

TEHRAN TIMES

Iran invites all
factions in Iraq to
settle differences
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12 Pages | Price 10,000 Rials | 37th year | No.12543 | Tuesday | MAY 3, 2016 | Ordibehesht 14, 1395 | Rajab 25, 1437

Iranian women do not give up easily: Tech girl Roxanne Varza

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Naghmeh Mizanian

Iranian women don't give up easily and this is something that has impressed me very much, said Roxanne Varza, the 31-year-old girl who was placed by Business Insider at 6th place among the top 30 women under 30 in tech in 2013.

Varza, born to an Iranian family in the U.S., is trilingual and holds degrees from UCLA, Sciences Po Paris and the London School of Economics. She is also an epilepsy advocate.

Varza is the co-organizer of the Failcon Paris conference. More recently, she co-founded Tech.eu, a European tech media.

Prior to TechCrunch, Varza worked for the French government's foreign direct investment agency helping fast-growing startups develop their activities in France. Roxanne has spoken, moderated, mentored and judged numerous startup events and programs throughout Europe and also helps European startups with content and communications.

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Leader says Persian Gulf is the 'home' of Iranians

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Leader of the Islamic Revolution said on Monday that a scheme is being looked into by the U.S. Congress to target Iranian Navy's drills

in the Persian Gulf, noting the Persian Gulf is the 'home' of the Iranian nation. "The Persian Gulf is the home and place of the Iranian people and the Persian Gulf's coasts and a large part of the coasts

of the Oman Sea belong to this mighty nation," Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei told thousands of teachers on the occasion of national Teacher Day. "Therefore, we have to be present in the region,

conduct drills and show power and it is the Americans who should reason why they have come from the farthest corner of the world and conduct drills," Ayatollah Khamenei remarked. →2



S. Korea to invest \$25b in Iran Tehran, Seoul set to hike trade to \$18 billion

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Oman Air to fly to Mashhad in Iran soon

Oman Air will be flying to Mashhad in Iran soon, the airline tweeted in its official twitter handle.

"Oman Air will be adding another destination in Iran, happy to be flying to Mashhad soon," the airline's tweet read.

Recently, Oman Air had added a second daily flight to Tehran.

Iran is making a fresh pitch for tourists, with the recent lifting of economic sanctions providing an opportunity to cash in. In January this year, Abdolhossein Khedri, chairman of Khedri Jahan Darya Company, said that an Islamic tourist cruise connecting Iran, Muscat, Salalah and Mumbai is initiative is being studied with the support of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization.

(Source: Times of Oman)

"Defending Palestine symbolizes a defense of Islam"

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution said on Sunday that defending the Palestinian cause in the face of the Zionist regime of Israel symbolizes a defense of Islam.

"Since from the very beginning, the Islamic Republic of Iran considered supporting Palestine as a duty, it will continue to fulfill its obligation in the future as well," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a meeting with Ramadan Abdullah, chief of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement. →9

Iran's nuclear chief visits Prague to talk business

The sanctions lifted, the head of Iran's nuclear program is coming to talk business with Czech leaders.

The Czech Foreign Ministry says Monday the two-day visit of Iran's vice president and nuclear chief, Ali Akbar Salehi, will focus on developing a bilateral nuclear cooperation. The Czechs say that would contribute to a better international control of Iran's nuclear program.

Iran is seeking help from European nations to better its civilian program.



Last year's landmark nuclear deal between Iran and world powers lifted painful international sanctions in exchange for Iran curbing its nuclear activities. Iran has denied ever seeking atomic weapons, insisting its nuclear program is for purely civilian purposes.

In Prague, Salehi is meeting the prime minister, foreign minister, industry and trade minister and the head of the nuclear watchdog.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Rouhani: Iran against development of nuclear arms on Korean peninsula

POLITICAL TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that Iran is against the production and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the world especially on the Korean peninsula and the Middle East.

"Our will is a world without mass destruction and nuclear weapons especially in the Middle East and on the Korean Peninsula," he said during a press conference with South Korean President Park Geun-hye in Tehran.

Rouhani also attached great significance to relations between

Iran and South Korea which he described as two important countries in West and East Asia.

He also said the important agreements that were signed between Iran and South Korea will turn Tehran-Seoul economic relations into "strategic" ones.

The South Korean corporations

will invest in Iran and advanced technologies will be transferred to Iran, Rouhani added.

On Monday, Iran and South Korea signed 19 agreements and pledged to increase the value of their trade and economic ties to 18 billion dollars in short term and to 30 billion dollars in mid-term.

Tehran to host meeting on 3 German-language authors

CULTURE TEHRAN — Works by three German-language writers will be reviewed during a meeting, which will be held at the Mahmud Afshar Foundation in Tehran on Wednesday.

Authors Anna Baar from Austria, Ulla Lenze from Germany and Peter Stamm from Switzerland are also scheduled to deliver speeches about contemporary German literature at the meeting entitled "The Night of German-Language Authors".

The event has been organized by the



This combination photo shows authors Anna Baar (R), Peter Stamm (C), and Ulla Lenze.

Persian literary monthly Bokhara in collaboration with the Austrian Cultural Forum and the embassies of Germany and Switzerland.

The authors also plan to deliver lectures at Tehran's Book City Institute this afternoon during a session entitled "Three Lands, One Language".

In addition, Stamm is scheduled to meet with Iranian readers of his works on Thursday at Ofoq Publications, the Persian publisher of his books in Tehran.

Velayati: Iran has always had positive view toward France

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior foreign policy adviser to the Supreme Leader, said on Monday that Iran's policy is expanding relations with other countries including France.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always had a positive view toward France and I hope that serious and practical steps would be taken in expanding ties," he said during a meeting with a French delegation in Tehran.

Velayati also said Tehran attaches great importance to fulfillment of commitments under

the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and urged France to play an "effective" role in this respect.

A member of the French delegation expressed hope that relations between the two countries would be expanded given implementation of the JCPOA.

Iran and the 5+1 group - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany - finalized the text of the JCPOA in Vienna in July 2015 and the deal went into effect in January 2016.

PERSPECTIVE

By M.A. Saki
Deputy chief editor

The Republic of Korea: A strong-willed country ruled by Iron lady

Park Geun-hye, president of the Republic of South Korea, made a historic visit to Iran on May 1-3. It was the first visit by a Korean leader to Iran since the two countries established diplomatic ties in 1962.

The Republic of Korea, commonly called South Korea, has emerged from a third world country to a developed and industrialized country in just a few decades.

This is worth noting that this country emerged from the ashes of the 1950-53 Korea war.

The pace of development in Korea has been like a miracle. A small country with just about 40 million people is now the fourth largest economy in Asia, coming after China, Japan, and India.

Politically and economically, the Republic of Korea can be called the West Germany of Asia as the Korean peninsula is still divided into South and North Korea.

Now this country can be an example for Iran and many other countries. This rapid growth could not have been achieved without proper planning, competitive economy, economic transparency, and hardworking, though still some Koreans think it is necessary to take more steps to build a more prosperous economy.

In international business, the Republic of Korea has also been taking giant steps. Since the July 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and great powers, some countries in the West are still slow to seize the opportunity for investment in Iran, thinking they may fall foul to hardliners in the United States. However, President Park, whose country is a strategic ally of Washington, has visited Iran with the biggest business delegation - including representatives from internationally famous companies such as Hyundai, Samsung, LG - signing contracts worth billions of dollars. →9

TEHRAN TIMES
Iran's Leading International Daily

Tehran Times publishes

A special issue on Twenty-first International Exhibition of Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical

Publishing date: 7 May 2016

Distribution at the exhibition venue and across the country

The best place to Introduce the capacities, products and potentials of oil, gas, refining and petrochemical Industry

Publishing Organizer: 43051450-43051405

Leader says Persian Gulf is the 'home' of Iranians

TEHRAN — A senior Iranian official, in an open letter to Saudi King Salman, has asked him to stop accusing Iran of running terrorist schemes in neighboring countries.

"Mr. King Salman, please read once the Quran which you publish in millions of copies," Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Expediency Council, wrote on Instagram on Sunday.

"Once you do... you'll realize that you are naming support for the oppressed as 'interference' while entitling yourself to defending the oppressor," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said stability and the increasingly powerful Islamic Republic are indicative of the enemies' implosion, noting, "The Quran has taught us to prepare ourselves in a manner that the enemy constantly has fear."

'Teachers' responsibility is to raise a generation with independent identity'

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader offered gratitude to teachers, highlighting that the main responsibility of teachers and the education system is "to educate a future generation with independent, honorable, and religious identity with exemplary traits and revolutionary."

Explaining his main theme, the Leader said, "The main topic is how to train the next generation" as "in raising the next generation we are not competing in a vacuum, but we are facing a rival called international hegemony."

Referring to the link between education and the international hegemony, the Leader noted, "Some may wonder if there is any relationship between education and the international hegemony, while this is a reality that the international hegemony has plots for the young generation of nations particularly the Iranian nation."



S. Korea to invest \$25b in Iran

Iran, S. Korea sign 19 cooperation documents in energy, tourism, and transport

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran and South Korea signed 19 cooperation documents here on Monday, pledging to increase their annual trade by three times the current volume of around \$6 billion to \$18 billion.

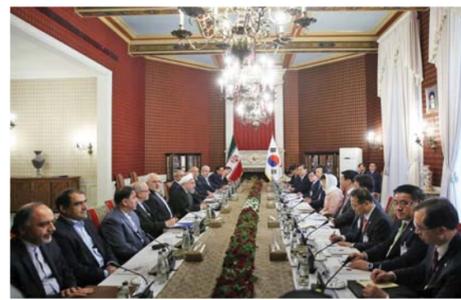
"We spoke about tourism, direct flights between Seoul and Tehran, and Korean investment in Iranian tourism infrastructure, including building hotels," President Hassan Rouhani said in a joint press conference with his South Korean counterpart Park Geun-Hye.

"We should increase bilateral trade, which has dropped in recent years, to \$18 billion in the first phase, and then to \$30 billion in the mid-term," Rouhani added, according to the president.

Iran and South Korea have the potential to expand relations in ICT, nanotechnology, environment protection, industry, and agriculture, he explained.

The Korean president, for her part, said, "We will expand relations in energy projects and infrastructure, as well as in oil, gas, car, health, and high-tech industries."

"Toward supporting relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, South Korea will provide \$25 billion in finance for infrastructure projects in Iran. This is the largest financial package South Korea has ever presented to another country," Park highlighted.



The new round of cooperation between Iran and South Korea has ever presented to another country," Park highlighted.

The new round of cooperation between Iran and South Korea has ever presented to another country," Park highlighted.

"This is the largest financial package South Korea has ever presented to another country," Park says.

South Korea will be within the framework of investment, research and development, and joint venture, she stressed.

Park added that the Tehran-Seoul direct flight will be launched soon to facilitate trade between the two countries.

Official data show the Iran-South Korea trade value stood at \$6 billion at the end of 2015, two times lower than the turnover in 2011, as a result of Western-led sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program.

Last year, South Korea imported \$2.2 billion worth of crude oil from Iran, down 51 percent from the previous year and far lower than \$9.36 billion in 2011, according to Korea Times.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh has said Tehran hopes this month to increase its oil exports to Seoul to 400,000 barrels per day from a current 100,000 bpd.

Park is the first South Korean president visiting Iran since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1962. She is accompanied by several ministers and a 230-strong business delegation.

Zarif says Iran ready to consult with France on regional issues

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran is ready to consult with France about various foreign policy issues, especially those related to regional crises, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday as he received a copy of credentials of François Senemaud, the new French ambassador to Tehran.

Zarif also expressed hope that Iran-France agreements would be fully implemented.

The foreign minister was referring to the agreements that were signed during President Hassan Rouhani's trip to Paris in January.



The visit took place after conclusion of President Hassan Rouhani's trip to Paris in January.

a nuclear deal between Iran and the 5+1 group (the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany) in July 2015. The agreement went into effect in January.

For his part, Senemaud expressed satisfaction over implementation of the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and said that France is determined to fulfill its commitments.

He also noted the relations between the two countries should be expanded,

expressing hope that banking transactions between the two countries would be facilitated within the framework of the JCPOA and international norms by expanding economic relations.

The new envoy also highlighted the importance of consultations between Iran and France on regional issues.

On Monday, Zarif also received credentials of Octaviano Alimudin, the new Indonesian ambassador to Tehran, and also new ambassador of Iceland Hermann Orn Ingolfsson.

Iran invites all factions in Iraq to settle differences

By Marjan Golpira

Iran encourages all political factions in Iraq to set aside different views and get engaged in dialogue in order to reach a political understanding.

Making the remark in his weekly press conference, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari said efforts should be made on "fighting corruption and terrorism" in Iraq.

Iraq has been the scene of political turmoil in the past weeks over Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's efforts to form a new cabinet.

On April 26, the parliament finally endorsed six new ministers proposed by Abadi despite attempts to block the chamber meeting by about 100 deputies who are reportedly close to former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and opposed to Abadi and Parliament Speaker Salim al-Jabouri.

In recent days, protesters stormed the parliament building in Baghdad's Green Zone, demanding that lawmakers approve the proposed technocrat government.

The protesters also called for the resignation of Iraqi president, prime minister and parliament speaker.

'S. Arabia will be to blame if Iranians don't get visa for hajj'

On issuing visa to Iranian pilgrims to visit Saudi Arabia for hajj ritual this year, Jaber Ansari said if Iranian pilgrims don't receive visas for hajj this year, Saudi Arabia will be the one to blame.

The spokesman added dialogues between Iran and Saudi Arabia have already begun in this regard.

Although the Saudi government has claimed that decision made on the future of visa issuance for Iranian pilgrims is not politically oriented, the evidence suggests otherwise, the Iranian official noted.

There is a big gap between what Saudi Arabia says and what it does, he said. "What the Saudi government is doing only intensifies the regional crises."

'Reestablishing Iran-Canada political ties time-consuming'

Elsewhere Jaber Ansari said resuming diplomatic ties between Iran and Canada will take time; although the two states have already had their first meeting in New York.

Blaming Canada for cutting ties with Iran a few years back, the official said after the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the new Canadian government expressed interest in reestablishing political ties with Iran.

And since the new government in North America has changed political tact towards Iran, "Iran replied positively," he remarked.

'Iran welcomes reopening of Irish embassy'

On whether Ireland is going to reopen embassy in Tehran, the official said Ireland closed down its embassy in Tehran back in 2011 due to financial difficulties.

At this stage, the official said, "We too have also heard the news through media outlets but have yet to receive an official request from the Irish government. "Iran welcomes reestablishment of Irish embassy in Tehran, should the Irish government decide to do so."

The official also said Iran and Turkey as two neighbors have long history of relationship and regardless of holding different views on some issues, the two sides try to resolve the regional crises.

"We hope that the mutual understanding between the leaders of the two countries will pave the way for resolving issues."

'Tehran will do its best to resolve problems of Iranian refugees'

Jaber Ansari said that the Iranian Foreign Ministry has held talks at consular level with each country involved with the Iranian refugees, promising that Iran will do its utmost to resolve the problem.

He expressed regret that some countries have left a very negative image of refugees on their citizens, leading them to mistreat refugees.

He then called the recent bitter incidents of Iranian refugees in some countries "painful" and hoped that Iranian citizens get to live a better life in their own homeland.

On April 29, a young Iranian asylum seeker set fire to himself to protest Australia's policies toward people who try to reach its shores by sea. He died from his injuries on Friday.

Majlis draws roadmap to empower Intelligence Ministry

The ratification obliges ministry to battle corruption, bioterrorism, extremism and sectarian challenges

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Under a new ratified bill at the Majlis, Iranian Ministry of Intelligence has to jack up intelligence measures to set the scene for implementing development schemes in the country.

The ratification followed as Majlis held an open session on Monday to study some articles of the sixth five-year development plan, according to Fars.

The bill stipulates the following:

1. Upgrading intelligence, operational, scientific, technical, and protective capacities qualitatively and quantitatively to boost sustainable security and promote superiority and capability in intelligence combats

2. Preventing and battling corruption, disturbance, bioterrorism, extremism and sectarian challenges, and

any sort of threat to Iran's national security as well as its interests at regional and international scales

3. Promoting capabilities, infrastructure, and mechanisms to increase citizens' cooperation and role in intelligence activities with the aim of strengthening the country's sustainable security

4. Fostering cooperation with and giving intelligence-security services to the country's organizations and institutes through: a) upgrading and managing the country's intelligence pool, b) continuous upgrading, coordinating, and implementing of schemes depicted to secure valuable assets of the country, and c) holding regular sessions by the Commission for Biosecurity (bioterrorism) attended by other organizations and institutes.



Read Quran once, Rezaei tells King Salman

TEHRAN — A senior Iranian official, in an open letter to Saudi King Salman, has asked him to stop accusing Iran of running terrorist schemes in neighboring countries.

"Mr. King Salman, please read once the Quran which you publish in millions of copies," Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Expediency Council, wrote on Instagram on Sunday.

"Once you do... you'll realize that you are naming support for the oppressed as 'interference' while entitling yourself to defending the oppressor," he added.



'Advisory missions aimed at keeping terrorists away from Iran'

TEHRAN — The former IRGC chief said on Monday that Iran dispatches advisory forces to Syria and Iraq in order to keep terrorists away from its own borders.

Rahim Safavi, now a senior military advisor to the Supreme Leader, said the five-year Syrian conflict is a proxy war staged by the U.S., UK, and Zionists in the pursuit of the new Middle East, the YJC reported.



'Larjani is final principlist choice for speakership'

TEHRAN — A principlist MP has said Ali Larjani is the ultimate choice of principlists to run for the position of speaker in the next Majlis.

"We principlists for sure endorse Mr. Larjani and have no other representative," Hamidreza Fuladgar told Khabaronline on Monday.

He went on to say that even some members of the more reform-minded List of Hope will vote for Larjani.



Iran denies Youm7 accusations

TEHRAN — Iran has strongly denied accusations made by the Egyptian daily Youm7 that Iran is running schemes against regional countries.

In a press release published on Monday, the Iranian interest section in Cairo said the accusations are baseless, stressing Iran approaches neighbors for better relations and mutual respect.

The daily in recent days published two reports in which it accused Iran of trying to set discord among Arab countries.



Majlis grants citizenship to families of foreign nationals killed for Iran

TEHRAN — The Majlis on Monday passed a bill that grants citizenship to the families of non-Iranians killed while on military mission for the Islamic Republic.

The law says citizenship is given to the families of non-Iranians killed in the Iran-Iraq war or later, while sent on mission by authorized bodies, ICANA reported.



First VP felicitates appointment of new Ukrainian premier

TEHRAN — First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri sent a congratulatory message on Monday to Ukraine's Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman on his appointment to the post, ILNA reported.

Jahangiri wished for the new Ukrainian PM success in implementing economic and social plans, and also hoped to witness further expansion of relations and cooperation between the two countries.



Al-Sadr not set to visit Iran

TEHRAN — Iran on Monday ruled out media speculation that Iraqi political leader Moqtada al-Sadr will visit Iran.

"He neither plans to visit Iran nor has paid a visit to Iran," an unnamed informed government source told IRNA.

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'Regime of calm' extended around Damascus: Syrian army

Kerry reaches out to Russian counterpart for Syria settlement

By staff & agencies

The Syrian army says a "regime of calm" around the capital, Damascus, has been extended for another 48 hours.

The Syrian military made the announcement in a statement quoted by state television on Monday. It made no mention of a 72-hour lull in fighting in the north of coastal Latakia Province.

On Sunday, the Syrian Armed Forces Command said in a statement it had extended a 24-hour lull in fighting in the capital which had been announced on Friday. The regime of silence affected the capital and the Eastern Ghouta region on its outskirts.

■ 'Regime of calm' in Aleppo

Meanwhile, head of the Russian Center for reconciliation of the opposing sides in Syria, Lt. Gen. Sergei Kuralenko said on Monday that talks were underway on declaring a "regime of calm" in Syria's Aleppo Province.

"Negotiations on introducing a 'regime of calm' in Aleppo Province continue," he said, as quoted by Russia's Interfax.

Syria's offensive in Aleppo is based on a United Nations Security Council resolution which accepts Syria's right to fighting terrorists.

Syria's official SANA news agency said on Saturday that at least 25 people were killed in militant rocket attacks on the two residential neighborhoods of Neel and Hamadaniyeh.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists and al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) are excluded from a "cessation of the hostilities" agreement reached in late February as an attempt for facilitating the peace talks.

The truce, which is sponsored by the United States and Russia, is still officially in place in many parts of Syria despite surging violence in Aleppo, which has been a flashpoint over the past weeks.

■ ISIL kills four youths over 'spying for U.S.-led coalition'

Elsewhere, ISIL has beheaded four youths in its stronghold of Raqqa in Syria, with the London-based monitor saying the number of executions by the terrorists in the past two years has exceeded 4,000.



The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Sunday the ISIL terrorist group beheaded the four youths for "photographing sites and handing information to the crusader coalition."

Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently (RBSS), a group of citizen journalists who documents abuses in the ISIL stronghold, confirmed the news.

The ISIL terrorist group has executed 4,144 people, most of them civilians, since it proclaimed a so-called "caliphate" in territories under its control in June 2014, the observatory said.

The report said the Syrian army and pro-government forces, ISIL's own members, Kurdish fighters as well as rival Takfiri militants from groups such as al-Nusra Front were among those executed during the period.

The observatory listed regular beheadings, shootings, stoning, throwing people off buildings and setting them on fire as among the killing methods used by ISIL.

The terrorist group often kills people over a series of charges including espionage, alleged cooperation with enemies, apostasy as well as attempts to defect the group and military "cowardice."

The report said 80 people were beheaded and shot dead in ISIL-held areas in the Syrian provinces of Dayr al-Zawr, Raqqa, Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hasakah in the month to March 29 this year.

Harry Sarfo, a German-born former

ISIL member, recounted atrocities committed by the terrorist group, saying he had witnessed stonings, beheadings, shootings, hands chopped off and many other things.

The man reportedly became disillusioned with Daesh over the scale of its brutality and fled the terrorist group three months after joining it in April 2015.

Sarfo, who grew up in Britain, is currently jailed in Germany over terror offences.

Sarfo said: "ISIL is not just un-Islamic; it is inhuman. A blood-related brother killed his own brother on suspicion of being a spy. They gave him the order to kill him. It is friends killing friends."

■ Kerry reaches out to Russian counterpart for Syria settlement

The development follows as UN Secretary of State John Kerry has once again appealed to his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov, for help to salvage the ceasefire in Syria amid fierce fighting in the city of Aleppo.

Speaking at the start of a meeting with Jordan's Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh in Geneva on Sunday, Kerry expressed hope that, with Moscow's assistance, the U.S.-Russia mediated "cessation of hostilities" which began on February 27 holds.

"These are critical hours. We look for Russia's cooperation. We obviously look for the regime to listen to Russia and to respond to the international communities' powerful statement to the UN Security Council," Kerry said.

The truce deal on Syria, which was reached during the UN-supported peace talks, excluded groups like ISIL and the al-Nusra Front that were officially blacklisted by UN Security Council as terrorists, while allowing humanitarian access to the war-torn parts of the country.

Kerry argued that "the UN Security Council Resolution calls for a full country, countrywide, cessation and also for all of the country to be accessible to humanitarian assistance. Obviously that hasn't happened and isn't happening."

U.S. officials said Kerry spoke with Lavrov at length on Friday and had been hoping to discuss the issue with him in person. However, Kerry's efforts to facilitate the desired U.S. outcome were complicated as Lavrov was not expected to join him in Geneva.

In Geneva, Kerry met with Judeh and was slated to meet UN envoy Staffan de Mistura and young Foreign Minister of the House of Saud regime, Adel al-Jubeir on Monday before returning to Washington.

Syria's so-called High Negotiations Committee, a major Saudi-backed opposition group which has militants on the ground in the conflict-ridden country, has warned that if Damascus does not stop fighting in Aleppo, the UN-led peace initiative would totally collapse.

However, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said on Saturday that Moscow will not seek a halt to Syrian airstrikes on Aleppo's militant-held areas.

Since March 2011, the United States and its regional allies, in particular the House of Saud regime, Qatar and Turkey, have been conducting a proxy war against Syria.

According to a February report by the Syrian Center for Policy Research, the conflict has claimed the lives of over 470,000 people, injured 1.9 million others, and displaced nearly half of the pre-war population of about 23 million within or beyond Syria's borders.

The Syrian Army, backed by Russian military forces who launched an anti-terror campaign last September upon a request from Damascus, have been dealing deadly blows to terrorists hiding in Aleppo.

Three blasts kill 14 in, around Baghdad

Iraqi protesters temporarily end demo, leave Green Zone

At least 14 people, including several Shia pilgrims, have been killed and dozens more injured in three bomb explosions in and around the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, security and medical sources say.

Iraqi officials said on Monday that the largest bomb attack killed 11 and wounded 30 others in the Saydiya district of southern Baghdad. The blast took place when an explosives-rigged vehicle went off.

Several of the casualties were pilgrims passing through the area on their way to Baghdad's northern neighborhood of Kadhimiyah to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of the seventh Shia Imam, Musa ibn Jafar al-Kazim (PBUH).

Separately, explosives planted on the ground in Tarmiyah, located 25 kilometers (15 miles) north of Baghdad, killed two people and wounded six others.

In the third blast, a roadside bomb in Khalisa, a town 30 kilometers (20 miles) south of the capital, left one dead and two others wounded.

Security forces have blocked major roads in Baghdad in anticipation of attacks against pilgrims who traditionally travel on foot from different parts of Iraq.

The latest explosions came two days after at least 23 people lost their lives and dozens of others sustained injuries in a car bomb attack that targeted a group of Shia pilgrims in Baghdad's southeastern neighborhood of Nahrwan on Saturday morning as the pilgrims were heading to Kadhimiyah.

Also on Friday, a civilian lost his life and six others suffered injuries when a bomb attack struck a commercial district in the al-Obeidi neighborhood of eastern Baghdad.

Gruesome violence has plagued the northern and western parts of Iraq ever since the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists launched an offensive in June 2014, and took control of portions of the Iraqi territory.

Latest figures released by the United Nations show that at least 741 Iraqi people, including soldiers and civilians, lost their lives in violence in the country in the month of April.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in a monthly report issued on Sunday, put the number of Iraqi civilians killed in April at 410. The other 331 fatalities were members of the country's security forces.

■ Protesters leave Green Zone

In yet another event, Iraqi protesters have temporarily ended their demonstrations in the government complex of Green Zone and began leaving the area.

Hundreds of protesters disbanded their move on Sunday, withdrawing from a restricted area which houses the country's key government institutions, peacefully.

They, however, vowed to return by the end of the week to go ahead with their demands for political reforms.

"The protest organizing committee announces the withdrawal of the demonstrators from the Green Zone," the protesters said in a statement distributed by the office of prominent cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

This came a day after protesters broke into the heavily-fortified area and stormed the parliament. The move came after lawmakers failed to reach a quorum to discuss a cabinet reshuffle proposed by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.

Many of the protesters were supporters of al-Sadr. The protesters left the parliament late on Saturday, but they were camping outside the parliament when organizers asked them to leave.

The protesters issued a number of demands, including the resignation of the president, the prime minister and the parliament speaker and a parliamentary vote on a technocrat government.

A spokeswoman for the protesters said they would resort to "all legitimate means" including civil disobedience if their demands are not met.



ence if their demands are not met.

This came after Abadi held an emergency meeting with Iraq's president and parliament speaker and a number of political leaders. They said they will hold more meetings in coming days to "ensure radical reforms of the political process."

On Saturday, Abadi toured the parliament building and walked past damaged furniture. He ordered authorities to arrest protesters who attacked lawmakers and security forces and damaged state properties. But no arrest has so far been made.

Iraq has been the scene of a political turmoil in the past weeks over Abadi's efforts to form a new cabinet.

On April 26, the parliament finally endorsed six new ministers proposed by Abadi despite attempts to block the chamber meeting by about 100 deputies who are reportedly close to former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and have opposed Abadi and parliament speaker Salim al-Jabouri.

(Source: agencies)

CIA mocked for 'live tweeting' Bin Laden killing

United States spy agency the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) has "live tweeted" the military raid that killed al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in Pakistan five years ago, drawing derision and satire from many people on Twitter.

Bin Laden was killed by U.S. Navy Seal commandos on May 2, 2011, when they raided his compound in Abbottabad.

Several of the tweets included diagrams and maps of the compound, providing a rundown of the operation from

the moment U.S. President Barack Obama and intelligence officials approved it until the president received confirmation that bin Laden had been killed.

The CIA's Twitter account has more than 1.3 million followers.

According to the timeline of events, two helicopters descended on the compound at 3:30pm and one crashed.

The operation continued however, and commandos killed the 54-year-old inside nine minutes.

One of the tweets showed an aerial photograph of the compound and a map of the region where it was located in Pakistan.

Several social media users criticized the CIA's posts, while others satirized them.

Writing on its Twitter account, The Daily Show, a popular U.S. news satire program, mocked the agency.

And several argued that the U.S. should have brought bin Laden to trial

rather than kill him.

Speaking to ABC News, CIA spokesperson Ryan Trapani defended the operation, arguing that the "take-down of bin Laden stands as one of the great intelligence successes of all time."

He said: "On the fifth anniversary, it is appropriate to remember the day and honor all those who had a hand in this achievement."

(Source: Al Jazeera)

NEWS

U.S. forces arrive in southern Yemen: report

A report says United States Special Forces have arrived in Yemen to fight alongside the United Arab Emirates forces in alleged operations against al-Qaeda militants in the country's south.

Yemen's al-Masirah television channel on Sunday quoted Tom Bawman, the National Public Radio's Pentagon reporter, as saying that the troops had arrived in Yemen on April 25.

The House of Saud regime and the UAE last year provided financial and military support to militants to confront the Ansarullah (Houthi) movement forces and the Yemeni army units that had taken over the security of the country after fugitive President Abd Rabbuh Manur Hadi resigned.

U.S. deployment of troops comes a year after the withdrawal of its forces from Yemen.

On March 21, 2015, the U.S. evacuated its remaining forces out of al-Anad airbase in southern Yemen "due to the deteriorating security situation" a day after al-Qaeda captured the nearby city of al-Houta.

Al-Qaeda has become stronger in Yemen taking advantage of the chaos created by the Saudi military campaign against Ansarullah more than a year ago.

Lately, Riyadh and its allies have announced an offensive against al-Qaeda in a decision seen by analysts as an attempt to ward off international criticism of the Saudi intervention in Yemen.

Last month, forces loyal to Hadi and UAE troops reportedly overran Mukalla after al-Qaeda militants left the seaport in southeast Yemen.

Back then, the official Saudi news agency SPA claimed that more than 800 al-Qaeda members had been killed in the operation.

But residents said al-Qaeda withdrew quietly westward to neighboring Shabwa province after negotiations with local clerics and tribesmen.

They also said there was no fighting after Saudi-backed units mobilized their forces at Mukalla's suburbs.

Yemen has been under military attacks by the House of Saud regime since late March last year.

At least 9,400 people, including 4,000 women and children, have been killed, and over 16,000 others injured since the onset of the aggression on Yemen aimed at shoring up the former regime of Hadi.

(Source: Press TV)

German establishment rounds on anti-immigration party over Islam

Merkel: Islam is a part of Germany

German politicians from across the spectrum criticized the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) on Monday after the party declared Islam incompatible with the constitution.

The AfD, which has surged onto the political scene since its launch three years ago, backed a manifesto pledge at a congress on Sunday to ban on minarets and the burqa, the full face and body-covering gown worn by some Muslim women.

With concerns about Europe's migrant crisis fuelling the AfD's rise, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative Christian Democrats led criticism of the party.

"What the AfD has decided on is an attack on almost all religions," Armin Laschet, deputy chairman of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), told ARD television.

"They have identified Islam as a foreign body in Germany," he said. "That is divisive, and startling to a Christian Democratic party for which faith has meaning."

Greens parliamentary party Leader Katrin Goering-Eckardt described the AfD manifesto as "reactionary" and accused the party of dividing society with Islamophobia.

■ Freedom of religion guaranteed by German constitution, Islam part of Germany

Opinion polls give the AfD support of up to 14 percent, presenting a serious challenge to Merkel's conservatives and other established parties ahead of a 2017 federal election. They rule out any coalition with the AfD.

The AfD has no lawmakers in the federal parliament in Berlin but has members in half of Germany's 16 regional state assemblies.

Merkel has said freedom of religion for all is guaranteed by Germany's constitution and that Islam is a part of Germany.

Germany is home to nearly 4 million Muslims, about 5 percent of the total population. Community leaders have called on politicians to ensure that no religious community be disadvantaged and that Islam not be defined as a "foe".

Many of the longer established Muslim community came from Turkey to find work. Last year, more than a million, mostly Muslim migrants, arrived in Germany. Most had fled conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Alexander Gauland, who leads the AfD in the eastern state of Brandenburg, said Muslims could still practice their faith in Germany.

"A Muslim in Germany can follow his religion without minarets. The AfD has nothing against places of worship," Gauland told Deutschlandfunk radio, insisting his party did not want existing minarets torn down but rather no new ones built.

Aiman Mazyek, head of Germany's Central Council of Muslims who has likened the AfD's attitude towards his community to that of Hitler's Nazis towards Jews, told the Osnabruecker Zeitung the AfD manifesto was "an Islamophobic program" that "is of no help to solve problems, but rather just divides our country."

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS

Number of trade delegations visiting Iran triples in a year: official

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Valiollah Afkhamirad, the head desk of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), announced that the number of foreign trade delegations visiting Iran during the past Iranian calendar year of 1394 (which ended on March 19, 2016) became three times more than that of its preceding year, IRIB news reported on Monday.

"In 1394, 64 trade delegations comprised of 837 foreign businessmen and officials from 28 countries visited Iran," he said, "the figure trebled compared to year of 1393, when 19 delegations including 477 people from 16 countries made trips to the Islamic Republic," he added.

"Accordingly, the number of visiting delegations increased 237 percent last year, while the number of visiting businessmen and countries recorded a 75 percent hike," Afkhamirad noted.

As he added, TPO received 42 trade delegations from 16 countries in the past year, while the number stood at five delegations from eight countries in 1393, which shows a 740 percent increase.

The official described that making joint investments, signing various MOUs, and granting the franchise of Iranian products to foreign countries were among the achievements of the paid visits to Iran.

Foreign countries and delegations are racing to secure business opportunities in Iran after Iran and the P5+1 group of countries reached an agreement over Tehran's nuclear program in the Austrian capital of Vienna on July 14, from among it can be referred to South Korea President Park Geun-hye who arrived at Tehran on Sunday evening, accompanied by a 236-strong delegation- the largest team ever dispatched to a foreign country.

German companies hope to take energy transition to Iran

Taking full advantage of the international political thaw with Iran, Germany has begun working closely with the fossil fuel-rich nation to develop renewable energy strategies based on the successes and failures its policymakers have learned from its own energy transition.

To jumpstart this, Germany's government recently released a commissioned report titled "Enabling PV Iran," which discusses opportunities offered by the Iranian photovoltaic (PV) market. Funded by the German Foreign Office and written by the German Solar Association (BSW-Solar) in cooperation with the consulting firm Eclareon, the Iran-Wind Group, and Pflüger International, the 135-page study aims to establish long-term cooperation with solar companies and industry associations in Iran. The preliminary results were presented in Tehran in December, and the full report was released this March.

Germany is taking advantage of its status as Iran's largest European trading partner to ensure a prime spot in the race to harness the Middle Eastern nation's renewable potential.

Germany and Iran have been trade and educational partners since the 1950s. German exports to Iran increased by 30% in 2014 year over year, and German companies and technologies are highly sought and admired.

The government report also serves as a guide, offering advice on how to establish business networks and carry out transactions in a country that enjoys 300 days of sunlight a year across 80% of its expansive territory. Less than 1% of Iran's power is generated by solar, and the huge potential is abundantly clear. With the economic sanctions against Iran lifted, German solar firms now have a "huge sales" opportunity, said BSW-Solar in the report. Of particular interest is the updating of the country's feed-in tariff (FIT). The latest proposed FIT is generous, totaling €0.17 to €0.30/kWh, under a 20-year contract.

Iran, with its power generation capacity of 70 GW, has incredible renewable energy potential, where wind capacity alone is estimated at 30 GW. Iran's Rouhani-led government wants to lift installed renewable energy capacity to 5 GW by 2020, equal to about 5% of annual power generation.

"The political will in Iran to realize success in this market is abundantly clear," said report author and BSW-Solar head Joerg Mayer. "What counts now for German firms is the speed and determination to build business relations" with Iran.

The flood of German investment may have already begun. Iranian news agency Mehr reported in November 2015 that an unnamed German company had signed a deal to build 1.25 GW of solar power capacity near Tehran. Iran's Ministry of Energy in January 2016 announced that it would authorize 1 GW of solar and wind contracts in March, offering a 35% bonus to companies that use equipment made in Iran. (Source: powermag.com)

Asia markets end lower, with the Nikkei dropping 3.1%

Asia markets took "sell in May" sentiment to heart on Monday, with the Japanese benchmark index tumbling over 3 percent and Australian bank shares selling off.

The Nikkei 225 closed down 518.67 points, or 3.11 percent, at 16,147.38, after initially tumbling as much as 4.14 percent in early trade. On Thursday, the benchmark index shed 3.61 percent, after the Bank of Japan surprised markets by standing pat on its monetary policy.

In South Korea, the Kospi ended down 16 points, or 0.80 percent at 1,978.15. Down Under, the ASX 200 retraced most of its morning losses of over 1 percent to close down 9.21 points, or 0.18 percent, at 5,243.00, with the heavily-weighted financials sub-index finishing down 1.56 percent. (Source: CBNC)

Tehran, Seoul vow to boost trade, investment

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran and South Korea signed a couple of agreements to give a boost to the bilateral trade and investment between the two countries in different fields of economy.

Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian and South Korean Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport Kang Hoin signed an agreement in water and power sectors on Monday.

Based on the agreement, the two sides will expand cooperation in improving the utilization of water resources and consumption patterns, developing smart water management systems related to reservation, supply, and desalination, and enhancing safety management during earthquakes and heavy rainfall.

Chitchian also signed an agreement with Joo Hyung-hwan, the South Korean minister of trade, industry and energy, regarding the development of modern electricity industries.

The two sides agreed to cooperate in establishing high efficient thermal power plants and transmission lines, building smart power grids, and launching renewable energy joint projects.

Meanwhile, the two countries agreed on Monday to promote partnerships in science and technology, riding on South



Hamid Chitchian (R), the Iranian energy minister, and Joo Hyung-hwan, the South Korean minister of trade, industry and energy, shaking hand after signing an agreement on development of modern electricity industries in Tehran on Monday

Korean President Park Geun-hye's landmark visit to Tehran, the Korea Times reported on Monday.

The Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning of South Korea said it signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Iran's Ministry of Science,

Research and Technology on "various research cooperation" in both the basic and applied science fields.

The two sides plan to launch a joint science-technology committee next year to discuss the details, it added.

The ministry will also update an MOU

with Iran's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for closer ties.

South Korea signed the accord with Iran in 1990 before joining international sanctions against Tehran for its nuclear program.

"In the ICT sector, in particular, Iran was South Korea's key cooperation partner in the region before the economic sanctions," South Korea's ICT Minister Choi Yang-hee said.

The ministry will try to actively use Park's trip as an opportunity for South Korea advanced technology and ICT firms to tap into Iran, he added.

Also, South Korea and Iran signed a set of deals on bilateral maritime cooperation on Sunday, the KBS World Radio reported on Monday.

South Korea's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries said on Monday that the two sides signed a maritime agreement and an MOU calling for cooperation in port development and in the fisheries and maritime sectors.

The ministry said that the conclusion of the maritime deal comes 20 years after the two nations had initiated negotiations for the agreement in 1996 but suspended talks due to international sanctions against Iran.

80 foreign job centers operating in Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Around 80 foreign job centers are presently active in Iran to employ Iranian work force, Mohammad Akbarnia told ISNA on Monday.

Since the implementation of the nuclear deal between Iran and the six global powers in January, different countries, namely Australia, Germany, Denmark, Turkey, and Ireland, have expressed tendency towards providing Iranian work force with jobs in their

countries, the official said.

England, Australia and Georgia are ready to establish job centers in Iran, he added.

Iranians looking for work in foreign countries can refer to the available job centers to get advice on finding a job there and to look at advertisements placed by the countries that are looking for new employees, he said.

As reported on February 19, Iran eyes Italy, German and Australia's job

market. "If ongoing negotiations between the Iranian government and senior officials of Italy, German, and Australia come into fruition, Iranian job hunters majoring in engineering, medical, and paramedical fields will find the chance to work in those countries," Deputy Labor Minister Mohammad-Taghi Hosseini said.

Hosseini added the three countries have shown interest in hiring the Iranian workforce, IRIB news agency re-

ported at the time.

He also said Iranians from various occupational echelons have long been working in the Persian Gulf countries.

The request, however, for Iranian workforce in the region has decreased due to political reasons, he added.

Hosseini also said that countries in Central Asia such as Tajikistan and those in the Caucasus region such as Azerbaijan are interested in employing Iranians.

PICTURE OF THE DAY Shana Mojtaba Mohammadgholi



Azizollah Ramezani (R), the deputy director of National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) for international affairs, shaking hand with Dong Hyun Jang, the CEO of SK Telecom Co. which is South Korea's largest wireless carrier, after the two companies inked an MOU on cooperation in manufacturing of smart gauging systems in Tehran on Monday.

India's April Iran oil imports up 49% from a year ago: data

NEW DELHI (The Economic Times)

— India's oil imports from Iran rose 48.8 percent in April from a year ago as refiners bought more crude after the lifting of sanctions against the OPEC producer, although the purchases were down from a multi-year high hit the previous month.

Refiners in the world's third-largest crude importer took in 393,000 barrels per day (bpd) of Iranian oil in April, the first month of the new contract year, according to preliminary tanker arrival data from trade sources and ship-tracking services on the Thomson Reuters terminal.

The April shipments were down 22.4 percent from Iranian volumes in March, when imports from Tehran topped 500,000 bpd to reach the highest level in at least five years.

India's oil imports from Iran are set to surge to a seven-year high in the year that began April 1, industry sources said early last month, with the nation's state-owned and private refiners together buying at least 400,000 bpd.

Part of India's recent resurgence in Iranian purchases comes from Reliance Industries, operator of the world's biggest refining complex, which in March took oil from Iran for the first time in six years for its plant in western India.



2015 Mercedes-Benz SLK recalled for battery fix

Mercedes-Benz has recalled 15 vehicles from its SLK sports car line over concerns that a battery failure could cause the car's electric park brake and gear selector to fail.

The German manufacturer reports that in the event of a main battery failure, the electric ignition lock will not be supplied power from the backup battery.

As a result, if the vehicle's engine stops during use — for example in traffic using the car's idle stop-start system — the electric parking brake and the transmission's "P" position cannot be engaged.

If this defect occurs, the vehicle cannot be restarted. Furthermore, stopping the vehicle from rolling would only be possible by operating the brake pedal, posing a significant hazard to the driver and other road users.



Goldman targets 'mass affluent' borrowers with unusual lending plan

Goldman Sachs Group Inc., the banking gold standard for the world's elite, sees a future in less prosperous investors.

A creative strategy taking shape inside the bank calls for it to partner with small brokerages and wealth management firms to lend money to their clients, many of whom have far less wealth than what's in the typical Goldman private bank account.

The idea is for Goldman to reach a big set of borrowers, in the U.S. and possibly abroad, without having to acquire them through a merger or build relationships one by one, people familiar with the initiative said. The plan is still in very early stages and may not be active until next year, the people added.



BOJ sees little reason to act when households aren't listening

Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda has a big problem. His radical monetary policy experiment has always been aimed at convincing the public that an end to deflation is near — and right now the public aren't listening.

Concerns that a fresh burst of stimulus would be wasted on households and businesses so far unconvinced by the bank's foray into negative rates, on top of huge money printing, were among the key factors behind last week's decision to hold off from further easing, according to sources familiar with BOJ thinking.

"There's a sense of anxiety spreading in the public about the fact the BOJ is implementing these abnormal policies," said one of the sources.

Globetrotting on a budget fulfills our dreams at low costs: adventurer

By Setareh Behrooz

Globetrotting on a budget is a way to fulfill our dreams at low costs, Iranian globetrotter Hossein Abdollahi said.

He named accommodation, food, and transportation as the main expenses for traveling.

"Don't forget hostels and hospitality exchange and social networking like 'couchsurfing' as great opportunities for budget traveling," he said.

In his point of view, these types of accommodation are not only economical but also provide an opportunity to have social communication with local people and other travelers.

"In this way, you have the chance to surprise yourself everyday by visiting new people and get involved in daily lifestyle of a new place you travelled.

"In hostels you may find fellow travelers and get information about new exciting destinations, which you were not aware of them before," he explained.

Abdollahi also talked about finding the ways to book the cheapest flights via budget airlines or days for cheap flights.

He also pointed out to the hitchhiking as one of the best ways for road travelling, calling it 'an opportunity to know more about the place you have travelled to.'



Then he explained about methods to save money on food when on travel.

"Don't forget street foods. It is one of the best choices to get acquainted with local cuisines. Chain stores, which offer foods cheaper after the rush hours are also another option," he said.

"If you stay in a hostel with travelers from other parts of the world, cooking a great way to know about foods served in other countries," he explained. Abdollahi, who has visited more than 60 countries worldwide, gave some details about obtaining visas from different embassies for Iranian citizens as well. "You should ensure the embassy that you are a traveler and you want to return to your country after traveling. They should be sure that you want to help their tourism industry by traveling to their country as well," he said.

In the end, he named 'willpower and creative mind' as the two things that a person need for travelling.

"And remember that, spending a lot of money will not lead to a high-quality trip," he concluded. Abdollahi made the remarks during a workshop held on the sidelines of "the first Qeshm Island bloggers' travel writing festival" on April 27.

The event, which was co-organized by Iran Federation of Tourist Guide Associations and Qeshm Free Zone Organization, was held from April 25 to 29 on the biggest Iranian island in the Persian Gulf.

NEWS

Louvre Hotels Group poised to enter Iran

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) branch of Louvre Hotels Group is close to signing agreements to open three hotels in Iran – its first foray into the market since international sanctions were lifted this year.



Louvre group already has a 447-room Royal Tulip-branded hotel in Alexandria, Egypt.

The group is in advanced talks with an Iranian investor to open a 300-room Royal Tulip-branded hotel in Tehran, MENA president Amine Moukarzel told Arabian Business this week.

The deal is expected to conclude in the next fortnight and the same investor - a "multipurpose Iranian company", he said - wants a second hotel with Louvre, but likely outside of Tehran. The deals would represent the investor's first foray into the hotels sector.

The group is also in talks to open a third hotel in Iran with a different investor, but those discussions are understood to be in the earlier stages.

"We have identified Iran as a strong, promising market that requires international [hotel] brands to build its reputation," Moukarzel said.

He also revealed plans for a second hotel in Egypt, comprising 440 rooms in Cairo near the Pyramids. "We are in the final stages of signing this agreement," he said.

Louvre group already has a 447-room Royal Tulip-branded hotel in Alexandria, Egypt, which it opened in 2013.

There are also plans to introduce the group's budget brands, Premiere Classe and Campanile, to the GCC for the first time, Moukarzel revealed.

The group is targeting 20-40 new budget hotels over the next 3-5 years, with a focus on the UAE and Oman, he said.

"The midscale, midmarket sector is the golden class in MENA at present, which is good news for Louvre group.

"In Dubai and the UAE in particular, the travel pattern has changed and visitors are increasingly looking for cost-conscious, family-friendly options as they increasingly plan two holidays, not one, per year."

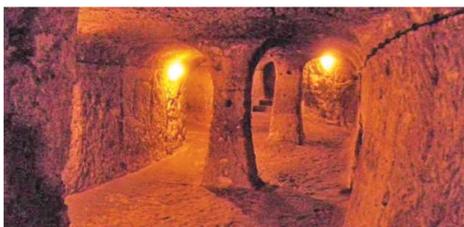
(Source: arabianbusiness.com)

Have people ever lived underground?

The precise origin of the underground city of Derinkuyu – which was rediscovered in the 1960s – as well as who dug the passages, and when, are unclear, but major excavation activity has suggested the city could date from the eighth century BC.

The multi-layered Derinkuyu reaches a depth of 85 metres and could shelter some 20,000 people. The passageways have been periodically modified, enlarged and extended with multiple areas for accommodation, storage and also defence.

No written testimony exists explaining how the city was



used, although it has been claimed that the tunnels were conceived as a combination of cold storage facilities and ancient underground bunker, protecting the population during times of invasion or internal strife.

Few of the passageways and rooms have been investigated so our understanding of why the people of central Turkey spent so much time working underground is, to date, incomplete, which serves to make Derinkuyu even more alluring and mysterious.

(Source: History Extra)

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Rebuilding the EU or breaking free from it?

By C.J. Polychroniou

The European debt crisis of 2010, which still has many peripheral nations in its grip and has led to what appears to be a permanent state of fiscal austerity, has exposed to the world the highly flawed and dangerous architecture of the European Monetary Union and the anti-democratic nature of European Union institutions.

Still, the powers that be continue to de-

pend ferociously a Frankenstein's monster-like creation, a playground for financial vultures, while progressive voices and otherwise critical Europeanists call for the rebuilding of Europe as they fear that, without reforms, the European integration project faces potential collapse, which will lead in turn to the resurgence of old national rivalries across the continent and social chaos inside many national formations.

This is the logic that gave rise to DIEM25,

a pan-European movement founded by former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, and somewhat similar concerns seem to be guiding the undertaking of an international conference entitled The Future of Europe, held on April 26-27 in the city of Thessaloniki, Greece, with former German Finance Minister Oskar Lafontaine as a keynote speaker.

However, for those who are truly concerned about the future of democracy, labor rights,



and national sovereignty, the critical question should not be how to rebuild the EU, but how to break free from it.

Following the end of World War II, certain visionary leaders in France and Germany were determined to create structures and institutions beyond the nation-state to ensure that Europeans would put an end to their favorite practice of sorting out their national differences by engaging in bloody warfare.

→9

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Asia's factories stay sluggish, stimulus lacks traction

Japanese manufacturing activity shrank in April at the fastest pace in more than three years as deadly earthquakes disrupted production, while output in China and the rest of Asia remained lukewarm at best.

Even the former bright spot of India took a turn for the worse as both domestic and foreign orders dwindled, pulling its industry barometer to a four-month trough.

Surveys due later on Monday are expected to show only sluggish activity in Europe and the United States as the world's factories are dogged by insufficient demand and excess supply.

"The backdrop remains one of sub-trend growth, inflation that is below target, difficulty in increasing revenue as margins are sacrificed to win modest volume gains, slow wage growth cramping spending and central banks that have used up much of their policy ammunition," was the sober assessment of Alan Oster, chief economist at National Australia Bank.

That is exactly why the U.S. Federal Reserve has been dragging its feet on a follow-up to its December rate hike, leaving the markets in a sweat in case they move in June.

Doubts about policy ammunition mounted last week when the Bank of Japan refrained from offering any hint of more stimulus, sending stocks reeling as the yen surged to 18-month highs.

The Nikkei share index .N225 was down another 3.6 percent on Monday while the yen raced as far as 106.14 to the dollar JPY= and squeezed the country's giant export sector.

"We've started the week with a precipitous drop in Japanese equity as the market responds to the strength of the yen," said Martin King, co-managing director at Tyton Capital Advisors.



The dollar was slightly higher against the yen at 106.51 after earlier dropping as low as 106.14, its deepest trough since October 2014. It logged its worst week against the yen since the 2008 financial crisis after the Bank of Japan decided not to muster fresh stimulus measures at its policy meeting last Thursday.

Industry was already struggling to recover from the April earthquakes that halted production in the southern manufacturing hub of Kumamoto.

The impact was all too clear in the Markit/Nikkei Japan Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index which fell to a seasonally adjusted 48.2 in April, from 49.1 in March.

The index stayed below the 50

threshold that separates contraction from expansion for the second straight month.

The news was only a little better in China where the official PMI was barely positive at 50.1 in April, a cold shower for those hoping fresh fiscal and monetary stimulus from Beijing would enable a speedy pick up.

The findings were "a little bit disappointing", Zhou Hao, senior emerging market economist at Commerzbank in Singapore, wrote in a note.

"To some extent, this hints that recent China enthusiasm has been a bit overpriced and the data improvement in March is short-lived."

■ Patchy performance

South Korea's activity did at least

stabilize in April after contracting for three months straight, with the Nikkei/Markit PMI edging up to 50.0, from 49.5 in March.

Yet it also reported demand from China was the worst in three months, with exports to its biggest market tumbling 18.4 percent on-year. Likewise, weakness in new orders and exports dragged on Taiwanese activity in April.

In Australia, firms reported another solid month of sales, profits and employment in April, suggesting the broader economy was coping with a protracted slowdown in mining investment.

National Australia Bank's (NAB.AX) monthly survey of more than 400 firms showed its index of business conditions dipped three points to +9 in April. That was down from its highest since early 2008 but still above the long-run average.

That resilience has been cited by the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) as one reason it kept interest rates steady at 2 percent over the last couple of months.

The central bank holds its May policy meeting on Tuesday and there is much speculation it could cut rates following alarmingly low readings for inflation in the first quarter.

Surveys from Europe and the U.S. due later in the session are expected to show output continued to expand in April, albeit at a modest pace.

The euro zone version of the PMI is expected to hold at 51.5, though with scant sign of a return of pricing power across industries.

The influential U.S. reading from the Institute of Supply Management was forecast to dip back to 51.4, from 51.8, ahead of the always-pivotal payrolls report out on Friday.

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Gold keeps shining as funds miss out on best rally in two months

Bullion has been on a tear, with futures last week posting the biggest advance in two months. Hedge funds missed the party, reducing their wagers on a rally by the most since they turned bullish in January. The money managers were more fortunate when it came to silver, taking their holdings to the highest on record just before the metal had its best monthly advance since 2013.

The Bloomberg Precious Metals Subindex jumped 23 percent in 2016 amid renewed demand for stores of value. That's the biggest gain to start a year in a decade. Slowing U.S. growth has underscored why Federal Reserve officials have been cautious about raising interest rates again. The Bank of Japan last week held off on expanding monetary stimulus, a move that surprised economists and added further pressure to the already weakening dollar, boosting the appeal of gold and silver as alternatives.

"The dollar will remain weaker relative to its major trading partners, and all of that favors gold", said John Stephenson, the Toronto-based chief executive officer of Stephenson & Co. Capital Management.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil prices fall on rising OPEC crude production

Oil prices fell on Monday as rising production in the Middle East outweighed a decline in U.S. output and a recent slide in the dollar, which has been supporting crude.

Brent was trading at \$46.77 (32 pounds) per barrel at 0440 GMT, down 60 cents, or 1.3 percent, from its last settlement. U.S. crude was down 48 cents, or just over one percent, at \$45.44 a barrel.

Liquidity was low due to a holiday in many countries for May Day.

Analysts said rising output from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was outweighing supportive factors such as a decline in U.S. output and a sliding dollar, which makes it cheaper for countries using other currencies to import dollar-traded fuel.

"The weaker dollar failed to excite investors in the crude oil markets," ANZ bank said, citing a rise in OPEC-output as the main downward driver for prices.

The recent oil rally, which saw prices run up by nearly a third in just four weeks, was largely driven by sentiment, BNP Paribas said.

(Source: Reuters)



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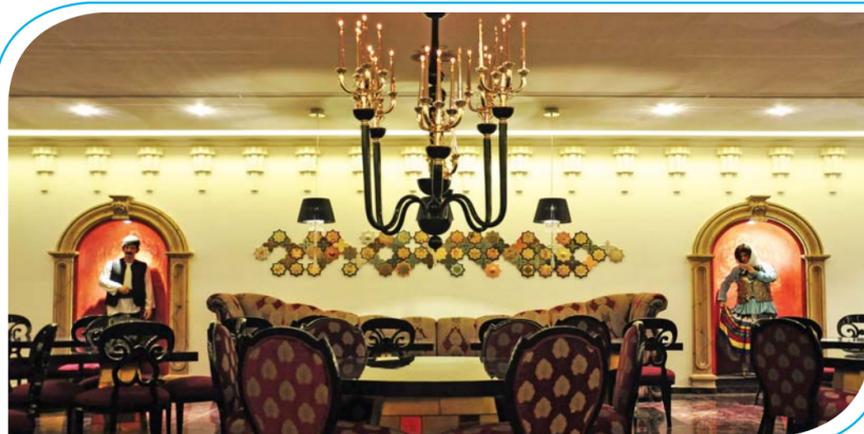


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NEWS IN BRIEF

Advance may make quantum computing more practical

Quantum computers are largely hypothetical devices that could perform some calculations much more rapidly than conventional computers can. They exploit a property called superposition, which describes a quantum particle's counterintuitive ability to, in some sense, inhabit more than one physical state at the same time.



But superposition is fragile, and finding ways to preserve it is one of the chief obstacles to developing large, general-purpose quantum computers. In today's *Nature*, MIT researchers describe a new approach to preserving superposition in a class of quantum devices built from synthetic diamonds. The work could ultimately prove an important step toward reliable quantum computers.

In most engineering fields, the best way to maintain the stability of a physical system is feedback control. You make a measurement -- the current trajectory of an airplane, or the temperature of an engine -- and on that basis produce a control signal that nudges the system back toward its desired state.

The problem with using this technique to stabilize a quantum system is that measurement destroys superposition. So quantum-computing researchers have traditionally had to do without feedback.

"Typically, what people do is to use what's called open-loop control," says Paola Cappellaro, the Esther and Harold Edgerton Associate Professor of Nuclear Science and Engineering at MIT and senior author on the new paper. "You decide a priori how to control your system and then apply your controller and hope for the best -- that you knew enough about your system that the control you applied will do what you thought it should." (Source: *Science Daily*)

The link between mosquito spraying and autism

A new study finds a correlation between the aerial spraying of pesticides to kill mosquitoes and an increased risk of developmental delays and autism among kids.

In the new findings, presented at the Pediatric Academic Societies 2016 meeting, researchers looked at the rates of autism and developmental delays from eight zip codes in a region of New York that is exposed to yearly airplane pesticide spraying to prevent mosquito-borne disease like eastern equine encephalitis virus. They compared those to the rates in 16 zip codes where the pesticide spraying doesn't happen.

The authors report that kids living in zip codes where the spraying was done each summer had around a 25% higher risk of an autism diagnosis or developmental problem compared to kids living in areas without the aerial spraying. "Several studies have previously reported links between pesticide and autism risk," says Dr. Steve Hicks, an assistant professor of pediatrics at Penn State College of Medicine in an email to *TIME*. "Our data suggests the way in which pesticides are applied might play some role."

Studies of pesticides in animal models show they can affect certain neurotransmitters in the brain, but their exact molecular effects on brain development are still being explored.

The study only shows a correlation between the two and does not show that aerial pesticide spraying causes autism. It also does not provide information about whether a child could have been exposed during pregnancy or after birth. Aerial spraying is a common mosquito control tool, and states in the U.S. are ramping up efforts to control mosquito populations amid the ongoing Zika outbreak. (Source: *Time*)

How will rising temperatures affect the world's workers?

A new report released by the United Nations (UN) last week found that climate change can worsen health and safety for workers in outdoor professions and cause billions of dollars worth of lost productivity.

The study by the international organization focused on the effects that the Earth's gradually rising temperature can have on workers and, in turn, the global economy. Climate change's impact on working conditions can be felt through the growing number of "very hot" days and heat waves each year, and more. "This rising heat in the workplace is a significant concern to any person working out-of-doors or in indoor conditions without climate control or with ineffective control of ambient temperatures," the report stated.

The UN found that agricultural enterprises are the most likely to be negatively impacted by heat, while manufacturing and service professions could be at risk as well. But, "even basic office and desk tasks are compromised at high levels of heat as exhaustion sets in."

The negative health effects could in some cases prove fatal, the report said, particularly as exposure to higher temperatures creates lapses in safety. And aside from impacts at the workplace, "daily family activities" can expose workers and their households to extreme heat.

"Those who work in the fields may ruin their health just by trying to put a meal on the table," International Center for Climate Change and Development director Saleemul Huq said in a statement. (Source: *The CSM*)

Scientists unearth 11th century Persian scholar's supernova surveillance

German scientists have uncovered a text written by famous Persian philosopher Ibn Sina, who appears to report having sighted a supernova that occurred in 1006 AD.

This is a mosaic image -- one of the largest ever taken by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope -- of the Crab Nebula, a six-light-year-wide expanding remnant of a star's supernova explosion.

For the first time scientists have studied a text by noted tenth century polymath Ibn Sina (known as Avicenna in Latin), in which the scholar described observations of a supernova in the year 397 of the Islamic Hijri calendar, calculated as 1,006 AD.

Ibn Sina (980-1037 AD) was a Persian physician and philosopher who is regarded as the most famous and influential of the medieval Islamic world's philosopher-scientists.

The scientists who studied Ibn Sina's account believe it was written when he was in present-day Iran, Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan, most probably the latter. They translate his description of the supernova's form, direction and appearance.

Transient objects

Ibn Sina wrote that the object was "tailless," which distinguished it from the more common transient objects, comets with tails.

The new star was "getting fainter and fainter until it disappeared," and that it "became fainter and disappeared," he wrote.

"At the beginning it was towards a darkness and greenness, then it began to throw out sparks and then it became more and more whitish."

**Ibn Sina (980-1037 AD) was a Persian physician and philosopher who is regarded as the most famous and influential of the medieval Islamic world's philosopher-scientists.**

His Arabic-language report is one of several historical observations of supernovas that have helped scientists in their understanding of these celestial events, and adds to previous information about the

Contemporary scientists have also provided today's astronomers with in-

formation about supernova sightings in 1054 (from Eastern Asia and Arabia), 1181 (Eastern Asia), 1572 and 1604 AD (the latter two sighted in Eastern Asia and Europe). "Historic reports can deliver the date of the observation (hence, the age of the supernova remnant and,

if existing, of the neutron star) together with a light curve (hence, possibly the supernova type), sometimes the color and its evolution, and the position of the supernova," the scientists explained in their paper, published on ArXiv.org.

(Source: *sputniknews.com*)

One minute of hard exercise may be as good as 45 minutes of moderate exercise

For many of us, the most pressing question about exercise is: How little can I get away with? The answer, according to a sophisticated new study of interval training, may be very, very little. In this new experiment, in fact, 60 seconds of strenuous exertion proved to be as successful at improving health and fitness as three-quarters of an hour of moderate exercise.

Let me repeat that finding: One minute of arduous exercise was comparable in its physiological effects to 45 minutes of gentler sweating.

I have been writing for some time about the potential benefits of high-intensity interval training, a type of workout that consists of an extremely draining but brief burst of exercise -- essentially, a sprint -- followed by light exercise such as jogging or resting, then another sprint, more rest, and so on.

Improving speed and power

Athletes rely on intervals to improve their speed and power, but generally as part of a broader, weekly training program that also includes prolonged, less-intense workouts, such as long runs.

But in the past few years, exercise scientists and many of the rest of us

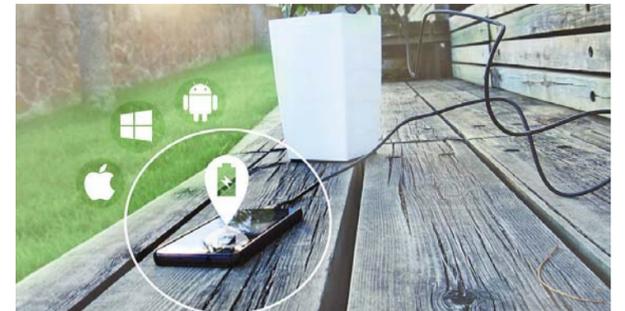
have become intrigued by the idea of exercising exclusively with intervals, ditching long workouts altogether.

The allure of this approach is obvious. Interval sessions can be short, making them a boon for anyone who feels that he or she never has enough time to exercise.

Previously, I have written about a number of different interval programs, involving anywhere from 10 minutes of exhausting intervals in a single session to seven minutes, six, four and even fewer. Each program had scientific backing. But because of time and funding constraints, most studies of interval training have had limits, such as not including a control group, being of short duration or studying only health or fitness results, not both.

So scientists at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, who had themselves conducted many of those earlier studies of interval training, decided recently to mount probably the most scientifically rigorous comparison to date of super-short and more-standard workouts.

(Source: *Charlotte Observer*)

Bioo uses photosynthesis to make plants phone chargers

Your wireless phone charger may be cool and all, but it's never going to be 'potted plant charger' cool. To get to that level of avant-garde phone-charging awesomeness, you'd need to hook yourself up with a Bioo Lite.

The Bioo Lite holds a potted plant -- a living, breathing plant that produces oxygen and absorbs carbon dioxide like you'd expect it to. Then, once holding that plant, it uses the plant to generate enough electricity to replenish a smartphone battery with the byproducts of its natural photosynthesis.

Externally, the charger looks like an average ornamental garden pot. But at the surface of the soil you'll find a USB port to which you can connect your phone's USB cable. The USB port connects to conductive material that snakes through the soil into a reservoir held at the bottom of the pot.

The reservoir contains water and anaerobic bacteria. Byproducts of photosynthesis are expelled by the roots and channeled through a semipermeable membrane into the reservoir. There, they come in contact with the microorganisms, which act on them to produce electrons. There is a cathode

and anode within the arrangement, so that's how electricity is produced in the underbelly of the Bioo Lite.

Elaborate process

Through this rather elaborate process, the device is currently able to produce 3.5 volts. The team claims they are working on a new modulator that will help the final production version output 5V -- that is the standard output for USB ports, making the Bioo Lite suitable for most personal electronic devices we use.

At the moment, the Bioo Lite can apparently charge phones from nothing to full 2-3 times a day, which should be sufficient for most smartphone users.

Evidently it is the process of photosynthesis that is a prerequisite for the production of electricity, so it doesn't matter what variety of fauna you grow in the pot -- the arrangement should work just fine as long as you ensure a living plant is in it.

However, the makers advise against using plants like cacti since the amount of electricity produced may not be as much as the amount you would get from leafy plants.

(Source: *snappunk.com*)

Breast milk linked to significant early brain growth in preemies

Feeding premature babies mostly breast milk during the first month of life appears to spur more robust brain growth, compared with babies given little or no breast milk.

Studying preterm infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at St. Louis Children's Hospital, the researchers found that preemies whose daily diets were at least 50 percent breast milk had more brain tissue and cortical-surface area by their due dates than premature babies who consumed significantly less breast milk.

The researchers present their findings May 3 at the annual meeting of the Pediatric Academic Societies, in Baltimore.

The "brains of babies born before their due dates usually are not fully developed," said senior investigator Cynthia Rogers, MD, an assistant professor of child psychiatry who treats patients at St. Louis Children's Hospital. "But breast milk has been shown to be helpful in other areas of development, so we looked to see what effect it might have on the brain."

**Cognitive development**

With MRI scans, we found that babies fed more breast milk had larger brain volumes. This is important because several other studies have shown a correlation between brain volume and cognitive development."

The study included 77 preterm infants.

The researchers retrospectively looked to see how much breast milk those babies had received while being cared for in the NICU. Then, the researchers conducted brain scans on those infants at about the time each would have been born had the babies not arrived early. All of the babies were born at least 10 weeks early, with an average gestation of 26 weeks, or about 14 weeks premature. Because they are still developing, preemies typically have smaller brains than full-term infants.

First author Erin Reynolds, a research technician in Rogers' laboratory, said in gauging the effects of breast milk on the babies' brains, the researchers didn't distinguish between milk that came from the babies' own mothers and breast milk donated by other women. Rather, they focused on the influence of breast milk in general.

"As the amount of breast milk increased, so did a baby's chances of having a larger cortical surface area," Reynolds said. (Source: *eurekaalert.org*)

A defiant Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro urged supporters to launch a general strike and "rebellion" if the opposition succeeds in ousting him from office in a referendum.

Maduro's fiery May Day speech came as Venezuela's emboldened opposition prepared on Tuesday to present more than 10 times the roughly 200,000 signatures needed to begin organizing a referendum to remove the unpopular president, blamed by many for the country's deep economic crisis.

Maduro vowed to fight for his job, despite a deep crisis in the country that has seen riots and looting in the second city over four-hour daily blackouts introduced to save energy.

"If the oligarchy someday does something against me and manages to take this palace, I order you to declare yourselves in rebellion and decree an indefinite general strike," he told supporters massed outside the presidential palace on Sunday.

Maduro told them the referendum "is an option, not an obligation. Here the only obligation is the presidential election and that will be in 2018." A recent poll found that more than two-thirds of Venezuelans want Maduro, elected president by a razor-thin margin in 2013, to leave office.

Once-booming Venezuela, which has the world's largest proven oil reserves, has plunged into economic chaos as global crude prices have collapsed. It has been in recession since 2013. The import-dependent country faces acute shortages of food and basic goods like toilet paper due to a lack of currency, more than 96 percent of which it gets from oil sales.

Maduro has vowed to press on with

Maduro calls for 'rebellion' if opposition recall succeeds



the socialist "revolution" launched in 1999 by his predecessor, the late Hugo Chavez, which has given Venezuela a government-led economy.

Recall vote this year?

If the electoral board accepts the signatures collected by the opposition as valid -- far from a sure bet, since opponents say the board is stacked with Maduro cronies -- the opposition will then have to collect four million more for the board to organize the vote.

Opponents are racing to hold the refer-

endum before the end of the year.

According to Venezuela's constitution, after January 2017 a successful recall vote would transfer power to Maduro's vice president rather than trigger new elections.

Jesus Torrealba, spokesman for the MUD opposition coalition that controls Venezuela's legislature, said the signatures -- collected in "record time" -- will be delivered to the electoral board on Tuesday.

However board official Tania D'amelio suggested on Twitter that the board might not start verifying the signatures until late

May.

More sleep, save energy

Venezuelans lost half an hour of sleep on Sunday as their clocks were set forward on the president's orders in a move to save power.

At 2:30am local time on Sunday, Venezuela shifted its time ahead by 30 minutes -- to four hours behind Greenwich Mean Time.

The move, announced in mid-April, is part of a package of measures the embattled socialist president is pursuing to cope with a crippling electricity shortage.

Hugo Chavez implemented the unusual half-hour time shift back in December 2007, saying he didn't want children to have to walk to school in the dark. Chavez died in 2013. In announcing the time change, the Maduro government said 30 extra minutes of daylight at the end of the day would curb the use of lights and air conditioning, especially draining for the power grid.

Maduro's government has also instituted four-hour daily blackouts across most of the country, reduced the public-sector workweek to two days and ordered schools closed on Fridays -- adding to the woes of a nation already stuck in a crushing recession. The power cuts sparked riots and looting this week in Venezuela's second-largest city, Maracaibo.

Maduro blames the power crunch on the El Nino weather phenomenon, which has unleashed the worst drought in 40 years, reducing the reservoirs at Venezuela's hydroelectric dams.

But the opposition says mismanagement is to blame for the power crisis as well as the recession and shortages.

(Source: AFP)

"Defending Palestine symbolizes a defense of Islam"

1 → "Defending the Palestinian cause" is enshrined in the very nature of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khamenei noted, according to Press TV.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader said the West, led by the U.S., have launched a war against the Islamic resistance in order to dominate the region.

"The [ongoing] developments in the

region must be studied and analyzed from such a viewpoint, and within this framework, the issues of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Hezbollah are part of this large-scale confrontation," the Supreme Leader

remarked.

The Islamic Republic continues to back the Syrian government "because those standing against Syria are in fact hostile to Islam in principle and are serving the

interests of the U.S. and the Zionist regime," the Leader added.

The Leader also said Israel is now more "fearful" of Hezbollah than before.

Hezbollah's resistance against Israel's 33-day war on Lebanon in 2006 shattered the invincibility of the Tel Aviv army. In that invasion Israel lost more than one hundred soldiers.

Israel is now more "fearful" of Hezbollah than before, Leader says.

The Republic of Korea: A strong-willed country ruled by Iron lady

1 → This shows that Seoul is not waiting for a green light from Washington to regulate its economic and political relations with Iran. The courageous move is expected from an Iron-willed country ruled by an iron-willed lady who takes care of the interest of Korean

people.

The visit by President Park to Tehran further indicates depth of Seoul's economic view of the 80-million Iranian market gifted with abundant natural gas and oil reserves as well as with a highly educat-

ed population.

Park's visit follows a visit by the Chinese leader in January, a few days after the nuclear agreement went into effect. Now Iran expects Tokyo does not lag behind Seoul.

No justice for victims of U.S. air strike in Afghanistan

Kathleen Thomas grimly recalls the day when a U.S. warplane flew over in Afghanistan and bombed her intensive care unit.

A survivor of the attack - which killed 42 and wounded dozens of others in the northern city of Kunduz - Thomas recounted seeing patients trapped in their hospital beds and engulfed in flames.

"The strikes tore through the outpatients department, which had become a sleeping area for staff. Our colleagues didn't die peacefully like in the movies," Thomas said.

"They died painfully, slowly, some of them screaming out for help that never came, alone and terrified, knowing the extent of their own injuries and aware of their impending death. It was a scene of nightmarish horror that will be forever etched in my mind.

"My eyes tear up as the raw grief I feel tugs at my heart," she said. "And the patients... So many bright young lives ripped viciously from this world."

The account is part of Thomas' public testimony released recently by Doctors Without Borders (MSF/Médecins Sans Frontières). The international medical charity operated the hospital in Kunduz that was flattened by a U.S. air strike last October.

Seven months since the deadly attack, survivors and family members of victims have struggled for an elusive justice that may never come. Even though the United States government has disciplined more than a dozen personnel, it has still skirted an independent investigation into the air strike, described by MSF as a "war crime".

The U.S. actions have sowed fears among human rights activists and advocacy groups that the entrenched pattern of bombing hospitals by "mistake" - in the words of the U.S. government - would leave health facilities in conflict zones even more vulnerable.

"We run the risk of getting used to these [unacceptable attacks] when actually our tolerance ratio should be zero," Román Oyarzun Marchesi, the permanent representative of Spain to the United Nations, said at a recent policy forum on attacks on health care facilities in armed conflict.



"Wars may be inevitable, but there are rules to follow," Marchesi said.

"Respecting international humanitarian law is not only a matter of life and death; it is humanity itself that's at stake here."

Entrenched pattern

At the forum, Jason Cone, MSF's executive director in the U.S., reiterated that his organization was "not satisfied" with the lack of progress on addressing the consequences of the Kunduz bombing.

"Suspected perpetrators get away with self-investigating and there is no independent follow up on attacks," Cone said, without mentioning the U.S. "We are not seeking justice; we do seek accountability."

Last December, MSF delivered a petition with half-a-million signatures to the White House, urging President Barack Obama to consent to an independent investigation of the attack.

Since October, the group has requested the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission to conduct an investigation. So far the U.S. government has kept mum on this. The commission is the only permanent international fact-finding body with a specific mandate to investigate potential violations of international humanitarian law under the Geneva Conventions, but its mandate has never been used.

Peter Van Buren, a retired 24-year veteran of the U.S. Department of State - including service in Iraq - has turned into a vocal critic of U.S. foreign policy. He has

compiled a list of protected facilities that the U.S. has attacked that dates back as far as the Vietnam War more than four decades ago.

The bombed health facilities include a major hospital in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital, during what historians call the infamous "Christmas Bombing" in 1972; a hospital in Belgrade, former Yugoslavia, in the 1990s; the Red Cross in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2001; and several other hospitals in Iraq in 2003.

To him, hospitals do make attractive targets. "Destroying them results in fighters dying of their wounds, and increases the burden on healthy soldiers, pulling them from the battlefield to care for their own wounded," he said. "In military terms that is known as a 'soft kill'. Accidents emerge in war, but so do patterns."

It is in this context that human rights activists have called for stepping up political pressure as a way to prevent further attacks.

Last January, MSF reported its medical facilities in Yemen had been bombed four times in less than three months, with two hospitals, a clinic and an ambulance coming under fire.

Last Wednesday, more than 50 people died in the bombing by the Syrian government of a hospital supported by MSF in northern Syria.

"Increasingly, we are seeing attacks on medical facilities being minimized as 'mistakes'," said Raquel Ayora, director of operations of MSF. "This implies that mistakenly bombing a protected hospital would be tolerable. This logic is offensive and irresponsible."

The Pentagon reiterated in an official report on Friday that the Kunduz bombing was unintentional, blaming human errors and "equipment failures". According to the report, "administrative actions" have been meted out against 16 American military personnel, including a general officer; but no criminal charges have been pressed.

MSF bristled at the findings of the U.S. investigation. "The threshold that must be crossed for this deadly incident to amount to a grave breach of international humanitarian law is not whether it was intentional or not," said Meinie Nicolai, the group's president.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Pakistan poisoned sweets death toll climbs to 33

Some 33 people including five children have now died in central Pakistan after eating sweets accidentally tainted with insecticide, officials said.

The mass poisoning occurred in the Karor Lal Esan area of Punjab province last month.

"The death toll from poisonous sweets has risen to 33 and 13 other victims are still in hospital," district police chief Muhammad Ali Zia told AFP.

Local resident Umar Hayat bought the baked confectionery on April 17 to distribute among friends and family to celebrate the birth of his grandson.

But their jubilation was short-lived when ten people died on the same day.

Police investigator Haji Mohammad Akhtar told AFP that two sweet shop owners and one worker who were arrested after the incident would be brought

before a court on Monday.

Akhtar said a chemical examination had indicated the presence of agriculture pesticides in the sweets, which had been consumed by 52 people.

Police were investigating how the chemicals were introduced into the sweets preparation process, he said.

Police last week said the worker may have inadvertently added pesti-

cide to the sweet mix since there was a pesticide shop close by which was being renovated, and the owner had left his products at the bakery for safe keeping.

Officials said the dead included the baby boy's father and six of his uncles and one aunt.

Pakistan has poor food safety standards and hygiene laws are rarely implemented.

(Source: AFP)

JUMP

Rebuilding the EU or breaking free from it?

6 → This is why the European Economic Community was created by the Treaty of Rome of 1957. It had a noble undertaking, and one that managed to build solid alliances among historical enemies that have lasted longer than any other time in European history, although other factors, such as the Cold War, the founding of NATO, and the development of nuclear weapons played a significant role in the long period of peace that ensued in Europe since the end of the war.

Be that as it may, the establishment of the European Economic Community evolved in time into something beyond a regional trade regime based on respect of democracy, national sovereignty and social rights: it was transformed into a corporate entity driven by a relentless desire to subjugate labor to the whims of global capital through the hijacking of the state by a global neoliberal elite and the transfer of actual political power from the demos to non-elected officials in Brussels and Frankfurt.

Under imperial setting

Under this imperial setting, the protection of the euro as a global currency is the chief objective of the European elite, while authoritarian neoliberalism reigns supreme and the politics of identity and multiculturalism have replaced universal values.

Today's EU is a huge, bureaucratic labyrinth, a highly elitist and anti-democratic entity, a gravedigger of labor rights and national sovereignty, with national citizens relegated to a status equal to that enjoyed by the subjects of ancient Rome.

This is why Euro elections generate the same enthusiasm among European citizenry as a football game played without spectators, and why the extreme right is gaining political ground and attaining increased legitimacy in virtually every European nation. Indeed, the type of Europeanisation promoted by EU institutions and policymakers is completely alien to the vision of a social and democratic Europe, a process that has enormously affected the ability of national governments to address effectively the specific needs and problems facing their economies and societies.

As for the euro, the EU's adoption of a single currency was consistent with the view of the creation of a single European market with a scaled-back state, based on the belief that less state "interference" paves the way to more efficient business operations and lower unit labor costs. It is not a belief that promotes sustainable development or well-functioning and decent societies. With the adoption of a single currency, the space for national economic policymaking was severely restrained - and completely eliminated for those member states under bailout programs.

In the absence of a federal government to attend to issues of unemployment and convergence, austerity became, almost by default, an integral component of European political economy, providing a perfect match to labor flexibility and other anti-social reform measures - privatization, the commodification of health and education, pension reform - all of which are geared towards the complete marketization of society.

Progressive-minded forces

In light of how deficient and undemocratic the EU has become, the task for all progressive-minded forces should be how to break free from this Frankenstein's monster-like creation, not how to rebuild it.

Rebuilding the EU would be the equivalent of seeking to rebuild ancient Rome when its institutions had become clearly obsolete and a hindrance to social progress.

Breaking free from the EU implies making the nation-state the center of all political action and bringing back the state as a vehicle of social and economic development. It also implies delinking from the euro as a common currency and restraining the power of global capital to run roughshod over labor.

Breaking free from the EU would not lead to the return of old, national rivalries and neither would it produce social chaos, as Europeanists like to claim, for the simple fact that the economic ties that bound will remain in place while war in today's environment carries only liabilities. Finally, breaking free from the EU will allow democracy to flourish and may even help to re-establish universal values at the core of European culture.

In sum, Europeans have nothing to lose and everything to gain by breaking free from EU's neoliberal and anti-democratic regime. The only losers will be empire-builders and financial vultures.

(Source: The CSM)

Karbasian to Explain Revitalization of Iran's Industry in Zurich

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Mehdi Karbasian, Chairman of the board of Iranian mines and mining industries development and renovation organization (IMIDRO), will lecture on "Revitalization of Iranian Industry" in 3RD Europe-Iran Forum in Zurich, Switzerland, IMIDRO's office of public relations reported.

According to this report, 3RD Europe-Iran Forum set to be held in Zurich, Switzerland on May 3-4, 2016.

Senior business executives, policymakers and industry experts from Iran and Europe will attend the event. This world class business conference will be the first major gathering following the implementation joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA), it is not only to enable networking and business development, but also to elevate the conversation about Iran's role in the global economy by looking to the future.

Speakers will lecture on several subjects such as the role of banks in the Iranian economy, information and communication technology, leadership in the private sector, infrastructure and construction, strategies to secure financing, the future of Iran's "mother industries", manufacturing and supply chain, transportation and logistics and strategies for global competitiveness. Alongside Mehdi Karbasian, Majid Ghasemi CEO of Bank Pasargad, Giulio Haas Ambassador of Switzerland in Iran, Jarrett Blanc Deputy Coordinator of US State department, Parviz Aghili CEO of Middle East Bank, Aliashraf Afkhami Chairman of bank of Industry and Mine and many other officials will speak in this event.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



"It's not easy being a mother. If it were easy, fathers would do it." *The Golden Girls*

NEWS

'Most women in U.S. experience discrimination'

Women demonstrate outside a Walmart store in Hyattsville, Maryland, on September 5, 2013 against its employment practices.



A majority of women in the United States have personally experienced discrimination based on their gender, according to a new poll. The results from an NBC News/SurveyMonkey poll show that 51 percent of American females face gender-based discrimination in society.

Many of those polled also said the society has not yet reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.

The percentage of Democratic women who said they have experienced discrimination on the basis of their race was 23 points higher than the percentage of Republican women who said so - 62 percent to 39 percent.

Among Independent women, 46 percent said they have personally experienced gender-based discrimination.

The issue of unfair treatment of women and gender-based discrimination has been at the forefront of the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign.

During a speech on April 26, Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump said the only thing Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton has going for her in the presidential race is the "woman's card" and that women do not actually like the female candidate.

On Wednesday, Trump repeated his gender-themed attack on Clinton, taking further aim at the likely Democratic nominee and claiming his original remarks were not sexist in nature.

"It's not sexist. It's true. It's just a very, very true statement. If she were a man, she'd get five percent," Trump said during a telephone interview with ABC's "Good Morning America." "She's a bad candidate. She's a flawed candidate."

She's not going to do very well in the election, and I look forward to showing that," he added.

A USA Today-Suffolk University poll released earlier this week showed that 66 percent of likely female voters had an unfavorable view of Trump, compared with 48 percent who had an unfavorable view of Clinton.

(Source: Press TV)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Strawberry waffles

"A rather quick and easy waffle recipe, with the added goodness of fresh strawberries. Serve warm, topped with warm maple syrup, or the fruit syrup of your choice."

- Ingredients:**
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups buttermilk



- 1/2 cup vanilla Greek-style yogurt
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 1/2 tablespoons white sugar
- 3/4 cup chopped strawberries, or more

Directions:
Preheat and grease a waffle iron according to manufacturer's instructions.

Sift flour, baking powder, and salt together in a bowl. Whisk buttermilk, yogurt, butter, eggs, and sugar together in a separate bowl; stir into flour mixture until batter is smooth. Fold strawberries into batter.

Pour about 1/3 cup batter into preheated waffle iron; cook until lightly browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Repeat with remaining batter.



Without earth no birth!

Iranian women do not give up easily: Tech girl Roxanne Varza

→1

"Iranian women have a very good spirit. I love it. I have heard a lot about difficulties and challenges that they have but still they have a very strong spirit," Varza said in an interview with the Tehran Times.

"This was a funny feeling when I came to know that I am among the top thirties. I think it is always very nice to be on this list but I definitely think that there are so many women around the world that should be recognized", she explained.

"Technology is both for men and women. When we started Girls in Tech, we were two people. I was a journalist at the time and I was writing about technology startups and all the startups that I met were founded by men and I was looking for some new stories. So we started this group to see who are the women working in technology and we actually discovered that they are a lot but they don't go to other technology events," Varza said, who was the former editor of TechCrunch France (2010-2011).

So, this was the main reason that we started Girls in Tech and today we do a lot of different programs to help encourage more women to join technology, she said, adding the number of women in technology is very low, usually around 30% in western Europe and the U.S..

I know Iran's statistics is actually much better, she noted.

"For girls that want to work on startups, I usually say you should start your own project. It doesn't have to be your own start-up, but a startup project," Varza, the director of the Halle Freyssinet,



1000 Startups project, which is set to be the largest startup incubator worldwide said.

I did the same thing when I started my blog or when I started Girls in Tech, explained Varza, the co-founder of the French and British chapters of Girls in Tech.

Startup is not specific to women, but definitely I have been very excited about getting more women into technology and encouraging especially younger generations to come into technology, she noted.

For me beginning to work in startups was by accident. I worked for a French government agency, working with American startups to bring them to France. So I tried to open offices for facebook, twitter, and other companies in France and

that was when I discovered actually I love startups, Varza said.

I love people who are creative, very optimistic and very intelligent. So I love entrepreneurs and that is how I got involved in startups. The second step I took was when I started a blog and my blog let me meet a lot of people, go to lots of events, and develop my network.

The talent of women in technology is actually very good. When people ask me what is the difference between a man and woman, I always say I don't know. I haven't been a man! But I think when we are looking at the talent, it is exactly the same. Women are actually matching men in everything, she stressed.

I think it is a very good time to be a woman entrepreneur right now, noted

Varza. I always think even though women's percentage in technology is very low, it's an advantage. Having been somebody who is rare is definitely something that people remember and people notice, which actually helps businesses a lot and the second thing is right now we are seeing a lot of big corporations, Microsoft, Google, IBM, all big companies that want to work more with women, she explained.

I think they are looking at being in diverse profiles. They don't want to hire a ton of people with the same background, because that's not where innovation comes from. So I think that they are realizing that they need women, said Varza, who was the lead for Microsoft's startup activities in France, running both Bizspark and Microsoft Ventures programs for 3 years.

There is no reason that a woman should be paid less than a man in any job, she stressed. There are different campaigns in France to make equal salaries for men and women.

Varza who prefers to come to Iran than going to the U.S., travels to Iran at least once a year, this time to meet her old grandmother, Tooran Shahriyari, who is one of the first female Iranian lawyers and also a poet living in Tehran.

I think Iran is also in a very exciting time because its economy and market is very attractive for foreigners, Varza noted, adding, foreigners want to learn about Iran and they want to be connected with Iran; and I think Iran is a very good place for investment right now.

Iran's elections bring more women in Majlis

WOMEN TEHRAN — Voting desk results published on April 30 show the new Iranian parliament has more women than the last parliaments, with 17 women. According to official voting results, 17

women have been elected to the Iranian parliament, setting a new record for the Islamic Republic, with the previous highest number of female MPs being 14. The new female section of the parliament mostly shares reformist views, while the

previous parliament had only 9 women who shared mostly conservative views.

With 290 seats total, 133 seats went to reformists, and 125 to conservatives, with the rest distributed between independents and minori-

ties. There are 136 parties that take part in parliamentary elections in Iran. During the first round of elections that took place in February no party achieved the required 25% of parliamentary representatives.

Pregnant women and new mothers 'face rise in discrimination at work'

Pregnant women and new mothers are suffering increasing levels of unfair treatment at work, including cuts in hours, being put on zero-hours contracts or even forced out of their job, a report has revealed.

Citizens Advice warned of a growing problem of new and expectant mothers facing discrimination. The charity said there had been a 25% increase in people seeking workplace advice on pregnancy and maternity issues in the past year, with more than 22,000 visits to its website.

Evidence from Citizens Advice included pregnant women and new mothers having their working hours cut, being put on to zero-hours contracts, being pressured to return to work early from maternity leave and, in some cases, forced out of their jobs.

One woman turned to Citizens Advice for help when her employer cut her weekly hours by more than half after she told them she was pregnant. Her boss claimed there was not enough work available to keep her on her previous hours, despite taking on new staff at the same time.

Another woman contacted her employer to find out why she had not received any maternity pay, to be told they had ended her contract while she was on maternity leave.

The report is the latest suggestion that pregnancy discrimination, which is illegal, is on the rise. In March, govern-



ment-commissioned research warned that three-quarters of pregnant women and new mothers experience discrimination at work and one in nine lose their job as a result. The study by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) suggests that discrimination has risen significantly since 2005, when 45% of women said they had experienced such discrimination.

The chief executive of Citizens Advice, Gillian Guy, said: "Pregnant women should be supported at work, not made to fear for their livelihood. It is concerning that more and more new and expectant mums are experiencing discrimination issues at work."

"People with a baby on the way will have a lot on their minds already. The last thing they need is a threat to their income or job

security. All employers should respect and uphold the rights of staff who are new parents or expecting a baby."

A government spokesman said: "Discrimination is unlawful and completely unacceptable. Attracting and retaining female talent is crucial to economic growth and, as well as being against the law, it does not make business sense for employers to alienate and discriminate against women in their workforce."

"We are determined to stand up for our workers and are taking action to tackle discrimination at work against pregnant women and parents."

The EHRC has previously called for a number of reforms to give pregnant women more protection in the workplace, including stronger steps to prevent employers asking in job interviews about a woman's pregnancy or her intention to have children.

It also suggested ministers could explore the feasibility of a collective insurance scheme to help employers from small and medium businesses provide enhanced pay and cover for maternity leave, as in Denmark.

The government did not accept the EHRC's suggestion that employment tribunal fees could be reduced, but it has committed to a number of other recommendations, such as working with businesses to raise employers' awareness of their legal obligations.

(Source: The Guardian)

IN FOCUS @ ISNA / POURIYA PAKIZEH



A student presents a flower bouquet to her teacher on the occasion of Teachers' Day, May 1st.

Pensioner insulted hijab-wearing mother

Barbara Blauvelt, 77, confronted the Muslim woman who was with her children at a Sainsbury store in Bexhill, East Sussex, in January.

Blauvelt told British-born Ritha Ahmed: "Women in Britain don't cover up. You should not cover up. If you are going to live in Britain, you should live by British rules. You look like you're about to bomb the place."

During the police investigation, Ms Ahmed, 35, told officers Blauvelt had hurled similar abuse at her outside a local GPs' surgery in September last year. Blauvelt had pleaded not guilty to two charges of religiously aggravated intentional harassment, alarm or distress, but magistrates in Eastbourne found her guilty.

The pensioner was given a conditional discharge with £620 costs and a victim surcharge of £15. Sergeant Peter Allan of Sussex Police, said: "I am pleased the court has convicted the defendant in this case."

(Source: express.co.uk)

Iranian referee Faghani appointed for Rio 2016 Olympic

SPORTS Iran's Alireza Faghani has been appointed to referee at the Olympic Football Tournament Rio 2016.

Faghani will be assisted by Reza Sokhandan and Mohammadreza Mansouri in the tournament.

The FIFA Referees Committee has confirmed the appointment of 88 match officials from over 40 countries to officiate at the event, FIFA.com wrote.

The men's competition will see 18 referees and 32 assistant referees officiate and at the women's tournament, 14 referees and 24 assistant referees will be on duty. In both competitions, all six FIFA Confederations will be represented.

The Olympic Football Tournament Rio 2016 represents the first important step on the road to the FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 and the FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019 for match officials.

The Olympic Football Tournament Rio 2016 will take place from August 3rd - 21st, with the competition's men's and women's finals taking place in the iconic Maracana stadium.

The opening game of the tournament, the first group game of the women's competition, will be played at the Olympic Stadium in Rio de Janeiro on Wednesday August 3rd.

Seven stadiums in total will host Olympic Football Tournament competitions including 2014 FIFA World Cup host venues: Belo Horizonte, Manaus, Salvador and Sao Paulo.



I would like to begin my coaching career with Queiroz, says Javad Nekounam

SPORTS Former Iran national team captain Javad Nekounam revealed that he is going to start his coaching career as Carlos Queiroz assistant at Team Melli.

"I don't want to lose this chance to work with Queiroz since I can learn a lot from him. He is a great coach and this would be an honor for me to be his assistant at Team Melli," Nekounam said.

Former Osasuna midfielder, who is currently playing in Qatar Stars League side Al Arabi, stated that he would like to continue his playing career.

"Al Arabi has offered me a contract extension and



When I see I have still offer from outside of Iran I don't want to put an end to my playing career.

"I don't like to retire from football because at the age of 35 I still have good offers to continue. But I will terminate my playing career if I have a chance to work with Queiroz. Before joining Al Arabi I talked with Queiroz and he told me to continue playing," he said.

Nekounam spent most of his professional career with Osasuna, appearing in 197 official games and scoring 31 goals during his two spells and also being team captain.

He has represented the Iranian national team 151 times, playing several major tournaments including two World Cups and four Asian Cups.

Jordan Burroughs praises Iranian wrestlers

SPORTS Three-time world champion and Olympic gold medalist Jordan Burroughs said that the Iranian wrestlers are highly disciplined and it's difficult to defeat them.

"Iranian wrestlers are well-formed and I believe that they are among the best in the world. They wrestle in a similar way because they train together but I and Tony Ramos are different because we train in our city," he said.

"I've never defeated Team Iran with my country since the Iranian wrestlers are highly disciplined and well-pre-



pared. Iranian are wrestlers to beat since they believe that they deserve to win," Burroughs added.

"I know I am a talented wrestler but I also work hard. Furthermore, I have good coaches in the U.S. and they help me to achieve my goal," the 74kg wrestler stated.

"I will bid farewell to wrestling after the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. However, I really don't know what happen until the Olympics. Nobody knows what will happen next year. You will likely suffer an injury, nobody knows," Burroughs concluded.

Real Madrid 'doing everything' to sign Alvaro Morata

Juventus sporting director Beppe Marotta admits Real Madrid "have done everything to convince" Alvaro Morata to rejoin them this summer.

Madrid can buy Morata back from Juve for €30m, having sold him to the Bianconeri for €10m less than two years ago, but speculation is mounting that the capital giants will exercise their repurchase option and sell him on to a Premier League club for a sizeable profit.

Nonetheless, Marotta told Sport Mediaset: "The will of the player is crucial."

"Alvaro is appreciated by us, he's closely linked to the club and his desire is to stay, although Real Madrid have done everything to



convince him. In any case, we'll rely on his will.

"Morata's situation not only depends on us. We want to him to stay and we'll try to speak with Real Madrid as soon as possible.

"Morata's future is linked to what Madrid will do as they're currently fighting for the Spanish League and Champions League."

(Source: FootballEspana)

Xavi Hernandez 'doesn't like Atletico Madrid style'

Barcelona legend Xavi Hernandez has accused Atletico Madrid of playing too defensively as "I don't enjoy watching teams who shut up shop".

Atleti's style of play under Diego Simeone has divided opinion, despite their significant progress, with their commitment to the cause countered by a perceived over-physicality, and Xavi - while praising their Coach for his management style - admitted he disliked Los Colchoneros' approach.

"I'm happy [at Al Sadd], I think I was 100 percent right to come here," the Al Sadd midfielder told BeIN Sports, when asked about his new club.

However, it was his opinion of events back in Spain which caught the eye, when he criticised the methods that Atletico Madrid use.



"I don't enjoy watching teams who shut up shop."

Xavi admitted that there were times when his Spain side would keep things tight, but argued the strategies of the side was fundamentally different from Atletico's.

"[Spain] won the World Cup by winning 0-1, 1-0 and 0-1 but playing good football."

(Source: FootballEspana)

Leicester's Jamie Vardy voted 2016 Player of the Year by the Football Writers' Association

Leicester City striker Jamie Vardy has won the Football Writers' Association Player of the Year award.

The England international topped the poll of 290 journalists with 36 per cent of the vote, a clear winner ahead of team-mates Riyad Mahrez and N'Golo Kante.

The 29-year-old striker has scored 24 goals for club and country so far this season as the Foxes close in on what would be a remarkable Barclays Premier League title triumph. They will be crowned champions should closest rivals Tottenham fail to beat Chelsea on Monday evening. Seven Leicester players received votes in the FWA poll, with captain Danny Drinkwater, goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel, defenders Wes Morgan and Danny Simpson being recognised by the voters.

Leicester forward Vardy will be honoured with the prestigious FWA accolade, which has been

running since 1948, at a gala dinner in London on May 12.

FWA chairman Andy Dunn, of the Sunday Mirror, said: "It is testament to their all-round excellence that so many Leicester players polled votes from our members."

"The Jamie Vardy story, though, clearly captured the imagination of so many writers."

"His record-breaking feat of scoring in 11 consecutive matches is the jewel in what will surely be Leicester's Premier League crown."

"And the Footballer of the Year award is not just a reflection of his fantastic season, but recognition of a remarkable journey from non-league to the international stage."

Other players to receive votes from FWA members were Tottenham striker Harry Kane, West Ham playmaker Dimitri Payet, Manchester City duo Sergio Aguero and Kevin De Bruyne as well

as Spurs midfielder Dele Alli.

Vardy said: "It's a great honour to win such a prestigious award and to have my name added to a list of previous winners that includes some unbelievable players. Thank you to the Football Writers' Association and to everyone that voted."

"Thank you also to my team-mates, who are the reason I've been able to achieve anything. It's been an amazing season for all of us at Leicester, based on teamwork not individuals, which you can see in the voting. Thanks also to the manager, all the staff and the fans for their support."

"We're all totally focused on getting over the line in the final two weeks of the season and turning a great season into one we'll never forget. Hopefully I can contribute to that and, if selected, carry some good form into the Euros this summer."

(Source: PASport)

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Bayern's Guardiola under pressure for Atletico return

BERLIN (AFP) — Bayern Munich's coach Pep Guardiola knows he needs to prove his critics wrong by overturning a 1-0 first-leg deficit against Atletico Madrid in Tuesday's crunch home Champions League semi-final.

Guardiola and Bayern are bidding to avoid losing a semi-final to a Spanish side for the third year running having lost the first-leg last Wednesday at Atletico after Saul Niguez's early solo strike.

Having won 14 titles in four years at Barcelona and six titles so far in three years with Bayern, Guardiola hopes to sign off in charge of Munich by lifting the Champions League trophy at the final on May 28 in Milan.

Bayern have exited the Champions League semi-finals for the last two years running with defeats to Real Madrid in 2014, then to Barcelona last year.

Another exit at the hands of Spanish opposition will not go down well in Bavaria, especially in the wake of Guardiola's decision to start the first leg in Madrid with Germany star Thomas Mueller, Bayern's top scorer in Europe this season, on the bench.

The decision drew plenty of criticism from the German media and, by his own admission, the Munich leg is Guardiola's "final bullet" in the battle to prove any critics wrong before he leaves to coach Manchester City next season.

"I have read in a German newspaper that my work in Munich will only be valued, and the job considered done, if I win the Champions League. That's how it'll be seen," Guardiola told reporters after Bayern saw off Benfica in the quarterfinals.

- Strong home record -

Bayern have been unstoppable at home in Europe this season, winning all five games at the Allianz Arena, but needed extra time to come back from 2-0 down to beat Juventus 4-2 at home in the second leg of the last 16.

They have won all 11 home games in Europe since being hammered 4-0 in the Munich leg by Real Madrid in the 2014 semi-finals, having lost 1-0 in Spain.

But, as they demonstrated in Saturday's 1-1 Bundesliga draw at home to Borussia Moechengladbach, they are simply not currently playing well, as they typically sat back after taking an early lead through Mueller's header.

The result denied Bayern the victory which would have confirmed them as Bundesliga champions, now they have to wait until Saturday's away game at Ingolstadt when they could become the first club to win four straight German league titles.

The good news from the Gladbach draw is that Germany defender Jerome Boateng is fit again after 99 days out with a groin injury having played the first 68 minutes in Munich.

"It was important to get a few minutes. I hope with the emotions of the game I'll have the strength to play for the 90 minutes (against Atletico). The tempo will be very different," said Boateng.

"Our chances are good. We're playing at home, the pitch will be good and we want to put pressure on from the start."

In turn, Diego Simeone's Atletico were boosted by the news Uruguay defender Diego Godin and Belgium winger Yannick Carrasco took part in training on Sunday after injury.

Godin has missed the last two weeks with a hamstring injury and is set to return as the cornerstone of Atletico's defence in their bid to repeat their run to the 2014 final, there they lost 4-1 to Real Madrid after extra-time.

"It is the best thing to have great games and the tiredness matters little," said Atletico's Antoine Griezman, the goal-scorer in their 1-0 Spanish league win over Rayo Vallecano on Saturday, when Simeone made seven changes.

"We are very enthusiastic. Every player dreams of playing in a Champions League semi-final and we will give everything."

Iran futsal captain Keshavarz undergoes knee surgery

Iranian national futsal team's captain Mohammad Keshavarz underwent successful arthroscopic knee surgery on Sunday to repair a torn meniscus.

Keshavarz injured in the match against Iraq in the 2016 AFC Futsal Championships in February in Uzbekistan.

Keshavarz can start his light training from Monday.

He will be a key member of Iran futsal team in the 2016 World Cup which will be held in Colombia from September 10 to October 1.



(Source: Tasnim)



Poem of the day

But when the Day of Reckoning is here,
I fancy little will be the gain.

Hafez

Prayer Times

Noon:13:01 Evening: 20:12 Dawn: 4:35 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:09 (tomorrow)

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■ Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
■ www.eshtarak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co. Tel: 88911433
■ Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
■ Printed at: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

NEWS IN BRIEF



"Scarecrow's Heart" tops at Italian festival

T E H R A N — Iranian director Ghodessk Lamreza Kazzazi's "Scarecrow's Heart" was crowned best animated movie at the 17th International Short Film Festival "Corti da Sogni - Antonio Ricci" in Italy.

Produced by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, the non-narrative movie is about a stranded sparrow that seeks refuge beneath a scarecrow's clothes to avoid hungry crows in the middle of a frozen field.

A total of 68 short films from 27 countries went on screen at the festival, which was held at the Rasi Theatre in Ravenna from April 27 to 30 April.



Regional Music Festival to echo in Kerman

T E H R A N — Bands, instrumentalists and vocalists from across Iran will be in the southern Iranian city of Kerman late this week to perform their native songs during the 9th Regional Music Festival.

Nine other cities in Kerman Province including Rafsanjan, Bam, Sirjan, Zarand and Baft will also host performances by bands and singers during the event, which will be held from May 6 to 10.

Groups from various regions of Iran, including Gilan, Kordestan, West Azarbaijan, East Azarbaijan, Fars, Sistan-Baluchestan, South Khorasan, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Bushehr, Hormozgan and Lorestan, will participate in the festival.



Guitar-clarinet duets to liven up Tehran hall

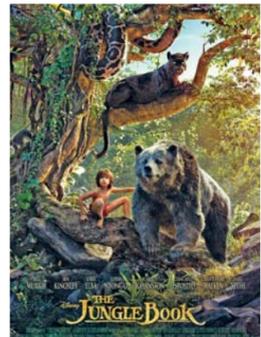
T E H R A N — Iranian classical guitarist Golfam Khayyam and clarinet virtuoso Mona Riahi are scheduled to perform duets at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on May 4 and 5.

Pieces from their album "Naqsh" ("Image") have been selected for the performance.

"Jungle Book" rules box office again; "Civil War" looms

NEW YORK (AP) — Disney's "The Jungle Book" trounced a handful of underperforming new releases to rule the box office for a third consecutive week, while next week's certain champ, "Captain America: Civil War", began setting records overseas.

Jon Favreau's live-action Rudyard Kipling adaptation earned \$42.4 million in its third week at North American theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday. One of the year's biggest hits, "The Jungle Book" has now totaled \$684.8 million globally.



The weekend's debuts withered under the stampede of "The Jungle Book".

Keegen-Michael Key and Jordan Peele's feline action-comedy "Keanu" opened with a modest \$9.4 million. That was a whisker behind "The Huntsman: Winter's War," which limped its way to \$9.4 million in its second disappointing week of release.

Warner Bros.' R-rated "Keanu", from the former Comedy Central stars of "Key and Peele", cost only about \$15 million to make. In it, they play Los Angeles cousins who are led into a criminal underworld in their search for a lost cat.

Garry Marshall's latest holiday-themed romantic comedy, "Mother's Day", bowed with a weak \$8.3 million despite the presence of stars Jennifer Aniston and Julia Roberts. Though Marshall's "Valentine's Day" opened with \$56.2 million in 2010, audiences have since been less enthusiastic for his poorly reviewed Hallmark card ensembles. "Mother's Day," released by Open Road, even trails the \$13 million opening of 2011's "New Year's Eve."

The video-game adaption "Ratchet & Clank", from Focus Features, made even less of a dent with an estimated \$4.8 million.

German artist Gunther Uecker pays tribute to Hafez

T E H R A N — German op artist Gunther Uecker commemorated Hafez (1325-1389), one of the finest lyric poets of Persian literature, by his exhibition of paintings, which opened at the mausoleum of Hafez in Shiraz on Sunday.

A large number of Iranian and German officials, artists, and Persian literature aficionados accompanied Uecker in the opening ceremony of the exhibit entitled "Tribute to Hafez" ("Huldigung an Hafez"), Persian media reported on Monday.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Uecker, who took inspiration from the ghazals of Hafez to create the collection, called the rich poetry of Hafez a tangible expression of both told and untold stories. He also said that the fragrance of heaven in breezes in the East has encouraged him to respect ghazals of Hafez in his paintings.

Director of the Cultural Section of the German Embassy, Justus Kemper, regarded the exhibition "Tribute to Hafez" as the return of Uecker to Iran, and said that Uecker has been impressed by the people of Iran, and their rich and beautiful country.

The influence of the rich culture and civilization of Iran in the paintings of Hafez are a reflection of his experience in Iran, he added.

The works will be on display in a month-long exhibit at Tar-o-Pood Gallery in Shiraz. The collection will later be shown in the Imam Ali (AS) Religious Arts Museum in Tehran for one month.



Uecker has donated the works to the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. Hannah Baader, a permanent Senior Research Scholar

at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, and Gerhard Wolf, the Director of the Kunsthistorischen Institut, were among the participating guests.

German op artist Gunther Uecker (2nd L) and some unidentified persons visit his exhibition at the tomb of Hafez in Shiraz on May 1, 2016. (IRNA/Reza Qaderi)

"The Little Witch" fascinates children's theater gala

T E H R A N — "The Little Witch" directed by Fariba Daliri has won top awards in three categories at the Celebration of the Association of Theater for Children and Young Adults.

Daliri received the award for best director while her play was also chosen the best play at the celebration, which was held at the Iranian Artists Forum on Sunday evening.

Hadi Hassanali wrote the play based on German writer Otfried Preussler's work of the same name.

In addition, Arash Sadeqian won the best actor award for his role in "The Little Witch" and Anali Shakuri received the best actress award for her role in "One Apple for Two".



A scene from "The Little Witch"

The award for best costume designer was presented to Roshanak Karimi for her collaboration in "Tresses for Flying", also directed by Karimi, and the award for best set designer went to Paria Ali-Mohammadi for her work in "Huckleberry Finn" directed by Ehsan Majidi.

Abbed Atashani won the best composer award for "One Apple for Two" and "Ghulaqu".

The organizer also honored theater expert Manuchehr Akbarlu for his lifetime achievements.

The celebration is annually held by the association, which is affiliated with the Iranian Theater Forum, to honor top theatrical productions staged in Iran over the past year.

PICTURE OF THE DAY Tasnim/Fereidun Qorbani



Flags of Iran flying with pride from poles are seen at Shahre Aftab, a newly-constructed fairground in southern Tehran, on May 2, 2016. The fairground will host the 29th Tehran International Book Fair, which will be inaugurated by President Hassan Rouhani. The ten-day exhibition will be open to the public on Wednesday.

Prince's motorcycle jacket from "Purple Rain" film on auction

NEW YORK (Reuters) — A motorcycle jacket worn by the late pop star Prince in his 1984 film "Purple Rain", when he rides through the woods, will be sold at auction, the company behind the sale said on Friday.

The V-neck jacket, which is black with white cross-hatching and has leather sleeves from the elbows down, will be presented for sale in Profiles in History's auction between June 29 and July 1 in Calabasas, California.

Brian Chanes, who handles client relations at Profiles in History, said the auction house received the jacket about six weeks ago, before the musician's unexpected death on April 21 at age 57.

Officials from the company had estimated the jacket would sell for between \$6,000 and \$8,000, but that was before Prince's death, which drew an outpouring of tributes for the seven-time Grammy-winner from President Barack Obama, Hollywood figures and fans worldwide.

"Now, all bets are off," Chanes said, adding that the jacket could fetch more than \$100,000.

Culture minister asks Justice Ministry help protect copyrights law

T E H R A N — Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Ali Jannati has asked the Ministry of Justice to help protect the copyrights law in the country.

He made the remarks at the Sixth Seminar of Art, Literary and Relevant Rights Ownership held at the National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) on Monday.

"If the Ministry of Justice does not cooperate with us, we cannot protect copyrights," Jannati remarked.

"But if the regulations are observed properly in the country, and other public organizations cooperate with us, we can protect the legal rights of the producers," he explained.

He continued, "The seminar is held annually to protect art and literary works in today's virtual world. We have talked many times about the legal rights of the producers of art and literary works.

"We are still having problems with the illegal publication of books, films and music albums. An artwork is like the child of the producer, and when the child is stolen,



Culture Minister Ali Jannati attends the Sixth Seminar of Art, Literary and Relevant Rights Ownership at the National Library and Archives of Iran on May 2, 2016. (Mehr/Hossein Esmaeili)

there no longer would be motivation for the producer to continue," Jannati said.

He next explained that a bill to join the Universal Copyright Convention was completed by the Ministry of Culture in 2012, and has been submitted for discussion in the cabinet and awaits final approval.

"The bill has been prepared based on the universal conventions so that Iran can join the Berne Convention in the future," he explained.

He hoped that by approval of the bill, Iran can be a member of international organizations to help protect the legal rights of producers.

Minister of Justice Mostafa Purmohammadi said that the increasing number of world officials' visits to the country indicates that they have found the atmosphere of the country to be favorable.

"As we are helping the producers, we need to help and protect artists and writers. Those individuals who are doing research works need serious help. They need to make use of their products and they should own the rights.

"If we do not provide them such assistance, they will publish their works outside the country," he added.