



MPs have final say on parliament speaker: government

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## Europeans and Americans are extremely ignorant about Islam: professor

**INTERVIEW**  
By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Prof. William O. Beeman, head of the anthropology department at the State University of Minnesota, says “Europeans and Americans are extremely ignorant about Islam.”

Beeman tells the Tehran Times since “Westerners know so very little about the religion, they tend to equate ISIS and its actions (also Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al-Shabab, and the Taliban) with ALL of Islam.”

However terrorist groups such Daesh have terribly tarnished the image of Islam in the eyes of the people in the world, the professor laments.

Following is the text of the interview:

**■ What is the Westerners’ understanding of Islam?**

A: Europeans and Americans are extremely ignorant about Islam. Many think that “Allah” is a pagan god.

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# President Hassan Rouhani opens Tehran Intl. Book Fair

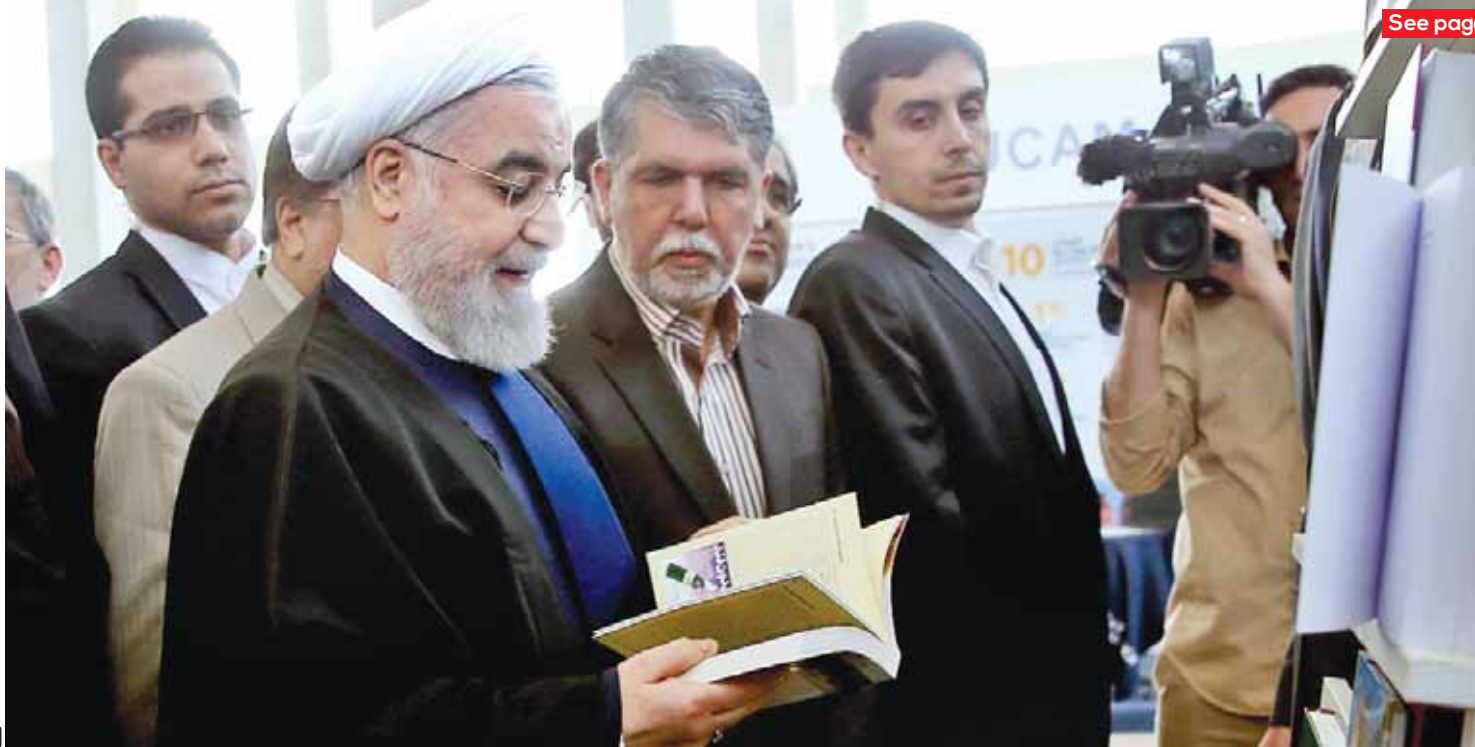
**TEHRAN** — The 29th Tehran International Book Fair was officially inaugurated by President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday at Shahre Aftab, a newly-con-

structed fairground in southern Tehran.

“I am delighted to be among the literary figures, writers, scholars and the publishers at the opening of this great cultural event,” Rouhani

said.

He also expressed his thanks to the Russian officials attending the fair as the special guest country this year.



President Hassan Rouhani visits the 29th Tehran International Book Fair after inaugurating the event at Shahre Aftab, a newly-constructed fairground in southern Tehran, on May 3, 2015. (ISNA/Borna Qasemi)

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## Germany ready for auto, energy, environmental co-op with Iran

**TEHRAN** — Berlin is ready to expand its ties in automobile, petrochemicals, renewable energy, transport, environment, water management, as well as port development with Tehran, German Deputy Economy Minister Uwe Beckmeyer said on the sidelines of Iran-Germany Economic and Investment Cooperation Forum in Tehran on Tuesday.

Addressing the mentioned forum, head of the Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran, Mohammad Khazaei, announced that Iran is at last stages of finalizing a deal with the German insurance company, Hermes, on the way to supply the required financial resources and insurance coverage.

German industry has been hoping for a surge in exports to Iran after international sanctions were lifted in January in return for the Islamic Republic complying with a deal to curb its nuclear program.

Germany was the first Western country to dispatch a high-ranking political and trade delegation to Iran after nuclear deal.

**■ Iran promises to repay debts from export guarantees**

Elsewhere in his remarks, Beckmeyer said Iran had promised to repay soon old debts arising from state guarantees for German exports, clearing the way for fresh guarantees to be issued.

“Iran has now recognized its old debts and promised me to pay them in the near-term,” Beckmeyer told Reuters.

Iran owes Germany about 500 million euros (\$578.90 million) under so-called Hermes covers, a German government arrangement that protects German companies if foreign debtors fail to pay.

## Iran has had steepest birth decline worldwide: official

**TEHRAN** — According to the reports provided with world’s credible population monitoring centers Iran has had the steepest decline in new-borns, a member of the Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution said on Tuesday.



Speaking on the occasion of the national week of population starting from May 14, Kobra Khaz’ali, director of cultural and social committee of the SCCR, said that Iran’s birth drop occurred over the past 10 to 15 years and if it continues the population starts to grow old.

Khaz’ali noted that based on global standards population policies should reform every 5 to 10 years while in Iran they haven’t changed for the past 50 years.

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## 3rd Europe-Iran Forum opens in Zurich

**TEHRAN** — The 3rd Europe-Iran Forum opened on Tuesday in Zurich, Switzerland. The 2-day event offers a new and innovative program designed to balance high-level networking opportunities with panels and industry-focused workshops of real practical value.

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## Intl. Quran competition to launch in Tehran

**TEHRAN** — The 33rd International Quran Competition is scheduled to launch in Iran, at Mosalla-e Tehran from May 11-17. There will be a large number of Quran reciters and memorizers from 80 countries participating in the competition.

The event will be providing a unique opportunity for Muslims from different races across the continents to assemble in a display of unity.

## Zarif says Iran has no limit to expand ties with Malaysia

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that Iran and Malaysia have always had “good relations” and Tehran has no limit to expand ties with Kuala Lumpur. “Relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Malaysia have been good and forward moving from a historical point of view and the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to expand all-out cooperation with Malaysia,” he said during a meeting with Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman in Tehran.

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## Iran stresses political solution to Syrian crisis

**TEHRAN** — Iran has been stressing the need to find a political solution to the crisis in Syria and sending humanitarian aid to the country since the beginning of the war in the country, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Monday.

“Some of the actors have supported the terrorists by adopting military approach to reach their objectives, but the Islamic Republic of Iran has stressed political solution and simultane-

ously supported the process of political reforms in Syria,” Amir-Abdollahian said during a meeting with Secretary General of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Christian Masset in Tehran.

Amir-Abdollahian also expressed concern over violation of ceasefire in Syria. “In spite of the agreements reached in Geneva upon ceasefire in Syria, some of the armed forces adopted hostile approach and violated the ceasefire in a coordinated plan with Daesh and Al-Qaeda,” he lamented. It is essential for the international community

to reach a proper understanding about definition of the terrorist groups, he said in reference to differences over who can be classified as terrorist or opposition. Masset said that Tehran and Paris share common views on solution to the Syrian crisis. He cited fighting terrorism and supporting the process of democracy in Syria as examples of common views of the two countries. According to Tasnim news agency, Amir-Abdollahian planned to visit Moscow on Wednesday to meet with his Russian counterpart Mikhail Bogdanov.

## U.S. killed nuclear deal in 2005: Jack Straw

**INTERVIEW**  
By Hamid Reza Gholamzadeh

In an exclusive interview with Mehr News Agency, former UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw talked about a host of issues including JCPOA, ISIL, Yemen and of course Brexit.

The Kazakhstan’s capital city of Astana was hosting the 13th Eurasian Media Forum on April 20-22 where many world figures attended as speakers. Former British FM Jack Straw was also among speakers and on the sidelines of the event, sat with Hamid Reza Gholamzadeh of Mehr News Agency’s English edition to respond to a number of questions in an exclusive interview. Here is what he had to share:

**■ NYTimes published a report recently saying that Europeans are dissatisfied with U.S. regulations – sanctions on Iran’s missile program as well as visa waiver rule – and as MEP Marijetje Schaake has put it “Europe is being taken hostage by American policy; we negotiated the nuclear deal together, but now the U.S. is obstructing its execution.” You believe that U.S. administration is pro-JCPOA and it is Congress which is curbing it... do you really think that Obama and his**



**team have done enough to push the deal forward or U.S. is taking JCPOA hostage to put pressure on Iran’s missile program?**

I am completely clear that administration of President Obama fully supports BARJAM (JCPOA) and wants to see it implemented; so president Obama and Secretary Kerry invested huge amount of political capital in the BARJAM. As you know, President Obama even had to face down in direct opposition in Congress from Bibi Netanyahu. So currently they strongly in favor of the deal. The problem has arisen between this U.S. administration during the last 9 months of its life of presidency and the Congress are hard for election. Democrat president got Republican Congress, that is important and it is very frustrating. In my view – and I don’t speak for British

government – it is very frustrating for the UK as well. Both of us have interests in Iran, and are doing what we can to seek resolution to this.

I’m very concerned about it and many people come to me who are involved or want to be involved in trade with Iran and they are also concerned.

**■ During Saadabad negotiations back in your time, you and other European officials didn’t recognize Iran’s right to have centrifuges, while Iran was fully committed to NPT and Additional Protocol; why? And don’t you think that if you had accepted it, the deal might have reached years earlier?**

A: All of us accepted Iran’s right to a civil nuclear program. I personally accepted Iran’s right to run some centrifuges for low enrichment program. We gained the interim agreement in October 2003 that was agreed in Tehran, and we had two more agreements in Paris and Brussels. But we were very close to final agreement; and when I saw Dr. Zarif at the beginning of 2014, on a Parliamentary delegation, he acknowledged that what stopped the deal in 2005 was not about centrifuges; it was our inability to get agreement from the Americans for concessions like aircraft spare parts, etc.

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## Frankfurt Book Fair sets stand at TIBF

**TEHRAN** – The Frankfurt Book Fair has set up a pavilion at the 29th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF), which opened on Tuesday.

Over 350 book titles from about 150 German publishers are on display at the pavilion, the organizers announced.

Frankfurt Book Fair sales manager for Africa, Southeast Asia, Korea and Iran Ursula Holpp and the manager of international projects of the book fair, Claudia Dobry, are currently in Tehran to arrange meetings with Iranian publishers and writers during the event.

Holpp and Dobry are scheduled to attend some review sessions on modern German literature in Tehran.

The TIBF will be running until May 14 at Shahre Aftab, a newly-constructed fairground in southern Tehran.

## 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



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MEDIA MONITOR



MPs thank police for launching moral security division

**TEHRAN** — 190 Iranian MPs in a statement on Tuesday thanked the police for launching an undercover morality division.

In their statement, the MPs also asked all organizations to cooperate with the police, Asriran reported.



Iran a secure island in stormy ocean: Rafsanjani

**TEHRAN** — The head of Expediency Council has said Iran is a secure island in a stormy ocean, noting thorough plans are needed to keep it secure.

The schemes that colonizers had developed for Islamic countries have now turned back on them, he observed in a public speech in Tehran on Tuesday, Nasim reported.



'Defendants of shrine' are smart: Quds force chief

**TEHRAN** — "Defendants of shrine" — a title attributed to those who have been martyred in the fight against terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq — are smart and the fathers and mothers of martyrs should be appreciated for they bring God's bliss, Quds Corps Commander Qassem Soleimani has said.

Soleimani said Imam Khomeini prioritized defense of the system over prayers, Tabnak reported on Tuesday.



'Friends and enemies changed places after JCPOA'

**TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has said after the JCPOA, Iran's "friends and enemies changed places."

"In such circumstances we should take our steps very carefully in the foreign policy sphere," Hossein Jaber Ansari told students at the University of Tabriz on Tuesday, ILNA reported.



Iranian Navy plans to hold 20 military exercises by March 2017

**TEHRAN** — Iran's Navy will continue holding military drills in the Persian Gulf despite an objection by the U.S., the Navy commander said on Tuesday. Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said that the U.S. is against Iran's powerful presence in the Persian Gulf, Fars reported.

He further said that Iran's military drills have nothing to do with other countries.

Sayyari added that the Navy plans to hold at least 20 special military exercises by March 2017.



Larijani insists on keeping Intifada alive

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani in a meeting with Islamic Jihad movement Secretary General Ramadan Abdullah in Tehran on Tuesday stressed the necessity for the Palestinian people to continue Intifada against Israeli occupiers powerfully.

Abdullah, for his part, appreciated Iran for its position and support for Palestine and Intifada, saying Intifada is the only way for Palestinians to gain freedom and get rid of their current situation.



168 to join 'hope parliamentary faction': Aref

**TEHRAN** — The head of reformists' policy-making council has said the "hope parliamentary faction" in the next Majlis may find 168 members.

Mohammad Reza Aref said on Tuesday many independent MPs and even principlists have expressed readiness to enlist in the bloc, the YJC reported.



'170 MPs to form principlist group'

**TEHRAN** — 170 MPs will become members of the next Majlis principlist parliamentary group, an MP has said.

Hossein Naqavi Hosseini told Tasnim on Tuesday that late this week the MPs will convene to coordinate measures.

# Leader: Tehran, Seoul must resist U.S. malice in ties

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, in a meeting on Monday with South Korean President Park Geun-Hye, highlighted the Islamic Republic of Iran's positive view to enhancing cooperation with Asian countries.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution said "persistent and sustainable communications between Iran and South Korea" were helpful for both countries, noting: "The memoranda of understanding and contracts should be struck between the two countries such that foreign factors and sanctions could not negatively affect them because the relations between countries like Iran and South Korea do not merit being influenced by the U.S. willpower."

Ayatollah Khamenei said cooperation and exchange of experience in different scientific, technological, political, social and security domains will be in the interests of both countries, adding: "In our foreign policy we are more inclined to Asia due to cultural and historical commonalities and on this same basis, we believe that there is a greater prospect for understanding, agreement and cooperation with these [Asian] countries including South Korea which is among the advanced Asian countries."

Ayatollah Khamenei also highlighted security challenges prevailing in the Middle East region and the world, saying: "If terrorism and insecurity are not tackled realistically and properly, countering them will become more difficult in the future and no country will be immune to this danger."

Referring to the U.S. officials' classification of terrorism under "good" and "evil" categories, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution said: "The U.S. is chanting the slogan of combating terrorism, but it does not behave sincerely in practice while terrorism in any form is evil and is dangerous to nations and security of countries because without security, favorable progress will not take place."

Regarding cooperation and agreements between the two countries, Ayatollah Khamenei referred to the priority of bilateral cooperation, adding: "Formation of helpful cooperation between Iran and South Korea is possible, but our priorities in cooperation are not [limited to] trade and transactions. Rather, contracts must be signed [in the fields] which are needed by Iran in its infrastructure and public economy."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution said a basic requirement for cooperation between the two countries was that the memoranda and agreements would not be affected by foreign factors, noting: "The relations between Iran and South Korea must not hinge upon sanctions and must not be affected by the U.S. influence and malice, rather the communications between the two countries must be continuous, sustainable, strong and cordial."

Referring to the quite long history of relations between the two countries despite ups and downs, Ayatollah Khamenei said: "Fortunately, the South Korean government is a cooperative government and Iran also enjoys abundant potential-



ities like young, talented and educated manpower for enhancing sustainable cooperation."

In this meeting, which was also attended by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, South Korean President Park Geun-Hye described her visit to Tehran as a valuable opportunity for the development of bilateral relations and boosting mutual confidence. She said: "During years of sanctions we also tried to continue our presence in Iran as long as we could."

The South Korean president said Iran is endowed with effective and efficacious human resources and an exceptional geographical position, adding: "We hope

that relations between the two countries will improve particularly in the economic sector in the future."

Mrs. Park Geun-Hye also referred to Ayatollah Khamenei's remarks about economic development in Iran and his insistence on scientific, economic and industrial development based on self-sufficiency, saying: "I am certain that your insistence on economic development and growth of Iran heralds a very good future for your country and we are also ready to enhance cooperation in different sectors like the environment, science and technology, and economy."

(Source: Leader.ir)

## Six ambassadors hand credentials to Rouhani

President receives credentials of ambassadors of Ukraine, Togo, Iceland, Bangladesh, Lithuania, and Macedonia

**POLITICAL TEHRAN** — In separate meetings on Tuesday President Rouhani received the credentials of the new ambassadors of Ukraine, Togo, Iceland, Bangladesh, Lithuania, and Macedonia.

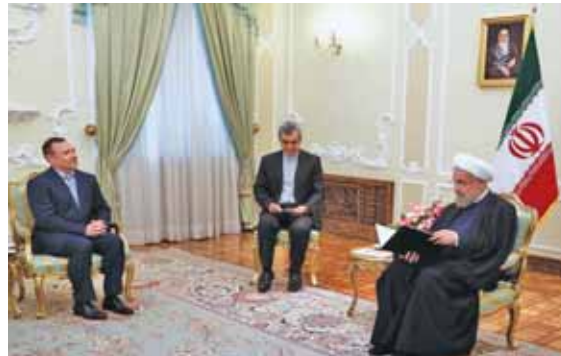
In his meeting with Sergei Burdiliak, the new ambassador of Ukraine to Tehran, Rouhani said the post-JCPOA atmosphere and removal of sanctions on Tehran have created opportunities to expand ties between Iran and Ukraine.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes expansion of relations between the two countries in areas of economy, politics and culture," Rouhani said.

Rouhani highlighted the necessity of using the two countries' capacities to expand ties.

Burdiliak evaluated prospect of Tehran-Kiev ties as "positive" and called for expansion of relations.

Rouhani also told the new Ambassador of Togo Mohamed Sad Ouro-Sama that "expansion of relations and



cooperation with the African countries is a principled policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Iran is ready to expand relations with Togo in various areas, Rouhani added.

Rouhani also told Hermann Ingolfsson, the new ambassador of Iceland to Iran, that "Tehran welcomes expanding and deepening relations with this country in spheres of economy, new technologies and renewable energies."

For his part, Ingolfsson said Iceland attaches great importance to ties with Iran.

**'Iran supports expansion of ties with Bangladesh'**

In the meeting with the Bangladeshi ambassador Mujeeb al-Rahman, Rouhani said that the Iranian government and people support support expansion of ties with Bangladesh as a "friendly and Islamic" country.

He said that the new ambassador of Bangladesh is duty bound to lay the ground for expansion of ties.

The new Lithuanian Ambassador Audrius Bruzga Branko Milic and the new ambassador of Montenegro also submitted their credentials to Rouhani.

## MPs have final say on parliament speaker: government

**POLITICAL TEHRAN** — On Tuesday, the government spokesman branded it as "unrealistic guessing" to say the government is inclined to a specific figure to take the influential parliament speaker seat.

"These analyses are unrealistic guessing because it is up to MPs to decide," Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht said.

There has been an ongoing debate over who will take the helm in the upcoming parliament after the reformist Mohammad Reza Aref took the lead in Tehran.

The dual, people familiar with the matter say, will be between the incumbent Ali Larijani and Aref.

**Expectations of JCPOA impact are incommensurate**

He also said Iran is increasingly reaping the outcomes of the JCPOA, recommending commensurate expectations of the deal.

**"We are yet to benefit from the outcomes of the JCPOA, though we are increasingly reaping the outcomes," Nobakht says.**

mending commensurate expectations of the deal.

"We are yet to benefit from the outcomes of the JCPOA, though we are increasingly reaping the outcomes," Nobakht told a weekly press briefing.

The spokesman's statement comes in reaction to voices from the opponent camp who constantly keep rapping the pact for not resulting in tangible changes.

"The JCPOA is only one of our divergences with world powers," Nobakht highlighted.

On the outcomes of the JCPOA, Nobakht said aside from the removal of sanctions, Tehran has hosted 8 presidents, 5 prime ministers, 3 parliament speakers, and 14 foreign ministers since the deal went into effect in January.

"We have been in talks with 12 international banks and institutions to use credit lines worth \$73 billion and investment permits for 41 projects worth \$3.418 billion have been issued," the spokesman reminded.

**'Iran insists on safe Hajj pilgrimage'**

On this year's hajj pilgrimage, Nobakht said, "We (Iran) insist on a safe and dignified Hajj and do our utmost to pave the way for such hajj as it is not unlikely that Saudis may show no respect to our pilgrims."

Thus far, he added, Saudis have already stonewalled the hajj negotiations, shunning their international and humanitarian responsibilities.

Tehran and Riyadh have so far failed to reach an agreement on this year's pilgrimage after more than 400 Iranian pilgrims lost their lives in the Mena stampede.

**U.S. \$2b-ruling in focus**

On measures taken by the government to nullify U.S. High Court ruling, the spokesman remarked, "At pres-



ident's instruction, a team has been tasked to defend rights of the Iranian nation."

Nobakht stressed that the problem could have been avoided, if right decisions had been made.

Some Iranian media outlets have traced the dossier to the Ahmadinejad administration.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that almost \$2 billion of Iran's assets had to be turned over to the American families of the people killed in a 1983 bombing in Beirut and other attacks baselessly blamed on Iran.

## Jahangiri says macro industrial units on agenda

'Gov. throws its weight behind the private sector'

**POLITICAL TEHRAN** — First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Tuesday establishment of macro industrial units is one of the needs of the country.

Jahangiri made the remarks in the opening ceremony of the Lorestan Petrochemistry, a plant located in the western Lorestan province, according to IRNA.

"Although small and medium-sized enterprises can overcome the unemployment challenge and we need to boost such units, this should not be taken to mean being inattentive to large plans," Jahangiri stressed.

Pointing to petrochemical projects as instances of macro industrial entities, the vice president said invest-

ment in macro plans will never stop being part of the government's agenda.

Such plans have the distinction of feeding small and medium-sized businesses, he remarked.

The petrochemistry sector, Jahangiri added, can attract foreign resources as well as repay loans from its revenues.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Jahangiri noted the government throws its weight behind the private sector, seeing it as an "honor."

At the end of his remarks, Jahangiri referred to capacities of Lorestan, saying, "Water, soil, and educated, industrious human resources can turn the province into an advanced one."





## NEWS

**'Syria ceasefire must be brought back on track'**

United Nations envoy Staffan de Mistura said on Tuesday a faltering truce in Syria must be "brought back on track" as he held talks in Moscow with Russia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov on ending a fresh upsurge in fighting.

As the talks kicked off in Moscow, fighting raged in Syria's second city of Aleppo, with state media reporting that rebel fire on a hospital killed three women. Another 11 people were killed in rebel attacks on other government-held neighborhoods, state news agency SANA reported.

In televised remarks, de Mistura praised the two-month-old truce brokered by Moscow and Washington as a "remarkable achievement" and said the two global powers should help "all of us to make sure that this is brought back on track".

Lavrov for his part said that "there was no alternative to the political settlement of the Syrian crisis", adding that Moscow highly valued Mistura's efforts to help negotiate an end to a conflict that has killed more than 270,000 people since 2011.

"I am looking forward to a fruitful discussion," Lavrov added. The talks in the Russian capital were a last-ditch bid to rescue peace negotiations that have been undermined by the fierce fighting around Aleppo. The meeting comes after a day of diplomacy in Geneva, where United States Secretary of State John Kerry added his weight to efforts to resuscitate the stuttering truce.

(Source: Daily Times)

**California Muslims sue over hijab discrimination**

Two lawsuits filed in California claim that Muslim women were discriminated against in separate incidents because of their religion and for wearing the hijab.

One of the suits claims that police in Long Beach forcibly removed a suspect's headscarf while another suit alleges that a group of women were kicked out of a Laguna Beach coffee house for being Muslim.

According to the complaint against the city of Long Beach and its police department, Kirsty Powell and her husband were pulled over by two officers while driving home in May of last year.

She was subsequently arrested on two outstanding warrants -- one linked to her sister allegedly falsely using her identity and one in relation to a 2002 shoplifting incident at a grocery store.

Powell, who is African American, alleges that while being booked at the police station, one of the officers forcibly removed her headscarf in view of other male officers and inmates, telling her she was "not allowed to wear her hijab" and that policemen were "allowed to touch women."

The suit states that Powell "suffered and continues to suffer extreme shame, humiliation, mental anguish and emotional distress" as a result of her experience.

"The actions taken by the Long Beach police officers were unwarranted and a serious violation of Mrs Powell's bodily integrity," said Yalda Satar, attorney for the Los Angeles chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which filed the suit on behalf of Powell.

"The manner in which Mrs. Powell was treated by LBPD officers was simply a show of authority over a woman of color who was unable to protect herself, and is another example of the type of discrimination faced by women who wear a hijab."

The Long Beach Police Department said in a statement late Monday that Powell's hijab was taken off in line with the department's policy to remove certain items from inmates -- including belts, shoe laces and head coverings -- for their own protection.

"We respect the religious rights and beliefs of all people and understand the sensitivity of this matter," police chief Robert Luna said. "The policies we have in place are for the safety of the individual, other individuals and police employees."

**■ 'Targeted over hijab'**

In a separate lawsuit, a group of seven women claim that they were kicked out of Urth Caffe, in Laguna Beach, last month because they were Muslim.

The women, six of whom wear the headscarf, allege that management had asked them to vacate their table on April 22 on grounds that the restaurant was busy and that the policy limited seating to 45 minutes when no free tables are available.

When the women refused to leave, the coffee house called in the police.

Dan Stormer, whose law firm is representing the women, told AFP that it was clear his clients were targeted because of their religion.

"At the time our clients were there, there were several dozen free tables," he said.

"There were people who were there before our clients arrived and they were not asked to leave. Those people were white and they were not wearing the hijab."

The owner of the restaurant, Shallom Berkman, could not be reached for comment.

But in interviews with local media, he denied discriminating against the women and pointed out that his wife was Muslim.

The two lawsuits come as police in Los Angeles and San Francisco have come under scrutiny over racist and homophobic text messages and emails, several of which target Muslims.

On Sunday, a senior official at the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department stepped down after outrage over emails he sent three to four years ago mocking Muslims and others.

In San Francisco, several police officers have resigned or retired over racist text messages they exchanged among each other.

(Source: AFP)

# Two Turkish soldiers, five Kurdish militants killed in attack

**Violent brawl at Turkish parliament as MPs 'debate' constitutional amendments**

By staff & agency

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) militants armed with rocket launchers and rifles attacked a military outpost in southeast Turkey, triggering a clash in which two Turkish soldiers and five PKK fighters were killed, the military said on Tuesday, Reuters reported.

The attack was launched in the Semdinli district of Hakkari province, which borders Iraq and Iran, the armed forces statement said.

Thousands of militants and hundreds of security force members and civilians have been killed since the conflict between the PKK and the state resumed last July after a 2-1/2-year ceasefire.

The PKK, designated a terrorist group by Turkey and its Western allies, began its insurgency in 1984 and more than 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

Meanwhile, The Turkish military says its warplanes have pounded Kurdish rebel positions in northern Iraq, killing 18 militants, AP reported.

Hundreds of Turkish soldiers and thousands of Kurdish fighters have lost their lives in the latest chapter of the bitter conflict.

Turkey has also witnessed a series of suicide attacks carried out by Kurdish militants. Last week a female suicide bomber blew herself up near a mosque in the city of Bursa.

**■ Violent brawl at Turkish parliament**

In another event, a Turkish constitutional committee meeting descended into chaos when a verbal argument between the ruling Justice and Devel-



opment Party (AKP/Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) and oppositional Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP/Halkların Demokratik Partisi) spiraled out of control into a brawl, RT reported.

The feud is believed to have been sparked by a comment from Justice Minister Bekir Bozdogan who blamed the pro-Kurdish HDP for instigating a similar scuffle on Thursday. The remark immediately drew the ire of the HDP's MP Garo Paylan who labeled it "slander".

The deputies who were captured on video can be seen exchanging punches, standing on the tables and throwing water bottles at each other.

At the center of the debate stand proposed amendments to the country's constitution, aimed at stripping Turkish lawmakers of legal immunity. The motion is viewed by the HDP as an attempt by

the authorities to pave the way for the prosecution of opposition MPs.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been accusing HDP of ties to the outlawed PKK. In its turn, HDP blames PKK for an ongoing crackdown on the Kurdish population in the southeast of the country which the government has been conducting since August 2015.

The previous round of punches prevented lawmakers from debating the legislation, meaning the meeting had been rescheduled for Monday. The Thursday row took a violent turn after LHDP rejected the amendments and demanded that the government withdraw forces from the embattled country's southeast where it imposes strict curfews and allegedly deploys heavy artillery against the civilian population in a hunt for Kurdish

militia fighters.

The HDP says the bill is targeting them and is aimed at suppressing dissent.

Erdogan, who founded the AK Party, has called for HDP MPs to face prosecution, accusing them of being an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

On Monday scores of deputies had crammed into a committee room to debate the bill when tempers flared and some deputies started shoving each other.

As the punches flew, a few suited MPs launched themselves into the melee from a table.

**■ Several MPs hurt**

Others threw water at each other and at least one person could be heard taunting opponents by shouting: "Come on, come on!"

Several MPs were hurt during the scuffle, Turkish media reported.

Turkish MPs are immune from prosecution while in office. The police can file "dossiers" against politicians, which can lead to a legal process once they cease to be a member of parliament.

Last week's brawl delayed efforts to pass legislation related to Turkey's deal with the European Union to take "illegal migrants" in exchange for legal Syrian refugees.

That legislation was also left unfinished on Monday evening, as some AK Party MPs left the general assembly to join their colleagues in the clashes.

Turkey has been promised visa-free travel for its citizens to the EU and accelerated accession talks as part of the deal.

**NATO alliance getting new supreme commander**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance this week is getting a new supreme commander, a former top-ranking United States military officer in Korea hailed on Tuesday by U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter as a proven warrior-diplomat and "a soldiers' general."

U.S. Army Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti was installed as head of U.S. European Command (EUCOM) at Stuttgart, Germany, and will become NATO's supreme allied commander Europe following a separate ceremony on Wednesday at alliance military headquarters in southern Belgium.

Scaparrotti, 60, will become the 18th U.S. officer to hold the post since Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower became the first NATO supreme commander in 1951.

The commander, by tradition an American general or admiral, is responsible for the overall direction and conduct of NATO's global military operations. The 28-nation alliance is now confronted by simultaneous security challenges ranging from a resurgent Russia to armed extremism and a migrant crisis in the Mediterranean.

"Today our way of life is at a pivotal moment, as we are encountering numerous threats and strategic challenges," Scaparrotti said in brief remarks after assuming command at EUCOM.

Carter, who attended the change-



of-command ceremony along with U.S. Joint Chiefs Chairman Marine Corps Gen. Joseph Dunford, said Scaparrotti, a West Point graduate and former head of U.S. forces in Korea, had been as "easy pick" as overall American military leader for Europe.

While serving in Korea, Carter said Scaparrotti proved his ability to work with allies and lead a coalition.

In both new posts, the Logan, Ohio, native is assuming command from U.S. Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, who helped lead the NATO alliance during the most sweeping revamp of its collective defense capabilities since the Cold War.

Carter praised Breedlove's three-year tenure as supreme commander, saying that under his leadership, "NATO forces have been writing a new playbook" to cope with today's threats and challenges.

(Source: AP)

**France threatens to reject EU-U.S. trade deal 'at this stage' in talks**

France on Tuesday (May 3) took aim at a vast but controversial European Union-United States pact to create a free-trade zone covering 850 million people, with President Francois Hollande threatening to veto it as it stands.

Hollande warned that Paris would reject the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) "at this stage" because his country opposes "unregulated free trade."

"Never would we accept the undermining of the essential principles of our agriculture, our culture, of mutual access to public markets," Hollande told a left-wing political conference.

Earlier on Tuesday, a top French trade official warned that the talks could grind to a halt because of Washington's reluctance to make concessions.

"In view of the United States' state of mind today, that seems to be the most likely option," chief French trade negotiator Matthias Fekl told French radio when asked if the TTIP talks, which began in 2013, could stop.

Given France's weight in the EU, "there cannot be an agreement without France, and much less against France," said Fekl.

The French comments reflect deep suspicion in Europe that the deal will erode ecological and health regulations to the advantage of big business.

Washington and Brussels want the mega-deal completed this year before U.S. President Barack Obama leaves office, but it has faced mounting opposi-



tion on both sides of the Atlantic.

On Monday, environmental pressure group Greenpeace released a trove of leaked documents about the closed-door negotiations, charging that a deal would inflict a dangerous lack of standards on U.S. and European consumers.

However, the European Commission, which negotiates trade deals on behalf of the 28 EU member states, said Greenpeace was "flatly wrong" in its interpretation of the documents.

The Greenpeace leak was a "storm in a teacup," Brussels said.

U.S. officials also hit back at Greenpeace with the U.S. Trade Representative saying: "The interpretations being given to these texts appear to be misleading at best and flat out wrong at worst." Fekl said that Europe was pushing for "reciprocity." "Europe is offering a lot and we are getting very little in return. This is unacceptable," said Fekl, who negotiates trade deals on behalf of France.

(Source: AFP)

**Syria: Aleppo hospital attacked by rebels**

Foreign-backed militants shell a hospital and several neighborhoods in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo, killing dozens of people and injuring many others.

Syria's official SANA news agency said at least three women were killed and 17 others injured after militants fired several rockets at al-Dabit Hospital in the government-controlled Muhafaza district of the troubled city on Tuesday.

Separately, rocket fire by militants on other government-held neighborhoods killed another 11 people, it added.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), a Britain-based monitoring group affiliated to so-called Syrian opposition, said that at least 19 people lost their lives and 80 others were wounded in the shelling of government-held areas of Aleppo on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Syrian army issued a statement accusing al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra), Ahrar al-Sham (Free Men of the Levant), and Jaysh al-Islam (Brigade of Islam) of carrying out the shellings.

The army also vowed to make "the appropriate response to the sources of fire."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters

after talks with United Nations envoy Staffan de Mistura in Moscow that a cessation of hostilities could be announced in Aleppo "in the next few hours."

"I am hoping that in the near future, maybe even in the next few hours such a decision will be announced," Lavrov said

Several hospitals and clinics have previously been hit by deadly militant attacks in the embattled city.

This comes as heavy fighting between foreign-backed militants and Syrian government forces continue in Aleppo.

The chaos comes despite the existing nationwide ceasefire in Syria. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) and al-Nusra Front terrorist groups are excluded from the "cessation of the hostilities" agreement reached in late February as an attempt for facilitating peace talks.

Aleppo has been divided between the government forces and militants since 2012, a year after the conflict broke out in the country. Dozens have been killed in renewed clashes over the past few days as warnings are high that a human tragedy may unfold in the city.

Since March 2011, the United States and its re-



gional 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.

(Source: agencies)



Iran collects 90% of annual planned tax revenues

**TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's National Tax Administration (INTA) Seyyed Kamel Taqavi-Nejad in Tuesday news conference announced that the administration could collect 90 percent of its expected tax income in the past Iranian year of 1394 (which ended on March 19, 2016).

"The earned figure stood at 667 trillion rials (\$19.3 billion) and registered a 16-percent growth, compared to the year of 1393," Tagavi-Nejad added.

According to the budget bill for the current Iranian calendar year (which began on March 20, 2016) tax incomes are projected to rise by 14 percent from the last year's 880 trillion rials (about \$25.4 billion) to one quadrillion rials (about \$28.9 billion), Iran's Management and Planning Organization Director Mohammad Baqer Nobakht said in January.

Nobakht said, "To reduce our reliance on oil revenues, we need to increase government's tax incomes."

Tax incomes, he said, includes the revenues earned from direct tax, value added tax (VAT) and customs duties.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's economic strategy is to significantly reduce the government's dependency on oil and instead collect tax more systematically, Ali Kardor, the deputy managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company said on October 2015.

"For the first time in 50 years, the government's share of the oil revenue is less than what it is earning from tax, including VAT," Kardor said. "Only around 10% of Iran's GDP is currently dependent on oil."

Meanwhile, according to Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ali Tayyebnia Iran's economy is heavily dependent on oil revenues; however, the government is determined to reduce dependence on oil through improving the tax system and the boosting of economic activities.

Park: S. Korea, Iran can create win-win biz situation

**TEHRAN (Yonhap)** — South Korean President Park Geun-hye said Tuesday South Korea and Iran can produce a win-win situation if they work together in infrastructure projects in the Islamic Republic.

Iran is pushing to rebuild an economy and modernize its infrastructure after the UN lifted sanctions in a follow-up to a landmark deal reached with the United States and five world powers over Tehran's nuclear program.

"I am here to pursue the path of common prosperity with old friend Iran," Park said in a forum attended by some 450 South Korean and Iranian business executives and leaders in the Iranian capital.

On Monday, Park and Rouhani observed the signing of nearly 20 out of 66 memorandums of understanding worth up to \$45.6 billion after their summit.

Seoul hopes the MOUs could pave the way for South Korean companies to eventually win massive infrastructure projects under way in Iran.

She also said she expects the MOUs signed between the two governments on transportation and infrastructure as well as water resources to further boost bilateral cooperation down the line.

South Korea and Iran "can produce a win-win outcome in overall infrastructure" projects, including railways and airport, Park said at the business gathering.

The forum is part of South Korea's efforts to help business executives from both countries build a network and facilitate economic cooperation.

More than 230 South Korean business executives and leaders have accompanied the president on her state visit to the Islamic Republic to explore new business opportunities.

Park also called for efforts to facilitate and diversify trade.

The trade volume between Korea and Iran stood at \$6.1 billion in 2015, compared with \$17.4 billion in 2011. Rouhani said the two countries could boost bilateral trade to more than \$30 billion in five years.

"I believe that my visit could serve as an important occasion to secure momentum for the development of bilateral relations and to strengthen substantial cooperation," Park said in a separate meeting with nearly 20 representatives from the Korean community in Iran.

Iran is home to about 330 South Koreans, mostly businessmen and their families.

Separately, more than 120 South Korean companies held business meetings with more than 490 Iranian buyers at a hotel in Tehran on Monday. Some of them signed deals worth \$537 million with Iranian partners, according to South Korean officials.

India to pay 1.5% interest on \$6.5b Iran oil dues

India has agreed to pay Iran an interest of 1.5 percent on \$6.5-billion that refiners like Essar Oil and Mangalore Refinery owe it in oil dues, as a 'goodwill gesture'.

Iran had sought an interest rate of Libor-plus 75 basis points on the \$6.5 billion Indian refiners owe it in past oil dues, to make up for the foreign exchange losses.

"Although we believe there is no interest due, but as a goodwill gesture oil companies have agreed to pay the interest rate," a Finance Ministry official said. "Seven days US Libor plus 75 basis points equals to an interest rate of about 1.5 per cent."

The demand for interest rate was made when Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan met Iranian Central Bank Governor Valiollah Seif in Tehran on April 9.

Iran wanted interest to be paid after differences cropped up over foreign exchange rate.

Iran sold oil to refiners like Essar Oil and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd in US dollar per barrel. Around 45 per cent of the oil bill was paid in rupees in a UCO Bank account while the rest 55 percent was to be cleared whenever banking channels open.

Now with lifting of sanctions, Iran has presented its unpaid bill. But Essar Oil and other refiners want to pay Iran at the exchange rate prevalent at the time of buying crude oil in the last three years.

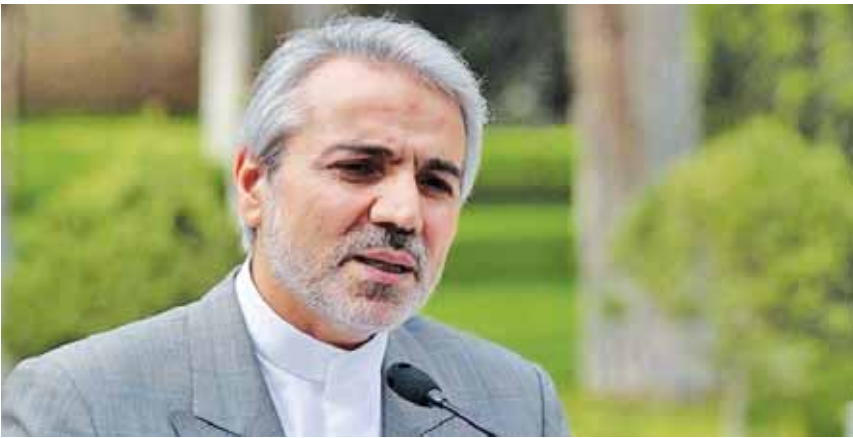
(Source: Reuters)

16 trade delegations visit Iran in first 3 post-sanction months

**TEHRAN** — "Some 16 trade delegations visited Iran in the first three months after the implementation of the nuclear deal between the Islamic Republic and the global world powers," Mohammad Baqer Nobakht, the government spokesman said in a news conference on Tuesday.

As IRIB news reported, the spokesman clarified that since the initial lifting of sanctions on January 16, senior officials including eight presidents, five prime ministers, three parliament speakers, and 14 foreign ministers from different countries have travelled to Iran.

Highlighting the vitality of seizing domestic capacities in post-sanction era, the senior official noted that during the said period, the Iranian administration has negotiated with 12 international banks and financial institutes to use a \$73-billion credit line.



On Monday, Valiollah Afkhamirad, the head 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.

"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.

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.

Tehran, Seoul promoting banking relation

Central Bank of Iran, Korea Development Bank pen MOU to boost ties

**TEHRAN** — Senior officials from Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and the Korea Development Bank (KDB) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to increase common banking ties in Tehran, on Monday.

According to IRNA, the signing ceremony was attended by Gholamali Kamyab, the vice governor of the CBI, and Lee Dong-Geon, an official affiliated to the KDB.

Emphasizing the importance of making brokerage relation between Iranian banks and their South Korean counterparts, the CBI official admitted that both countries are inclined to boost mutual trade.

Dong-Geon, for his part, called the inked MOU a significant step on the way to enhance bilateral relation and said that KDB is poised to assist Iran with industrial development via making investments.

First S. Korean bank launches office in Tehran

South Korea's Woori Bank opened its first representative office during a meeting also attended by Kamyab in Tehran, IRNA reported on Monday.



Woori is now the first South Korean commercial bank to start banking activities in the Islamic Republic. The Korean bank had asked CBI for the possibility of opening its branch in Tehran after the implementation of the nuclear deal between Iran and the 5+1 Group in January.

"Both sides should take advantage of Iran's post-sanction era to tighten mutual ties," Kamyab said in his speech.

PICTURE OF THE DAY ISNA Amir Kholousi



Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh (2nd R) and First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri (2nd L) inaugurated Lorestan Petrochemical Complex, western Iran, on Tuesday. The complex has the capacity of producing 300,000 tons of low and high density polyethylene per year.

Global stocks slide as yen, euro gains question policy potency

The U.S. dollar slid to its lowest against major currencies in well over a year on Tuesday, a move led by the yen's continued march higher as investors grew doubtful about central banks' ability to boost growth through aggressive policy easing.

That did not stop Australia's central bank surprising markets by cutting interest rates to a record low of 1.75 percent, however, hitting the currency but lifting the country's shares.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan fell to a three-week low and the euro's burst through \$1.16 for the first time in eight months pushed European shares deeply into the red.

Europe's FTSE 300 index of leading 300 shares fell 1.3 percent.FTEU3 and Germany's DAX shed 1.7 percent, both the lowest in nearly three weeks.

Banks were among the biggest sectoral losers in Europe, down nearly 2 percent in early trading. Shares in Swiss bank UBS were down 6 percent after first quarter results.

Analysts at Rabobank noted the dollar's fall towards 105 yen from as high as 122 only a few months ago, a remarkable move that will do nothing to relieve the deflationary pressures in Japan and which reflects "the broader problem of unconventional monetary policy reaching its limits just like conventional policy already has".

(Source: Reuters)



HSBC profit falls amid volatile markets

Banking giant HSBC has reported a 14% drop in profits for the first quarter following "extreme levels of volatility" in financial markets at the start of the year.

Profit before tax came in at \$6.1bn (£4.17bn) for the three months to March, down from \$7.1bn a year ago. However, analysts had expected a far steeper fall in profits.

HSBC chief executive Stuart Gulliver said the bank had been "resilient in tough market conditions".

Adjusted pre-tax profits, including currency effects and one-off items, fell 18% to \$5.4bn (£3.7bn).

HSBC cut almost a thousand jobs worldwide in the quarter, leaving it with 254,212 full-time staff across 71 countries and territories.



Lufthansa slows growth plans as it seeks to cut costs

Lufthansa has said it will slow the pace of its growth plans this year as it continues to come under pressure from lower cost competitors.

It comes as the German airline reported a net loss of €8m (£6.3m) in the three months to the end of March against a profit of €425m a year earlier.

The airline said it would now grow the number of seats it offers by 6% this year instead of 6.6%.

It said it would also look at whether further cost cuts needed to be made.

In March, Lufthansa said it would resume dividend payments to shareholders and forecast slightly higher profits in 2016.



Johnson & Johnson just lost another talcum powder cancer lawsuit

Johnson & Johnson has suffered its second costly court defeat in less than three months over claims its talcum powder caused cancer. And many more cases are looming.

A jury in St. Louis awarded \$55 million in damages to Gloria Ristesund, who used Johnson & Johnson's talcum powder for more than 35 years before being diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2011.

Ristesund's lawyers argued that Johnson & Johnson knew of possible health risks associated with talc, but failed to warn consumers.

"Internal documents from J & J show it knew of studies connecting talc use and ovarian cancer but, to this day, it continues to market it as safe -- neglecting any warning," The Onder Law Firm, which represented Ristesund, said in a statement.



# Lahijan: As a tourist in my hometown

Some people have titled her “the sleeping beauty under the rain” because she is still beautiful when the sky is gray and rainy in the Fall, and snowy and gloomy in the winter. Lahijan, this mountainous city laying peacefully on the Alborz foothills in northern Iran, has her better seasons too. I love it more when the sun shines in her humid summer and when her tea leaves turn to light green color in the spring.

Few months ago, my Lebanese friend, Salam traveled to Iran to meet up with us and explore the country. She was so excited to travel to the famous cities all over Iran, to which she did not have the chance in her first Iran trip. She came over and spent 4 days in my house in north. It was first time that I was a travel guide for my hometown and I had to show her around the city beside some famous spots in the province. And only then and there, I had the opportunity to explore my hometown in a new way. This time I was a visitor too and in some ways or the other, I felt like a tourist.

We had only a day to explore Lahijan and I found out the time we spent in my hometown was not enough. There were many spots to explore and we did not manage to visit many places. I tried to do some touristic things with Salam. So we visited the Sheikh Zahed mausoleum, resting place of a famous Iranian scholar.



Then stopped the car in the middle of the road to go deep into the tea fields which were just blossoming. We waited an hour in the long queue and for the first time I took the Tele-Cabin with Salam and my sister to go up the mountains.

After that, we went back to the city and to the tea museum and afterward walked down the road to the lake. We had a good Latte at my favorite cafe and when the sun

was completely down we went to the lake and spent some time there too. With the laughter, excitement and the fresh spring air, I explained for Salam story of every place we visited and by then I also started to notice the streets, the trees, the colors and the people more brightly, as I do when I am traveling abroad.

I reviewed the developments, the history and the memories behind every

place and name. This new version of Lahijan which was displayed to me, gave me a lot of positive energy. I knew every bit of this little northern city and this familiarity made me feel secure and confident somehow, the way you feel when you meet a person you know, once again in a very crowded street in a strange country.

I have this strange relationship with Lahijan as well, not that of love and hate but with ups and downs. I left it very young and ever since, I return every now and then and stay for long or short-term here. My hometown and I are very good friends. We know each other very well and even though our path has been slightly different, we have kept this relationship close to our hearts. That day I learnt that I had not taken my hometown as serious as I should.

It has many places that looked ordinary to me, but not to the tourist me. For knowing the city too much, sometimes I get confused, just like we all do when dealing with the things or people we know them very well. As a tourist in Lahijan, this city that I always called home embraced me warmly. We both had grown up so much. But the city still managed to make me smile and take my breath, with all the nostalgic memories that she allowed me to rediscover again.

(Source: Dream of Iran)

## Is ‘dark tourism’ OK?



Kutna Hora's Bone Chapel, Czech Republic

There's nothing inherently wrong with visiting Chernobyl's fallout zone or other sites of past tragedy. It's all about intention.

These days it seems you can't go more than a few weeks without hearing about some unfortunate selfie faux pas on the Internet.

Tourists posting photos of themselves giving the thumbs up in Auschwitz, for example, or smiling from a rusted-out bumper car in Pripyat, the Ukrainian city that was evacuated after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear meltdown.

The offending images are seen and blasted around to social media circles. Disparaging comments are made and the shares continue, rippling out to create a full-blown meme about travelers' growing predilection for “dark tourism.”

The truth is, visiting places associated with death and suffering has been popular a lot longer than the selfie stick.

Mark Twain devoted a full chapter to Pompeii in Innocents Abroad. Tourists flocked to the still-smoking fields of Gettysburg in 1863 to see the aftermath of one of the bloodiest battles of the American Civil War. Anton Chekhov left his successful playwrighting career in 1890 to become the world's first “gulag tourist.” And then there's the Taj Mahal—a selfie-central icon that's actually a tomb—which has been a staple of the world-travel circuit for half a millennium.

From the September 11 Memorial and the Roman Colosseum to Rwanda's Murambi Technical School, there is no shortage of “tourist sites of death, disaster, or the seemingly macabre,” as the U.K.-based Institute for Dark Tourism Research puts it.

But while so-called “dark tourism” isn't new, what is new is how some of these sites and experiences are being marketed.

Visitors to the Cu Chi tunnels near Ho Chi Minh City are promised a chance to shoot AK-47s in the famous Viet Cong guerrilla maze ... for a price. Certain tours to Israel's Golan Heights come with expectations of witnessing real-time missiles in an active war zone. You get the idea.

The first thing we should ask ourselves: Are we travel-

ling to a place to heighten our understanding, or simply to show off or indulge some morbid curiosity?

Of course, intention can be a two-way street. There is a difference, obviously, between the people who go on tours and the people who develop, run, and profit from them.

While some tour operators seem to have no qualms about skewing—and even fabricating—facts or ratcheting up the gore factor for dramatic effect, others approach sensitive subjects such as genocide, terrorism, and nuclear disaster with the care and gravitas they deserve.

Confronting the most chilling examples of what poet Robert Burns termed “man's inhumanity to man” can be a profoundly moving experience, bringing war,

oppression, violence, and injustice to gut-wrenching life and deepening our capacity for compassion and empathy.

As I was thinking about this story, I did a lot of reflecting on my most memorable travel experiences. Many of the places that made my list—concentration camps, the sites of massacres and political assassinations, and battlefields—could be described as “dark.”

Of course, nearly every destination in the world is “dark” in some way. Even places we describe as “to die for” often have been scenes of natural disaster, violence, and displacement. Turning your back on that reality can be the ugliest travel of all.

(Source: National Geography)

## A CLOSER LOOK

### Wonders of Egypt you better not miss

By John Roberts

I put my feet in the warm brown sands of the Sahara. I had finally made it to Egypt, land of so much history and so many mysteries.

I found that a 12-day trip with Viking River Cruises is the perfect way to explore the country and all of its ancient relics, structures and fascinating tales of pharaohs, wars and shifting religions.

Whether you are visiting on a Nile cruise, exploring with a land-based tour or just wandering through the desert on your own, don't miss these wonders of Egypt.

#### ■ The Great Sphinx

One of many sphinxes you'll see in Egypt, the Great Sphinx is the noseless icon looming near the Pyramids of Giza complex — carved from the bedrock of the Giza plateau and comfortably stretched out on the sands with the head of a human and body of a lion.

Much about when and why the Sphinx was constructed is unknown, but the most popular theory says it dates to the around 2,500 B.C. and was commissioned by King Khafre of the 4th Dynasty. It measures 66 feet high, 241 feet long and 63 feet wide and is one of the few monuments from Ancient Egypt with no inscriptions.

Myths state that Napoleon's army shot the nose of the Sphinx, but drawings show the nose was missing prior to Napoleon's arrival in Egypt. Instead, it is likely the Turks used it for target practice.

#### ■ Pyramids of Giza

Egypt is home to 123 pyramids (discovered so far), and none are more famous than the three famous stony triangles that fill the skyline over the desert in Giza and our notions of what Ancient Egypt looks like in pictures. They were built in the 25th century B.C., and viewing them in person is amazing. You can walk right up and touch the centuries-old structures we know from the pages of our history books.

The largest, Great Pyramid, is the oldest of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and the only one that remains mostly intact. You can pay a fee to venture inside a passageway all the way up and to the center of the Great Pyramid.

#### ■ Temples at Abu Simbel

Two temples were cut into solid rock cliffs along the Nile River in southern Egypt in the mid-12th century B.C. and honor the country's longest-ruling pharaoh, Ramses II, and his favorite wife, Nefertari. The scope and size of the 10 statues that rise more than 30 feet high at the entrances of the temples is impressive enough.

But the story behind how this complex was cut into blocks, moved from its original location and reassembled in the town of Abu Simbel is even more incredible. Engineers and workers from around the world worked fast to save this site and other temples from Nile flooding that created Lake Nasser in the 1960s during construction of the Aswan High Dam.

(Source: Travel Pulse)

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#### PICTURE OF THE DAY

ISNA/Amir Harirchi



People visit Darreh-Arghavan (Judas tree valley) on Mashhad-Torqabeh road, northeastern Iran





# South Africa, EFF and political vulgarity

By Thembisa Fakude

In April 2016 South African opposition politician Julius Malema said in an interview that he is willing take up arms and "remove the government through the barrel of a gun".

The African National Congress (ANC)-aligned military veterans issued a similar statement against the government over benefits that have not materialized. The governing

ANC has since opened a treason case against Malema.

The lack of political leadership is presenting a serious political challenge for South Africa. The neglect of political leadership by the ANC, the oldest political party in Africa, is manifesting itself negatively in the current politics of the country.

There is a widespread indiscipline and political naivete persisting in several political parties.

And Malema's recent statement demonstrates that naivete.

Carelessness in political speeches has had a devastating history in Africa. They have led to genocides, civil wars and economic collapse.

## ■ Political instability

The economies of almost all developing nations - including South Africa - are vulnerable to any signs of political instability, and as a result foreign investors are still weary of the



developing world.

Notwithstanding the endurance of South African democracy compared with many African countries, it is still not out of the woods.

Therefore, any political statements that suggest or point towards a possible political upheaval discourage foreign investment which the South African economy desperately needs.

→ 9

# Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

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# Saudi efforts to 'modernize' its economy away from oil are just PR tactics - and the West is lapping them up

Just like his adventure in Yemen, Saudi Arabia's young Deputy Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman got it all wrong last week. It's not Saudi Arabia which suffers from "oil addiction", it's we who are addicted. The unique Saudi drug – a cocktail of wealth, arrogance and infantile Puritanism – is far more dangerous, since it depends on the arithmetic (or myth) of its 716 billion barrels of oil reserves.

If this statistic is as ill-conceived as the Sunni Saudi war on Yemen's Shia Houthis, along with its massive civilian casualties, then Prince Mohamed's 'reforms' – oiled (if that's the right word) by a \$2 trillion public investment fund which would take over ownership of the state oil company Aramco – will have to kick in long before the deadline of his 'Vision 2030'.

For years, oil analysts have suggested that Saudi reserves are nothing like the kingdom claims them to be – a suggestion which became far more disturbing when Wikileaks disclosed last year that the U.S. embassy in Riyadh had warned Washington that Saudi reserves could be 40 per cent less than we were led to believe.

## ■ Inaccurate statements

The source was Sadad al-Husseini, the former head of exploration at Aramco. He later angrily explained that he'd been misrepresented by the American diplomats whose note, already at least six years old, contained "many patently inaccurate statements". But back in 2004, oil analysts such as banker Matthew Simmons, after studying 200 technical papers on Saudi reserves, were saying that the country's oil was "peaking", its oil fields already damaged by using salt water to maintain pressure.

These rumors were only reinforced by Saudi Arabia's refusal to reveal any details of their reserves. Thus, Prince Mohamed's promise that a privatization of Aramco would increase transparency and limit corruption will be viewed with



the usual skepticism.

More than 30 years ago, the Sunday Times was taken in by Saudi claims of imminent reforms – inviting foreign journalists to the country to learn of striking changes has long been a Saudi routine – but even then reporters spotted the real problems of Riyadh and other Persian Gulf capitals.

## ■ Welfare stateism

Martin Woollacott, one of my early heroes in the trade of reporting, wrote in 1981 that what he called "welfare stateism" in the region was producing a class of people "that is losing sight of the relationship between work and reward that is incipiently anti-foreign... It is wide open for an ideology which would purge it of its unease and guilt without materially reducing its privileges. The youth of this alienated middle class and confused, if materially comfortable, working class is already showing signs of going in the most likely direction –

toward political Islam."

Woollacott, let us remember, was writing before the Taliban, before al-Qaeda, 20 years before 9/11 and its 15 Saudi hijackers – and 33 years before the emergence of ISIL. And this, of course, was what was missing from Prince Mohamed's triumphalism last week.

How can we believe in the massive planned changes in the social structures of Saudi Arabia, its emergence as a global investment power, when its monarchy is locked into eternal marriage with the same crude Wahhabi faith practiced by the Taliban, al-Qaeda and ISIL?

How can we listen to the good Prince saying that "we will not allow our country ever to be at the mercy of commodity price volatility or external markets" when Saudi Arabia is, in truth, at the mercy of an army of head-chopping, anti-Shia puritans who support the assault on Yemen (which, with eight other nations in tow but with futile inappropri-

ateness, was code-named "Operation Decisive Storm"), and regularly express their loathing of Iran, Syria, and many of the Shia Muslims in Lebanon?

No wonder, as the Washington Post revealed this month, the Saudis are spending millions on Washington's top law, lobby and public relations companies to promote foreign investment in the Saudi economy – some of them, according to the paper, "tasked with coming up with content for the [Saudi Washington] embassy's official Twitter and YouTube accounts". The PR firm Qorvis, it turned out, also ran the Twitter account for the Syrian Opposition Coalition. Firms like Podesta, BGR Government Affairs, DLA Piper and Pillsbury Winthrop are trying to raise the Kingdom's "visibility".

## ■ Free riders

After threats to release the missing – or "redacted" – pages of the 9/11 report, Barack Obama's snotty criticism of Persian Gulf "free riders" in his Atlantic magazine interview, and the Clinton-Sanders support for U.S. families who want to sue foreign governments like Saudi Arabia for 9/11, these PR firms have a lot of work to do – and a lot of money to make.

Interestingly, the Podesta Group – with a \$140,000 monthly contract with the Centre for Studies and Media Affairs at the Saudi Royal Court, was founded by Tony Podesta, a Democratic lobbyist and major contributor to La Clinton herself.

And all this without mentioning that oil still floats away from the Persian Gulf at scarcely \$35 a barrel. Or about the unchanging and absolute nature of the Saudi monarchy. Or about Saudi education reform or tax revenue. Or about a Saudi woman's right to drive a car. Or about the decapitations that the Saudis still inflict on those who trade in drugs.

But not on those, of course, who suffer from that most dangerous of narcotics: oil addiction.

(Source: Independent)

**For years, oil analysts have suggested that Saudi reserves are nothing like the kingdom claims them to be.**

## U.S. killed nuclear deal in 2005: Jack Straw

**1 →**  
**■ You have talked of the role Wahhabism has played in forming extremism and terrorist groups such as ISIL; can you elaborate on that?**

A: Wahhabism was a homegrown movement within Sunni Islam to I quote 'purify Islam' and you see that in other religions. I said it is a perversion even from Wahhabism, but it seems to me that to deal with this virus that has infected the mindset of these men, you need to take military action to eliminate them, but you still have to deal with the problem in their mind, and to challenge them theologically; I mean in a very direct way, because what they claim is that the more extreme you are in terms of day to day behavior, the closer you are, they say, to the Almighty and everyone not believing like them is an infidel and it is not only about Christians, it is about Shias as well. They celebrate violence and suppression of women. I don't see enough challenge, intellectual and theological challenge, against this. Another issue, is lack of what we would call in Europe a reformation within Sunni Islam. I think there are differences between Shiism and Sunnism which are striking in all sorts of ways. I'm very stroked by sorts of parallels between what we had in Europe and there was in Iran. The fact that in 16th century, in Iran and also in England, the leaders break away from a super national authority over their religion, and started to develop religious practice and theology to fit in their national culture and identity. So the Safavid in Iran did that and Henry VIII in England. The second thing is because there is an authority structure in Church of England, and also in Shiism, the Ayatollah. The theology of the church requires them to move with the time, to keep with science and to for example encourage literature and books like this. Look at the vibrancy of intellectual life, but also in Iran filmmakers and people like that can go to workshops or so. I know it is a bit of generalization, but there is a shortage of such intellectual figure in some Sunni countries.

**■ UK is one of main sources of arms sale to Saudis who reportedly are supporting ISIL with their weapons and you said that 'there are supports from elements in Saudi Arabia for ISIL in Syria'. Do you think that London's selling of weapons to Riyadh can be justified if they are supporting terrorists?**

A: I'm quite sure no arms that we have sold Saudis have gone to ISIL. The system that we have in the United Kingdom for export licenses for arms is very tight. I cannot comment on particular sales as I haven't seen the licenses. But I can tell you from my period in government in five years I was in charge of granting license to these exports, we looked at the applications very carefully, and turned down some, and they are all reported to a committee in House of Commons.

**■ President Obama just visited your country, paying probably his farewell visit as president to UK; it seems Brexit is main topic in the meeting; what's your take on this trip? What outcomes do you expect?**



**when I saw Dr. Zarif at the beginning of 2014, on a Parliamentary delegation, he acknowledged that what stopped the deal in 2005 was not about centrifuges; it was our inability to get agreement from the Americans for concessions like aircraft spare parts, etc.**

A: I think what he said was very helpful. And I think it will assist the campaign against Brexit. Let's say I'm strongly in favor of Britain remaining inside the EU as I see very little advantages in leaving and very big disadvantages and it increases generally the risks to the future of the UK in all sorts of way. So it was very helpful I can say, and I noted there are some politicians on the other side who complained about Mr. Obama's right to offer his opinions; yet these people like Boris Johnson every day are telling other people what to do! Just as we are entitled to comment on events and policies in the United States, and we do all the time, they are also entitled to comment on us. I hope very much that we will win; it looks so, but there is still two months to go.

**■ For more than a year now, Saudis have been invading Yemen, killing women and children and destroying their infrastructures... without making any success even if we assume that they are fighting for a good reason. Why Europeans and particularly UK are still silent on the issue?!**

A: This silent war shows relativism of news reporting across the world. It is a difficult country to get into, precisely because it is one of the poorest countries in the world and the region. Western states don't have much

of stake in it. That becomes sort of reinforced as people don't know a great deal about it. Everybody I speak to believes that it has been a disaster and there has to be a political settlement. Of course there are people in GCC who do support this action against Yemen, but there are also people who have serious reservations about the situation in Yemen.

**■ So do such things matter in UK export licenses for arms sale that you said?**

A: You asked me questions about licensing for arms; I don't know quite certainly that none of arms we sold Saudis have gone to ISIL; I don't know sitting here this morning about the situation of Saudi forces or UAE forces' use of those arms in Yemen. I think it is being considered to a parliamentary committee in England.

I think there is a general problem about a lack of information and understanding about Yemen.

**■ Your idea about leadership of Mr. Jeremy Corbyn in Labour Party?!**

A: As you know, he and I were together on parliamentary delegation to Iran in January 2014; he is a nice man, very interested in world affairs, I didn't actually support him; I supported a different candidate, Yvette Cooper, for leadership who I thought was better qualified. Now, he is leader and everyone in Labour party is concentrated on winning upcoming elections of Scotland, London mayor and municipalities elsewhere. We have Sadiq Khan who is Labour candidate for mayor of London, who if elected, will be the first Muslim mayor of London. And further we have referendum on Brexit. So, Mr. Corbyn was elected democratically and we all get on with it.

**■ How do you see the relations between Iran and UK after the nuclear deal? In which areas do you see more potentials for cooperation?**

A: Signing of BARJAM, there has been a big change in approach of government overall, and government has now said they want to open and improve relations with Iran and I'm delighted about that. I want to see reopening and flowering of the relationship; I believe there should be beginning of political and cultural cooperation. In terms of business, the prime minister very wisely appointed Lord Norman Lamont as UK trade representative. That's very important because Lord Lamont, like me, has been a long standing supporter of Iran and spoke out for Iran when it was unpopular to do so. Now we are gradually increasing our diplomatic representation in Tehran. In terms of trade, Britain is very good in oil and gas, and also in manufacturing and obviously in services of all kinds like investment, legal services and so on. That's why it is very important to us to get the Americans out of the way and have the Americans clear these obstacles out of the way.

I'm a member to British-Iran Chamber of Commerce which is led by Norman Lamont; and there is a great British Iranian diaspora, particularly in London; and they had a tough time during the period of sanctions. I don't have any formal role in relations, but people come to me for advice.

## COMMENT

### Will Abadi resign from his party?

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi is seeking to form a government of independent technocrats away from the quotas system, the political process that Iraq has grown accustomed to over the past 13 years. Under the system, the political positions are divided according to the quotas distributed among the main components of the country – Sunnis, Shias and Kurds. However, the steps that the prime minister is taking in forming the government of independent technocrats has faced obstacles, most notably political and popular demands for him to leave the Islamic Dawa Party with which he is affiliated.

Abadi became prime minister of Iraq on Aug. 11, 2014, when President Fuad Masum assigned him to form a government, after the Iraqi political blocs refused to grant his predecessor, Nouri al-Maliki, a chance to get a third term, forcing him to waive his third term in favor of his fellow party member, Abadi.

On March 2, Hanan al-Fatlawi, member of parliament (MP) and head of the Irada block – an independent block that has no governmental position and only one parliamentary seat – demanded that Abadi, her former colleague in the State of Law coalition, should either resign from his position as head of the government or declare a state of emergency and ask the parliament to vote on it.

## ■ Dawa Party

Meanwhile, MP for the Kurdish Change bloc, MP Risan Sheikh, told Al-Monitor, "Abadi intends to form a government of technocrats, and this is a positive step toward reform, but it is difficult for Abadi to head this government as long as he insists on remaining affiliated with the Dawa Party. This is a fallacy and a negative point against the democratic political process."

Against this background, protesters organized a demonstration at Tahrir Square in Baghdad and called on Abadi to become independent and announce his resignation from the Dawa Party.

One of the protesters at Tahrir Square, Suad Ali, told Al-Monitor, "Iraqis are protesting to demand Abadi to resign from the Dawa Party and to set an example for a government of independent technocrats. If he stays affiliated with the party, I do not see how he could be able to positively head the government or even obtain political and popular support. A technocratic government should be headed by a person who has no affiliation with any party. His sense of belonging and loyalty should only be to Iraq so that he can [properly] serve the Iraqi people."

In a press conference held at the parliament on March 2, a number of MPs for the National Alliance called on Abadi to resign from his party as part of the reforms that he wants to carry out.

MP Ali al-Badri, who participated in the press conference, said, "Public opinion is being misled when it comes to the reforms that are going to save the country from destruction and corruption just by changing ministers. Some blocs want a partial Cabinet reshuffle while others want a technocratic Cabinet."

"The major issue in the country is not only the ministers, but also the undersecretaries and general managers in the ministries, who are subject to the quotas system" he noted.

Badri stressed the importance of "a reform program that is built on solid foundations and not only based on the Cabinet reshuffle. The program must start with the prime minister himself; he should abandon his party and show Iraq that he is a prime minister for all Iraqis."

Ihsan al-Shammari, a political analyst and head of the think tank Iraqi Centre for Political Thought, told Al-Monitor, "The demand made by the political powers for Abadi to submit his resignation from the Dawa Party bears a political dimension, which is part of the obstacles impeding the reform project that he put forward and which targeted the center of influence of leaders and political parties, prompting them to find obstacles for this shift toward the use of [competent personnel] in the management of the state and its institutions."

He added, "There is a constitutional cover for [Abadi] to remain within the scope of the political system; Article 78 of the Iraqi Constitution points out that the president shall assign the candidate of the largest parliamentary bloc, and the constitution does not state that the prime minister shall be independent or be obliged to choose the ministers of any title, whether they are independent or technocrats."

Shammari stressed that "the demands for Abadi to resign from his party are part of the struggle and political revenge between parties that do not want to leave the partisan, sectarian and nationalistic quotas system and are still holding onto the power and its luster."

Perhaps those demanding Abadi to resign from the Dawa Party will not stop here; they might even demand him to resign from his position as prime minister or even call on the parliament to withdraw the vote of confidence, should he insist on staying affiliated with his party. However, Abadi might be surprised by a step similar to the one that surprised parliament Speaker Salim al-Jabouri on April 14, when about 171 MPs staged a sit-in at the parliament building and voted to dismiss him and his two MPs Humam Hamoudi and Aram Al-Sheikh Ali.

The political crisis in Iraq has affected the entire political system, which is still searching for a way out. This comes amid disputes that cannot easily be resolved, especially after an angry public has already taken a stance.

(Source: Al Monitor)





## NEWS IN BRIEF

**Solar-powered plane  
lands in Arizona on  
round-the-world flight**

A solar-powered airplane midway through a historic bid to circle the globe completed the tenth leg of its journey on Monday, landing in Arizona after a 16-hour flight from California, the project team said.

The Swiss team flying the aircraft in a campaign to build support for clean energy technologies hopes eventually to complete its circumnavigation in Abu Dhabi, where the journey began in March 2015.

The spindly, single-seat experimental aircraft, dubbed Solar Impulse 2, arrived in Phoenix shortly before 9 p.m., following a flight from San Francisco that took it over the Mojave Desert.

The flight would have taken a conventional airplane just two hours, but the solar craft's cruising speed, akin to that of a car, required pilots to take up meditation and hypnosis in training to stay alert for long periods.

Occupying the tiny cockpit for the trip was project co-founder Andre Borschberg, who alternates with fellow pilot Bertrand Piccard at the controls for each segment of what they hope will be the first round-the-world solar-powered flight.

Borschberg was the pilot for the Japan-to-Hawaii trip over the Pacific last July, staying airborne for nearly 118 hours.

That shattered the 76-hour world duration record for a non-stop, solo flight set in 2006 by the late American adventurer Steve Fossett in his Virgin Atlantic Global Flyer. It also set new duration and distance records for solar-powered flight.

(Source: Reuters)

**Infants much less likely  
to get the flu if moms are  
vaccinated while pregnant**

Babies whose moms get flu vaccinations while pregnant have a significantly reduced risk of acquiring influenza during their first six months of life, a new study shows, leading the authors to declare that the need for getting more pregnant women immunized is a public health priority.

In a study published May 3, 2016, in *Pediatrics* online, University of Utah School of Medicine researchers reported that infants 6 months and younger whose mothers were vaccinated when pregnant had a 70 percent reduction in laboratory-confirmed flu cases and an 80 percent reduction in flu-related hospitalizations compared with babies whose moms weren't immunized. Health records showed that 97 percent of laboratory-confirmed flu cases occurred in infants whose mom's were not immunized against the disease while pregnant.

"Babies cannot be immunized during their first six months, so they must rely on others for protection from the flu during that time," says the study's lead author, Julie H. Shakib, D.O., M.S., M.P.H., assistant professor of pediatrics. "When pregnant women get the flu vaccine there are clear benefits for their infants."

Influenza, or the flu, is a nasty bug that causes a variety of symptoms including aches, chills, fevers, nausea and diarrhea. Illness can last for a week or longer and results in thousands of deaths each year in the U.S.; pregnant women and young infants are among those at highest risk for dying from flu.

(Source: EurekAlert)

**China creates world's first  
graphene electronic paper**

In a groundbreaking achievement, China has developed the world's first graphene electronic paper that can possibly revolutionize the screen displays on electronic gadgets such as wearable devices and e-readers.

The material, touted as the world's first graphene electronic paper, is also the world's lightest and strongest material in prevalence today.

It has been developed by Guangzhou OED Technologies in partnership with another company in the Chongqing Province.

The hype is real! At just 0.335 nanometers thick, the new material can be used to create hard or flexible graphene displays. Graphene e-paper comes with the capability to conduct both heat and electricity, and it can supposedly enhance optical displays to a brighter level, owing to its high-light transmittance properties.

Graphene-based e-papers can be easily produced cost-effectively given that it is derived from carbon. Traditional e-papers, on the other hand, use indium metal for their display, which is very expensive and rare to source.

Discovered in 2004, graphene can be described as an extremely thin layer of pure carbon - a single, tightly packed layer of carbon atoms bonded together in a hexagonal honeycomb lattice.

(Source: Tech Times)

# Can't sleep? New study says try therapy, not pills

People with insomnia should try counseling before they turn to pills, which often carry dangerous side-effects, a doctors' group advised Monday.

Specialized counseling can and does work, even if people don't like doing it and even if doctors often don't know how to do it, the American College of Physicians said in new guidelines on insomnia.

The "evidence is quite strong that cognitive behavioral therapy is effective. It works. It's long-lasting and it has the potential to decrease cost to the health care system," Dr. Wayne Riley, president of the American College of Physicians, told NBC News.

A team at the organization looked at research on insomnia and at an evidence review by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

"We looked at 10 years of very strong research studies that looked at the effects of cognitive behavioral therapy and other interventions in terms of improving sleep for patients who have chronic insomnia," Riley said.

**■ Clinical disorders**

Between 6 percent and 10 percent of U.S. adults have insomnia serious enough to be considered a clinical disorder. "Insomnia is more common in women and older adults and can occur



Dr. Amir Qaseem

**"Insomnia is more common in women and older adults and can occur independently or be caused by another disease," the guidelines team, led by Dr. Amir Qaseem, writes.**

independently or be caused by another disease," the guidelines team, led by Dr. Amir Qaseem, wrote.

"People with the disorder often experience fatigue, poor cognitive function, mood disturbance, and distress or interference with personal functioning."

But sleeping pills don't work that well and carry risks. One study found that drugs including Ambien and Restoril may



double someone's risk of a car crash.

The Food and Drug Administration says the drugs remain in the bloodstream at levels high enough to interfere with morning driving, which increases the risk of car accidents. It required makers to lower recommended doses. And there's not even enough evidence to tell whether drugs such as Valium and Xanax help people sleep,

the review found. There's also precious little evidence about alternative therapies such as herbal teas.

But therapy, although time-consuming and potentially annoying, works, the studies show.

"Cognitive behavior therapy at the beginning is hard to do but once you get through the initial phase it's lifelong. It's durable," Riley said. (Source: NBC News)

**Breast cancer treatment breakthrough  
after 'milestone' genetic discovery**

The latest breast cancer research could lead to more personalized care for patients and help further understanding of the causes of the disease, scientists said.

A study involving people from around the world has been hailed as giving a more complete picture of the changes in DNA in breast cancer, providing potential opportunities for new treatments.

A study of 560 breast cancer genomes, or complete genetic codes, turned up five new genes associated with the disease.

The results, published in *Nature* and *Nature Communications*, provide evidence that breast cancer genomes are "highly individual", researchers from the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute said.

**■ Genomes in patients**

The team looked at genomes in patients, four of whom were men, and focused on mutations that encourage the disease to grow and the patterns - known as mutational signatures - in each tumor.

They found that women with genes that leave them at a higher risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer, have entire genome profiles that are very different to each other and distinctive from other breast cancers.

Dr. Serena Nik-Zainal, who led the team of researchers, said: "In the future, we'd like to be able to profile individual cancer genomes so that we can identify the treatment most likely to be successful for a woman or man diagnosed with breast cancer. It is a step closer to personalized healthcare for cancer."

He said: "This study both gave us the first large scale view of the rest of the genome, uncovering some new reasons why breast cancer arises, and gave us an unexpected way to characterize the types of mutations that happen in certain breast cancers."

Professor Sir Mike Stratton, director of the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, said discovering gene mutations is "crucial" to understanding the causes of cancer and coming up with better treatments.

He said: "This huge study, examining in great detail the many thousands of mutations present in each of the genomes of 560 cases brings us much closer to a complete description of the changes in DNA in breast cancer and thus to a comprehensive understanding of the causes of the disease and the opportunities for new treatments."

(Source: The Independent)

**Scientists discover potentially  
habitable planets**

For the first time, an international team of astronomers from MIT, the University of Liège in Belgium, and elsewhere have detected three planets orbiting an ultracool dwarf star, just 40 light years from Earth. The sizes and temperatures of these worlds are comparable to those of Earth and Venus, and are the best targets found so far for the search for life outside the Solar System. The results are published today in the journal *Nature*.

The scientists discovered the planets using TRAPPIST (TRAnsiting Planets and PlanetesImals Small Telescope), a 60-centimeter telescope operated by the University of Liège, based in Chile. TRAPPIST is designed to focus on 60 nearby dwarf stars — very small, cool stars that are so faint they are invisible to optical telescopes. Belgian scientists designed TRAPPIST to monitor dwarf stars at infrared wavelengths and search for planets around them.

**■ Star's infrared signals**

The team focused the telescope on the ultracool dwarf star, 2MASS J23062928-0502285, now known as TRAPPIST-1, a Jupiter-sized star that is one-eighth the size of our sun and significantly cooler. Over several months starting in September 2015, the scien-

tists observed the star's infrared signal fade slightly at regular intervals, suggesting that several objects were passing in front of the star.

With further observations, the team confirmed the objects were indeed planets, with similar sizes to Earth and Venus. The two innermost planets orbit the star in 1.5 and 2.4 days, though they receive only four and two times the amount of radiation, respectively, as the Earth receives from the sun.

The third planet may orbit the star in anywhere from four to 73 days, and may receive even less radiation than Earth. Given their size and proximity to their ultracool star, all three planets may have regions with temperatures well below 400 kelvins, within a range that is suitable for sustaining liquid water and life.

Because the system is just 40 light years from Earth, co-author Julien de Wit, a postdoc in the Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences, says scientists will soon be able to study the planets' atmospheric compositions, as well as assess their habitability and whether life actually exists within this planetary system.

(Source: MIT News)

## Global warming is starving west coast waters of oxygen

Just west of Los Angeles, decimated populations of spiny rockfish rummage for prey among bush-like corals. Cold currents from deep valleys wash nutrients between the Channel Islands, fertilizing plants that are eaten by fish. The fish are eaten by dolphins and pelicans and served with fries to diners watching ocean sunsets from Venice Beach.

Rockfish populations that crashed off the southern Californian coast in the 1990s have been protected by fishing rules and marine parks.

As atmospheric pollution warms the planet and its seas, oxygen levels are declining in the oceans, making it harder for

the bottom-dwelling fish to breathe.

Ocean warming is projected to continue reducing oxygen levels in some hotspots that are naturally low in oxygen, such as the eastern Pacific Ocean.

The "importance of oxygen loss has been underestimated or overlooked by ocean scientists," said Lisa Levin, a Scripps Institution of Oceanography professor who is helping to pioneer research into the problem.

**■ Oxygen levels**

Levin's lab published a study last week revealing the heavy influence of oxygen levels on the biodiversity of worms, molluscs and other creatures that live in West



Coast mud, which are eaten by rockfish and other marine predators.

As oceans warm, fish and other sea animals need more oxygen, yet the sea water they breathe holds less of it. Ocean circulation changes caused by global warming can also reduce oxygen levels

below the ocean's surface, where it's absorbed from the atmosphere.

That's jeopardizing fisheries already afflicted by overfishing, wetland losses, water pollution, ocean warming and ocean acidification. "For some things that can't move, it's going to kill them," Levin said. "For things that can swim away, it's going to shrink their habitat."

Oxygen levels can be highly variable, and scientists are still trying to untangle the role climate change may have played in declining West Coast oxygen levels since the 1980s, some of which coincided with local ocean cooling.

(Source: Bonner County Daily Bee)

## Why your heart disease risk may not be as high as you think

Heart disease is the leading killer of Americans, so predicting who is at highest risk of heart attack or stroke is a top priority. After decades of relying on a checklist of risk factors identified in the 1950s, which included factors like high cholesterol, high blood pressure, excessive weight gain and family history of heart trouble, heart experts decided to update the formula for calculating risk

in 2013. The new formula focused less on specific cholesterol targets and instead created an algorithm of the most significant risk factors, each weighted for how much they might contribute to heart issues. The problem, as many doctors quickly pointed out, was that the new formula seemed to loosen the criteria for putting people on medications, especially ones that lower cholesterol.

Simply being older, for example, could push a person into higher risk territory that would warrant a statin prescription, even if this person ate a healthy diet, got plenty of exercise and wasn't overweight or hypertensive. So this raised serious questions about whether everyone who qualified for treatment under the new guidelines actually needed it.

(Source: Time)



United States Defense Secretary Ashton Carter has criticized Russia for what he described as "nuclear saber-rattling" and pledged to continue a robust military buildup on NATO's eastern flank to deter the Russian "aggression."

Carter said the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) alliance would "keep the door open for Russia" for cooperation on global security challenges but it was up to Moscow to decide.

"We don't seek a cold, let alone hot, war with Russia. We don't seek to make Russia an enemy," he said on Tuesday. "But make no mistake; we will defend our allies, the rule-based international order and the positive future it affords us."

The Pentagon chief made the remarks at a ceremony in the western German city of Stuttgart in which he presided over the change of command for U.S. European Command.

Army General Curtis Scaparrotti, commander of U.S. forces in South Korea, will take over from Air Force General Philip Breedlove, assuming a post that traditionally also makes him the supreme allied commander of NATO's European forces.

Scaparrotti will have to handle NATO's tense relationship with Russia, which has deteriorated over the Ukraine crisis and the Russian bombing campaign in support of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

In brief remarks, Scaparrotti said NATO faced "challenges to international law" by Russia. "We also face the immediate threat that terrorism poses as the world witnessed in the recent tragedies in Brussels, Paris and Ankara," he said.

U.S. officials accuse Russia of flexing its military muscles in Ukraine and Syria and provocative interactions with U.S. armed forces.

In March, Carter pledged about 4,000 troops and military equipment would deploy to Europe early next year.

The efforts follow President Barack Obama's latest budget proposal, which includes a \$3.4 billion request to

## Carter accuses Russia of 'nuclear saber-rattling'



strengthen U.S. support for NATO and place an additional U.S. army brigade in Eastern Europe.

"NATO continues to be a linchpin, a cornerstone of US security policy," Obama said alongside NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the White House last month.

U.S. military experts have warned that the Baltic Sea has become increasingly unsafe for the American military forces there because of the military encounters with Russia.

On April 27, the U.S. Air Force deployed two of its most advanced jets in Lithuania in Eastern Europe for the first

time in a show of support for the region. The F-22 fighter jets had previously visited Poland, Estonia, and Romania.

The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were formerly ruled by the Soviet Union. They joined NATO and the European Union in 2004.

Last year, the U.S. delivered over 100 pieces of heavy military equipment to the Baltic states to provide them with the ability to "deter" the perceived threat from Russia.

The Baltics also asked NATO to permanently deploy up to 5,000 troops as a deterrent, a request that is still under consideration.

Admiral Mark Ferguson, commander of U.S. Naval Forces in Europe, told CNN in April that Russia was deploying new submarines that are harder for the U.S. Navy to track and detect.

The warning came as U.S. intelligence officials raised concerns that Russian submarines, with a significant and unsettling capability, could cut critical undersea communications cables between the U.S. and Europe, in the event of a conflict.

NATO has established a high-speed response force complete with forward command and logistics centers in its eastern members to counter Russia.

■ **Carter: American killed in combat in Iraq**

Elsewhere, Carter said on Tuesday that an American serviceman has been killed near Irbil in Iraq.

The defense secretary provided no other details, other than to tell reporters that the serviceman lost his life "in the neighborhood of Irbil."

"A Coalition service member was killed in northern Iraq as a result of enemy fire," the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement. "Further information will be released as appropriate."

The CENTCOM statement noted it is the policy of the military "to defer casualty identification procedures to the relevant national authorities."

Vice President Joe Biden visited Baghdad last week to exhort leaders of the government in Iraq to resolve internal political strife and concentrate on the effort to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.

Carter, likewise, visited Baghdad recently. The Obama administration has been pressing the effort against ISIL, which has been slowed down in its quest to overrun Iraq.

Carter presided earlier at a ceremony installing a new commander of U.S. European Command, Army Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti.

(Source: agencies)

## JUMP

### Europeans and Americans are extremely ignorant about Islam: professor

1→ They don't understand the continuity between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. They are surprised to hear that Islam reveres Moses, Abraham and Jesus. Islam is not taught in elementary and high schools. For most students the only time to learn about Islam is in college. Many writers such as Karen Armstrong, Carol Delaney and Reza Aslan have written popular books to try to educate Westerners about Islam, but in general the population remains ignorant and prejudiced.

■ **Why are we seeing verbal attacks, especially in the recent years, on Islam and Prophet Muhammad (S) in the West?**

A: The violence in the Middle East gets all the press. This has caused ignorant people to equate Islam with violence. You hear terrible distortions such as politicians saying: "All Muslims are terrorists." Donald Trump has been a major influence, calling for the banning of all Muslims from the United States. We also have the Paris, Belgian and California attacks for which Muslim groups were blamed. Because there is general ignorance about the Islamic world, these violent Islamic groups have become identified with all Muslims.

■ **How do you see the role of extremist groups such as Daesh in presenting a distorted image of Islam?**

A: ISIS/ISIL/DAESH has been terrible for the image of Islam. Because Westerners know so very little about the religion, they tend to equate ISIS and its actions (also Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al-Shabab, and the Taliban) with ALL of Islam. The media has been very influential. There is an old saying in journalism: If it bleeds, it leads. This means that violence and bloodshed get more attention in the press than "good news." Islam is not centrally organized. We do have the Muslim Anti-Defamation league <www.adl.org> that tries to counteract prejudice and discrimination, but they are very underfunded.

### South Africa, EFF and political vulgarity

6→ The lack of effective party-sponsored political colleges and mentorship has culminated in political sophistry in South Africa. The government justification of the private residence of President Jacob Zuma is one case in point.

The underperforming post-apartheid political college of the ANC has failed to produce high-quality political leaders who can do well in international politics.

Politicians wait until they reach government positions before they can be enrolled in international political crash courses in preparation for the office.

Most former leaders of the ANC Youth have courted radicalism and political vulgarity as a form of political engagement. It is widely regarded as the best method of upward mobility within the ranks of the party.

The economic freedom fighters (EFF) was formed by a group of disgruntled ANC Youth League members with Malema and Floyd Shivambu. Malema and Shivambu were expelled from the ANC for bringing the party into disrepute and showing no remorse during the mitigation process in 2012.

Malema once entered a rowdy exchange of words with the BBC journalist Jonah Fisher, subsequently yelling insults at the journalist during a press conference. He was later forced to apologize to Fisher by the ANC.

#### ■ Political rhetoric

Malema's temperament and confrontational political rhetoric has on several other occasions landed him in trouble. During the rape trial in 2006 of his erstwhile ally, Jacob Zuma, he was quoted as saying that he was "willing to kill for Zuma".

This statement invited a barrage of criticism from the public and the opposition parties in South Africa at the time.

Later in 2011 he was taken to court and later convicted of hate speech for insisting on singing a sensitive anti-apartheid song Dubul Ibhuu (Shoot the Boer).

Shivambu, deputy president of the EFF, has not been clear from controversy either. He was taken, tried and later forced by the court to apologize for calling a white female journalist a "stupid white b\*\*\*h".

In November 2014, Shivambu was caught on camera showing his middle finger at the Deputy President of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa in parliament.

These cases clearly demonstrate lack of political discipline, and it is this political trajectory that has characterized the rise of the EFF.

What needs to be done?

While in developing nations the tradition of political education and mentorship thrives, Africa is still lagging far behind. There are several reasons why this is the case in the developing world and in South Africa specifically. The elongated struggle against colonization by most African countries resulted in many African leaders missing the opportunity of political education.

Moreover, the sociopolitical imperatives of post-colonial dispensation have resulted in the neglect of political education and mentorship of future leaders. Finally, the new power holders are reluctant to mentor owing to fear of raising political competition.

What most developing countries have to deal with as a result is regular political violence; and this circle continues unabated. However, unlike those other African countries, South Africa has so far managed to establish a political system that encourages vibrant multi-party democracy.

Consequently Malema's threat to take up arms against the government has been a great cause for concern in what most view as an African success story.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Seymour Hersh: Bin Laden killing story a fantasy

The world is no safer 15 years after the United States-led invasion of Afghanistan and the killing of Osama bin Laden did not change the war very much, veteran journalist Seymour Hersh told Al Jazeera on the fifth anniversary of the killing of al-Qaeda's leader.

The al-Qaeda leader was killed in a U.S. raid in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in 2011, an event that is a "fantasy", according to Hersh.

"The president did authorize the killing and the [Navy] Seals did kill bin Laden. Everything after that is sort of a fantasy, it's Lewis Carroll," Hersh said.

"But the killing of bin Laden didn't seem to change the war very much."

Hersh said the U.S. is struggling to win the longest war in its history.

"The Americans declared a war on terror and look at where we are now ...15 years later still fighting in Afghanistan."

The famed U.S. journalist, known for his expose of U.S. war crimes in Vietnam, said the U.S. was hiding key facts about the raid that killed the al-Qaeda leader.

The CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) said the mission in Pakistan was the "culmination of years of complex, thorough and highly advanced intel. operations and analyses", in a series of tweets posted on Monday, describing the operation as a "significant victory" in the war against al-Qaeda.

The CIA "live tweeted" the military raid that killed bin Laden five years ago, drawing derision and satire from many people on Twitter.

Crucially, U.S. officials stated that the Pakistani government and intelligence service were not informed about the operation, a claim Hersh has disputed.

"We had a disgruntled Pakistani intelligence officer

come to our embassy in the summer of 2010 and tell us 'My God! The Pakistanis have parked this guy in this town'," Hersh said.

"We [the US] eventually worked it out and made an agreement and accommodation with the Pakistani military and intelligence services that we would go with their help and take out the guy."

"The idea that he was there without the [knowledge] of the Pakistani intelligence service, in particular, the ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence] and the Pakistani military, is just comical."

Hersh said the mistakes of the George Bush administration continued to be made by the current U.S. President Barack Obama, citing his continued use of drones and his involvement in Syria.

(Source: agencies)

## Iran has the steepest population drop worldwide: official

1→ Last year the council decided to set May 14 as the national day of population and it is being observed this year for the first time in Iran, she said.

The national population week with

the slogan of 'family, reproduction, and bringing up children' will last up to May 20 and revolves around subjects such as healthy families, infertility, respecting senior citizens, healthy pregnancy, and bringing up children, she explained.

All organizations are tasked to help change cultural perspectives of childbearing, she said, adding in case "we strive, for the next two decades we will reach a balance in the population."

Khaz'ali believes that population is a source of "wealth and power" and to acquire these two all responsible organizations ought to try to change the overall view on childbearing and take appropriate measures.

## 3rd Europe-Iran Forum opens in Zurich

1→ At this Forum delegates will be able to meet potential partners, trusted advisors, and exemplary business leaders.

The forum features 6 panel discussions, 15 industry workshops, and 4 keynote speeches, according to the official website of the forum.

For the last two years the Europe-Iran Forum conference series has enabled noted European and Iranian business leaders to forge new relationships, share



strategic insights, and lay the foundation for future trade and investment in Iran. Including both the first Iran-focused international business conference (London 2014) and the largest such conference to date (Geneva 2015), the Europe-Iran Forum conference series is the most respected gathering for senior business leaders looking at the Iran opportunity, as well as for policy leaders seeking the formation of new and constructive ties.

### Iranians discover gas reserves in Pakistan

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iranian desk official announced the discovery of new gas reserves in the south of Pakistan by the Iranian oil and gas companies.

Referring to the biggest exploration project in Pakistan carried out by Iranians, Mohammad Irvani, Chairman of Iran's drilling association stated that Iran had participated in tenders for oil and gas exploration in Pakistan which after providing technical and financial offers was elected as one of the winners. He further noted, "This exploratory project consists of nearly 4 thousand kilometers of two-dimensional and three-dimensional seismic survey in several oil and gas blocks of Pakistan. Unlike Iran, Pakistan's oil and gas are small blocks and

exploration operations in these hydrocarbon blocks is not too extensive".

So far, nearly three thousand kilometers of two-dimensional seismic survey and one thousand kilometer of three-dimensional seismic survey have been started by Iranians in some exploration blocks in Pakistan. The total value of the project is estimated to be approximately \$ 40 million. Irvani went on saying, "Since Pakistan has expressed interest to continue cooperation with Iranian companies in exploration projects, we are seeking similar projects in other neighboring countries".

"In the near future Iranian companies will attend in tenders for drilling or exploration projects in Central Asia, Iraq and Turkmenistan", he added.

### K-sure to cooperate with EGFI to facilitate export

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Export desk Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI), and its South Korean counterpart, Korea Trade Insurance Corporation (K-SURE) signed an Memorandum Of Understanding on May 2nd 2016 at EGFI's headquarter in Tehran.

Identifying opportunities for trade of goods and services, co-financing, re-insuring and co-insuring of projects or contracts in third countries involving Korean and Iranian exports, are the fields in which both sides expressed their willingness to cooperate.

In the event, Mr. Seyed Kamal Seyed Ali, EGFI's CEO and chairman, explained that Export Credit Agencies exposure on Iran was nearly \$30 billion before the

sanctions and the outstanding amount is now around \$4 billion which Iran is ready to but due to the existing blockage of banking channels it cannot be done. Seyed Ali also expressed EGFI's readiness to cover a part of the risk that KSURE underwrites on Korean exports to Iran.

Mr. Kim Young – Hak, for his part, noted that K-SURE's exposure on Iran in 2011 was around \$1.6 billion but it decreased to \$ 800 million in 2014 due to sanctions. But K-SURE is keen to increase its exposure on Iran to more than \$2 billion.

EGFI's new strategy is not only to support Iranian exporters, but also to play a role in FDI absorption.





Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose.  
*Lyndon B. Johnson*

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Getting a Massage

Robert: Why are you **twisting** your back like that?  
Staci: I'm in pain. My back and shoulders really hurt. I think it's from sitting at this computer all the time.  
Robert: What you need is a good **massage**. It can get rid of the **knots** in your muscles and get you some **pain relief**.  
Staci: I don't know. I don't like the idea of getting naked in front of a stranger.  
Robert: If you're **skittish** about that, remember that you'll be covered with a sheet, except for the part that he or she is working on. It's not a big deal.  
Staci: But what if they're too **rough** with me? It might make things worse.  
Robert: An experienced massage **therapist** will ask you the amount of **pressure** you want and you can **speak up** if you don't like what he or she is doing.  
Staci: Do you think a massage could really help me?  
Robert: Definitely. I recommend my massage therapist. She's **licensed** and very good.  
Staci: She doesn't use **smelly** oils or play **hokey** music during the massage, does she?  
Robert: No, she doesn't. She's very professional, without being too **clinical, if you know what I mean**. Call her!  
Staci: I'll think about it – ouch!  
Robert: Call her right now. You don't have a minute to lose!  
*(Source: eslpod.com)*

- **Words & phrases**  
**twist:** to turn a part of your body around or change your position by turning  
**massage:** the action of pressing and rubbing someone's body with your hands, to help them relax or to reduce pain in their muscles or joints  
**knot:** a tight painful place in a muscle  
**pain relief:** the alleviation of pain, typically by means of medication  
**skittish:** a person who is skittish is not very serious, and their feelings, behavior, and opinions keep changing  
**rough:** not gentle; using force, anger, or violence  
**therapist:** someone who has been trained to give a particular form of treatment for physical or mental illness  
**pressure:** the force or weight that is being put on to something  
**speak up:** to say something, especially to express your opinion  
**licensed:** having been given official permission to do a particular job  
**smelly:** having a strong unpleasant smell; stinky  
**hokey:** overly sentimental; mawkish; very silly, old-fashioned, or sentimental  
**clinical:** considering only the facts and not influenced by personal feelings  
**if you know what I mean:** used to ask if someone has understood you

## QUIZ OF THE DAY

149) What does the idiom mean?  
Laugh your head off.  
a) laugh at something with great gusto  
b) laugh hard at something  
c) both a and b  
**(Quiz No. 148 answer: b)**

## PHRASAL VERB

### Sign up (for)

- **Meaning:** enroll in an activity
- **For example:** Emma signed up for a computer course.

## ENGLISH PROVERB

### (The) devil makes work for idle hands

- **Explanation:** people who have no work, or are idle, often get into trouble



Without  
earth no  
birth!

# 20,000 low-income families nationwide receive houses

**THE SOCIETY TEHRAN** — 20,000 **d e s k** low-income families under the coverage of Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation nationwide received houses last year (March 2015-March 2016), said an official with the foundation.  
Additionally, 30,000 houses are either being constructed or completed and are ready-to-move, Qader Samadi said, IRNA news agency reported.  
A great deal of the houses will be completed by the next month of which 60 percent are being built in villages and the rest are in the cities, he added.  
Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation will provide under privileged with 200 million rials (nearly \$5,700) grant in the cities and 100 million rials (nearly \$2,800) grant in the villages for building houses, Samadi explained.

Help seekers in more deprived provinces such as Ilam, Sistan-Baluchestan, Bushehr, and Hormozgan would receive



larger grants, he pointed.

"We have thoroughly inquired into such families' financial state and we have

prioritized them based on the information we have acquired," he said.

"All necessary measures to make the

houses earthquake and flood resistant are taken," he highlighted.

Samadi went on to say that last year Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation spent some 2,300 billion rials (nearly \$66 million) on the housing scheme and it is predicted that this amount would increase by 15 to 20 percent for this year.

Moreover, he added, 900 billion rials (nearly \$25 million) of the money given to the charities were paid out for the housing scheme.

Currently there are 150,000 families who are being supported by the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation who don't have any houses and the number will hopefully decrease to 90,000 this year, he said.

Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation was established in 1979 as a charity organization to provide support for underprivileged families. The aim is to help such families regain financial stability.

## Two die in Iran as floods hit 3 provinces

Over 291 flood victims receive relief services



Flood in South Khorasan

**THE SOCIETY TEHRAN** — Heavy **d e s k** rain and flooding affected three eastern provinces of Kerman, Khorasan Razavi, and South Khorasan over the past 24 hours, leaving 2 dead, said spokesman for the Rescue and Relief Organization Mostafa Mortazavi.

He added that 17 cities and villages in the aforesaid provinces were in-

undated with flood, YJC reported on Tuesday.

Sadly, two are dead so far, he said, adding that more than 291 flood victims received relief services. Meanwhile, water was pumped out of 22 houses which were flooded.

14 of the victims received emergency accommodation, 48 were sent to safe zones and one was transferred to a hospital, he noted.

## Iran, S. Korea sign MOU to boost forest preservation

**THE SOCIETY TEHRAN** — Iran's Forests, Range, **d e s k** and Watershed Management Organization inked a memorandum of understanding with Korea Forest Service in Tehran on Monday, ISNA news agency reported.

The MOU centers around sustainable management of forests; forests' preservation and exploitation; soil erosion prevention; pesticide's management; monitoring, controlling and fighting forests fire; and watershed management; the Iranian organization's director Khodakaram Jalali said.

This has paved the way for great cooperation between the two countries, Jalali noted.

Jalali explained that the MOU does not constitute a



S. Korea, Secretary of Forestry Won Sop Shin (L) Khodakaram Jalali (R) are showing a document on forest preservation

**IN FOCUS** IRNA/Mohammad Babaei



Women who have passed courses for cultivation of plants are now working at a garden growing medicinal herbs and plants in Karaj, Alborz province.

## LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ ع

### Families with 2 or more disabled children to receive houses: minister

Families who have two or more children with disabilities will get houses by the end of the next Iranian calendar year which falls in March 2018, Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Ali Rabiei said.  
Upon a visit to a family with four children with disabilities, Rabiei explained that the aforementioned housing scheme started in 2015 and is supposed to be fulfilled by March 2018, Tasnim news agency reported.  
Families with more disabled children will be prioritized, he added.  
Some 11,000 families are having two or more children with disabilities in cities and so far 2,000 of them have received houses, he pointed, adding, "of course great deal of houses will be given to these families this year (March 2016-March 2017)."  
Rabiei additionally noted that 32,000 people with disabilities have been provided with jobs up to now.  
At the end of the visit, the minister pledged to provide a job for the unemployed father and one of the children with two disabled legs.

### وزیر رفاه: خانواده‌های دارای ۲ معلول به بالا صاحبخانه می‌شوند

علی ربیعی وزیر تعاون، کار و رفاه اجتماعی گفت: تا پایان سال ۹۶ تمام خانواده‌های دارای ۲ معلول به بالا صاحب خانه می‌شوند.

به گزارش خبرگزاری تسنیم، ربیعی در دیدار با خانواده‌ای با ۴ فرزند معلول توضیح داد: از سال ۹۴ طرح خانهدار شدن خانواده‌های دارای دو معلول به بالا در حال اجراست به گونه‌ای که تا پایان سال ۹۶ تمام این خانواده‌ها باید صاحب خانه شوند.

وی افزود: خانواده‌هایی که دارای فرزندان معلول بیشتری هستند در روند تحویل مسکن در اولویت قرار خواهند گرفت.

ربیعی ادامه داد: ۱۱ هزار خانوار شهری دارای ۲ معلول به بالا هستند که باید تحت پوشش مسکن قرار بگیرند و تاکنون ۲ هزار خانه به این خانواده‌ها تحویل داده شده است البته حجم بالایی تحویل‌ها در سال ۹۵ خواهد بود.

ربیعی همچنین خاطرنشان کرد تا کنون برای ۳۲ هزار معلول ایجاد شغل کردیم. وزیر تعاون، کار و رفاه اجتماعی قول مساعدی ایجاد اشتغال برای دختر معلول خانواده که دچار معلولیت از ناحیه ۲ پا است و حل مشکل اشتغال پدر خانواده ارائه کرد.



# Iran's Tasisat Daryaei draws Barcelona at Futsal Intercontinental Cup

**TSPORTS** Asian champion Tasisat Daryaei has been handed a tough draw in the 2016 Futsal Intercontinental Cup which will be held in Qatar.

Vahid Shamsaei's men have been drawn in Group A of the competition alongside Russia's Dynamo Moscow, Brazil's Carlos Barbosa and Spanish giant FC Barcelona Lassa.

Group B consists of Qatar's Al Rayyan, Portugal's Benfica, Brazil's Magnus Futsal and Spain's Movistar Inter.

The tournament will witness the participation of the eight best teams in the world and will be held at the Ali bin Hamad Al Attiya Arena in Al Sadd and Aspire's Ladies Sports Hall from June 24 to 29.

The Futsal Intercontinental Cup draw and press conference took place Tuesday in Aspire Dome Auditorium.

"The organization of this tournament in Qatar is a big step for futsal. This is a very balanced tournament as the eight teams are all strong and there is no favorite. I think each team could finish first or eight," Former Brazilian futsal legend Falcao who attended the draw and press conference as the Ambassador of this year's edition told reporters.

In its 15th edition, the Intercontinental Futsal Cup is considered to be one of the best club's tournaments in the world.

The team with most intercontinental titles is Movistar Inter, with 5 titles achieved consecutively from 2005 to 2011.

The tournament was inaugurated in 1996 and Inter Ulbra won the first title after beating FC Barcelona 4-2



in the final.

The last edition of the tournament took place in 2013

and was won by Russian club Dynamo Moscu FC after they won against Brazilian club Carlos Barbosa 5-1.

## Majid Jalali sacked by Iranian football club Saipa

**TSPORTS** Saipa football club sacked its coach Majid Jalali two weeks before the end of the season due to poor results in recent weeks.

Former Malavan coach Farhad Pourgholami has been appointed as the interim coach until the end of the season.

Jalali who was appointed as Saipa coach in May 2014 with a three-year contract had his worst record with the club in his entire career. Jalali's record of 24 wins from 61

games gives him a win percentage of just 39.34 per cent which is worse than his statics at Pas, Saba, Foolad and even Tractor Sazi.

Pourgholami, who was Jalali's assistant in recent years at Tractor Sazi and Saipa, will now be in charge of the Oranges.

Saipa is currently in 10th place with 36 points and will take on Esteghlal Ahvaz and Naft Tehran in the remaining two weeks of the league.



## Referee Faghani backs Iranian referees

**TSPORTS** Referee Alireza Faghani has backed Iranian referees to take charge of more international events.

The international referee was appointed for the Olympic Football Tournament Rio 2016 on Monday.

Faghani will be assisted by his countrymen Reza Sokhandan and Mohammadreza Mansouri in the prestigious competition.

Faghani made history by officiating the FIFA Club World Cup final, where Barcelona defeated River Plate 3-0 at the International Stadium in Yokohama, Japan.

He was named as the fourth referee for the opening match of the 2014 FIFA World Cup between Brazil and Croatia.

Faghani was appointed to referee the 2015 AFC Asian Cup Final, which was contested by South Korea and Australia.

"The Iranian referees have been ap-

pointed for the prestigious tournaments in the recent years. It means our referees have capacity to officiate at the big events," Faghani told ISNA.

"To be appointed for the Olympic Games is important however I think to do a good job in the event is more important because of this we must be well-prepared for the competition," the 42-year-old added.

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," FIFA said.

FIFA noted that the Olympic Football Tournament Rio 2016 will take place from August 3 - 21, with the competition's men's and women's finals taking place in the iconic Maracanã stadium.

## Iranian defender Tafazzoli interested in playing for Team Melli

**TSPORTS** Mansfield Town defender Ryan Tafazzoli has shown interest to play for the Iranian national football team.

The 24-year-old center defender started playing for Southampton's youth teams when he was 12 years old.

In an interview with Persianfootball.com, Tafazzoli said that it would be an honor for him to play for Iran national football team.

"Playing under Carlos Queiroz would be a dream - he has coached some of the best players in the world. To get called up I know I need to play at a higher level, perhaps league 1/championship being the minimum so hopefully when I make it there I've got a chance. I can



also score a lot of goals as a defender as well. Playing for Iran would be amazing," Tafazzoli said.

"My dad is often in Iran because a lot of my family lives in Iran. Normally I meet my family in Dubai. I haven't had a chance to go to Iran just because of poor timing of my schedule.

"I would definitely like to go there in the future and see where my family lives and see what the culture is like over there. I do not speak Farsi unfortunately but I am around it a lot when I'm in London with my father. He watches Iranian TV and Iranian football so I try to familiarize myself a bit with the culture and language through him and my family," he added.

## Ronaldo practices again, looks fit to face Man City

**MADRID (AP)** — Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo's chances of facing Manchester City in the second leg of the Champions League semifinals on Wednesday were boosted as he returned to full training, having missed three consecutive games because of an injury to his right leg.

Ronaldo looked fit again as he practiced with the rest of the squad on Monday — the first full practice session for the Portuguese forward this week.

He had participated in some of Sunday's session and had shown no signs of being bothered by the injury.

Ronaldo got injured late on in a Spanish

league game against Villarreal on April 20.

In addition to sitting out the first leg against Manchester City in England, which finished 0-0, he also missed two Spanish league games for title-chasing Madrid.

Ronaldo underwent tests last week but Real Madrid has not released any specific details on Ronaldo's injury, prompting numerous rumors in Spanish media about its severity.

Coach Zinedine Zidane had expected Ronaldo to play in the first leg against Manchester City, but the player failed a physical in the last training session before the game

and had to watch from the bench.

Ronaldo is the leading scorer in the Champions League with 16 goals, one shy of the record he set in the 2013-14 season, when Madrid won its 10th European title. He has 31 goals in the Spanish league, having surpassed the 30-goal mark in six straight seasons. Real Madrid is one point behind both Barcelona and Atletico Madrid with two rounds to go in the Spanish league.

While Ronaldo is likely to be back on Wednesday, it remains unclear if Karim Benzema will be able to play at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Benzema ran by himself in Monday's practice session. The France striker was diagnosed with a hamstring injury to his right leg after being substituted at halftime of the first leg in Manchester.

Benzema and Ronaldo lead Madrid with a combined 74 goals this season. Gareth Bale has been the team's top forward recently, scoring four goals in the last four games.

Brazilian defensive midfielder Casemiro also practiced separately from the rest of the squad, after picking up a knock in the team's 1-0 win at Real Sociedad in the Spanish league on Saturday.

## Why "life became a misery" for Afghanistan's "Messi boy"

**KABUL, Afghanistan** — The family of a 5-year-old Afghan boy who received autographed shirts from his soccer hero Lionel Messi was forced to leave Afghanistan amid constant telephone threats, the boy's father said Tuesday.

Mohammad Arif Ahmadi -- whose son grabbed headlines when he was photographed wearing a homemade Argentina shirt with No. 10 on the back -- said they have moved to neighboring Pakistan and settled in the city of Quetta, hoping for a

better life there.

"Life became a misery for us," said Ahmadi, speaking to The Associated Press over the telephone from Quetta. He added that the family didn't want to leave Afghanistan, but the threats were just getting more and more serious.

Ahmadi said he feared that his son, Murtaza Ahmadi, would be kidnapped after becoming an Internet sensation after pictures of him wearing a Messi shirt made out of a striped plastic bag went

viral.

The family first traveled to the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, but couldn't stay there long because of the high cost of living. They later moved to Quetta.

"I sold all my belongings and brought my family out of Afghanistan to save my son's life as well as the lives of the rest of the family," the father said.

Earlier this year, the Afghan soccer federation had promised to arrange a meeting between Messi, a UNICEF good-

will ambassador, and Murtaza. There were reports that either Messi would come to Afghanistan to visit the boy or that some other arrangement would be made, such as sending the boy to Spain, where Messi plays with Barcelona, or arranging a meeting in a third country.

But none of the options worked out, Ahmadi said.

"Still, Murtaza hopes that one day he would be able to meet his hero, Messi," the father added. (Source: AP)

## FOOTBALL

### Leicester manager and players return to training the morning after being crowned Premier League champions

It was business as usual for Claudio Ranieri on Tuesday morning as he arrived for training just hours after Leicester were confirmed as Premier League champions.

Tottenham's 2-2 draw with Chelsea was enough to ensure the Foxes will finish top of the table, but their historic title win will not affect preparations for Saturday's home game with Everton.

Ranieri was pictured arriving at the club's Belvoir Drive base, with his players - including captain Wes Morgan and Shinji Okazaki - following closely behind despite their late-night celebrations.

"I feel good, you can imagine," Ranieri told reporters as he drove into the club's training complex. "Last night I was at home to watch the (Chelsea vs Tottenham Hotspur) match."

"I had lunch with my mother and then I come back with our plane and I arrived 7pm and 8pm I watched the match. No, not yet (I haven't spoken to the players)."

"The job is good. I very, very happier now, because maybe if I won this title at the beginning of my career, now I forgot. No, now am I very, very old man and then I can feel much better."

"The emotion was at the maximum level. I told every time I'm very happy for the fans, for the chairman, for everybody, for all the Leicester community."

Ranieri flew back into East Midlands Airport on Monday night after celebrating his mother's 96th birthday in Rome.

The former Juventus boss returned on a £43million jet with Foxes executive director Supornthip Choungrangsee and wasted no time in getting back to work after watching Tottenham's draw with Chelsea on television.

N'Golo Kante, Danny Drinkwater and Andy King were among the players spotted arriving at training, less than 24 hours after celebrating their historic triumph at Jamie Vardy's house.

Drinkwater, who left Manchester United in 2012, admits this season has been 'bonkers' after helping his side defy odds of 5000-1 to claim their maiden top-tier title.

He told Sky Sports News HQ: "We've won the Championship, now the Prem, it's bonkers."

"I'll be looking back at this for years. It's something I'll be able to tell my kids about."

"I'm happy that my family have got to feel this about. It's hard to put into words about what it's going to do for this club. It doesn't sound right does it, but we've done it!"

The entire squad gathered to watch Eden Hazard's late goal hand them the title, sparking scenes of joy in Vardy's home, which he shares with fiancée Rebekah Nicholson.

Morgan was filmed being dragged around the floor, while the likes of Christian Fuchs, Riyad Mahrez, Danny Simpson and Leonardo Ulloa celebrated wildly after clinching victory with two games to go.

Asked about the celebrations in Melton Mowbray, Morgan said: "Unbelievable scenes, the boys were jumping up and down. Standing on furniture. I hope Vardy's house is alright!"

"I can't quite believe it. Looking at the start of the season, I never thought I would be in this position right now."

"The journey we've come on has been fantastic and will go down in history. It's an achievement that might never happen again."

The Foxes host Everton in their last home game of the season on Saturday, before Ranieri visits his former club Chelsea on the final day. (Source: DailyMail)

### Gary Lineker to present Match of the Day in his underwear after Leicester City's Premier League triumph

Gary Lineker is to honour his pledge to present Match of the Day in his underpants after his beloved Leicester City defied all the odds to become Premier League champions.

Lineker, who scored 95 goals in 194 appearances for during a seven-year career with Leicester - his local club - made the pledge as the team hunted down the most unlikely of championship wins.

Tottenham Hotspur's failure to beat Chelsea at Stamford Bridge enabled Leicester to clinch the title in one of the biggest upsets in the history of football in Britain.

When he made his pledge in mid-December Leicester City were only two points ahead of Arsenal and most experts expected the club's tilt for glory to fizzle out in the weeks ahead.

Few expected Lineker, 55, to have to honour his promise. Leicester, who had just avoided relegation the previous season, were 5,000/1 outsiders for the Premiership which has been the preserve of the well-funded footballing aristocracy.

Lineker's appearance in his underpants will mark the culmination of a surreal season. It was, he said "The biggest sporting shock of my lifetime."

A lifelong Leicester fan, as well as a former player, Lineker watched the match with three of his sons and told Radio 5 Live that they went "absolutely bonkers" and were "jumping around like lunatics" when it looked as if the team were on the cusp of being crowned champions.

His promise to appear before millions of television viewers in his underwear drew an interesting response on social media, including a tweet from his former wife, Danielle Bux. "Hope they're whiter than white Links" she wrote.

Tottenham needed to beat Chelsea at Stamford Bridge to keep the match alive for the first time since February 1990 - when the winning goal was scored by a certain Gary Lineker. (Source: Telegraph)





## Poem of the day

We are as pieces of chess engaged in victory and defeat:  
our victory and defeat is from thee, O thou whose  
qualities are comely!

Rumi

## Prayer Times

Noon:13:01 Evening: 20:13 Dawn: 4:33 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:08 (tomorrow)

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## NEWS IN BRIEF



### Iranian movies line up for U.S. festival

**TEHRAN** — A lineup of Iranian short, documentary and feature films will go on screen in various sections of the Livermore Valley Film Festival (LVFF), which will be held in eastern Alameda County, California from May 13 to 15.

"Blue-Eyed Boy" directed by Masud Soheili, "The Story of a Rainy Night" by Mehdi Fardqaderi, and "A Report about Mina" and "When Sanam Cried" by Fariborz Ahanin are among the movies.

The lineup also includes promising Iranian filmmaker Saman Hosseinpour's shorts "1-0", "Fish" and "Autumn Leaves".



### Damavand cultural officials to honor artist Isa Ahmadi

**TEHRAN** — Cultural officials of Damavand, a town located about 80 kilometers northeast of Tehran, plan to honor artist Isa Ahmadi for his lifetime achievements during a ceremony to be held on May 10.

Born in 1940 in Damavand, Ahmadi is a painter, sculptor and a set designer whose career spans over half a century. His works have been showcased at dozens of solo and group exhibits across the country.

Ahmadi has long been a source of inspiration for the local art enthusiasts in Damavand and some neighboring towns such as Rudehen.

The organizers also plan to showcase a large number of Ahmadi's works in an exhibition on the sidelines of the event, which will be held at Damavand's Kowsar Cultural and Artistic Complex.

# President Hassan Rouhani opens Tehran Intl. Book Fair

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"I am happy the fair opened in this location, and I must thank the Tehran mayor [Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf] for having constructed such a big and beautiful place for the exhibition," he added.

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Ali Jannati, also accompanying the visiting delegation, called the fair the biggest cultural event in the country.

He added that the relocation of the fair from Imam Khomeini Mosalla to Shahre Aftab was a difficult and tiring task, which was carried out by the Tehran Municipality with the cooperation of his colleagues.

In his brief speech, the director of Russia's Federal Agency on Culture and Cinema, Mikhail Shvydkoy, pointed to the cultural and historical commonalities between Iran and Russia and said that the main similarity between the two countries is that they do not change their traditions and values by force.

He added that the events occurring over the past few decades prove that sanctions cannot be obstacles in the way



President Hassan Rouhani visits the 29th Tehran International Book Fair after inaugurating the event at Shahre Aftab, a newly-constructed fairground in southern Tehran, on May 3, 2015. (ISNA/Borna Qasemi)

of a country's progress.

Pointing to the Russian President

Vladimir Putin's visit to Iran in last November, Shvydkoy said that a new win-

dow has been opened and that the relations between the two countries have been growing in different fields.

Shvydkoy also noted that the Persian poets like Rumi and Khayyam are quite well known in his country and that Russian citizens begin to read Persian poetry from their childhood.

He hoped to get to know Iranian publishers during the book fair and expressed thanks to Iran, which has provided an opportunity for the Russian publishers to introduce their books.

Russia has arranged a vast variety of cultural programs during the fair to introduce more of the country.

Cultural officials from China, South Korea and Mexico were also in attendance at the opening ceremony.

Some Iranian publishers were awarded by the president for the special activities that they carried out over the past year.

"Tomorrow Is Too Late to Read" is the motto of the 29th edition of the Tehran International Book Fair, which will run until May 14.

## Iranian films on screen at Istanbul Aydin University

**TEHRAN** — Istanbul Aydin University is screening a lineup of Iranian films during a program entitled "The Days of Iranian Cinema".

The program opened on Monday with a screening of "Reclamation" by Ali Ghaffari. The film's star, Hamid Farrokhejad, also watched the film along with a large number

of students, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Tuesday.

"Painting Pool" by Maziar Miri, "A Cube of Sugar" by Reza Mirkarimi, "Kissing the Moon-Like Face" by Homayun As'adian, "Long Summer" by Ali Khazaei and "Sand and Coral" by Masud Atyabi are among the films scheduled to go on screen during the four-day program.

Istanbul Aydin University Rector Yadigar Izmirlir also delivered a short speech at the beginning of the program.

She called the cinema of Iran the school of honesty and friendship, and said that Iranian cinema with its low budget has stood firm against the cinema of Hollywood with a budget of millions of dollars, and has turned into one of the top cinemas in the world.

She regarded the cinema of Iran as the cinema of resistance and called Iranian films as smooth as poetry.

The consul general of Iran in Istanbul, Mohsen Mortezaifar, also talked about the cultural commonalities between the two countries and emphasized the need to expand cultural cooperation between them.

# Shiraz, the Center Of Iranian Identity

Being the capital of Fars Province, Shiraz is located in southwest Iran. The Fars Province has played such a major role in Iran's ancient history that it is considered the center of Iranian identity - the Persian language spoken today is called Farsi. Indeed, it was one of the main seats of the great Achaemenian Empire, stretching from Egypt to India. Among the highly precious monuments situated in Fars, Persepolis,



Pasargadae, Eram Garden, and King's Garden (one of the ancient gardens in Pasargadae) have been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List making the province rank first in the country.

Founded in the Achaemenian Dynasty (2500

years ago), Shiraz turned into one of the main cities of the country under the Sasanians, and became the provincial capital in 693. It flourished under Islam, grew even more in importance and was chosen as Iran's capital several times, the last one being during Zand Dynasty, when many architectural masterpieces (Karim Khan Citadel, Vakil Bazar, Vakil Mosque among many others) were built. Shiraz is considered the literary center of Iran, thanks to its world-known poets, Hafez and Saadi, whose col-

lection of poetry can be found in almost any Iranian house and whose writings

have been immortalized in the form of innumerable proverbs and aphorisms. The city of gardens, of roses, of nightingales and literature also boasts a long tradition of art, with its specific painting style flourishing in the 14th century. Today's numerous handicrafts produced in the city (Khatam and Monabbat, kinds of wood marquetry, Ghalamzani, seven-colored tiles, to mention just a few) as well as architectural masterpieces reflected in the historical sites (especially the old mosques of the city) bear witness to this claim.



But above all, Shiraz is rightly proud of its religious position in the country. Being called Sevomin Haram Ahle Beyt in Iran (the third most important religious city which house the mausoleums of Hazrat-e ShahCheragh (A), the city is a major tourism destination which offers natural, historical as well as religious must-see places to the visitors.

Shiraz is also a major health hub, with a prestigious reputation for organ transplants within the Middle East countries and beyond.



Photo By: Omid Aghaei

