high standards."

"In particular, both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation to address common concerns with respect to unfair trade practices utilized by third-countries," it said.

(Source: Reuters)

China's second quarter GDP growth seen at around 6.8 percent

China's economy will likely expand around 6.8 percent in the second quarter of 2017, the State Information Center said in an article published in the state-owned China Securities Journal on Saturday.

The State Information Center is an official think tank affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planning agency.

It forecast consumer inflation in the world's second largest economy of around 1.4 percent and expected an increase of about 6.5 percent in producer price inflation in the second quarter from the same period a year earlier.

"Overall, China's economy will remain stable but with a slightly slowing trend," the think tank said in the paper.

China's economy grew 6.9 percent in the first quarter from a year earlier, slightly faster than expected, supported by a government infrastructure spending spree and a housing market that has shown signs of overheating.

The think tank said it had seen contradictions between government policies to fend off financial risks and reduce corporate finance costs.

"Strengthening financial regulations has weakened the effect of monetary policy to a certain extent," it said, suggesting that a prudent and neutral monetary policy may actually manifest itself as a tightening bias when implemented.

The State Information Center also said that steady growth of the economy may be inhibited due to worsening labor and debt conditions amid deepening cuts in excess industrial capacity.

China is aiming to expand its economy by around 6.5 percent this year, Premier Li Keqiang said during the annual meeting of parliament in March.

(Source: Reuters)

Germany, Netherlands, Britain top investment making seekers in petchem sector

**ENERGY TEHRAN** — Germany, the Netherlands and Britain stand on the top of the list of countries seeking investment making in Iran's petrochemical sector in the post-sanctions era, IRNA reported on Saturday quoting Hossein Alimorad, director for investment making in National Petrochemical Company (NPC).

After the implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), foreign companies mainly from Europe and Japan are showing more and more interest for cooperation with Iranian petrochemical sector and as they consider this sector reliable when it comes to the return on investment (ROI), they even ignore the extant hurdles regarding banking transactions, the official underlined.

Iran is among the few countries which have all kinds of petrochemical feedstock, according to NPC Managing Director Marziyeh Shahdaie.

After the implementation of Iran's nuclear deal, NPC has received high willingness from European companies for cooperation with Iran in the petrochemical sector both in financing and licensing, Famaz Alavi, the NPC director for planning and development, announced last December.

Given the positive environment created after the lifting of sanctions against Iran, NPC has put product diversifica-



tion and market expansion on its agenda, Alavi told the Tehran Times in an e-mailed interview in early April.

"These two objectives are some of the key policies of NPC in post-sanctions time. In this regard, petrochemical

companies are seeking to export their diversified products to new target countries in a way that simultaneous with reviving their lost markets, they can find new markets," the official stated.

Talks between EAEU, Iran on free trade zone may end by Oct.

**MOSCOW (Sputnik)** — The negotiations between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Iran on a temporary free trade zone agreement could be finished by the next EAEU summit, scheduled for October 11, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Nebenzya told Sputnik on Saturday.

"The next meeting of the EAEU at the high level is scheduled for October 11. We are hoping that by that time, we will already be close to finishing the talks and will

start the procedure of signing the agreement on a temporary free trade zone between the EAEU and Iran," Nebenzya said.

Nebenzya reminded that the previous round of the talks took place in Bishkek in early April, "but, unfortunately, the talks didn't end in Bishkek, as the parties could not agree on their stands."

"Trade talks are never easy. Representatives of the Eurasian Economic Commission spoke at the session of the Eurasian Supreme Economic Council, which also

took place in Bishkek in mid-April, regarding the interim results of the negotiations. The presidents [of the EUEU member states] instructed the Eurasian Economic Commission to continue the dialogue," Nebenzya said.

In April, Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov said that the negotiations continued, with Iran demanding from the EAEU more than intending to give in return. Shuvalov also assumed that the negotiations could end in May,

but stressed that the quality of the agreement "must be of more concern" than the speed of reaching it.

Expert-level talks on a free trade area between Iran and the EAEU started in 2016.

The EAEU, comprising Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, is an international organization that encourages regional economic integration through the free movement of goods, services, and people within the union.

South Africa open to Iranian investment if new refinery goes ahead

**CAPE TOWN (Reuters)** — A net importer of refined oil products, is looking to West Africa and the Middle East, including Iran, for potential partners on a new refinery project, energy ministry officials said on Friday.

Energy minister Mmamoloko Kubayi told parliament that the cabinet expects to decide by December whether to build the refinery that has been under consideration for almost a decade.

National oil company PetroSA has promoted the idea of building a refinery with a capacity of up to 400,000 barrels per day on the east coast, but the government was put off by the \$10 billion price-tag in 2010 and a lack of equity partners.

Kubayi said the refinery was now urgent

because South Africa's oil imports were increasing.

She said that a public-private partnership to develop the refinery, which would be majority owned by the government, was the preferred approach.

"By the time any new refinery is completed, the country will be importing in excess of a third of its fuel requirements," she said.

The acting director general at the ministry of energy Tseliso Maqubela told Reuters after a separate press conference that South African authorities were in talks with countries and firms from the Middle East and West Africa to build the refinery.

"At this stage no country is excluded," Maqubela said when asked if Iran was

among the countries being considered.

He said there was no decision yet on the new refinery's production capacity or its construction costs.

Royal Dutch Shell, BP Total and Sasol are among the main refinery operators in Africa's most industrialized country.

South Africa bought around 68,000 bpd of crude from Iran in May 2012, a month before it halted crude purchases as Western countries pressured Tehran over its nuclear program.

Pretoria, which also gets oil from Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Angola, has said it wants to resume imports from Iran since Western sanctions were lifted in 2016.

According to Thembisile Majola, the

deputy minister of energy, building the refinery would help South Africa maintain some control over a vital resource such as petrol, diesel and jet fuel.

"There are some issues around sovereignty that are linked to refining capacity," said Majola.

Kubayi also said the government wants to increase the participation of black fuel wholesalers in importing crude oil, with an immediate focus on West African crude oil, which presently accounts for around half of South Africa's crude imports.

"The modalities of this strategic approach will be finalized after consultation with the major oil companies in this financial year," she said.

Italy tax police seize documents from IBM in BT Italy probe

Italian investigators have seized documents from the Milan offices of International Business Machines Corp as part of an investigation into allegations of fraud at one of its customers, BT Italy, a unit of Britain's BT Group, sources said.

Dozens of tax police visited the Italian offices of nine suppliers to BT Italy, including the U.S. tech group, on Thursday, as well as BT Italy's own headquarters, and took boxes of documents away, said sources familiar with the probe.

IBM spokesman Alessandro Ferrari said the company was cooperating with authorities.

The U.S. group is not formally under investigation and none of its representatives has been accused of wrongdoing, but the warrant for Thursday's seizures, seen by Reuters, states that some transactions between BT Italy and its suppliers were faked.

The warrant authorized the search for evidence in relation to allegations that former BT Italy managers had conspired with suppliers and customers to fake orders and to issue false credit notes in order to reduce BT Italy's costs.

Investigators also sought evidence that BT Italy and suppliers contrived sale-and-leaseback transactions to artificially boost sales and profit margins. These transactions involved several firms, including IBM, according to the warrant and the sources.



The accounting scandal surfaced last October when BT Group said it had discovered accounting errors at its Italy unit. In January, it characterized it as improper accounting and took a write-down of around 530 million pounds.

In March, it filed a criminal complaint with Italian prosecutors, accusing several former Italy executives and other employees of breaking company rules and unlawful conduct.

BT Group said in an emailed statement: "We've been proactively assisting prosecutors in Milan with their investigations into the inappropriate behavior that took place at BT Italy"

Saudis see all 'on board' to extend oil cuts for 9 months

All producers agree to extend crude output cuts by nine months to help trim a supply glut, according to Saudi Arabia's energy minister.

The extension through the first quarter of 2018 will help producers reach their goal of trimming global stockpiles to a five-year average, Khalid Al-Falih said. OPEC and other global producers such as Russia had agreed to reduce production in the first six months of this year, and the decision to extend the cuts will be taken when they meet in Vienna at the end of the month, Al-Falih said.

"We think we have everybody on board," Al-Falih said in an interview with Bloomberg television in Riyadh on Saturday. "Everybody I've talked to indicated that nine months was a wise decision."

National representatives from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and officials from several non-members discussed in Vienna on

Friday the outlook for rising U.S. shale oil production, which has been diluting the price impact of their production cuts. The producers, who together account for about half the world's oil supply, have seen the initial price boost from their historic agreement fade as shale companies deployed more rigs and raised the country's output to the highest since 2015.

Al-Falih was speaking in Riyadh as Donald Trump started a visit in Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, on his first overseas trip as U.S. president.

Global inventories

OPEC and other producers who agreed to the cuts last year are not targeting any specific oil price, Al-Falih said. "Everybody wants the extension, as we realize we have not achieved the objective of bringing global inventories down to a five-year average," he said.

"OPEC and non-OPEC countries are

working together, and that should encourage investment. My objective is clarity of where the market is going so that people invest, and I am less concerned about prices over the next 12 months than I am over the next 3 years, when supply will be short, demand will be approaching 100 million barrels a day," he said.

While news of a proposal for a 9-month extension of output cuts helped send prices to a two-week high on Monday, crude remains stuck near \$50 a barrel, less than half the level traded in 2014. Inventories in 35 of the world's most industrialized nations -- the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development -- were just above 3 billion barrels in April, or about 307 million above their five-year average, data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows.

Floating storage

Inventories are decreasing, crude de-

mand is rising and the global economy is doing well, Al-Falih said on Saturday.

"OECD and non-OECD floating storage has been offloaded into tanks and consumed. We're coming into high demand season, so I think everything is coming together with consensus among producers, demand rising, the global economy doing well, Japan, Europe, the U.S. are all doing reasonably well economically. So we're fairly optimistic."

Producers are working on fixing some "deviations" to the output limits set when they agreed on the cuts last year, Al-Falih said.

"I don't accept that Saudi Arabia or any other countries should pick up the slack from others," he said. "We did go the extra mile initially to set an example and be a role model, and I think our colleagues appreciated that and responded positively."

(Source: Bloomberg)



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## The moral of the Assange story? Wait long enough, and bad stuff goes away

By Marina Hyde

‘It’s 2017 and the patriarchy’s grip is as strong as ever.’ If, like many self-respecting bros, you are turned off by mentions of the word “patriarchy” – I know exactly what you mean. The only reason to take that one seriously was that it was uttered by a man hiding in an embassy to avoid a rape investigation. So it’s the good kind!



The context of Julian Assange’s remark was far-right candidate Marine Le Pen losing the French election. “First Hillary, now Marine,” lamented a guy you should in no way judge to be an ironical maniac. “It’s 2017 and the patriarchy’s grip is as strong as ever.”

Indeed, the fact that Swedish prosecutors have now dropped their rape investigation into Assange shows just how right the WikiLeaks founder continues to be about this matter, and how he remains a beacon of hope for other radical feminists seeking to wait out the efforts of justice in a diplomatic space with only the likes of Nigel Farage, Kathy Lette, John Pilger and Yoko Ono for occasional company. (In many ways, I always felt Assange’s Ecuadorian Embassy guest list was in itself an alternative form of justice. But is it scalable? Probably not.)

### Official statement

According to the official statement, the case has been taken as far as it can be without Assange appearing in court in Sweden, which – let’s go out on a limb – feels slightly less likely than his appearing in the next series of The Handmaid’s Tale. I think we all learned a really important lesson here, which is that if you wait a really long time and absolutely refuse to face up to them, bad things go away.

In fact, plenty of Assange supporters will think it would have been far better for the women who alleged they had been sexually assaulted by Julian to have taken that classic approach, even if they wouldn’t have been able to see it all the way through to the “bad things go away” phase.

But let’s steer away from the sadface stories on this day of celebration. Before his typically disingenuous turn on the embassy balcony on Friday afternoon, Assange himself opted to tweet a T-shirted, easy-like-Sunday-morning photograph of himself grinning the relaxed smile that says: “Yes, I know this would look better with a Make America Great Again baseball hat. But shopping’s been a little difficult lately!”

The image was promptly retweeted by his special lady caller, Pamela Anderson – and we shall have to see where this goes. The erstwhile Baywatch star recently published a prose poem titled My Julian, while both have given several interviews coyly declining – albeit at some length – to discuss the special nature of what they have together.

My instinct is that Assange could be getting ahead of himself a bit here. To examine the affected insouciance of the photo of himself he posted is to suspect Julian is daydreaming of Pamela coming to pick him up from the embassy in a classic Ford convertible with a pair of jeans to go with the T-shirt. Like the Levi’s ad where Brad Pitt gets released from desert jail, picked up by a girl who brings him a pair of jeans, and they dry-h\*\*p to T. Rex for the benefit of his jailer and the consumer public, and all the jealous guys be hating on him.

And yet, be they? The Metropolitan police lost no time in confirming that Assange is still wanted for skipping bail in 2012, and will be arrested if he leaves the embassy.

Frankly, that might be the get-out – or rather, the stay-in – Pamela needs. This feels worse than all that business with her former husband, Mötley Crüe drummer Tommy Lee. Psychologists often suggest that women who are drawn to disturbingly unsuitable men are the type who form relationships with those who are incarcerated, as it allows them to engage without placing themselves in danger. Certainly, we know various high-profile prisoners do well with the ladies – Charles Bronson, for instance, can never move for visitors, penpals and/or fiancées. He used to have a website – you’re not the only one with a website, Julian – where he posted the sexy photos they sent him. Though it seems to be down currently, possibly on account of the fact he recently got married again (inside) to a young lady who describes him as “the inspiration I have been waiting for my whole life”.

### Julian’s image

Anyway. I can’t help feeling Julian’s image is not flattered by his news coming in the very week of the release of Chelsea Manning, who released the original vast trove of state secrets to WikiLeaks, and who he carelessly misgendered during the balcony scene.

Chelsea’s incarceration has been a little bit different to Julian’s. For a start, she was actually incarcerated, as opposed to being on the run in a Knightsbridge embassy where celebrity visitors were given to delivering frequent care hampers from the nearest grocer (Harrods). Chelsea was once barred from the prison library, gym, and outdoor areas for 21 days for being caught with expired toothpaste and some magazines. And I think Julian once had some paté that went off a bit or something.

And while Chelsea continues to choose dignity, some legal experts speculate that Julian may still have to stay holed up until 2020 to allow all statutes of limitations to expire. But Captain WikiLeaks will get out of pretend-jail eventually. And when he does, we must hope that he doesn’t go down that classic movie path of being lured into one last job by a Mr. Big – or a President Big, or whoever – that ends up doing for him, just when he thought he’d escaped.

(Source: The Guardian)

# Was Vietnam winnable?

By Mark Moyer

My interest in the Vietnam War began in the early 1990s, when I took a college course on the history of the conflict. Part of what drew me to the subject was the visceral contempt that my peers, professors and intellectuals generally had not just for the war, but for its veterans. It seemed to me a profound wrong that the young men who had risked their lives in Southeast Asia were deemed less worthy than those who had stayed safe at home.

The history of the war, as taught in my college classes, rested on two assumptions. First, that the war was unnecessary; the “domino theory,” the idea that a Communist takeover in Vietnam would cascade through the rest of Southeast Asia, was wrong. Ho Chi Minh was more of a nationalist than a Communist — and therefore, America needn’t have worried about “losing Vietnam.” The fact that most of the dominoes did not fall after South Vietnam’s defeat in 1975 was Exhibit A.

The second assumption was that the war was unwinnable. According to the orthodox historical narrative, the United States never could have won the war because of the dedication of the Vietnamese Communists, which was said to be far superior to that of America’s South Vietnamese allies. No alternative strategies could have achieved success, and hence America was fated to abandon South Vietnam after sustaining prolonged casualties.

As I pursued the study of Vietnam into graduate school, I began to question both these assumptions. By delving into the conflict’s deep crevices, I came upon a wealth of untapped information pointing me in a different direction. (I owed many of those discoveries to Merle Pribbenow, a retired linguist who found and translated a wealth of documents and histories from the opposing side.) These North Vietnamese sources shed extraordinary light on longstanding debates. They showed that North Vietnam controlled the South Vietnamese “resistance” from the beginning, even while Hanoi’s propagandists convinced gullible Westerners that it was a purely local movement. They also refuted the widely held view that the South Vietnamese government was reeling militarily at the time of Ngo Dinh Diem’s assassination in November 1963.

### Aspects of the war

Other discoveries resulted from investigation into hitherto neglected aspects of the war. No previous historian had looked in detail at what was taking place in the neighboring “dominoes” when Lyndon Johnson made his fateful decision in 1965 to insert American ground troops into the war. In fact, in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore, anti-Communist leaders were warning that South Vietnam’s fall would cause all the



**According to the orthodox historical narrative, the United States never could have won the war because of the dedication of the Vietnamese Communists, which was said to be far superior to that of America’s South Vietnamese allies.**

Southeast Asian dominoes to fall, and were offering to commit troops to the anti-Communist cause. Suddenly, the domino theory looked far more plausible.

As the huge size of the unexplored territory became apparent to me, a projected single-volume history of the war turned into a trilogy. The first volume, covering 1954 to 1965, took seven years to complete. Titled “Triumph Forsaken,” it was promptly termed “revisionist,” since it fundamentally challenged the reigning orthodoxy, joining a small number of other books in that category such as Lewis Sorley’s “A Better War” and H. R. McMaster’s “Dereliction of Duty.”

The book showed that Ho Chi Minh was a doctrinaire Communist who, like his Soviet and Chinese allies, adhered to the Marxist-Leninist view that Communists of all nations should collaborate in spreading the world revolution. By the time of Johnson’s decision to deploy ground troops into South Vietnam, Ho and his allies were nearing their objective of turning all of Southeast Asia Communist, and they most likely would have succeeded had the United States bailed out.

American intervention made possible an anti-Communist coup in Indonesia and the self-devastation of China’s Cultural Revolution, and it bought time for other Asian dominoes to shore up their defenses.

Not only was the war necessary, I argued, but it was winnable with better strategic decisions. The most momentous blunder was the decision of the American ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, to foment the coup that overthrew Ngo Dinh Diem, which wrecked the South Vietnamese security

apparatus and led North Vietnam to initiate a huge invasion of the South. Another mistake was Johnson’s decision to not insert American ground forces into Laos to block the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a move that would have transformed the war and reduced the need for American forces.

### Antiwar movement

The book generated considerable discussion in academic circles, including a volume of responses, “Triumph Revisited.” Some of the resulting conversation was constructive, but much of it was dismissive, petty, even ad hominem, particularly when it came from veterans of the antiwar movement and their protégés.

Although a minority of professors welcomed a well-substantiated challenge to conventional wisdom, the collective hostility coalesced wherever I applied for an academic faculty position.

I bring this up not to gain admittance to the nation’s ever-expanding victim class — my misfortunes with academia led to the unexpected good fortunes of teaching terrific students at America’s military universities and conducting research on pressing topics. Rather, it is to point out the dangers to society of a politicized academia. When a profession that claims to thrive on new ideas and debate instead ostracizes those who challenge certain orthodoxies, it deprives students of access to serious thought and encourages the rest of society to ignore it. The only way for the profession to regain its relevance is to show that it is open to challenges, and that it will give serious consideration to new ideas.

Challenging the orthodoxies around Vietnam is as important today as it has

ever been. While working as a consultant in Afghanistan, Iraq and other conflict zones, I saw politicians, military officers, journalists and political scientists seek to apply the lessons of Vietnam. The more I saw, the more I became convinced that superficial historical understanding and excessive reliance on academic theorizing were yielding bad advice — advice that could get men and women killed, that could even lose wars.

In fact, my most recent research, focused on the events of 1967, casts important new light on how domestic conversations about war can have a decisive effect. Among the most fascinating developments of 1967 was the Johnson administration’s regret about its decision to refrain from generating support for the war by discussing the necessity for it in public. The lack of public enthusiasm for the war, administration officials now realized, was encouraging the enemy to believe that the United States would eventually abandon its ally, and therefore North Vietnam had no reason to desist.

The “administration made a deliberate decision not to create a war psychology in the United States,” Secretary of State Dean Rusk remarked that October, because it was “too dangerous for this country to get worked up.” Johnson, Rusk and other officials had feared that war fever would undermine the domestic programs of the Great Society and heighten tensions with the Soviets. But now, Rusk conceded, “maybe this was a mistake; maybe it would have been better to take steps to build up a sense of a nation at war.”

During 1967, White House advisers and foreign leaders repeatedly urged Johnson to change course, to tell the American public why the United States was in Vietnam and what it was trying to achieve. But Johnson could not bring himself to do it, even as he increasingly recognized the damaging consequences of his silence. “If history indicts us for Vietnam,” Johnson admitted in the fall, “it will be for fighting a war without trying to stir up patriotism.”

In the absence of presidential cheerleading, American public support for the war declined over the course of 1967. As administration officials had feared, the apparent weakening of American resolve hardened the determination of the North Vietnamese to persist. Hanoi rebuffed every American overture for peace negotiations, anticipating that the coming Tet offensive would destroy what remained of America’s will.

In other words, the public’s turn against the war was not inevitable; it was, rather, the result of a failure by policy makers to explain and persuade Americans to support it. Today, with the country engaged in two distinct, long-running conflicts and the possibility that others could flare up at any moment, it’s a lesson that our current leaders should take to heart.

(Source: The NYT)

## It’s time to get rid of Donald Trump

By Klaus Brinkbäumer

Donald Trump is not fit to be president of the United States. He does not possess the requisite intellect and does not understand the significance of the office he holds nor the tasks associated with it. He doesn’t read. He doesn’t bother to peruse important files and intelligence reports and knows little about the issues that he has identified as his priorities. His decisions are capricious and they are delivered in the form of tyrannical decrees.

He is a man free of morals. As has been demonstrated hundreds of times, he is a liar, a racist and a cheat. I feel ashamed to use these words, as sharp and loud as they are. But if they apply to anyone, they apply to Trump. And one of the media’s tasks is to continue telling things as they are: Trump has to be removed from the White House. Quickly. He is a danger to the world.

Trump is a miserable politician. He fired the FBI director simply because he could. James Comey had gotten under his skin with his investigation into Trump’s confidants. Comey had also refused to swear loyalty and fealty to Trump and to abandon the investigation. He had to go.

Trump is also a miserable boss. His people invent excuses for him and lie on his behalf because they have to, but then Trump wakes up and posts tweets that contradict what they have said. He doesn’t care that his spokesman, his secretary of state and his national security adviser had just denied that the president had handed Russia (of all countries) sensitive intelligence gleaned from Israel (of all countries). Trump tweeted: Yes, yes, I did, because I can. I’m president after all.

Nothing is as it should be in this White House. Everyone working there has been compromised multiple times and now they all despise each other – and everyone except for Trump despises Trump. Because of all that, after just 120 days of the Trump administration, we are witness to an American tragedy for which there are five theoretical solutions.



### The five theoretical solutions

The first is Trump’s resignation, which won’t happen.

The second is that Republicans in the House and Senate support impeachment, which would be justified by the president’s proven obstruction of justice, but won’t happen because of the Republicans’ thirst for power, which they won’t willingly give it up.

The third possible solution is the invocation of the 25th Amendment, which would require the cabinet to declare Trump unfit to discharge the powers of the presidency. That isn’t particularly likely either.

The fourth is that the Democrats get ready to fight and win back majorities in the House and Senate in mid-term elections, which are 18 months away, before they then pursue option two, impeachment.

The fifth is that the international community wakes up and finds a way to circumvent the White House and free itself of its dependence on the U.S. Unlike the preceding four options, the fifth doesn’t directly solve the Trump problem, but it is nevertheless necessary – and possible.

Not quite two weeks ago, a number of experts and politicians focused on foreign policy met in Washington at the invitation of the Munich Security Conference. It wasn’t difficult to sense the atmosphere of chaos and agony that has descended upon the city.

### Trump as laughing stock

The U.S. elected a laughing stock to the presidency and has now made itself dependent on a joke of a man. The country is, as David Brooks wrote recently in the New York Times, dependent on a child. The Trump administration has no foreign policy because Trump has consistently promised American withdrawal while invoking America’s strength. He has promised both no wars and more wars. He makes decisions according to his mood, with no strategic coherence or tactical logic. Moscow and Beijing are laughing at America. Elsewhere, people are worried.

In the Pacific, warships – American and Chinese – circle each other in close proximity. The conflict with North Korea is escalating. Who can be certain that Donald Trump won’t risk nuclear war simply to save his own skin? Efforts to stop climate change are in trouble and many expect the U.S. to withdraw from the Paris Agreement because Trump is wary of legally binding measures. Crises, including those in Syria and Libya, are escalating, but no longer being discussed.

And who should they be discussed with? Phone calls and emails to the U.S. State Department go unanswered. Nothing is regulated, nothing is stable and the trans-Atlantic relationship hardly exists anymore. German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel and Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Norbert Röttgen fly back and forth, but Germany and the U.S. no longer understand each other. Hardly any real communication takes place, there are no joint foreign policy goals and there is no strategy.

In “Game of Thrones,” the Mad King was murdered (and the child that later took his place was no better). In real life, an immature boy sits on the throne of the most important country in the world. He could, at any time, issue a catastrophic order that would immediately be carried out. That is why the parents cannot afford to take their eyes off him even for a second. They cannot succumb to exhaustion because he is so taxing. They ultimately have to send him to his room – and return power to the grownups.

(Source: Spiegel)



# U.S. attacks Syrian government forces – it now has to make its choice

The Syrian army is on the way to liberate the ISIS besieged city of some 100,000 and garrison of Deir Ezzor in the east of the country. The U.S. has trained a few thousand “New Syrian Army” insurgents in Jordan and is reportedly prepared to march these and its own forces from Jordan through the east-Syrian desert all the way up to Raqqa and Deir Ezzor. About a year ago it occupied the al-Tanf (al-Tanaf) border station which consists of only a few buildings in the mid of the desert. The station between Syria and Iraq near the Jordan border triangle was previously held by a small ISIS group.

A U.S. move from the south up towards the Euphrates would cut off the Syrian government from the whole south-east of the country and from its people in Deir Ezzor. While that area is sparsely populated it also has medium size oil and gas fields and is the land connection to the Syrian allies in Iraq.

With the western part of the country relatively quiet, the Syrian government and its allies decided to finally retake the south-eastern provinces from ISIS. They want to lift the ISIS siege on Deir Ezzor and close the border between Syria and Iraq with its own forces. The move will also block any potential U.S. invasion from the south by retaking the road to al-Tanf and the Syrian-Iraqi border (red arrows). The sovereign Syrian state will not give up half of the country to an illegal occupation by ISIS or the U.S. At the same time as the eastern operations are running consolidation and clearing operations against ISIS in the middle and west of the countries will take place (green arrows).

Yesterday a small battalion size force (~2-300 men) of the regular Syrian army, Syrian National Defense Organization volunteers and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF/PMU of the Kata’ib al-Imam Ali) marched on the road from the west towards al-Tanf. They were about 23 kilometers away from the border station when they were attack by U.S. aircraft coming in low from Jordan. The U.S. jets directly fired at the convoy, allegedly after earlier giving some “warning shots”. At least one Syrian tank and several other vehicles were destroyed. Six Syrian government forces were reported killed and more were wounded.

The U.S. command claimed that this was a “defensive” move to “protect” its soldiers at the al-Tanf station. There are U.S. and British special forces stationed near the station who lead and train the NSA contingent – all together a few 100 men.

The U.S. attack was clearly a willful, illegal



## The sovereign Syrian state will not give up half of the country to an illegal occupation by ISIS or the U.S.

attack on Syrian ground against legitimate forces of the sovereign Syrian government. (The Iraqi PMU contingent in Syria is a legitimate allied force under control of the Iraqi prime minister.) There is no clause in international law, no U.N. resolution or anything similar, that could justify such an attack. The U.S. military has no right at all to be at al-Tanf or anywhere else in Syria. There is nothing to “defend” for it. If it dislikes regular Syrian and Iraqi forces moving in their own countries towards their own border station and retaking it, it can and should move out and go home. Moreover – the U.S. claims it is “fighting ISIS” in Syria. Why then is it attacking the Syrian government forces while these launch a large move against the very same enemy?

The coalition led by the U.S. military claimed it asked Russia to intervene and that Russia tried to deter the Syrian force to move towards al-Tanf I am told that this claim is incorrect. Russia supports the Syrian move to the east and the retaking of the border. The move will be reinforced and continue. The revamped Syrian air defense will actively protect it. Russia will support it with its own forces if needed.

The illegitimate occupation forces, the U.S. and British forces and their proxies, will have to move out of al-Tanf or they will have to directly fight the Syrian government forces and all its allies. They have no right to be there at all. The Iraqi PMU in Syria, some of which were hurt in yesterday’s U.S. attack, are an active part of the coalition against ISIS

in Iraq. If the U.S. fights it in Syria it will also have to fight it in Iraq (and elsewhere). Russia is able and willing to reinforce its own contingent in Syria to help the government to regain the Syrian east.

The U.S. has no legitimate aim in Syria. It is somewhat tolerated in the north-east where it helps Syrian-Kurdish forces to fight ISIS and to liberate Raqqa. That does not give it ANY right to occupy Syria’s east or to attack Syrian government forces. When Raqqa is done all U.S. forces in the north-east will have to again move out.

Together with its many subordinate NATO and Gulf allies the U.S. has the military and economic power to destroy the Syrian military. It can eliminate the Syrian government under President Assad and occupy the whole country. That would be a large war which would probably escalate into a global fight against Russia, Iran and other countries. It would necessitate a several decades long follow-up occupation for “nation building” while constantly fighting against a large al-Qaeda aligned Takfiri insurgency in Syria and all its neighboring countries (especially in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey where U.S. friendly governments would fall). The war would cost several trillion U.S. dollars, a large number of casualties and cause decades long chaos in a geo-politically sensitive region.

The U.S. has a simple choice: Either go in with full force and bear the above consequences, or concede to the sovereign

Syrian government and its allies and coordinate with them to retake the country from ISIS and al-Qaeda. This will have to be done as they, not the U.S., see it proper to do. To believe that the U.S. can take the east and convert into some peaceful vassal statelet is pure fantasy. Way too many regional forces and interests are strung against that. There is little grey between these black and white alternatives.

The only tactically thinking U.S. military and intelligence services will try to avoid to choose between these. They will use their Jihadist proxy forces in west-Syria to break their current ceasefire with the Syrian government side and launch a diversion for their moves into the Syrian east. The Syrian government would then probably have to delay its larger operations in the east.

But that would not change the strategic situation. The choice the U.S. people and their government have to make will still be the same. The point in time to finally accept it may move out a few months while the fighting escalates and causes more damage on all sides. The choice would still be the same. It is all-in or out. The best time to take it is now.

There are some maps flowing around which assert that Iran is seeking a military land communication route via Iraq into Syria and beyond. They show some fantasy route up north through Iraqi and Syrian Kurdish territory as the “current route” and the roads between Damascus and Baghdad as “future route”. The claim is that military equipment moves along these roads.

It is nonsense. Iran did not and does not need such land routes for military exchanges with its allies in Syria and Lebanon. Where was that Iranian land route in 2006 when the U.S. occupied Iraq while Israel attacked Lebanon? Where was that land route when ISIS occupied half of Iraq and Syria? There was no such route and Iranian support still reached Hizbullah in 2006 and later Syria. It came by air, by ship and, most important, by other means.

By holding up such fantasy maps certain interests want to insinuate that the area is “strategically important” for the U.S. and that the U.S. must therefore occupy south-east Syria. It is true that the road network between Syria and Iraq has some economical importance. Like all roads these are used for local commerce. But history demonstrates that they are not militarily strategic asset in the sense of an essential, overarching need.

(Source: Moon of Alabama)

## U.S.-led coalition airstrike on Assad’s forces in Syria was not accidental

By Sophie mangal

On May 18, the moving convoy of the Syrian pro-government forces consisted of militias was hit by a massive airstrike of the U.S.-led international coalition. The accident occurred at the Syrian-Jordanian border near the settlement of At-Tanfa.

As reported by the official representative of the U.S. Central command Josh Jakes, the Pentagon did not have any information about the number of casualties as a result of the airstrike.

It is worth noting that the U.S. has previously hit the pro-government forces in Syria. For example, during Obama’s presidency the Syrian army positions in Deir ez-Zor were attacked by ISIS terrorists right after the United States had launched their own airstrike. According to the U.S. officials that attack was a mistake caused by “the human factor”.

In April the U.S. Navy has already bombed Syria’s Shayrat Air Base, in response allegedly to the Khan Shaykhun chemical attack.

So, what’s the true reason of such aggressive actions of the U.S.-led international coalition this time? A number of Syrian military analysts believe that the U.S. Air Force main task was to hamper Syrian pro-government forces and to slow down their further advance towards Deir ez-Zor rather than to ‘protect’ U.S. ‘partners’.

Their actions are motivated by the fact that the Syrian military command is ready for a large-scale military operation to liberate the city from ISIS. Damascus sees the complete liberation of Deir ez-Zor province from the blockade as the restoration of the control over the largest oil fields. This may significantly improve the economic situation in the country.

This Syrian city is also a tasty little deal for the coalition forces. The overwhelming desire of the West to plunge the country into a state of constant chaos is the main reason for the planned seizure of oil rigs.

The Syrian city was namely a kind of dainty bit for the U.S.-led coalition. The irresistible impulse of the West to drive the country into the permanent chaos is the primary reason for the oil derricks seizure.

Furthermore, the air strike was performed amid the ongoing Syrian talks in Geneva. A show of power like that may have targeted at making the talks even more difficult and troublesome as they are.

Apparently, the U.S.-led coalition’s regular strikes on the pro-government troops in Syria testify that Washington intends to continue its double-standard policy towards the Syrian conflict. We remember how they supported the establishing “de-escalation” zones but now their actions indicate the opposite. It is sheer cynicism to strike against those who really fight ISIS terrorists. But this doesn’t come as a surprise either in Syria or in the world.

## Saudi Arabia is a terrible choice for Trump’s first overseas visit

By Medea Benjamin

Donald Trump has selected Saudi Arabia as the destination for his first trip abroad, strengthening U.S. ties to a regime that is fueling the very extremism, intolerance, and violence that the U.S. government purports to want to eradicate.

Here’s 10 reasons why the United States shouldn’t be closely allied with the Saudi kingdom.

The Saudis export an extremist interpretation of Islam, Wahhabism, around the globe. Over the past three decades, Saudi Arabia has spent about \$4 billion per year on mosques, madrasas, preachers, students, and textbooks to spread Wahhabism and anti-Western sentiment. Let’s not forget that 15 of the 19 fanatical hijackers who carried out the 9/11 attacks were Saudis, as was Osama bin Laden himself.

The Saudis fund terrorism worldwide. A WikiLeaks-revealed 2009 cable quotes then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton saying, “Donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide ... More needs to be done since Saudi Arabia remains a critical financial support base for al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Lashkar e-Tayyiba, and other terrorist groups.” In Syria the Saudis are supporting the most extreme sectarian forces. And while the Saudi government condemns ISIS, many experts, including 9/11 Commission Report lead author Senator Bob Graham, believe that ISIS is a product of Saudi ideals, Saudi money, and Saudi organizational support.

The government represses religious minorities. Trump says he is promoting tolerance with this trip, but this theocratic Sunni regime is based on repressing the Shia minority and non-Muslims. It is the only country in the world to ban all churches, and atheism is a capital offense. Year after year, the U.S. government’s own Commission on International Religious Freedom says Saudi Arabia commits “systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom.”

Free speech and free association are forbidden in the kingdom. Criticizing the Saudi regime can lead to flogging, long jail sentences, or even beheading. Tragic examples are Raif Badawi, languishing in prison for blogging; attorney Waleed Abulkhair, serving a 15-year sentence for defending human rights; and Ali al-Nimr, arrested as a minor and now on death row for nonviolent dissent.

The regime is the most misogynist, gender-segregated country in the world. Women are not even allowed to drive and must live under a guardianship system that gives men authority over the most important decisions in their lives.

There is no political freedom in Saudi Arabia. While most of the world’s monarchies have evolved to lessen the role of royalty, Saudi Arabia remains one of the world’s last absolute monarchies. The Saud family picks the king, who then has ultimate authority in virtually every aspect of government. There



are no national elections and political parties are banned, as are unions and most civic organizations.

They have engaged in a catastrophic war in Yemen. In March 2015, the Saudis launched a bombing campaign in Yemen that has targeted schools, hospitals, markets, weddings, and funerals. The war has resulted in acute malnutrition and disease, leaving a Yemeni child dying every 10 minutes. Instead of supporting the bombing, the US government should be pushing a ceasefire and negotiations.

Saudi Arabia has one of the highest execution rates in the world. Scores of people are killed each year after being convicted of various nonviolent charges that range from adultery, apostasy, drug use, and sorcery. The executions are usually carried out by public beheading.


The Kingdom primarily functions on the backs of mistreated foreign laborers. Of the nation’s 30 million people, some 10 million are foreigners. Workers from poor nations seek economic gains within Saudi Arabia, but are often lured under false pretenses and then not allowed to leave the country without permission from their employer. Female migrant workers, treated like indentured servants, often face physical and sexual abuse.

Saudi Arabia helps maintain the world’s destructive dependence on oil. Saudi Arabia is the largest exporter of oil in the world. With its vast potential for solar energy, Saudi Arabia could lead the world in renewable energy. Instead, the economy remains almost entirely dependent on oil and on the international level, Saudi Arabia works with the United States to oppose global climate agreements that would affect oil profits.


If the Trump administration truly wants to find a way out of the wars in the Middle East and make the United States safer from terrorists, it would do well to stop arming, aiding, and abetting the ruthless Saudi regime.

If the Trump administration truly wants to find a way out of the wars in the Middle East, it should stop arming, aiding, and abetting the ruthless Saudi regime.

Second Announcement



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# A new Yalta and the revival of Europe

By Roger Cohen

In the end the French election turned on the most unlikely of subjects: Europe. Yes, the ugly European duckling of 2016 politics — rejected by Britain, mocked by President Trump — ushered Emmanuel Macron into the Élysée Palace as France's youngest president.

Macron, throughout his campaign, was strong in his support of the European Union and its shared currency, the euro. That was risky; identification with the European Union hardly seemed a winning ticket. But it was precisely on the euro and the union that Marine Le Pen, the rightist candidate of the National Front, committed public political suicide.

In the final TV debate, days before this month's vote, she babbled and blundered for minutes on end about Europe and its currency. It was, as Macron put it, "du n'importe quoi" — roughly meaningless garbage. And it was garbage that touched the French in a very sensitive area: their pocketbooks.

The French, unlike Americans, don't talk about money but they think about it as much as anyone else.

## ■ Submission to federalism

Le Pen confused the euro and the ECU (a basket of European currencies once used as a unit of account); she seemed

to think Britain had been in the euro and made the wild claim that Brexit had sent the British economy skyrocketing; she blabbered about the coexistence of a restored franc for French people and a euro for big companies; she appeared to decree that other nations would leave the euro at the same time as her France. She accused Macron of "submission to European federalism." The retort was swift. It was also devastating because the French, it turns out, are attached to the euro. Macron said the value of people's savings would plunge 20 to 30 percent the day after a return to the franc. He asked how anyone from the producer of Cantal cheese to Airbus — small or large enterprises fully integrated in the European economy — would function once compelled to do their foreign transactions in euros and pay their employees' salaries in francs. He predicted the return of capital controls as people rushed to get money out of the country.

Le Pen gaped at him, laughed inappropriately, fired increasingly wild and unrelated salvos, and generally seemed on the verge of total meltdown. It was the end. Europe had killed her. For any Europhile, and I proudly wear that badge, it was the sweetest of moments after a rough passage.

Le Pen had made a serious miscalculation. France, where the blue-and-gold European flag adorns many public build-

ings, is not Britain. It is a founding member of the European Union; the union still defines in many ways the aspirations of postwar France. As Jacques Rupnik, a political scientist, put it to me, "For Germany, the union was redemption. For France, it was ambition by other means after the World War II humiliation and decolonization."

## ■ Franco-German couple

The Franco-German couple ran into trouble after the end of the Cold War because its balance was lost in German unification, but the shared commitment to the European idea remains fundamental to both countries. Suddenly that idea is recovering luster because Brexit has focused minds and because of what the French call the threat of "a new Yalta."

In an interview with Le Monde, Jean-Louis Bourlanges, a former member of the European Parliament, defined this 21st-century Yalta as a "Russian-American couple that does not hide its hostility to the union and to the independence of Europeans." Trump, in his first visit as president to Europe, will face the widespread perception that he loves every dictator he meets but has a hard time with a European democratic leader, like Germany's Angela Merkel. This in turn has inspired a sense that an opening exists for Europe to lead the free world in the defense of its values because America

under Trump has abdicated that role.

Merkel is the favorite to win the German election in September. A Macron-Merkel duo could be formidable. They will have to deliver in several areas if Europe is to seize this moment. The first is security: the European Union needs effective external borders. The second is fiscal: the euro in the long run can only function with fiscal consolidation. The third is growth: Europe is already stirring from stagnation but needs to create more jobs, and for that Macron's planned labor-market reforms will be important.

The fourth is solidarity: the free ride of countries like Hungary and Poland that benefit from vast European Union financial transfers but flout European values through their growing autocratic tendencies must be stopped. It's simple: no free money without a free press and an independent judiciary.

Macron and Merkel are both passionate Europeans (as is the Social Democratic contender in Germany, Martin Schulz). Putin's threats, Trump's valueless American foreign policy, and Britain's small-mindedness — alongside an economic recovery that is gathering steam — have created a unique opportunity to rekindle the dream of a federalizing Europe. It could be that 2017 will be the year of Europe.

(Source: The NYT)

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# Pancreatic cancer: symptoms, treatment, and prevention

By Moira Lawler

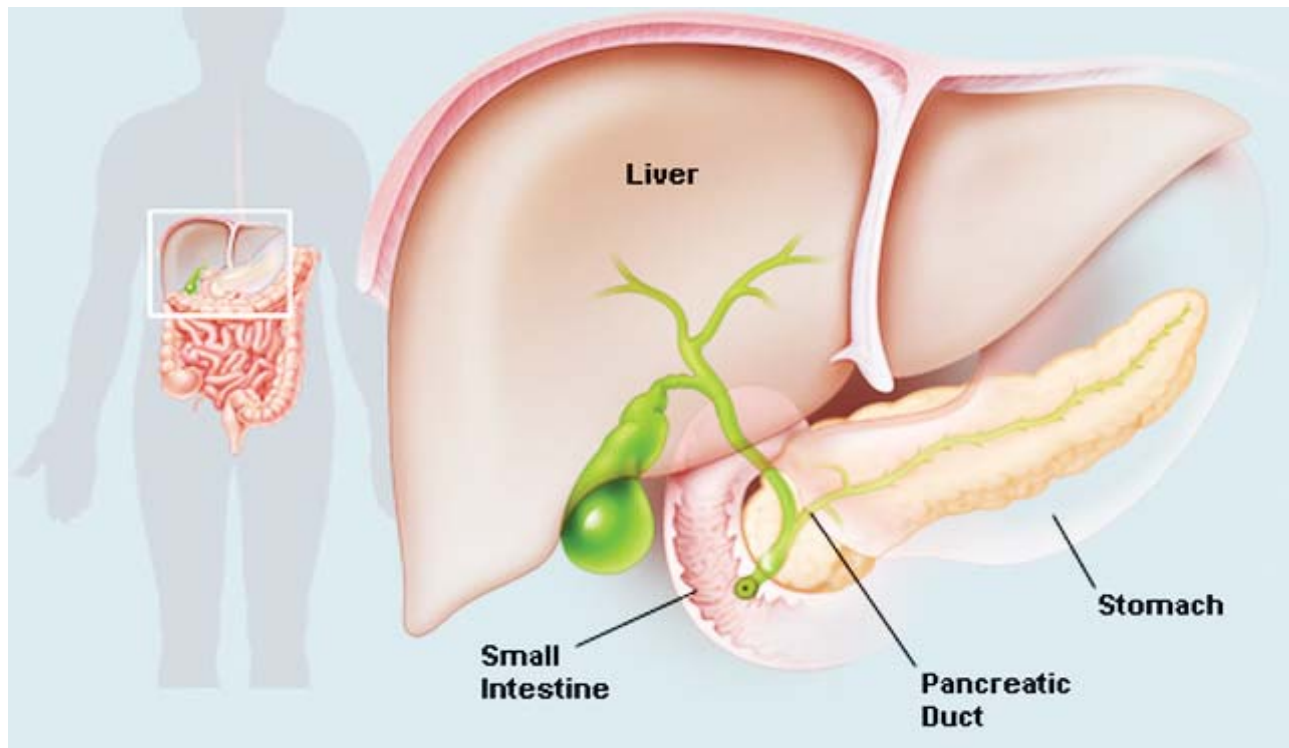
Hard to detect and quick to spread, pancreatic cancer is among the deadliest of cancers. Scientists hope that genetic research will make it more like other cancers—a treatable disease. But even if it's caught while confined to the pancreas—and it rarely is—just 16% of patients are alive five years after the initial diagnosis. By comparison, the five-year survival rate for localized breast cancer is 86%. If the cancer has spread beyond the pancreas, the likelihood of living another five years is just 2%. Only the statistics for liver cancer are as grim.

Fortunately, pancreatic cancer is uncommon compared with other major cancers. About 50,000 new cases are diagnosed every year in the United States, in contrast to about 250,000 new cases of breast cancer, and 225,000 new cases of lung cancer. But because it's so untreatable, pancreatic cancer causes about 40,000 deaths each year. It is the 4th leading cause of cancer death.

No one knows exactly what causes pancreatic cancer. Like many cancers, it's an older person's disease — the median age at diagnosis is 71. Because Americans are living longer, there are more cases now than a half-century ago. Pancreatic cancer does run in families. Former President Jimmy Carter's father, brother, and two sisters died of the disease. Familial cases account for 5%-15% of the total.

## Symptoms

Symptoms often include abdominal pain that radiates to the back and weight loss. Because the pancreas is near the spine, backaches are common. It sometimes causes people to itch all over their bodies. About 70% of pancreatic cancers start in what doctors refer to as the head of the pancreas, which is the bulbous end of the gland. The tumor can block the common bile duct, which



**Salvaging some of the pancreas in surgery is preferred because otherwise the patient must cope with a sudden loss of insulin production as well as a life-threatening cancer.**

drains the gallbladder and liver. As a result, the waste product bilirubin backs up and gets into the blood. This results in jaundice, yellow discoloration of the skin and the eyes.

## Treatment

Surgery provides the best chance of cure. However, the surgeon discovers that even a localized tumor is inoperable. If the tumor can be cut out, the surgeon may remove all or part of the pancreas, as well as parts of nearby organs. Salvaging some of the pancreas

is preferred because otherwise the patient must cope with a sudden loss of insulin production as well as a life-threatening cancer.

If the cancer is in the head of the pancreas, the surgeon may perform the Whipple procedure, a major operation that involves removing parts of the small intestine, bile duct, and stomach, in addition to the head of the pancreas. If the tumor is another part, surgeons may remove that part of the pancreas along with the spleen.

## Prevention is the best medicine

But preventing the disease is by far the best course of action. Smoking is the clearest risk factor, so not lighting up is the surest prevention tip. After you've kicked the habit, in several years your risk becomes the same as if you never smoked.

Other ways to help prevent pancreatic cancer include maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly, limiting alcohol use, and eating a Mediterranean-style diet.

(Source: [health.harvard.edu](http://health.harvard.edu))

**Hard to detect and quick to spread, pancreatic cancer is among the deadliest of cancers.**

## 5 warning signs of depression

By Alex Groberman

Depression is a serious mental condition that can be very easily misunderstood or go unnoticed by people surrounding the depressed. While many may simply disregard one or more of the five warning signs of depression as someone "being sad," they might actually be the signs of a serious disorder.

Like most conditions, the key to treating depression is to diagnose it early. The longer people wait to receive treatment, the more risk they subject themselves to in terms of the possible negative effects of living with depression.

With that in mind, here are 5 warning signs of depression:

**1.** A lack of interest in activities that the person used to be interested in. Typically, people who suffer from depression lose interest in doing things that they once enjoyed doing. This can range as anything from dropping out of social events like clubs and sports teams, to walling themselves off from outsiders with whom they once shared a hobby. This symptom of depression typically goes on to worsen the condition, because it hurts some of the social relationships that depression sufferers previously engaged in.

**2.** A noticeable change in eating habits is another big warning sign of depression. While there are obviously a number of reasons why one might change their diet, big shifts in weight gain and/or weight loss typically signify a loss of interest in eating or a lackadaisical attitude towards making food. This symptom, in turn, can negatively impact a depression sufferer's physical health.

**3.** Suddenly noticing an increase in the number of headaches, stomachaches and physical symptoms is another sign of depression. While depression in itself is a mental condition, it is often accompanied by a number of physical discomforts like headaches and stomachaches.

**4.** Constant fatigue or an inability to sleep is a big warning sign of depression. This can either come as a slight problem with sleeping enough to feel fully rested, or it can be full-blown insomnia. Waking up too early or constantly waking up during the night are other common signs of depression.

**5.** The most serious sign of depression is thoughts of suicide or hurting oneself. Unlike the other symptoms, which on their own can be indicators of a number of conditions, this particular sign almost always signals depression.

(Source: [psyweb.com](http://psyweb.com))



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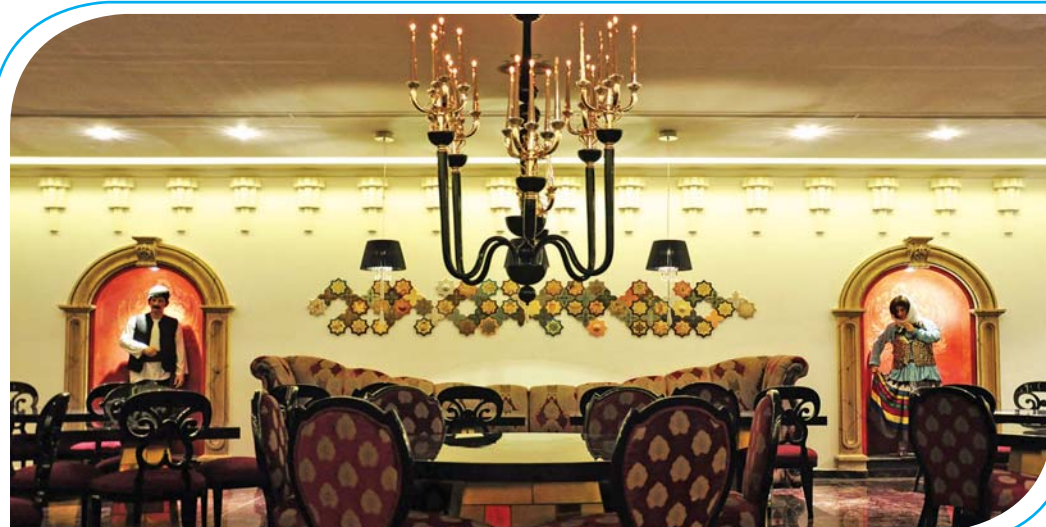


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## Tehran exhibit features handmade Turkmen jewelry

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — An exhibition of exquisite jewelry crafted by Iranian Turkmen nomads opened to the public at the Niavaran Cultural Historical Complex in northern Tehran on May 18, which marks the International Museum Day.

Ornaments to clothing, head, forehead, hair, ears, neck, chest, wrists, fingers as well as the ones appropriate for children and houses are seen in the exhibit, CHTN reported on Thursday.



Handmade jewelry crafted by Iranian Turkmen nomads

The objects have not been put on show before and they are belonging to the treasure trove of the complex, the source added.

Turkmen jewelry designs mainly feature floral patterns, animals and abstract images, relying on geometric patterns amongst them circles, triangles, squares and rectangles.

The semi-nomadic Iranian Turkmen are primarily living in Turkmen Sahra region in northern Iran.

The exhibit runs through May 26.

## Ancient Egyptian pharaoh carving found in looting hole

Egyptian authorities say they caught looters digging up an ancient stone block carved with an image of a pharaoh, Live Science reported on May 19.

In the city of Abydos, antiquities authorities say they were inspecting an old two-story, mud-brick house when they found that the owner had excavated a hole in the floor.

The block was at the bottom of the hole, about 13 feet (4 meters) below the floor, according to an announcement from the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities.

Images of the discovery show that the block is decorated with the cartouche of Nectanebo II. (A cartouche is a symbol consisting of ovals that frame a set of hieroglyphs indicating a royal name). Nectanebo II ruled during Egypt's 30th Dynasty, from 360 to 342 BC, and was the last native Egyptian pharaoh before his defeat during the Persian conquest.

Abydos is in Upper Egypt about 6 miles (10 kilometers) from the Nile River. The earliest kings of Egypt were buried at the site, and it remained an important religious place for thousands of years. Today, many of its monuments are still visible, such as Temple of Seti I and Ahmose's pyramid.

Abydos was especially important as a cult center for Osiris, the god of the underworld. Several Egyptian rulers built their own temples to Osiris at this site, and Nectanebo II might have done so, too. The block could be a part of the king's royal shrine or an extension of a wall from the temple, said Hani Abul Azm, head of the Central Administration for Antiquities of Upper Egypt, according to the announcement.

The house where the block was found is now under police supervision. Abul Azm said that proper excavations may take place to reveal more about the site.

## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Mana Pools National Park

The Mana Pools National Park, Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas World Heritage Site is an area of dramatic landscape and ecological processes on the banks of the Zambezi, Zimbabwe.

The area is home to a remarkable concentration of wild animals, including elephants, buffalo, leopards and cheetahs. An important concentration of Nile crocodiles is also be found in the area.



Physically protected by the Zambezi River to the north and the steep escarpment (which rises to over 1,000 m from the valley floor) to the south, this substantial property of 676,600 ha provides shelter for immense congregations of Africa's large mammal populations which concentrate in its flood plains.

The Mana Pools are former channels of the Zambezi River, and ongoing geological processes present a good example of erosion and deposition by a large seasonal river including a clear pattern of plant succession on its alluvial deposits.

While black rhino has disappeared since the property's inscription, huge herds of elephant and buffalo, followed by zebra, waterbuck and many other antelope species and their associated predators including lion and hyena migrate to the area each year during the dry winter months.

The river is also famous for its sizeable numbers of hippopotamus and Nile crocodile. Resident and migratory birdlife, with over 450 species recorded, is also abundant. Controlled hunting on quota is permitted in the safari areas.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Iran lures more travelers from Spain

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The visit of Spaniards to Iran has raised by more than double over the past four years, an official with the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts organization says.

The number of Spanish travelers to Iran added up to 9,761 in the last Iranian calendar year (Mar. 20, 2016 – Mar. 20, 2017) while the figure stood at 4,022 in 1392 (Mar. 21, 2013 – Mar. 20, 2014), CHTHO Deputy Director Morteza Rahmani-Movahhed told ISNA on May 17.

"Cementing cooperation with Spain will help us adopt more effective policies," he added, calling the southwestern European country a role model for the tourism sector.

Earlier this month, Matilde Pastora Asian Gonzalez, the Secretary of State for Tourism of Spain, expressed Madrid's willingness to invest in tourism and hospitality infrastructures across Iran, referring to growing bilateral relations and Iran's high tourism potentials.

She made the remarks in a meeting with Rahmani-Movahhed on the sidelines of the 105th UNWTO Executive Council held in Madrid on May 11 and 12.

The government has put in a great deal of effort to revive tourism and hospitality businesses since President



An undated picture released by Fars news agency shows a clergyman offering cookies to foreign travelers in the 17th-century Imam Mosque of Isfahan.

Hassan Rouhani assumed office in August 2013.

Back in April, Rahmani-Movahhed publicized that a total of 19.9 million

travelers visited the country during the four-year period.

## Iran strengthens commitment to cultural heritage, ICCROM says

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran reaffirms deeper commitment to preserving its cultural heritage as the country extends restorations projects to beyond its borderlines, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) announced on its website on May 18.

The comment comes after the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization revealed plans to allocate \$2.4 million towards the conservation of sites around the world linked to Iranian heritage.

Earlier this month, the two establishments signed

a memorandum of understanding in a bid to strength collaboration in cultural heritage conservation between ICCROM and Iran, a member state since 1972.

The agreement also sets the basis for organizing professional training activities, workshops and other activities to raise public awareness and support for conservation.

According to the ICCROM, the center is seeking new sources of funding, including from the private sector, to implement projects in Iran and the region starting this year.



ICCROM Director-General Stefano De Caro (L) talks to Iran's tourism chief Zahra Ahmadi-pour in Tehran, May 3, 2017.

## British Airways expands routes from regional airports

A raft of new routes from UK regional airports are being introduced this weekend by British Airways.

British Airways flights will take off from Birmingham and Bristol airports for the first time in a decade to four popular European destinations, meaning that the airline now flies from 17 airports in the UK and Ireland.

The summer-only services from Birmingham and Bristol to Florence, Malaga, Ibiza and Palma will operate at weekends.

BA last flew from both airports in 2007 when its regional airline business was sold to Flybe.

Manchester will gain seven new routes, with three from Stansted and a new Dublin-Ibiza service.

Alicante, Malaga, Ibiza, Palma, Mykonos, Nice and London City air-



port will be served from Manchester.

Florence, Geneva and Nice will be added from Stansted, plus increased frequency on existing routes to Ibiza and Palma. Flights to Malaga and Faro will also resume for the summer.

Flights to Palma from Edinburgh and to Skiathos from London City Airport will be added in June.

Embraer 190 jets will operate the new services.

(Source: travelweekly.co.uk)

## With Chinese tourism down, Taiwan looks to lure visitors from Southeast Asia

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Nowhere is the boom in tourism from China over the last decade more palpable than among neighbors of the country, Asia's largest economy. But perceived economic benefits can be used as a political weapon when Beijing wants to send a message.

Many Chinese tourists are boycotting South Korea in response to its deployment of an antimissile system that China considers a threat to its security. In March, Chinese tourist arrivals in South Korea were 40 percent lower than a year earlier, dragging total arrivals in the period down 11 percent. Hong Kong had a similar experience after pro-democracy demonstrations in 2014.

"Beijing has used Chinese tour groups as both carrots and sticks," said Ian Rowen, an assistant professor of geography at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, who is writing a book on Chinese tourism.

Now, the stick is being deployed against Taiwan, he said, to pressure President Tsai Ing-wen, who took office a year ago, to publicly endorse a view of China and Taiwan as part of "one China." Her Democratic Progressive Party has historically favored independence for Taiwan. Since her inauguration, Chinese visits to Taiwan have fallen significantly.

Ms. Tsai has held her ground, however, and demonstrated that a declining number of Chinese tourists can be offset, to some extent, with visitors from other Asian markets.

Last year, international arrivals in Taiwan reached a record high of nearly 10.7 million, up from 10.4 million in 2015, according to the Tourism Bureau. That happened even as arrivals from China dropped more than 600,000, to 3.5 million, after Beijing urged tour group operators to reduce travel to Taiwan. Many of the new visitors were from Southeast Asia, whose numbers rose 16 percent.

Figures from the first three months of this year show, however, that while Southeast Asian arrivals exceeded 478,000, up 36 percent from the same period in 2016, the number of Chinese visitors continued to drop, by 42 percent, to just under 660,000. This pulled down total arrivals by 10 percent in the first quarter, putting pressure on Taiwan to attract more visitors from other Asian countries.

The search for alternative sources of tourism revenue is part of Ms. Tsai's New Southbound Policy, a plan to shift Taiwan's economy away from its dependence on China, and to strengthen ties with 18 countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Her predecessor, Ma Ying-

## China tourism investment to top \$218 billion in 2017

China's tourism investment is expected to maintain rapid growth in 2017 as ongoing consumption upgrades will keep the sector on the fast track.

The China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) Friday said tourism will remain a magnet for private capital, predicting direct investment will jump more than 20 percent from last year to 1.5 trillion yuan (\$218.07 billion) this year.

Hot areas within the sector include rural travel, big data and tourism equipment.

"From now to 2040, the tourism will witness a golden period," Li Jinzhao, head of the CNTA, said during a forum.

With China's GDP per capita surpassing \$8,000, the sector is embracing for explosive growth boosted by steady economic development, rising incomes and consumption upgrades, Li said.



"There will be sustainable increases in tourism consumption abilities and travel demand, as well as the number of tourists."

Given lackluster traditional industries, services, including tourism, have stood out as fresh impetus to the slowing economy. In 2016, the tourism revenue in China totaled 4.69 trillion yuan, contributing around 11 percent to the national economy.

(Source: China Daily)



Chinese tourists outside the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei, Taiwan. (Credit Ritchie B. Tonga/European Pressphoto Agency)

jeou, had pursued closer economic relations with China, including the expansion of business and leisure travel in Taiwan.

The tourism component of the policy has focused on making it easier for Southeast Asians to come to Taiwan; visa requirements have been relaxed, new air routes have opened, and announcements at some train stations are made in Indonesian, Thai and Vietnamese. The number of Southeast Asian visitors is expected to rise further when Taiwan extends visa-free entry to the Philippines, most likely this year, as happened with Thailand in August.

Taiwan's tourism industry is maturing at a time when a new generation of cash-rich travelers is emerging in Southeast Asia, said Tsai Hung-Jeng, director of National Sun Yat-sen University's Center for South-

east Asian Studies.

"The economies of Southeast Asian countries are growing very quickly, and their middle classes are expanding rapidly," Mr. Tsai said.

That is reason enough to pursue new markets, he said, but avoiding an overreliance on China is also important, he said, citing the experiences of South Korea and Hong Kong.

Peter Lin, sales director of Topology Travel, an agency in Taipei, said that under the policy, inquiries from the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam had more than doubled.

Until last year, the agency's Southeast Asian customers mostly lived and worked in major Chinese cities. But now, clients are coming directly from Vietnam and Thailand, he said, spending as much as \$400 per person a day, excluding accommodations.

"They're really, really high end," he said. In addition to typical tourist destinations like Taipei 101 — one of the world's tallest buildings — night markets and the National Palace Museum, Mr. Lin said, many of his Southeast Asian clients are eager to experience the cooler climates and snow of Taiwan's two largest mountain ranges.

(Source: The New York Times)



# The deaf-blind can now ‘watch’ television without intermediaries

PervasiveSUB compiles all the subtitles of television channels and sends them to a central server which forwards them to smartphones or tablets. From there, they are sent to the Braille line of the deaf-blind person thanks to the GoAll app, which integrates the software, is compatible with different Braille lines and makes it possible to control the speed of the subtitles that are captured directly from the TV broadcast in perfect synchronization.

The presentation, which took place at the UC3M Madrid-Puerta de Toledo campus, was attended by Ángel García Crespo, a UC3M professor and director of the project; Arancha Díaz-Lladó, the director of Telefónica's Sustainable Innovation; and Francisco José Trigueros Molina, the president of FASOCIDE. Also in attendance was a group of deaf-blind persons who gave a demonstration of how this technology works.

PervasiveSUB, financed by Telefónica, was developed by the research group at the UC3M Pedro Juan de LastanosaInstitute of Technological Development and Promotion of Innovation. García Crespo, who headed the group, stated that “one of the big problems deaf-blind persons face is the scant attention they receive, which is demonstrated by the fact that they weren't recognized by the European Parliament until 2004.”

Díaz-Lladó said, “At Telefónica we endeavor to become a more accessible



company and that way contribute to equal opportunities for all. And although we still have a long way to go, the new inclusive technologies and the digital rev-

olution are the best means to help us get there.”

#### ■ Blind-deaf users

A group of deaf-blind users from FAS-

**Deaf-blind persons suffer a combined deterioration of sight and hearing, which impedes their access to information, communication and mobility in a way that seriously affects everyday abilities necessary for a minimally independent life.**

## U.S. Endangered Species Act can help giraffes in trouble: study

On April 19 of this year, five major wildlife protection groups petitioned the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to list the giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) as an endangered species. As the petition asserted, the “giraffe has suffered a major reduction in population size across its range primarily due to habitat loss, commercial overutilization, and severe poaching, and such decline continues unabated.”

If the Fish and Wildlife Service agrees to list the giraffe, a set of legal tools will become available to protect this iconic species. But how would listing in the U.S. help this African mammal, whose population numbers in the wild have dipped below 100,000?

While extinction can be a natural process, the current rate of extinction is anything but. Scientists estimate that at least 99 out of 100 species extinctions in the world today are the result of human action. Although people rarely intend to drive species into oblivion, as with the giraffe, they do so through the destruction of habitat, poaching and legal hunting. As the petition notes, “giraffes once occupied much of the savanna and savanna woodlands of Africa ... (it) has undergone a 36 to 40 percent population decline over the past 30 years.”

#### ■ Prominent species

More than a century ago, scientists began to notice the disappearance of once prominent species around the world. The American passenger pigeon, the Carolina parakeet and the Great Auk — once well-established in

North America — disappeared. Other species like the American bison and many kinds of whales had once played central roles in important ecosystems but had been reduced to small remnant populations.

The existence of species is important to people for many reasons. Sometimes species provide clues for the development of medicines. Often they play a fundamental role in maintaining the functioning of ecosystems on which people depend. As Aldo Leopold — perhaps America's most famous naturalist — noted,

“If the biota, in the course of aeons, has built something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.”

#### ■ Species on Red List

In 1964, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) began tracking the conservation status of species on its “Red List.” Although the IUCN provides information only about the status of species, this is the first step in helping to limit extinction because it allows conservation efforts to be directed where they're most needed.

A few years later in the United States, the federal government began keeping an official list of species in danger of extinction — what we call endangered species — and species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future — threatened species.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA), passed in 1973, goes further than just identifying imperiled species. Un-



der its terms, listed species are protected from actions “authorized, funded or carried out” by the federal government that may jeopardize their continued existence or adversely affect their essential habitat. Species members are also protected from direct harm by any person. Commerce in species protected by the ESA is generally a crime.

The purpose of the ESA is the “conservation” of protected species. In practice, that means bringing the species back to the point where it no longer requires the protection of the ESA.

(Source: Scientific American)

## River channels on three worlds reveal a history of shifting landscapes

At this point, we've worked out the basics of the processes that produced the topography around us here on Earth. But other worlds in our solar system have very different landscapes that could partly be the result of foreign processes. The distant glimpses we get of these worlds make revealing those landscape histories a real challenge. Reconstructing a crime from a detailed inspection of a crime scene is one thing, doing it through a telescope is another.

Rivers are, in a way, topography by-

standers that always flow downhill. The channels they carve certainly modify the landscape, but their paths reflect the elevations around them. They can also tell you about past topography if you know how to look. A team led by City University of New York researcher Benjamin Black sought to apply this concept not just to the Earth, but also to the two other worlds where we see river channels — Mars and Titan.

The researchers distinguished between long-wavelength topography

(think continents and ocean basins on Earth) and short-wavelength topography (think mountain ranges within continents). The differing scales signify different processes, with smaller features resulting from local interactions between Earth's tectonic plates rather than the fundamental difference between continental and ocean crust.

Playing with a simulation of an evolving landscape, the researchers demonstrate how rivers record these two processes. If you only deform an initially

flat landscape to make long-wavelength topography, river channels dutifully trace simple, orderly lines from high elevation to low. But as you also push up localized topography, river channels deviate from that large-scale pattern more and more as “downhill” becomes a spatially variable concept.

Of course, if you stop pushing up localized topography, those rivers will eventually carve through the “bumps” and return to the orderly, large-scale pattern.

(Source: Ars Technica)

## Iranian Bank Wins Euromoney's Best Bank Transformation Award in Middle East

Euromoney's best bank transformation award for 2017 has gone to Iranian private lender Ayandeh Bank after successfully accomplishing a merger of troubled banks to become one of Iran's biggest private banks, Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

According to Euromoney, a market research firm, another Iranian bank that did well over the year, positioning itself well for the internationalization to come, was Bank Pasargad. The bank, which was selected as Iran's best bank for the second consecutive year, grew its correspondent banking relations by an impressive

300%, from an admittedly low base.

It is for 26 years that Euromoney Accredited Institution evaluates banks in the country in national regional and international levels according to their previous fiscal year performance and compare them with one another.

Accordingly, this prestigious institute selects the best banks in every country, the best bank in the region and also top banks of every region in different disciplines in various parts of world including Middle East, Asia, Europe, South America, North America

and Africa.

For this purpose, AYANDEH Bank was named at the Best Bank Transformation in the Middle East in 2017.

It is worth mentioning that this is for the first time that an Iranian bank managed to win title of the best transformation bank in the Middle East region which is home to the outstanding and famous banks of world such as HSBC, Citi Bank, Barclays, Standard Chartered, Goldman Sachs and Deutsche Bank, etc., the Public Relations Dept. of the Bank ended.

## Platts S&P Website Expounds on Italian and German Investment in Manufacturing Steel Products in Iran

Platts S&P Website delivered a comprehensive report on the Italian and German investment in manufacturing steel equipment and machinery in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Public Relations Dept. of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) reported.

Given the above issue, Steel Equipment and Machinery Production Plant of Danieli Persia Company was inaugurated a couple of days ago in Eshtehard Industrial Park, located at 80 km West of

Tehran Province in the presence of Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Eng. Ne'matzadeh and Managing Director of IMIDRO Mehdi Karbasian.

For this purpose, Gianpietro Benedetti Chief Executive of Danieli Company in a conference held in Tehran in 2014 announced that his company intends construct a steel equipment and machinery manufacturing company in Iran in order to meet 40% demand of steel demand of country, so that construction operation of this project

started in 2015.

In the inaugural ceremony of this giant plant, Eng. Ne'matzadeh stated: “Iran will be in dire need of more steel equipment due to the burgeoning growth in manufacturing steel and we expect that steel production will increase from 18 million tons in 2016 to 25 million tons before the termination of current year in 1396 (to end March 20, 2018).”

Managing director of IMIDRO Mehdi Karbasian was the other speaker who

said: “German SMS Company, as the main supplier of metallurgy equipment and factory, is constructing another factory in central part of Iran in Isfahan in cooperation with an Iranian company, so that it will be put into operation in the very near future.”

It should be noted that a giant factory will be put into operation between Iran and Italy, costing €6.2 billion, as joint venture for the development of steel manufacturing and sponge iron capacity in Iran.

## Earth has a new man-made protective ‘force field’

Earth might seem like a cozy place to live, and that's mostly true, but only due to a very thin protective barrier generated by our planet's magnetic field. Without this natural shield, we'd be under constant assault by extreme space weather like coronal mass ejections.

But now scientists believe we may have another way to protect ourselves should our natural shield break down, an artificial force field-like boundary that we accidentally, inadvertently, created, reports Newsweek.

It turns out that our communications using very low frequency radio signals, such when radio telescopes are transmitted from the ground and are used to communicate with submarines, have been leaking out into space and interacting with electrons and ions there. This interaction has resulted in a sort of VFL (Very Low Frequency) “bubble” that completely enshrouds our planet.

A “number of experiments and observations have figured out that, under the right conditions, radio communications signals in the VLF frequency range can in fact affect the properties of the high-energy radiation environment around the Earth,” Phil Erickson, one of the scientists involved, said in a statement.

Normally, man-made radio bubbles might seem like bad news, a kind of cosmic pollution. But these artificial bubbles actually have been secretly working in our favor, adding another layer of protection from dangerous solar storms. The result is a “Star Trek”-like invisible shield that could potentially be manipulated to be turned up or down depending on the level of protection we might need.

A major reason why scientists constantly monitor the sun's activity is because of the dangerous conditions generated in the aftermath of solar flares, when plasma and magnetic field from the solar corona can be spewed in our direction.

(Source: mnn.com)

## Scientists use stem cells to create functional artificial blood

Blood is one of the most vital components of the human body, but we can't create an artificial version, which means we must rely on donations for transfusions and operations. However, two recent studies suggest we're closer than ever to making a limitless, artificial supply of blood.

In one new study, researchers created a mix of different types of blood stem cells that produced different kinds of human blood cells when transfused into mice, The Independent reported. This is an important step toward making artificial human blood, as doctors believe that figuring out a way to turn stem cells into blood artificially will eventually lead to this breakthrough.

“This work is the culmination of over 20 years of striving,” explained study researcher George Daley, The Independent reported. “We're now able to model human blood function in so-called ‘humanized mice’. This is a major step forward for our ability to investigate genetic blood disease.”

Stem cells are cells that can essentially transform into any type of cell. While we have been able to stimulate these stem cells into becoming blood cells in the past, this has only been on levels too small to be used in a medical setting. For example, in a study published in March, scientists in England were able to produce about 50,000 red blood cells by coaxing stem cells into transforming into red blood cells.

(Source: IBT)

## Rare ants rediscovered that grow fungus with insect poo

Ants invented agriculture long before humans, learning how to grow fungus on bits of leaves and other detritus, fungus which provided them with food. One of the more primitive fungus-farmers, known as *Mycetophylax asper*, was discovered in 1887, but has barely been seen since. Scientists weren't even sure it was still around.

But researchers have re-discovered it in a park in Brazil known as the Chapecó National Forest in huge numbers, as described in a study published in PLOS ONE.

After being tipped off by a colleague named Rogeria Silva, an entomologist at the Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi, the study authors traveled to the park to see for themselves.

The researchers say they only collected a small number of the ants from one location, and there are still large numbers of the species left in the forest.)

The ant has a number of bizarre and unique features. For one, it grows fungus on bits of detritus and frass, a technical term for insect poop.

Physically, it is covered in erect hairs, which is unique for its genus, the taxonomic group above species, says study first author Jeffrey Sosa-Calvo, a postdoctoral researcher at Arizona State University. It also has a distinctive groove in its head called a “scrobe” that allows it to fold its antennae back, and a pronounced protuberance on its thorax (the middle body part) known as a turbercle.

Genetic analysis of the ant showed that it is one of the more primitive fungus-farmers, and further study of its relationship to the fungus it cultivates should help researchers better understand how these creatures evolved, Schultz says.

(Source: Newsweek)



## Dust storms hit Iran’s western provinces

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Heavy dust storms hit the **d e s k** western and southwestern provinces of Iran, namely Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Lorestan, Khuzestan, and Bushehr on Saturday.

Dust storms will also continue in Ilam, Lorestan, Khuzestan and Bushehr provinces on Sunday, Tasnim news agency quoted a report by the meteorological organization as saying.

Sand and dust storms mostly originated from hot-spots in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia are adversely affecting Iranian cities in western areas and causing great discomfort for the poor dwellers.

Many ponds which were once located in the arid and desert regions stretching from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea to Iran have gone dry over the years. This ongoing desertification process has greatly increased the number of dust storms in the region and every year heavy dust storms envelope more than half of the country.

## Tehran records hottest day on Saturday

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — As the mercury touched 35, **d e s k** Tehran experienced the hottest day since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

Iran Meteorological Organization’s expert Fariba Goodarzi told Nasimonline that spells of rain are expected today in the city and also in some central and western provinces.

## 105-year-old woman receives honorary high school diploma

**OAKDALE, Pa. (AP)** — A Pennsylvania woman who said her only regret in life was not finishing high school has received an honorary diploma — at age 105.

Theresia Brandl donned a cap and gown Wednesday at her Oakdale nursing home to celebrate, surrounded by four grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren.

Brandl attended Stowe High School until she had to drop out to care for her ailing mother. The school was later merged with a nearby school, forming Sto-Rox High School, which awarded her the honorary diploma.

The diploma was arranged by the Twilight Wish Foundation, which helps fulfill wishes for people over 65, after Brandl was nominated by an administrator at the nursing home.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Getting A Subscription

A: Good afternoon Ma’am, My name is Mike and I am selling **subscriptions** to all sorts of **periodicals**.

B: No thank you, I am not interested.

A: Please ma’am, **if you could spare** five minutes of your time, I am sure we could find something that interests you!

B: I wish I could, but I have to walk the dog and finish cooking so if you would excuse me.

A: We have a great variety of magazines all about cooking! This one for example, is a bi monthly publication with recipes from all over the world!

B: Wow that would be kind of useful, do you have any other cooking magazines?

A: Sure do! This one is a **quarterly** publication, but each issue has over 200 color pages of recipes and also many home decorating ideas!

B: Wow, this is nice! Ok, sign me up for both publications.

A: You mentioned you have a dog, most pet owners sign up for this weekly newsletter that has information on dog care, pet shops and even **pet sitters**!

B: That is exactly what I needed! What else do you have?

A: Well, I also have....

■ **Key vocabulary**  
**subscription:** a purchase by prepayment for goods or services

**periodical:** a magazine, especially one about a serious or technical subject

**if you could spare:** do you have, can you offer

**quarterly:** at three month intervals

**issue:** a final publication such as a magazine

**pet sitter:** person who takes care of pets in owner’s absence

■ **Supplementary vocabulary**

**cable TV:** TV channels which are purchased for a monthly fee

**internet service:** service that provides internet access for a fee

**gym membership:** paid membership that provides access to the gym

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Have an idea?  
Be in touch!

[lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com](mailto:lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com)

# Salamander habitats monitoring schemes get underway

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Iran **d e s k** has recently started implementing schemes with the aim of monitoring salamander habitats nationwide, IRNA news agency reported on Saturday.

As salamander species are considered endangered in the country the first step to protect these vulnerable and precious animals is monitoring their natural habitats throughout the country.

“Thankfully the habitat monitoring schemes are being carried out successfully in provinces of Golestan, Mazandaran, Khuzestan, Lorestan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah and Azarbajjan,” the director general for office for aquatic wildlife of the Department of Environment said.

Since the sixth five-year development plan mandates endangered species conservation the budget for conservation schemes is now allocated and strategic plans to protect the species are already drawn up and are expected to be implemented particularly in provinces



of Khuzestan and Lorestan to which salamander is most endemic, Majid Kharrazian-Moqaddam added.

Additionally Masoud Ebrahim-Tehrani, the head of reptiles and amphibians office explained that out of seven salamander

species found in Iran four are endangered and data on the rest of them are not well-documented.

“Therefore, a group of expert are now striving to collect as much information as possible on salamander species distribution, habitat, and threats posing them and also examine the vegetation and the ponds and spring in their habitats,” Ebrahim-Tehrani noted.

Unfortunately depleting the lakes and ponds for irrigation purposes and locals’ lack of awareness about the salamanders are most threatening the species, he suggested.

Moreover, the illegal trade of the salamander species and illegal poaching have also dragged the species on the verge of extinction.

Kaiser’s spotted newt, also known as the Lorestan newt or emperor spotted Newt, is a species of very colorful salamander and one of the world’s most attractive salamander species. It is only endemic to the southern Zagros Mountains in Iran.

## World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development is annually held on May 21 to help people learn about the importance of cultural diversity and harmony.

Three-quarters of the world’s major conflicts have a cultural dimension.

Bridging the gap between cultures is urgent and necessary for peace, stability and development.

Cultural diversity is a driving force of development, not only with respect to economic growth, but also as a means of leading a more fulfilling intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life. This is captured in the seven culture conventions, which provide a solid basis for the promotion of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is thus an asset that is indispensable for poverty reduction and the achievement of sustainable development.

At the same time, acceptance and recognition of cultural diversity – in particular through innovative use of media and Information and Communications

Technologies (ICTs) – are conducive to dialogue among civilizations and cultures, respect and mutual understanding.

The day provides us with an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to advance the four goals of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted on 20 October 2005:

■ **Support sustainable systems of governance for culture**

■ **Achieve a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and increase mobility of artists and cultural professionals**

■ **Integrate culture in sustainable development frameworks**

■ **Promote human rights and fundamental freedoms**

■ **Background**

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in Paris, France, on November 2, 2001. It was the 249th resolution adopted at the 57th session of the United Nations General Conference. Although the declaration was the culmination of years of work, it was adopted in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. This reaffirmed the need for intercultural dialogue to prevent segregation and fundamentalism.

The year 2002 was the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage. At the end of that year, on December 20, 2002, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared May 21 to be the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. The General Assembly emphasized links between the protection of cultural diversity and the importance of dialogue between civilizations in the modern world. The World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development was first observed in 2003.

(Source: [un.org](http://un.org) & [timeanddate.com](http://timeanddate.com))

## How not to die of embarrassment

a live interview with Professor Robert E. Kennedy. During the interview, both of his young children inadvertently came into his home office – and into full view of the camera!

● **Criticism and rejection** – An obvious example of this type of situation, is asking someone out on a date. You’ve built up all your strength and confidence, but this is quickly smashed to smithereens when the other person turns down your invite. Face-to-face, this can be a highly embarrassing situation – for both parties.

● **Appropriate image** – Teenagers are particularly susceptible to this. Either they are embarrassed by their body, or embarrassed by their lack of trendy clothes and belongings (e.g. the latest iPhone).

● **Environment** – This can take place when you’re watching a movie with your parents. Everything is going well, and you’re enjoying the movie, until... suddenly an ‘adult’ scene begins to take place! You don’t know where to look – or what to say. You just hope and pray that the scene will finish soon!

As you can see from the above examples, embarrassment is impossible to avoid in our lives.

However, there are ways to deal effec-

tively with embarrassing situations. Let’s take a look at these now.

■ **How not to die of embarrassment?**

● **Don’t Let the “Spotlight Effect” Blind You.**

Researchers from Cornell University recently conducted several studies into how much our actions and appearance are noticed by others. The studies revealed that most of us massively overestimate how much other people notice or remember our behaviors and appearance. It appears that most people are too busy being concerned about themselves, than to worry about other people. (I’m sure you know some colleagues or friends who fit this description.) In other words, your embarrassing situation is likely to go unnoticed, or at least be easily forgotten. (Great news!)

■ **Change the channel**

You’ve been asked to introduce a colleague at your company’s annual sales conference. Unfortunately, nerves get the better of you – and you fail to remember your colleague’s name. It’s embarrassing, for sure. However, there is a simple trick to wiggle your way out of this situation. Turn the attention to your colleague (and away from yourself) by giving them a

compliment such as: “One thing I do remember, is that my colleague has a much better memory than me!”

■ **Stay cool**

The questions just keep coming... And the interviewer seems determined to find out why you’re unsuitable for the job! In situations like this, you can quickly start to feel weak and embarrassed. The secret is to keep your cool. You can do this by making sure you control your breathing, that your answers are coherent (to the best of your ability), and to remind yourself that other interviewees will be receiving the same grilling as you! By keeping your poise, you’ll stave off embarrassment – and have a great chance of securing the job.

■ **Laugh at yourself**

At 2.10 meters tall, I often get people commenting on my height (several times a day, in fact). Sometimes this attention is welcome – other times it’s not. I usually deal with the latter by making a self-deprecating joke. For example, if I’m shopping in a supermarket, occasionally someone says to me: “With your height, you’d be great for filling the top shelves.” I’ve been known to reply with: “True, but I’d be useless for filling the bottom shelves!”

(Source: *Lifehack*)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

## Rangers’ protection bill aims to crack down on poachers

Iran’s Department of Environment will put forward rangers’ protection bill to the cabinet next week, which aims to make regulations and restrictions more stringent on poachers.

“The bill proposes harsh punishments for poachers who attack rangers and help to expedite the decision-making process for the cases involving rangers,” the deputy DOE director for legal affairs said.

## ENGLISH PROVERB

### Chain is no stronger than its weakest link

■ **Explanation:** an organization is only as strong or powerful as its weakest person

■ **For example:** George is completely out of shape. I don’t want him on our ball team; a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Chill out

■ **Meaning:** to relax completely instead of feeling angry, tired, or nervous

■ **For example:** I spent the afternoon chilling out in front of the TV.

## ENGLISH IDIOM

### Been there, done that

■ **Explanation:** used to indicate that the speaker is familiar with the situation mentioned

■ **For example:** If your attitude toward Las Vegas is been there, done that, perhaps it’s time to try a different vacation spot.



# Iraqi forces capture key west Mosul districts

Terror blasts in Iraq's Basra, Baghdad kill 35, injure 45

Iraqi government forces have wrested full control over two strategic neighborhoods in the western side of Mosul as they press ahead with operations to drive ISIL (Daesh) terrorists out of the country's second largest city.

Commander of Federal Police Forces Lieutenant General Raed Shaker Jawdat said on Saturday that his forces had fully recaptured 17th July and Eqtesadeen neighborhoods of Mosul, and set up barricades and barriers in the liberated areas, Arabic-language al-Sumaria television network reported.

He added that 66 Daesh terrorists had been killed while 13 explosive-laden cars and nine motorcycle bombs had been destroyed during the operations.

The high-ranking Iraqi official noted that federal police forces had regained control over 80 areas, killed 172 snipers, and destroyed 373 car bombs as well as 321 motorcycle bombs ever since the military campaign to liberate western Mosul from the clutches of Daesh extremists began in mid-February.

Jawdat highlighted that Iraqi police forces had also helped the evacuation of 40,000 families from conflict zones, returned 10,000 displaced families to their hometowns and distributed foodstuff and basic commodities among some 55,000 families.

Meanwhile, the media bureau of the Popular Mobilization Units, commonly known by the Arabic word Hashd al-Sha'abi, announced in a statement that



the volunteer forces had intercepted and shot down a Daesh drone south of Qairawan region.

The statement added that the unmanned aerial vehicles had been rigged with explosives, and sought to target Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters stationed inside Sahl Sinjar airbase.

## ■ Terror blasts in Iraq

A fresh wave of terror bombings has hit Iraq's southern city of Basra and the capital of Baghdad, killing at least 35 and injuring nearly 45 others.

According to security officials, at least 11 people lost their lives and over 30 others were wounded after two bombers

blew up their explosives-laden vehicles on Friday at checkpoints near a military base as well as a highway near the area's oilfields.

Seven of the injured are reportedly in critical condition.

The first blast occurred outside the Ar-Rumeila military base, where eight people were killed, including the head of the local intelligence establishment as well as a number of intelligence forces, according to the sources cited in local reports.

Confirming the first bombing, Basra operational commander, Jameel al-Shemri, further announced in a news

briefing that a second bomber also blew up his explosives-packed vehicle near the al-Sadra checkpoint on a highway leading to the region's oilfields.

The attacker then detonated his explosive vest after he was surrounded by security force, killing three people.

This is while the southern province of Basra, where the bulk of the nation's oil is produced, remains one of the most stable and secure regions of Iraq, in which bomb attacks are quite rare.

## ■ Over 526,000 Iraqis displaced amid west Mosul battle

Meanwhile, the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement says over 526,000 people have been displaced amid an operation by Iraq's military and volunteer fighters to drive Daesh terrorists out of western Mosul.

The ministry said in a statement on Friday that 526,233 civilians had experienced forced displacement in the face of the offensive, noting that the refugees had been accommodated in camps set up in the southern, eastern and liberated western parts of Mosul.

Iraqi army soldiers and volunteer fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units have made sweeping gains against the Takfiri elements since launching the Mosul operation.

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

(Source: agencies)

## Yemenis fire ballistic missile at Riyadh ahead of Trump visit

Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah fighters and their allies in the army have reportedly fired a long-range ballistic missile at the Saudi capital Riyadh, a few hours ahead of US President Donald Trump's visit to the Arab kingdom.

According to a report by Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network, the Yemeni forces, backed by allied fighters from Popular Committees, launched a Borkan-2 (Volcano-2) ballistic missile, a domestically modified rocket, aimed at the Saudi capital on Friday evening.

The report also carried a statement by the Yemeni army, saying the missile strike conveyed "a clear and important message that we are all ready to respond to the aggression."

The report, however, gave no further detail, including the exact impact location, the possible casualty toll and the extent of potential damage inflicted.

Meanwhile, the Saudi military announced that it had intercepted and destroyed a projectile some 200 kilometers west of Riyadh, without giving more details.

Back in March 18, the Yemeni army announced

that another Borkan-2 missile accurately hit King Salman Air Base, located in the vicinity of Riyadh, in retaliation for the deadly Saudi war on Yemen.

On September 2, 2016, Yemeni forces also fired a similar missile against a stationary target in the Saudi city of Ta'if, located more than 700 kilometers southeast of the Saudi capital.

The Yemeni army says so far more than 100 ballistic missiles of various types have been fired at positions held by Saudi invaders inside and outside Yemen.

The Friday launch came just hours before Trump's arrival in Riyadh for a two-day visit to the Arab kingdom, his first foreign trip since he became president.

Trump has already departed for Saudi Arabia, where he is expected to finalize a \$100-billion controversial arms deal with the kingdom. Riyadh has been importing tens of billions of dollars of arms from the US over the past years.

On the second day of his visit, Trump is scheduled to speak at a summit of Arab and Muslim leaders in Riyadh.

After concluding his visit to Saudi Arabia on Sunday, the US president will fly to Israel, another major Wash-

ington ally in the region.

Yemenis are particularly angry at Washington for being complicit in the Saudi crimes against the Yemeni nation by providing the Al Saud regime with conventional and banned weapons.

Since March 2015, Saudi warplanes have been heavily bombing Yemen in an attempt to crush the popular Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstate the resigned president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

Latest tallies show that the imposed war has so far killed over 12,000 Yemenis and wounded thousands more. The Saudi aggression has also taken a heavy toll on the country's facilities and infrastructure, destroying many hospitals, schools, and factories.

Nearly 3.3 million Yemenis, including 2.1 million children, are currently suffering from acute malnutrition, while more than seven million people are grappling with starvation. The figures, however, could drastically increase if the Saudi war machine continues to breathe fire on Yemeni people.

(Source: Press TV)

## Lavrov says he did not discuss Comey with Trump

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Saturday he had not discussed the firing of the former FBI Director James Comey with U.S. President Donald Trump, Interfax news agency reported.

"We did not touch this issue at all," Interfax quoted Lavrov as saying.

The New York Times has reported that Trump told Lavrov and Russian ambassador Sergei Kislyak at a White House meeting last week that firing Comey relieved "great pressure" the

president faced from a law-enforcement probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Comey, who had been in charge of the investigation, was fired by Trump on May 9.

Trump Thursday denied asking Comey to drop the probe into links between Russia and his former national security adviser Michael Flynn and decried a "witch hunt" against him.

(Source: Reuters)



## Libya: 141 people killed in Brak al-Shat airbase attack

An attack on an airbase in southern Libya has killed at least 141 people, mostly soldiers loyal to renegade General's Khalifa Haftar's self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA), a spokesman for his forces said.

LNA's Ahmad al-Mismari told the AFP news agency that members of a militia loyal to the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli had carried out summary executions during Thursday's assault.

The victims also included civilians who worked at the Brak al-Shati airbase or were in the nearby area, Mismari said.

"The soldiers were returning from a military parade. They weren't armed. Most of them were executed," he said.

The GNA denied ordering the attack, which it condemned, and said it had set up a commission of inquiry

to investigate the allegations.

Mahdi al-Barghathi, the GNA's defense minister, was suspended, pending an outcome of the probe. Jamal al-Treiki, the head of GNA's Third Force militia, which was accused of carrying out the attack, was also suspended.

Libya has been wracked by chaos since the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi, with rival militias and authorities vying for control of the oil-rich country.

The LNA does not recognize the authority of the GNA, and instead supports rival authorities based in the east. It has promised a "strong" response to the attack.

Martin Kobler, the UN envoy to Libya, voiced "outrage" at reports of fatalities.

He suggested that if the reports were true, the "unprovoked attack" could amount to war crimes and may

be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court.

Aguila Saleh, the speaker of the Tobruk-based parliament in eastern Libya, accused the GNA's Third Force of a "serious breach" of a truce agreement reached between Haftar and Fayeze al-Sarraj, head of the Tripoli-based government, in Abu Dhabi on May 2.

Following the reconciliation talks, both men said they had agreed to put an end to violence in southern Libya, where tribes and militias vie for control of lucrative smuggling routes with neighboring Chad, Niger and Sudan.

Saleh said he has ordered the armed forces "to take the measures necessary to respond to the assault and defend the south and cleanse it of all outlaw militias".

His comments prompted alarm in Tripoli, with the GNA calling for an immediate ceasefire in the south.

(Source: agencies)

## U.S. embassy move would 'end peace process': PLO official

Moving the American embassy in Tel Aviv to occupied Jerusalem would end the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, a senior Palestinian official said Saturday.

"We believe that moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem would mean the end of the peace process," Saeb Erekat, second-in-command of the Palestine Liberation Organiza-

tion (PLO), said days ahead of a visit to the region by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Trump promised during his election campaign to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, whose status is one of the thorniest issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The new U.S. ambassador to Israel David Friedman, who took up office Monday, has also backed the move.

There has been no movement so far on the pledge which would break with decades of American policy on the city, home to some of the holiest sites in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The Palestinians and the Arab world fiercely oppose such a move which the international community has warned could spark fresh unrest.

"I hope that President Trump would give us a chance," Erekat said at the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa at the Jordanian Dead Sea resort of Sweimeh.

"He said... he will not impose solutions on us or on the Israelis," Erekat said. "(But) the fact that he is going to move the embassy is imposition, is dictation."

(Source: AFP)

## Michel Temer accused of obstruction of justice

Brazil's top prosecutor has accused President Michel Temer of corruption and obstruction of justice, according to an investigation released by the country's supreme court.

Attorney General Rodrigo Janot wrote that Temer and a senior senator attempted to derail a sprawling anti-graft probe known as "Car Wash" by legislative means and influencing police investigators, the court filings made public said.

"In this way, there is evidence of possibly committing the crime of obstructing justice," Janot said.

The formal accusation is the latest revelation related to a secretly-recorded audio, which purportedly captured Temer endorsing the paying of hush money to a former politician jailed on corruption charges.

The court also released plea-bargain testimony by the same man who recorded Temer - Joesley Batista, chairman of meat packing giant JBS - which accused the president and his two predecessors of taking millions of dollars in bribes. Batista said the company paid Temer 15m reais (\$4.6m) in bribes.

Temer's office denied in a statement that he obstructed justice by interfering in the probe and also denied accusations he took bribes.

The scandal has sparked protests and prompted eight impeachment filings, raising serious doubts whether Temer, 76, can remain as president.

Temer on Thursday said he would not resign, adding that he wanted the investigation to proceed as fast as possible.

"I have nothing to hide," he told an audience in the capital, Brasilia.

Temer took office in September, promising a "new era" for Brazil following the impeachment of ex-President Dilma Rousseff over accusations of taking illegal state loans to patch budget holes in 2014.

## ■ Millions in bribes

Prosecutors wrote they had proof that Aecio Neves, a senator accused of corruption, collaborated with Temer in attempts to slow or halt the Car Wash probe, which centres on political kickbacks in exchange for firms winning contracts at state-run enterprises, especially at oil company Petrobras.

According to the testimony, JBS had paid Neves to support a new "abuse of authority" law that seeks to make it easier for suspects and defendants to sue investigators, prosecutors and judges.

The measure, which passed the Senate last month, must still be approved by the lower house.

It has been sharply criticised by those leading Brazil's crackdown on corruption.

The testimony also alleges that former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is already facing five corruption trials, received \$50m in bribes in offshore accounts. Rousseff, Temer's predecessor, was also accused of taking \$30m in bribes, also in offshore accounts.

Lawyers for Lula said he was innocent. Rousseff also denied any wrongdoing in a statement.

During her impeachment trial, Rousseff said that her removal was the price she paid for refusing to quash the Car Wash probe, saying that corrupt politicians conspired to oust her to derail the investigations.

In addition to the three presidents, congress members, ministers and several governors and mayors of major cities were named in the testimony. It implicates ruling and opposition parties alike.

"This is easily the worst moment in Brazil since we returned to democracy," Claudio Couto, a political scientist at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, calling the claims "the mother of all plea bargains."

"This testimony is hitting everyone, all the major political players and, most importantly, a sitting president," he told the Reuters news agency.

## ■ 'Taking advantage'

The court also released the audio tape of Temer speaking with Batista. In the recording, which was made in March, the president appeared to condone a payment to silence testimony by Eduardo Cunha, a potential witness in the Car Wash probe.

Cunha, a former lower house speaker who last year orchestrated Rousseff's impeachment, has been convicted of corruption and is serving a prison sentence.

Temer's office has questioned both the legality and content of the recording, which was first reported by the O Globo newspaper.

In a statement on Friday, Temer's office said the president "does not believe in the veracity of the declarations", and accused Batista, who is under investigation, of "taking advantage" of the situation.

Many politicians fear that if Cunha turned a witness for the state, his testimony could implicate scores of Congress and executive branch members.

Overall, the Car Wash probe has led to more than 90 convictions of businessmen and politicians and prompted the investigation of dozens of sitting Congress members and a third of Temer's cabinet.

The constant march of indictments and new scandals has led to widespread calls among Brazilians for new elections.

At least eight pieces of proposed legislation to impeach Temer have been submitted in Congress, and a steady stream of people from many walks of life have called for him to step down.

On Friday, former Chief Justice Joaquim Barbosa added his voice.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Militants begin evacuating town in Syria's Homs province

➡ Turkish special forces are training more FSA troops in using mortars, rocket launchers and machine guns, Anadolu news agency reported.

"It is no longer the old FSA in the field but a new FSA being born. These FSA members in training will show their difference in possible future operations," the report quoted an unidentified military official as saying.

The report comes after Turkey declared in March an end to the first phase of its so-called military operation along with the FSA against Daesh and People's Protection Units (YPG) Kurdish fighters in northern Syria.

(Source: SANA)



## Zidane feels Real Madrid are primed to claim LaLiga title

Real Madrid head coach Zinedine Zidane says his players are in “great” condition ahead of their LaLiga title decider against Malaga on Sunday.

The leaders go into the clash at La Rosaleda knowing a point will be enough for them to claim their first top-flight crown since the 2011-12 campaign.

Zidane has been praised for his rotation policy this season, with his careful use of the squad enabling them to keep the destiny of the title in their hands and secure a place in the Champions League final for the third time in four years.

And the former France star is confident Madrid will be ready to fight for the result they need this weekend.

“We know the difficulty of winning LaLiga,” he told a news conference. “It’s very tough. It’s 38 matches. You have to show that you want to win every week. The players have been phenomenal and we deserve what we’re doing. They’re top and have to finish it.

“We’re going to go for the win because it’s in the DNA of this club. Then we’ll see what happens.

“The unity of the team is the key. I’ve always said that the squad is amazing to see. Everyone is important. The ones who play less have been doing as well as the ones who have done more. We’re okay mentally and physically we’re great.

(Source: Soccerway)

## John Terry awarded title belt by WWE superstar Triple H

Hanging a Premier League medal around your neck is a moment to be proud of, but John Terry has gone a step further with his very own title belt!

Terry is set to leave the Blues after Sunday’s clash with Sunderland at Stamford Bridge having starred for almost two decades at the west London club.

And with Antonio Conte’s men already crowned Premier League champions, the last game of the season will resemble a testimonial for the Chelsea stalwart more than a competitive fixture.



Celebrations kicked off early for the Chelsea defender with a special gift from World Wrestling Entertainment superstar Triple H, who presented Terry with a belt commemorating his title success.

“Congratulations to John Terry and Chelsea for winning the Premier League,” the wrestler wrote on his Twitter

account, alongside photos of the star holding up his memento.

The belt has been specially made for the 36-year-old, and boasts the Chelsea badge on the side as well as the legend World Heavyweight Champion.

Terry has never been averse to a scrap on the field, but we are more likely to see him continue his career elsewhere in the Premier League than in the ring with the rest of the WWE crew.

(Source: Goal)

## Neymar has been told to join Man United – by his father

The Brazilian, 25, should leave Barcelona because he will always be in the shadow of superstar forward Lionel Messi.

Neymar joined Barcelona in 2013 and has had a trophy-laden four years, winning two La Liga titles, the Copa del Rey twice, the Club World Cup and the Champions League.

But after two sensational seasons – where he scored 39 and then 31 goals – Neymar has struggled through a difficult year.

Barca are in the Copa del Rey final but it has been a poor season by their lofty standards.

According to Diario Gol, Neymar Santos Sr believes his son should move to Old Trafford.

Under Jose Mourinho he would be out of Messi’s shadow as the famous club try to work back to former glories.

But Mourinho has played down the chances of Neymar moving to Old Trafford in the past.

In March he said: “A club like Barcelona cannot and will not lose Neymar”

“Although Lionel Messi is still a young player with years ahead of him, he’s almost 30, and Neymar will be the great player of Barcelona post-Messi.

(Source: Sun)

## Mourinho reveals ‘Pogba’s only problem’

Manchester United have been having ups and downs this season. The Red Devils will finish the current campaign out of the top four but still have a chance to qualify for the Champions League winning the Europa League final that they will play on the 24th of May against Ajax.

Expectations of Manchester United fans were a bit higher at the beginning of the season but the win of the second most important European tournament could still be an important achievement in the history of the club as the Europa League is also the only tournament Manchester United have never won in their history.

Expectations on Paul Pogba were also very high and the Frenchman has had ups and downs as well this season. José Mourinho, however, believes the former Juve star has had a good campaign.

“I think Pogba’s only problem is the price-tag on his back. I hope next summer he’s not anymore the highest transfer fee and the pressure can go on somebody else because if his transfer fee was half of it, everybody was saying: ‘what a buy!’

(Source: calciomercato)

# Rio 2016 admit some Olympic and Paralympic medals are disintegrating

Medals awarded during last year’s Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro have begun to disintegrate and need repairing.

This has reportedly happened to over 100 medals awarded during last August and September’s Games.

Silver medals have seemingly been hardest hit because they were made with 30 per cent recycled materials as part of a sustainability drive.

“We’re seeing problems with the covering on between six and seven per cent of the medals,” admitted Rio 2016 director of communications Mario Andrada to Agence France-Presse.

“It seems to be to do with the difference in temperatures.”

A total of 2,021 medals were awarded across both Games, meaning that six or seven per cent is between 121 and 141.

“Together with the International Olympic Committee we’re setting up a system for replacing the defective medals,” Andrada added.

“The medals will either be repaired or replaced.”

This marks another embarrassment to the legacy of Rio 2016 following similarly bizarre stories erupting during the Games, such as the diving pool turning green.

Rio organisers have also asked Federal and Municipal Governments this week to help pay the outstanding BRL117 million (37.8 million) debt from the Paralympic Games.

There has been some limited progress recently with fulfilling other parts of the Rio legacy.



Rio City Hall officially opened Carioca Arena 3, one of the venues used last year in the Olympic Park at Barra de Tijuca, to the Brazilian public earlier this month.

The venue staged taekwondo and fencing competitions at the Rio 2016 Olympics, before hosting judo and wheelchair fencing at the Paralympic Games.

Badminton, table tennis and trampolining are set to be among sports housed in the venue for public use.

An International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) Beach World Tour event is also taking place on a renovated tennis court within the Olympic Park this weekend.

(Source: Inside the Games)

## Nadal targets French Open after shock defeat

Rafael Nadal will set his sights on winning a 10th French Open title, after a day of “fishing or golf”, following his shock defeat to Dominic Thiem in the Rome Masters quarter-finals on Friday.

Nadal, a former seven-time champion in the Italian capital, had dominated the Austrian to win the Madrid Masters final last week.

But the Spanish fourth seed had no answer to the eighth seed’s aggressive approach and impressive range of shots on a shocked centre court as Thiem raced to a 6-4, 6-3 victory in 1hr 51 minutes, ending Nadal’s 17-match winning run.

Nadal, meanwhile, said he intends to have a free weekend before ramping up his preparations for Roland Garros from Monday.

“Tomorrow I’ll be in Mallorca fishing or playing golf, or another thing. I’m going to rest a little bit, I think I deserve it,” said Nadal.

“Then from Monday and Tuesday I will start to prepare for Roland Garros. It’s an important event for me.

“If you do things well, you have more chances in Roland Garros. I hope to play my best tennis in Roland Garros.”

Nadal, given a first round bye, played only three games of his second round match with Nicolas Almagro before his unseeded compatriot retired injured on Wednesday.

The 30-year-old made amends for his comparative lack of playing time with a 6-3, 6-4 win over American Jack Sock on Thursday.

But from the outset against Thiem, Nadal looked in trouble.

The Austrian’s serve, precision and movement were near flawless and soon had Nadal hitting shots wide of the mark.

As the centre court crowd steadily got behind the 23-year-old upstart, Nadal’s confidence waned.

Before the two-hour mark, Thiem avenged his Madrid Masters defeat, breaking Nadal in their final game when the Spaniard hit a wayward return.

“I didn’t play very well,” added Nadal. “I want to congratulate him because he was better than me this afternoon.

“Great, in all aspects. He played long, he played very aggressive, hitting the ball very strong with high intensity.

Sport24

## Enrique out to end Barcelona career on a high



Luis Enrique aims to end his Barcelona career on a high as the Catalans dream of a miraculous final-day title win.

The Camp Nou side are trailing leaders Real Madrid by three points heading into the final game of the season and will not only have to beat Eibar on Sunday, but also need Zinedine Zidane’s men to lose at Malaga in order to retain their Liga crown.

Luis Enrique, who will leave the post at the end of the campaign, realises a tough task awaits when he takes to the Barca bench for the last time, but he is refusing to give up just yet.

“We are ready for what will be a key game,” the Barcelona coach said

at a news conference.

Luis Enrique: “I am very grateful to Barça for everything they have given me throughout all these years”

“It will be a special night for me, my last game as Barcelona coach. I am super proud to have been part of this club’s history. I am privileged. I will be at Camp Nou a lot of times next season to watch games as a fan.

“Our only objective now is to win and get the three points. If that is not enough, then we will congratulate Madrid.

“We do not have things in our own hands, but we have been fighting for the title right until the very end.”

(Source: Soccerway)

## Nicky Hayden remains in serious condition after cycling accident



Former MotoGP world champion Nicky Hayden remained in an “extremely serious” condition in hospital on Thursday, having been hit by a car while cycling the previous day.

Hayden, who is in his second season with the Red Bull Honda World Superbike Team, was initially taken to a local hospital in Rimini following the incident.

However, the 35-year-old American was subsequently transferred to the Bufalini Hospital in Cesena.

A statement from the hospital on Wednesday night confirmed Hayden was in a critical condition in intensive care, adding: “Because of his injuries it was not possible to perform surgery.”

On Thursday, an update quoted by La Gazzetta dello Sport read: “There are no substantial changes from what was

communicated yesterday evening. Nicky Hayden remains hospitalised in the intensive care unit. The clinical picture remains extremely serious.”

Hayden was cycling along the Rimini coastline when the accident took place, having raced in the Italian round of the Superbike World Championship at Imola last weekend.

A veteran of 218 MotoGP races, he won the world title with Repsol Honda in 2006 – ending Valentino Rossi’s streak of five successive championship victories – and also raced for Ducati before switching to the Superbike circuit last year.

News of his accident sparked a flood of tributes from fellow riders on social media, with reigning MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez among those to offer messages of support.

(Source: Yahoo Sports)

## Conte: I won’t do another year at Chelsea without my family

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte has had a stellar first year in charge at Stamford Bridge but insists his family are the No 1 priority ahead of next season.

Conte led the Blues to a stunning Premier League triumph at the first time of asking and with Inter Milan hoping to lure the Italian back to Serie A with a big-money offer, Chelsea are keen to reward him with a new deal.

Conte left his wife, Elisabetta, and daughter, Vittoria, at home in Italy when he took up the top job at Stamford Bridge and wants them to move to London during the summer.

“My objective is to lay the foundations so Chelsea can continue to win,” Conte told La Repubblica newspaper.

“This is already a big club, but it’s inconsistent. They won the Champions League, then went out in the first round. They won the Premier League and then finished 10th. Chelsea need to find stability at the top.



‘I will speak to Roman Abramovich soon.’

‘It’s not all happiness and light. The arrival was, but the journey wasn’t. With my wife Elisabetta in January we decided that Vittoria would finish school in Turin, even if she was already registered to start in London.

‘However, if I am to stay, then they will come and stay with me. It will be a great opportunity for my daughter to live in a foreign country. I’ll tell you one thing for sure, I won’t have another year on my own.’

The former Italy and Juventus boss rejuvenated a Chelsea side in disarray following their 10th-place finish last season.

Conte brought infectious enthusiasm, new training and nutrition methods as well as a new 3-4-3 formation that brought out the best in the Londoners.

‘The lads accepted new methods: very intense training sessions, the diet, the video analysis and importance of details,’ he added.

‘I feel fortified. I remain intransigent in my work, but I am more flexible. I learned to turn a blind eye to certain things, like players eating scrambled eggs before a game... You have to accept the traditions of a country.

(Source: Daily Mail)



# Iran ready for FIFA U20 World Cup opener against Costa Rica: coach

**S P O R T S** Amirhossein Peyrovani says they are ready to take on Costa Rica in their opening match of the 2017 FIFA U20 World Cup.

The Iranian team have been scheduled to meet Costa Rica in Group C of the competition at the Jeju World Cup Stadium in Seogwipo, South Korea on Sunday.

"We played two friendly matches with Senegal as part of preparation for the FIFA U20 World Cup. Now, we are ready for the match against Costa Rica, both physically and mentally. We traveled to South Korea a week earlier for dealing with time change," Peyrovani said.

"I wish all the best for Iran U20 football team in the competition. Costa Rica are a good team and we've analyzed them very well," he added.

Iran have been drawn along with Portugal, Costa Rica and Zambia in Group C.

The 2017 FIFA U20 World Cup is the 21st edition of the FIFA U20 World Cup, the biennial international men's youth football championship contested by the under-20 national teams of the member associations of FIFA, since its inception in 1977 as the FIFA World Youth Championship.

The tournament is hosted by South Korea between 20 May and 11 June 2017.



## AFC U-20 Futsal Championship Group D: Iran 10-0 Kyrgyz Republic

The Islamic Republic of Iran made it four wins out of four at the AFC U-20 Futsal Championship on Saturday, as a 10-0 win over Kyrgyz Republic saw them reinforce their position at the top of Group D.

Having already secured their ticket to the quarter-finals on Friday, Iran warmed up for their last eight meeting with Lebanon by going ahead within seven minutes at the Hua Mark Indoor Stadium thanks to Hamzeh Kadhoda's smart finish.

In what was proving to be a blistering first half

display by the Iranians, further goals from Mohammad Jamebalani, Hamid Ghahramani, captain Mahdi Karimi and Kadhoda again, saw head coach Ali Arani's side take a commanding 5-0 lead going into the break.

Iran would continue to dominate after the interval, with Hamdrez Karimi's brace as well as strikes from Mohammad Heidari, Omid Khani and Mohammad Taheri underlining the threat they will pose in the competition's knockout phase.

(Source: AFC)

## Iranian striker among best players of Dutch Football League



The Iranian striker of the Heerenveen Reza Ghoochannejhad has been named in team of the season 2016-2017 of the Dutch football league.

The Goal news website has named the Iranian international forward of the Dutch Heerenveen football club among the Eredivisie's best XI of 2016-17 in a Monday (May 15) report.

Ghoochannejhad, who is not used to missing scoring chances, scored 19 goals in 34 matches to help his side finish in ninth place at the end of the season.

Ghoochannejhad ranked third among Eredivisie's top scorers following Feyenoord's Danish striker

Nicolai Jorgensen (21 goals) and Vitesse's Ricky van Wolfswinkel (20 goals).

Heerenveen's forward played a total of 2,924 minutes for his team this season and registered three assists. Sixty percent of his shots have been on target, more than top scorer Jorgensen (54 percent) and Wolfswinkel (58 percent).

Praising his brilliant performance, the Goal report said scoring 19 goals for the Heerenveen team finishing right in the middle of the league is no easy achievement, but the Iran international has been deadly all season.

(Source: Goal)

## Hong Kong sweep Iran at Asian Women's U23 Volleyball Championship



Hong Kong capitalized Iran's errors to power past the rivals with a convincing straight-set 25-14, 25-22, 25-18 victory at their 5th-8th playoff match at the 2nd Asian Women's U23 Volleyball Championship at The Mall Nakhon Ratchasima's MCC Hall on Saturday.

Chim Wing Lam scored a match-high 17 points for Hong Kong consisting of 13 kills from 44 attempts, 2 blocks and 2 ace serves, while Koo Yung Yung added 9 points. Mona Ashofteh led Iran with only 9 points, all from her destructive spikes.

"I think my team played a stable performance today. Iran are very strong team with tall players. They made many

unforced errors, so we took advantage of their mistakes to win this match. Today we also served and counter-attacked pretty well," said Hong Kong's head coach Cheung King Fai.

"Tomorrow (Sunday), we will play either Kazakhstan or Malaysia. We played Kazakhstan before, but in that match our performance was not good. Hopefully we can match them if we have to take on the Kazakhs again. For Malaysia, they are a good team with tall and good attackers. I think both teams are not easy to play, so we have to try our best. Hopefully, the fifth position can be within our reach," he added.

(Source: asianvolleyball)

## Arsenal shareholder willing to make £2bn offer to take full control

ALISHER USMANOV is prepared to make an increased offer of up to £2BILLION to take controlling interest of Arsenal, according to reports in Russia.

The Uzbek billionaire has already made a £1bn offer to American majority shareholder Stan Kroenke.

Usmanov – who is worth an eye-watering £11.2bn from mining and investments – currently owns a 30 per cent stake in the club.

Kroenke is not interested in the offer at that price.

A source told the Financial Times: "Two weeks ago, I thought something could realistically happen. Now I am not so sure."

But according to Bloomberg, Usmanov is willing to make an increased bid.

Usmanov is reported to value Arsenal at £1.6bn and knew his bid would be rejected by Kroenke.

The 63-year-old oligarch, is hoping to gain support of Arsenal fans, who have been furious with the way 'Silent Stan' has run the club since taking over in 2011.

Fans have held numerous protests against the billionaire – and the increasing cost of ticket prices, lack of major signings and failure to compete for a Premier League title.

Usmanov is also a strong supporter of under-fire Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger.



Last month he said: "I do not think that the coach alone is to be blamed for what is happening.

"Some continuity is needed. This includes the need to prepare a successor for Wenger, but in a very respectful way. I can suggest that Wenger himself can prepare a successor."

In a singing review of the Frenchman last year, he said: "We are all very high on Arsene. He's a great manager. He's been a wonderful influence on the club."

"I know a number of [sports team] owners who are very successful who say the same thing; the hardest thing to

do is be consistently competitive at the top of the league. Arsene has always done that and Arsenal has always been in that position. We have always been competitive."

Usmanov, who acquired his fortune in the metal industry, is believed to be concerned by a lack of investment in Arsenal.

The fifth-placed Gunners face missing out on Champions League football next term.

But Usmanov currently has no power to help salvage the club.

Last October he said: "I personally, unfortunately, am fully isolated from decision-making in the club.

"All the responsibility for the fate of the club rests with the main shareholder."

American businessman Kroenke, 69, who is worth £5.8bn, first bought a 9.9 per cent share in Arsenal in April 2007.

Throughout the years he has increased his stake and secured 67 per cent last May.

Usmanov – who owns the world's biggest yacht – also first bought shares in 2007 and increased his holding to 30 per cent last year.

The Sun have contacted Arsenal for comment and are waiting for a response.

(Source: Sun)

## IWBF supports FIBA's new rule on headgear

The International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) has expressed their support for the International Basketball Federation's (FIBA) recent ratification of a new rule that will allow players to wear headgear.

The new rule, which was passed at the FIBA Mid-Term Congress, comes as a result of the fact that traditional dress codes in some countries – which call for the head and/or entire body being covered – were incompatible with FIBA's previous headgear rule.

IWBF Secretary General, Maureen Orchard said: "We are extremely pleased that FIBA has made the decision to revise its previous rule over headgear. This decision will make the understanding and enforcement by our officials easier now because of the harmonisation between both sports.

"We also passed a similar regulation ahead of Rio 2016 to ensure Algeria women's wheelchair basketball team were able to play at the Paralympic Games."

Like IWBF, the new FIBA ruling has been developed in a way that minimises the risk of injuries as well as preserve consistency of the colour of the uniform.

(Source: Paralympic.org)



## Freestyle wrestler Nasiri snatches gold medal at Baku 2017

Iranian freestyle wrestler Meysam Nasiri claimed a gold medal in the Islamic Solidarity Games on Friday.

Nasiri defeated Azerbaijan's Magomed Muslimov 5-3 in the final match of the 65kg weight class.

"I dedicate the gold medal to my family, especially my fiancée. I won a tough match because Muslimov is a medal winner in Europe," Nasiri said.

The bronze medal jointly went to Ma'Bunde Cumba from Guinea Bissau and Kazakhstan's Ilyas Zhumay.

More than 3,000 athletes from 54 countries of the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation are competing in 21 sports at the Games.

The Baku 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games started May 8 and will last until May 22 in Azerbaijan's capital.

(Source: Tasnim)

## Table tennis player Noshad Alamyani captures gold

Noshad Alamyani defeated his brother Nima Alamyani, both from Iran, to win the gold medal in the table tennis of the Islamic Solidarity Games on Friday.

Nima lost to Noshad 3-4 (11-13, 11-7, 7-11, 11-8, 10-12, 16-14, 9-11).

Qatar's Ping defeated Turkey's Ahmet LI 4-1 (11-7, 11-6, 8-11, 11-2, 11-7) in 29 minutes for the bronze medal.

The Baku 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games started May 8 and will last until May 22 in Azerbaijan's capital.

(Source: Azer News)

## Iran's 4x100m disability relay team takes gold

Iran claimed a gold medal in the men's 4x100m disability relay (T11/T12/T13) of the Islamic Solidarity Games on Friday.

In the competition held at the Baku Olympic Stadium, Iran sprinted to gold in the men's 4x100m disability relay (T11/T12/T13) after Azerbaijan wrecked its chances with a botched handover.

The Iranian quartet of Arash Khosravi, Amir Khosravani, Vahid Alinajimi and Hossein Saeidi won in 45.24secs ahead of Turkey in the three-team final, while bronze was not awarded after the Azeris failed to finish.

(Source: Paralympic.ir)

## Djokovic eases into Rome semis after rain delay

World number two Novak Djokovic dealt with unfinished business by beating Argentina's Juan Martin del Potro 6-1 6-4 in a rain-delayed Italian Open quarter-final on Saturday.

The Serbian second seed will now play Austrian Dominic Thiem, who shocked seven times winner Rafa Nadal on Friday but has lost his previous four encounters with Djokovic, in the evening semi-final.

Germany's Alexander Zverev and American John Isner were playing for the other final place.

The match between Djokovic and Del Potro was halted on Friday with the score at 6-1 1-2, and the Serbian serving, as rain and lightning lashed Rome's Foro Italico.

Djokovic had wrapped up the first set in 44 minutes, after dropping serve in the opening game but then winning the next six.

He needed only one of two match points to finish off Del Potro in just over an hour and a half and reach his eighth Italian Open semi-final.

(Source: Reuters)



# Nine Iranian companies offer productions at Cannes Film Market

**A R T TEHRAN** — Nine film companies from Iran are taking part in the Cannes Film Market – Marché du Film, which is running from May 17 to 26, film expert Amir Esfandiari said.

The companies include Filmiran, Eli Image, Aria Sanat Takhayyol, Persian Film Distribution, Farabi Cinema Foundation and Avini Institute, Esfandiari, who is currently in Cannes, told the Persian service of ISNA on Friday.

“The Iranian companies are currently busy negotiating with foreign companies over distribution their films,” he said.

Esfandiari, who is the Farabi Cinema Foundation International Department Director, added that Farabi will screen a number of its eight new productions at the market.

The films include “Appendix” (Hossein Namazi), “Lina” (Ramin Rasuli), “Sara and Ayda” (Maziar Miri) and “Leaf of Life” (Ebrahim Mokhtari).

“Five more Iranian films are also offered at the Cannes Film Market by the France-based company Dreamlabs,” he remarked.

The films include “Subdued” directed by Hamid Nematollah, “Israfil” by Ida Panahandeh, “Searing Summer” by Ebrahim Irajzad, “Sunset Truck” by Abolfazl Saffari and “Panah” by Ahmad Bahrami.

Esfandiari also said that (film producer) Ali Moallem, who was a



permanent visitor of Cannes, has really been missed.

Moallem, the founder of the Hafez Awards, Iran’s first and only private awards in film industry, died of a heart attack in March.

“We are planning to hold a ceremony in his honor at Iran’s pavilion in Cannes,” he noted.

‘Abbas Kiarostami’s new experimental work ‘24 Frames’ will have a special screening in the 70th

Anniversary Events of the Cannes Film Festival, and his son Ahmad is also expected to attend the program,” Esfandiari concluded.

Kiarostami completed “24 Frames” months before his death in July 2016.

## Huge mural depicting Shahnameh story adorns Tehran Ferdowsi Square

**CULTURE TEHRAN** — A huge miniature painting featuring the First Battle of Rustam and Afrasiyab, a story from Ferdowsi’s epic masterpiece Shahnameh, was unveiled in Tehran’s Ferdowsi Square last week.

The 700-square meter mural has been painted by veteran artist Abbas Barzegar-Ganji on the wall of a nine-story building located to the northwest of the square, Tehran Municipality’s Beautification Organization has announced in a press release.

Verses of the Shahnameh recounting part of the story have also been inscribed on the top and bottom of the mural, which was unveiled on National Ferdowsi Day last Monday.

Ganji called the artwork a special painting and said, “I believe this is a unique painting and mostly attracts the tourists visiting the city.”

He also said that the mural seems impressive for people and added,



“First Battle of Rustam and Afrasiyab” by Abbas Barzegar-Ganji in Tehran

“This shows that Ferdowsi and the Shahnameh enjoy a high respect among the Iranian people.”

## Wife of Soundgarden’s Cornell calls suicide ‘inexplicable’

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — The wife of Soundgarden frontman Chris Cornell said on Friday that she did not believe the singer meant to kill himself, suggesting anxiety drugs he was taking might have played a role in his death.

Cornell, 52, was found dead in the bathroom of his Detroit hotel on Wednesday night after the grunge band had played a concert in the city. The Wayne County Medical Examiner initially ruled the cause of death to be suicide by hanging.

“What happened is inexplicable, and I am hopeful that further medical reports will provide additional details,” Vicki Cornell said in a statement. “I know that he loved our children, and he would not hurt them by intentionally taking his own life.”

Cornell said the singer, a recovering addict, was taking the prescription drug Ativan, which treats anxiety and insomnia. One of the listed side effects is that it may increase depression and cause impaired judgment.

Kirk Pasich, a lawyer for the family, said they were disturbed at the inference that Cornell “knowingly and intentionally took his life” before the results of toxicology tests were known.

“The family believes that if Chris took his life, he did not know what he was doing, and that drugs or other substances may have affected his actions,” Pasich said.

Ativan maker Pfizer Inc said it does not sell branded or generic versions of the drug in the United States, where Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc now has the product rights.



Musician Chris Cornell of the band Soundgarden arrives on the red carpet for the film “Machine Gun Preacher” during the 36th Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) September 11, 2011. (Reuters/Mark Blinch)

Valeant did not immediately return calls for comment on Friday, and it was not clear whether Cornell was taking a branded or generic version of Ativan.

Cornell had spoken openly of his drug and alcohol addiction in the past, as well as periods of depression and agoraphobia.

Vicky Cornell said she had asked security to check on her husband on Wednesday night when she spoke to him before and after the Soundgarden show.

“I noticed he was slurring his words; he was different...” she said. “He told me he may have taken an extra Ativan or two.”

Cornell’s death, in the midst of a U.S. tour, was met with an outpouring of grief.

Soundgarden was one of the leading bands in the grunge music movement in the 1980s and ‘90s, releasing albums such as “Badmotorfinger” and the Grammy-winning “Superunknown,” which brought the group mainstream success.

## Iranian ensemble Bamdad to perform at two intl. festivals



**A R T TEHRAN** — Bamdad,

an ensemble from the Iranian city of Mashhad, is scheduled to give performances at music festivals in Germany and Estonia.

The band led by daf player Salar Mortazavi will first perform a repertoire of Iranian folk and traditional music at the Harmonie Festival, which will be held in Limburg, Germany from May 25 to 28.

In addition, the Iranian band Hamgam and German-Iranian ensemble Sama will perform traditional Persian music at the festival.

Bamdad will then to give a concert on June 2 at the Festival Orient, which will be

held in Tallinn, Estonia.

Bamdad also features Amir Goharian on tar, Babak Shayeque on santur, Reza Shariati and Ali Zafari on kamancheh and Nafiseh Tabatabai on ney.

“Performing at the festivals is really amazing for us,” Mortazavi told the Persian service of ISNA on Saturday.

“But it will never be as good as it would be when we are allowed to perform in our homeland,” he added.

Since Mashhad is home to the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS), certain groups have prevented musicians from performing solo or in groups in the city over the past few years.

## Netflix big-beast thriller “Okja” impresses at Cannes after boos

**CANNES, FRANCE (Reuters)** — A technical glitch on Friday halted the screening of Netflix’s first movie to compete at the Cannes Film Festival, but “Okja”, starring Tilda Swinton and Jake Gyllenhaal, which opened to boos, ended to hearty applause.

One of the most keenly anticipated films of the festival, because of its stellar cast and director as well as the video streaming company’s decision to give it only a limited theatrical release, opened to a packed press screening.

As the Netflix logo hit the screen, sections of the crowd booed, and the opening scene was difficult to hear due to heckling and slow handclapping - apparently due to the film being projected in the wrong aspect ratio.

The projection was stopped, the screen adjusted and the movie then restarted, with the Netflix logo again being booed, but the rest of the film watched in respectful silence.

“This incident was entirely the responsibility of the Festival’s technical service, which offers its apologies to the director, his teams, the producers and the audience at the showing,” the festival said in a statement.

Directed by Korean Bong Joon-ho, known for “Snowpiercer” and “The Host”, “Okja” is the story of a little girl’s relationship to an intelligent giant pig-like animal which has, unknown to her, been bred by a U.S. biotech company to produce cheap meat.

The animal is saved, but also used, by activists from the Animal Liberation Front (ALF).

With elements of “King Kong”, British magazine Sight and Sound said the “snazzy science fiction succeeds as both a



70th Cannes Film Festival - Photocall for the film ‘Okja’ in competition - Cannes, France. 19/05/2017. Director Bong Joon-ho and cast member, Seo-Hyeon Ahn and Hee-Bong Byun pose. (Reuters/Stephane Mahe)

critique of the modern meat industry and a bittersweet tale of the bond between a girl and a mighty beast.”

Gyllenhaal made light of speculation the screening glitch had been sabotage, possibly by Netflix’s opponents in the French movie industry angry at its refusal to release the film in theaters, saying: “It was the ALF I guess.”

French rules mean that movies cannot be streamed online until three years after their theatrical release, and Netflix has ruled out any such release in France - creating a controversy that has been hard to avoid at the festival.

Pedro Almodovar, the head of the jury that will award this year’s big prize, said he did not think a film not shown on the big screen should get the Palme d’Or.

Swinton, a co-producer on “Okja” who has served on the Cannes jury twice, said thousands of “the most beautiful and esoteric films” are screened at Cannes but never get seen in cinemas, and defended the U.S. company for giving the director free-rein on such a big budget film.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF



### “Love of Swann” published in Persian

**CULTURE TEHRAN** — French comic artist Stephane Heuet’s graphic novel “Love of Swann” has recently been published in Persian by Chatrang Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Kamran Baradaran and Payam Mirzai, the book is a graphic adaptation of French novelist Marcel Proust’s most prominent work “In Search of Lost Time”.

“In Search of Lost Time” follows the narrator’s recollections of childhood and experiences into adulthood from the late 19th century to early 20th century in aristocratic France.



### Pop star Mohsen Yeganeh to perform in London

**A R T TEHRAN** — Iranian pop star Mohsen Yeganeh will give a concert at the Barbican Center in London on May 27.

Yeganeh is scheduled to play a repertoire of his newest and memorable hits at the performance.

## Six siblings designated heirs to musician Prince’s estate

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — A Minnesota judge has ruled that six siblings of pop music superstar Prince are the heirs to his vast estate, more than a year after his death from an accidental drug overdose, according to court documents released on Friday.

Prince’s sister, Tyka Nelson, and his half siblings, Omarr Baker, Alfred Jackson, Sharon Nelson, Norrine Nelson and John Nelson, were designated as the musician’s heirs by Carver County District Judge Kevin Eide.

Prince died at age 57 of an accidental, self-administered overdose of the powerful painkiller fentanyl in April 2016 at his Paisley Park Studios compound in the Minneapolis suburb of Chanhassen.

The creator of hits such as “Purple Rain” and “When Doves Cry”, Prince did not leave behind a will, sparking a protracted legal battle over his estate, with dozens of people filing claims of heirship.

The exact value of Prince’s estate is unclear but believed to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. He left behind some \$25 million in properties alone, according to an inventory compiled after his death by an asset management company.

Prince’s assets will not be distributed to his heirs without a formal court order. If an appellate court rules that rejected claimants could have a claim, Eide said he would consider them, court documents said.

Last month, a U.S. judge blocked a planned release of new Prince music. The six-song EP “Deliverance” had been scheduled to be released on the first anniversary of Prince’s death.

It would have marked the first in a series of planned posthumous releases of material by Prince from the huge vault of discarded or unfinished material he reportedly left behind.

Paisley Park now operates as a museum, with displays of Prince’s flamboyant concert wardrobe as well as his instruments and motorcycle collection.

## Hollywood’s big summer movies were all filmed elsewhere

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — This summer’s biggest-budget films have everything moviegoers have come to expect from Hollywood blockbusters: superheroes, pirates, space aliens. But in the truest sense of the term, none of them is a Hollywood movie.

Despite a major effort by Los Angeles over the last two years to lure film production back to where it started, producers continue to make big-budget movies elsewhere, saying they get better tax breaks and subsidies outside of Hollywood.

As a result, the summer’s movies come from all over the globe. Warner Bros. filmed “Wonder Woman” and “King Arthur” in Britain, where the Time Warner Inc studio owns a large production space. Twenty-First Century Fox Inc’s movie studio chose Australia for “Alien: Covenant.” Walt Disney Co’s Marvel Studios rolled its cameras in Georgia for “Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2,” one of six superhero movies it has filmed near Atlanta.

“The support we get in Georgia is tremendous,” Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige said in an interview. “We’re certainly doing many of our biggest films there well through this year and into next year.”