

Tehran condemns Khan Touman seizure near Aleppo, backs political settlement

Foreigners can purchase 100% shares of Iranian state-run firms: official

Sharks in Persian Gulf needs accreditation schemes

Shahrdad Rohani appointed conductor of Tehran Symphony Orchestra

# TEHRAN TIMES



Iranian reciter finishes fourth at Malaysian Quran contest

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## Leader: Security is top priority

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — The Supreme Leader on Sunday spoke to a number of top police officials where he defended the latest security measures taken by the police.

"Security is the number one and highest priority issue of the country," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, adding that even important issues such as resistance economy are dependent on

a secure society.

"In issues related to moral security, when thorough, powerful, and wise plans are made, no attention should be paid to objections

made by some people or the vibe that is created by some media. Rather, the work should be pushed forth by keeping trust in God," the Leader stressed.



See page 2

## Saudi king sacks ministers in major cabinet rejig

Saudi King Salman announced a series of changes in the government, sacking some ministers in a major cabinet reshuffle.

In a royal decree, King Salman reformed the ministries of energy, oil, water, transport, commerce, social affairs, health and pilgrimage and

replaced ministers in charge of their portfolios.

A decree was also issued by the monarch for setting up a new recreation and culture commission.

However, the most notable change of the portfolios was sacking the long-serving

oil minister Ali al-Naimi. He was replaced by Khaled al-Faleh, who acted previously as the health minister. Faleh takes on the portfolio of energy, industry and mineral resources.

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## Visitors satisfied with new venue for Tehran book fair

By Manijeh Rezapoor

Most people visiting the 29th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) feel pleased with the relocation of the fair, calling the venue more convenient for a book fair. The organizers relocated the fair this year from Imam Khomeini Mosalla to Shahre Aftab, a newly-constructed fairground in southern Tehran.

In an interview Tehran Times conducted with several citizens on Sunday, the fifth day of the fair, most of the visitors expressed their satisfaction with the new venue. Narges Aqajani and Zahra Taheri, two university students studying computers, were happy with the fair.

"The location is good; there are more facilities. The publishers are offering books at reasonable prices with a good number of discounts," they said.

However, they complained about the location of some publishers of general books and proposed that all publishers active in a specific topic should be situated next to each other for easier access by the visitors.

The 11-year-old school girl, Mahdis Babai, and her mother, Zahra Baqerzadeh, who were visiting the fair with a number of her colleagues coming from the Khorramdarreh Department of Culture and Islamic Guidance from Zanjan Province, called the fair excellent.

"It is large with a good atmosphere. The children's section is also large with a good atmosphere," Mahdis said.

Iraj Davudbeigi, an art expert from the department said that the new location is very good for visitors coming from other cities.

"There is a large parking lot. We were not stuck in a traffic jam as in previous years. The transportation inside the fair is also good for visitors," he added.

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## Japan eyes Iran infrastructure development

**TOKYO (Nikkei)** — The Japanese government hopes to play a role in the development of a regional logistics hub in southeastern Iran, according to sources on Saturday.

Japan hopes to team up with India on the construction of the site, which is set to include a port and an industrial complex. India has already begun work on the plan.

With Iran expected to enter a period of growth after the lifting of economic sanctions last year, Tokyo is keen to build stronger ties with Tehran.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hopes

to reach a deal during a planned visit to the Iranian capital later this year.

The planned site for development is the city of Chabahar on the coast of the Gulf of Oman, close to the Pakistani border. The location lies in Iran's southernmost free trade zone and offers prime access to shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean. It is also a pivotal trade hub for Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries.

In April, the Indian government announced plans to invest some \$20 billion to build fertilizer and petrochemical plants at Chabahar.

The Japanese government hopes to start

drawing up specific plans by the end of this year through the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Taking heed of requests from Iran and India, the government will decide on details such as the necessary infrastructure and a list of companies it will invite to tender for the project. The investment will use official development assistance. The Japanese government hopes to develop the area into a trading center for resource-rich Central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan, the world's fourth largest producer of natural gas. It also hopes that Chabahar will serve as a logistics pivot for Iran and Afghanistan.

## Hajj may be cancelled this year: MP



**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — A member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee says that hajj pilgrimage may be cancelled for Iranians this year as Saudi Arabia is refusing to give guarantees that it will take care of the lives of pilgrims.

Today the committee held a session with Hajj and Pilgrimage

Organization officials, where it was said that Saudi Arabia has not guaranteed the safety of the pilgrims, Mohammad Hassan Asafari said, ICANA reported.

He said as Saudi Arabia is unlikely to announce that it is ready to protect the pilgrims within a 7-day deadline set by Iran, Tehran may just cancel sending pilgrims on hajj this year.

## Iran in transition from two-faction to three-faction consensus: official

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — The political director of the presidential office believes that Iran is going through a transition time from pursuing consensus between two faction to one among three different factions.

That means a consensus should be reached among moderates, reformists, and moderate principlists, Hamid Aboutalebi wrote in a message posted on dolat.ir website on Sunday.

He said the choice of the next Majlis speaker would come as the third major event after the 2013 presidential election and the 2015 Majlis elections to complete a triple set.

"If a decades-long tradition is not put aside, minor players will



once more have the chance to pull their traditional strings and force their will on the speaker-ship. Therefore, the third and upcoming event should render some cooperation that ends in some consensual statecraft," he stressed.

## Poll: U.S. seeks pretexts for new Iran sanctions

The United States is seeking a new pretext to impose new sanctions against Iran through the country's defensive missile program, a PressTV poll finds.

In a survey carried out by PressTV on April 3-May 7, some 58% of respondents believed that the U.S. is looking to find fresh excuses for sanctioning Iran over its missile capabilities.

Some 33% said Washington has been trying to make Iran's military vulnerable through targeting its missile program.

Only 9% of the interviewees said the U.S. move is aimed at se-

curing peace and stability in the Middle East. Some 6,990 people were surveyed in the poll.

In recent years, Iran has made major breakthroughs in its defense sector and attained self-sufficiency in the production of important military equipment and systems.

The country has also conducted major military drills to enhance the defense capabilities of its armed forces and to test modern military tactics and state-of-the-art equipment.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) successfully test-fired two ballistic missiles on March 9 as

part of military drills to assess its capabilities. The missiles dubbed Qadr-H and Qadr-F were fired during large-scale drills, code-named Eqtedar-e-Velayat.

On March 8, Iran fired another ballistic missile called Qiam from silo-based launchers in different locations across the country.

The U.S. claims that Iran's missile tests violate the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that endorsed a nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was reached between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries — the five

permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany — on July 14, 2015.

Iran, however, has repeatedly announced that the missile launches were not against the Security Council resolution.

On Saturday, Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehghan said that Tehran has no limitations to holding military drills "and those who came [to the region] from thousands of kilometers away and claim to establish security in the region must know that their presence is a source of insecurity."

(Source: Press TV)

## ARTICLE

By Camilia Razavi and Daniel Khalessi

## China looks towards Iran

In 138 BC, a Chinese imperial envoy named Zhang Qian set out to traverse the dangerous plains of Central Asia on horseback, ultimately entering the Persian Empire. On January 30th, 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping descended from his airplane in Tehran, marking the continuation of a two-thousand-year-old relationship between the two civilizations.

"Iran has historically been one of China's most significant trading partners," says Dr. Lu Yang, Professor in the Department of History at Peking University. "For centuries, Persia and China engaged in trade over land and sea. During the Tang Dynasty, Persia transferred important technology for sea travel to China."

Today, Chinese leaders and entrepreneurs are reinvigorating the history of close economic ties between the two countries. President Xi became the first foreign head of state to visit Iran in the aftermath of the recent nuclear deal and the suspension of international sanctions against Iran. After a series of meetings between President Xi and Iranian leaders—namely Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, President Hassan Rouhani, and the Majlis (Iran's parliament) — the two governments ambitiously agreed to increase bilateral trade from \$55 billion to \$600 billion over the next decade. In September 2015, only a few months after the P5+1 finalized the nuclear deal, a single Chinese businessman Sheng Kuan Li invested \$200 million in a steel mill in Zarinabad, even bringing laborers from China to work at the facility.

"Iran and China have become natural allies because of practical necessities and not certainly due to ideological compatibility," says Mahmood Monshipouri, Visiting Professor at UC Berkeley and Middle East expert. "Iran is a stable country in a region of political instability and has a great deal of resources that China needs."

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IRNA



Incoming MPs request study of 6th development plan by next Majlis

**TEHRAN** — 104 incoming MPs wrote a letter on Sunday to Majlis speaker Ali Larijani requesting that the sixth development plan be studied and addressed by the next Majlis.

"In this letter we have stressed our demand that the law be postponed to the next Majlis term," said Aligoudarz representative Mohammad Khoda Bakhshi, the Iran Online reported.



Tehran, Vienna engaged in post-JCPOA talks: ambassador

**TEHRAN** — The Iranian ambassador to Vienna has said Iran and Austria are engaged in a series of post-JCPOA talks, ISNA reported on Sunday.

The talks cover such areas as industry, tourism, and higher education, Ebadollah Molaei said.

He added Iran-Austria relations can be pursued in a multiplicity of areas to realize "full-blown ties".



Police cracking down on organized smuggling groups

**TEHRAN** — Police is carrying out extended operations against organized smuggling groups, the Iranian police chief said on Sunday.

After recent requests by the Leader, orders were sent out across the country to arrange special measures against goods and currency smugglers, Hossein Ashtari said, Mehr reported.

He added "good agreements have been reached" to identify and subdue the groups.



Next Majlis belongs to principlists: Zonnour

**TEHRAN** — Mojtaba Zonnour who has been elected to the parliament from Qom says the next Majlis belongs to principlists with the biggest number in the 290-seat assembly.

181-to-be MPs are in favor of the comprehensive principlist coalition headed by Ali Larijani, Zonnour said on Sunday, Fars reported.



Interior minister orders inquiry into attack on Mohmoud Mousavi

**TEHRAN** — The interior minister has ordered security forces to track down a hooligan-like attack against former diplomat Mir Mahmoud Mousavi by three men.

Preliminary findings show the incident, happened on Sunday evening, falls in the category of extortion and no other particular intention is involved, Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said on Sunday, the YJC reported.



Iran set to strengthen Asian languages teaching against English

**TEHRAN** — The Supreme Cultural Revolution Council has been commissioned to propagate substitute languages for English in the education system, says a senior scholar and politician.

Gholam-Ali Haddad Adel, a sitting MP who chairs the Majlis Cultural Committee, said the move comes after the Supreme Leader called for paying attention to a diversity of languages including Asians rather than English alone, Mizan reported on Sunday.



48 Saudi embassy attackers receive indictments

**TEHRAN** — An Iranian court has issued indictments against 48 who attacked the Saudi embassy in Tehran in early January, the Judiciary spokesman said on Sunday.

However, no court hearing has been held yet, Qolamhossein Mohseni Ejei said, ILNA reported.

Leader: Security is top priority

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He also called for the presentation of a positive image of the police before the public eye, noting, "The police should be pictured as a kind and powerful friend in people's mind."

He cautioned officials as well as people to take care of the existing unity, adding, "The creation of double currents and bipolarity is one of the lethal blows the enemy is attempting [to foster]."

ISNA

MEHR

FARS

YJC

HADAD

ILNA

# Rouhani: It's crucial that Majlis and govt. close ranks to flourish economy

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani underlined late on Saturday that for economic growth to gather pace, the parliament and administration need to close ranks.

Rouhani made the remarks in a dinner feast attended by lawmakers-elect who secured victory for the next parliament in the February elections and April runoff. "The common goal of the administration and parliament is to resolve problems and gratify people's expectations," IRNA quoted Rouhani as saying.

Rouhani said he sees the resolution of problems facing the country entails a "common prudence".

The president also offered gratitude to the outgoing parliament, saying the people's expectations of legislative and administrative branches are crystal clear.

"The people wish coordination and harmony between legislative and administrative branches to address the country's fundamental challenges."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani hinted at the parliamentary elections, saying the outcome indicated Iranians continue to believe in the moderate movement and sublime causes of the Islamic Revolution.

Rouhani chose a motto of moderation for his presidential campaign in 2013, acting out rivals, winning a landslide victory. Also, he vowed to end Iran's impasse with the West over its nuclear program. In July 2015, after a two-year marathon of negotiations, he delivered his promise of



forging a deal with the six world powers (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany).

Current Majlis speaker Ali Larijani and Mohammad Reza Aref, leader of the coalition of reformist and moderate MPs in the next parliament, also spoke to the participants.

Larijani said the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has opened "new opportunities" for the country.

Larijani, who acted as chief nuclear negotiator when he served as the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council from 2005 to 2007, said, "The Islamic republic system took a guarded and timely decision in brokering a deal with the 5+1... and this has provided an opportunity and new climate for country in terms of investment, development and diplomatic interaction."

Aref also said national unity is more urgent

**"The people wish coordination and harmony between legislative and administrative branches to address the country's fundamental challenges," Rouhani says.**

## Tehran condemns Khan Touman seizure near Aleppo, backs political settlement

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African countries Hossein Amirabdollahian on Sunday condemned terrorists' seizure of Khan Touman village near Aleppo, according to IRNA.

"We continue to believe in a political settlement as a solution for the Syrian crisis and the global community should condemn and clamp down on terrorists and affiliated armed groups," Amir-Abdollahian was quoted as saying.

In the battle, thirteen Iranian military advisors, all members of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), were martyred and more dozens wounded, Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday.

The official stated he had talked with Russians about reasons for breaches of the ceasefire in Aleppo, saying, terrorists' and armed groups misuse of the ceasefire backed by foreigners' hands shows they have no belief in political solutions.

From the very beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, Iran has been standing beside the Syrian government and people, losing senior commanders in the battlefield.

The war has left more than 200,000 of the Syrian people killed and millions displaced, although the UN special envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura has put the number of dead at about 400,000.

Unlike Iran's practical steps to ward off the plague of terrorism in the region, some countries, especially re-



gional states, have been supporting armed and extremist groups to topple the Beshar al-Assad government.

## Nobakht: Population to hit 84m by end of 6th development plan

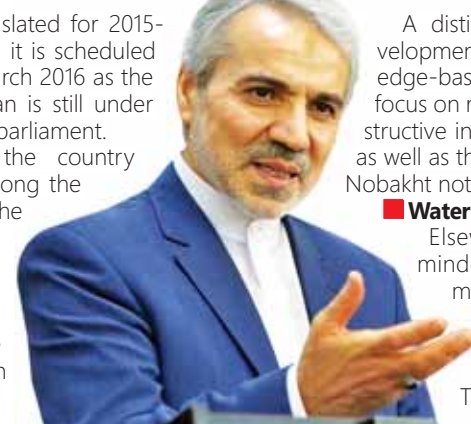
**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht, head of the Management and Planning Organization, has said that Iran's population will hit a record of 84 million by the end of the sixth five-year development plan, Tasnim reported on Sunday.

To achieve the goal, a birth rate of 2.1 percent has been forecast, taking into account a proportionate economic growth, Nobakht said in a gathering on Saturday night attended by President Rouhani and lawmakers-elect.

Since 1988, Iran has been implementing five five-development plans, with the

sixth version slated for 2015-2020, though it is scheduled to start in March 2016 as the economic plan is still under study by the parliament.

Whereas the country has been among the youngest in the world, Iranian officials have expressed concerns over the population turning older.



A distinction of the sixth development plan is its knowledge-based orientation with a focus on resistance economy, constructive interaction with the world, as well as the Iranian-Islamic culture, Nobakht noted.

**Water crisis, a major challenge**

Elsewhere, Nobakht reminded the importance of managing water resources, saying, "We run into crisis if the water issue goes unnoticed. The environmental chal-

lenge, like what happened to Hamoun wetlands and Lake Urmia, is a reality in need of addressing."

Low precipitations, inter alia, over the past years have resulted in wetlands and local lakes drying up in Iran.

Many cities are already grappling with the challenge, with little done over the past years to lessen consequences.

Speaking to the same gathering, President Rouhani also underlined the issue, speaking of a water agenda being followed by the administration.

## China looks toward Iran

While many experts and policymakers discuss the merits of an American pivot to Asia, China is pivoting to the world, starting with Iran.

Before this agreement however, sanctions prevented European countries from accessing Iranian oil markets, allowing China to purchase oil from Iran and invest in Iran's energy production sector. Indeed in 2014, China doubled its quota for infrastructure investments in Iran. As reported in the Chinese newspaper Xinhua, President Xi stated that China and Iran would be "natural partners" in his One Belt, One Road Initiative, which attempts to promote greater economic connectivity between China, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

Some scholars, however, point out that the partnership between the two countries is more likely grounded in pragmatism than political ideology. "Iran and China have become natural allies because of practical necessities and not certainly due to ideological compatibility," says Monshipouri. "Iran is a stable country in a region of political instability and has a great deal of resources that China needs." The proxy wars and conflicts between Iran and Saudi Arabia can increase regional instability and pose risks to China's ease-of-access to Iran's resources.

Despite tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, it is important to note that President Xi visited both nations during his Middle East tour. The simultaneity of President Xi's economic diplomacy with the two geopolitical rivals of the region could potentially allow China to serve as a third party mediator in the event of a conflict. According

**President Xi stated that China and Iran would be "natural partners" in his One Belt, One Road Initiative.**



to Monshipouri, the rationale for these strategic visits might be to show the world that China is "keen on maintaining stability in the region and has worked assiduously and diligently to have bilateral relationship with all key countries in the region." Greater regional stability, in turn, can strengthen the confidence of Chinese investors as they contemplate new ventures in the Middle East.

The trade and investment trends emerging in the aftermath of the Iran nuclear deal provide a valuable window into China's possible strategic ambitions in the Middle East. In the midst of economic challenges at home and brewing tensions in the Middle East, President Xi's historic visit to Iran and the new \$600 billion trade deal may be part of China's larger strategy of sustaining a balance of power against the United States while reaping the economic benefits of a more globally integrated Iranian economy. While many experts and policymakers discuss the merits of an American pivot to Asia, China is pivoting to the world, starting with Iran.

(Source: Huffington Post)



# Syrian army, allies set to liberate northern town of Khan Tuman

Syrian government forces, backed by advisors from Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, are preparing to launch a large-scale operation and retake the strategic town of Khan Tuman in Syria's northern province of Aleppo from foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants.

Syrian troopers together with military advisors from Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and fighters from the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement as well as Iraq's Mobilization Units have converged on the outskirts of the town, located southwest of the provincial capital city of Aleppo, and are gearing up for the liberation operation, Fars news agency reported.

Takfiri militants, led by fellow terrorists from the al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front, took control of Khan Tuman on Friday, shortly before a 48-hour truce in Aleppo was due to expire.

Informed sources, requesting not to be named, told Qatar's al-Jazeera satellite news network that groups involved in the attack included Ahrar al-Sham, Ajnad al-Sham, and other factions under the command of Jaish al-Fatah (The Army of Conquest).

The IRGC announced in a statement on Saturday that 13 of its military advisers had been killed and 21 others wounded in Syria in recent days.

The town has changed hands between Syrian army soldiers, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorists and foreign-sponsored militants over the past few months. Syrian soldiers had wrested control over Khan Tuman in last December.

## ■ British money in Syria diverted to ISIL Report

Meantime, millions of pounds of British money channeled to Syria as so-called aid may have ended up in the hands of ISIL terrorist group, a British government report says.

The revelation was made in the December report titled "Assessment of financial risk and fraud" by the Department for International Development (DFID), a British government institution



responsible for administering foreign spending, the Mail reported on Sunday.

The money that ends up in ISIL hands came from what London claims to be financial support sent to the war-stricken country.

The British government has long been providing military and financial aid to the so-called "moderate" militants operating to topple the government in Syria over the past five years.

The DFID conceded that "the most serious risk" to its programs in Syria is "from the large scale diversion of aid, including for the purposes of terrorism."

The value of the money that may have ended up in ISIL hands is about one percent of the total £510 million of British aid that has gone to Syria since 2011, but this still could represent some £5.1 million.

Analyzing the £26.5 million contribution to a humanitarian project run by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the DFID also warned of "a high risk of corruption and fraud," adding, however, that the UN "had robust procedures" to deal with the problem.

This is not the first time that the DFID

has acknowledged diversion in its foreign aid.

Back in 2013, the DFID admitted that almost £500,000 of its aid and equipment had reached the al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabab militants based in Somalia.

The latest revelation is expected to intensify pressure on British Prime Minister David Cameron, who has pledged to commit 0.7 percent of Britain's gross national product on overseas aid.

## ■ Spanish journalists freed from captivity in Syria

Elsewhere, Madrid says the three men, who had been missing since July, arrived in Spain on a plane that took off from Turkey.

Three Spanish freelance journalists who went missing in Syria last year and were believed to have been kidnapped have been released, the Spanish Press Federation and the government say.

Antonio Pampliega, Jose Manuel Lopez and Angel Sastre disappeared last July while working on an investigative report in the northern city of Aleppo, where other journalists have been captured in the past, Spanish media report-

ed at the time.

The government said a plane brought them from Turkey to Spain on Sunday.

No details were immediately available on how the three were released, but their release had been "possible thanks to the collaboration of allies and friends especially in the final phase from Turkey and Qatar", the Spanish government said in a statement.

Qatar's state news agency said Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad Martian had received a phone call from Spain's minister of state for foreign affairs, Ignacio Ispanaz Rebeo, thanking "the State of Qatar for its efforts in the release".

Various Spanish media, including El Pais, said the three were held by al-Qaeda's Syrian wing, al-Nusra Front.

Qatar has previously mediated the release of foreign hostages held by al-Nusra in Syria.

The journalists had entered Syria from Turkey on July 10 and went missing shortly afterwards, Spanish press association FAPE said last year.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group, the three reporters were last seen in a rebel-held area of Aleppo on July 13, when they were travelling in a van together before being taken away by armed men.

After they disappeared, Madrid said officials were working with Spanish intelligence members in Syria to try and secure their release.

Syria has been gripped by a deadly turmoil since March 2011. Damascus says the House of Saud regime, Turkey and Qatar are the main supporters of the militants fighting the government forces.

UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura estimates that over 400,000 people have been killed in the conflict, which has furthermore displaced over half of Syria's pre-war population of about 23 million.

British authorities say at least 800 British nationals have traveled to Syria and Iraq to support or fight alongside the Takfiri terrorist groups operating there.

(Source: agencies)

## Decision time for FBI on Clinton

The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) investigation swirling around Hillary Clinton's presidential run appears to have entered the final stages.

Many of the former secretary of State's key aides have been interviewed over the course of the last month, and Clinton herself is expected to answer investigators' questions about her use of a private email server in the coming days or weeks.

Former officials and legal experts say that Clinton's testimony will likely be the final puzzle piece for federal prosecutors and FBI investigators as they decide whether to file any charges over her use of a personal email server.

The end of the investigation would be a relief for Clinton and her allies, who have faced questions for months over her exclusive use of a personal server while serving as secretary of State.

Though her rival in the Democratic primary, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), has vehemently refused to attack her over the email issue, Republicans are sure to use it against her in the general election.

For Clinton, the stakes of the final interview will be high.

Attorney General Loretta Lynch and FBI Director James Comey have both denied that they are seeking to wrap up the investigation by this summer's political conventions, or any other point on the political calendar.

But the bureau's accelerating pace suggests that it is well aware of the ticking clock of the campaign season; many doubt that the case would drag on for much longer without a resolution of some sort.

If prosecutors wanted to press ahead with an indictment, they may have their work cut out for them.

In Clinton's case, none of the more than 2,000 emails now considered classified on her system were marked as such at the time they were sent, complicating the question of whether she or her allies broke the law.

Multiple media outlets have reported that federal officials have yet to find any evidence that Clinton intended to violate the law.

It remains unclear whether officials have managed to recover any of the roughly 30,000 emails that Clinton deleted from her machine, claiming they were personal. If they did, the messages could provide a treasure trove of information.



Over the next two months, at least six current or former aides to Clinton will be asked to give depositions as part of those cases, which are being led by the conservative watchdog group Judicial Watch. Clinton herself could be asked to testify as well, a federal judge has ruled.

Republicans, for their part, show no signs of letting up.

(Source: The Hill)

## Zawahiri: Al-Nusra Front could break away from al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has released an audio recording, hinting that his organization has no objection to the breakaway of its Syrian affiliate, al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra).

In the audio statement posted online, Zawahiri said many people talked and fought about the issue of al-Nusra and its al-Qaeda link.

He said if the people choose their own leadership; the organizational affiliation will not be an obstacle to what he described as "the great hopes of the Islamic nation".

Al-Nusra, one of Syria's main armed groups, has been excluded from peace talks between the country's government and opposition in Geneva because of its affiliation with al-Qaeda and it remains on United Nations and United States terror lists.

In recent months there have been several reports suggesting al-Nusra is trying to "rebrand" and present itself to the Syrian people, as well as outside powers such as the U.S., as a more moderate, purely Syrian force not linked to al-Qaeda.

But, the group's leadership was re-

portedly unsure about breaking the organizational bond with al-Qaeda.

The group - known as Jabhat al-Nusra in Arabic - has been actively involved in Syria's war since 2012, battling Syrian government forces across the country. It has also fought smaller rebel groups, including Western-backed ones, for control of territory.

Al-Nusra is a popular force on the ground among many Syrians opposed to the government, because of its fighting capabilities. But, at the same time, many Syrians in the opposition have long been worried about the group's links to al-Qaeda.

Recently, the Free Syrian Army, engaging in the political process with the West, has been weakened as al-Nusra has made gains.

On Friday, al-Nusra and its allies captured the strategic town of Khan Touman in Aleppo province, from pro-government forces, a victory that could potentially open up new supply routes for rebel-held areas of the city.

Since al-Nusra is considered a terrorist organization by the UN and the U.S., it has not been an official party to any ne-



gotiations about the future of Syria.

But it has allied itself with several other Syrian groups, who are not on international terrorist lists, in order to gain legitimacy.

Al-Nusra was excluded from a ceasefire agreed between government forces and the opposition in February.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## NEWS

### Kim Jong Un: Pyongyang won't use nukes first

North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un said during a critical ruling party congress that his country will not use its nuclear weapons first unless its sovereignty is invaded, state media reported on Sunday.

Kim also said he is ready to improve ties with "hostile" nations in a diplomatic overture in the face of international pressure over its recent nuclear test and long-range rocket launch. He also called for more talks with rival South Korea to reduce misunderstanding and distrust between them and urged the United States to stay away from inter-Korean issues, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.



"Our republic is a responsible nuclear state that, as we made clear before, will not use nuclear weapons first unless aggressive hostile forces use nuclear weapons to invade on our sovereignty," Kim said in a speech carried by the KCNA.

He said that North Korea "will sincerely fulfill its duties for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and work to realize the denuclearization of the world."

The North is ready to improve and normalize ties with countries hostile to it if they respect its sovereignty and approach it in a friendly manner, Kim said.

At the congress, Kim also announced a five-year plan starting this year to develop the North's dismal economy and identified improving the country's power supply and increasing its agricultural and light-manufacturing production as the critical parts of the program, the KCNA said.

Analysts have anticipated Kim would use the first Workers' Party congress in decades to propose talks with rivals to exploit what he considers to be increased leverage as a nuclear power.

North Korea carried out its fourth nuclear test in January and followed with a satellite launch in February that was seen by outside governments as a banned test for long-range missile technology, earning worldwide condemnation and tougher United Nation sanctions.

The North responded to the punitive measures, and also the annual U.S.-South Korean military drills in March and April, by firing a series of missiles and artillery into the sea. It also claimed advancements in developing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, and combined them with threats of pre-emptive nuclear strikes on Washington and Seoul.

South Korea has taken a hard-line approach to North Korea following its nuclear test and long-range rocket launch, shutting down a jointly-run factory park in a North Korean border town that had been the last remaining symbol of cooperation between the rivals and slapping Pyongyang with its own economic sanctions.

Seoul has also been in talks with Washington on deploying a sophisticated U.S. missile defense system in South Korea.

North Korea had spent the past months resisting talks with the South and threatening attacks against it, but Kim spoke with a different tone at the conference. He said "fundamentally improving" inter-Korean relations was an urgent matter for his government and also called for the South to "hold hands" with the North as a "companion" for unification, the KCNA said.

However, Kim stressed that the South must first employ practical measures to improve ties and throw out laws and institutional systems that have hampered them. He also said that the United States should no longer be involved with matters in the Korean Peninsula, and that if enemy forces "ignite the fire of war," the North was ready to mercilessly punish the aggressors and accomplish the "historical feat" of unification.

(Source: AP)

### Gunmen kill 8 police in Cairo suburb, ISIL claims attack

Gunmen killed eight plainclothes police on the southern outskirts of capital Cairo overnight, the Egyptian interior ministry said, in an assault claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.

The four attackers pulled alongside in a pick-up truck and sprayed a police vehicle with automatic weapons fire before fleeing, the ministry said on Sunday.

The gunmen wore masks, residents in Helwan, an industrial area on the edge of the capital, said.

Egypt's government is facing an insurgency that has killed hundreds of soldiers and policemen, mostly in northern Sinai, since mid-2013, when then-army chief Abdel Fattah el-Sisi ousted President Mohamed Morsi following mass protests.

ISIL's Egyptian affiliate, which calls itself Sinai Province, mainly operates out of the northern Sinai Peninsula, which borders Israel, the Gaza Strip and the Suez Canal.

Militants have also occasionally targeted security forces and planted bombs in Cairo and other areas.

In an Arabic-language statement, ISIL said the Helwan attack was part of its Abi Ali Al-Anbari campaign, which has seen the group carry out a series of bombings and other attacks in Iraq.

It was not clear how or why Egypt was linked to the Iraqi campaign. The statement also said the attack was aimed at avenging women held in Egyptian jails, but gave no details.

ISIL controls swathes of Iraq and Syria. In 2014, an Egyptian militant group called Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis pledged allegiance to ISIL and changed its name to Sinai Province.

Al Azhar, a historic centre of Islamic learning in Cairo, condemned what it called a "terrorist attack the likes of which contradict Islamic teachings" and offered in a statement its support for Egypt's security forces.

(Source: AP)



NEWS

NIOC allowed buying office in Mumbai

Keen on strengthening ties with Iran, the Indian government has allowed National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) to buy office in Mumbai and is processing requests to allow three of its banks to open branches in the country.

With the lifting of international sanctions, major economies including China and Korea are courting Iran, which has the world's second-largest gas reserves after Russia.



Not to be left behind, India too is keen to raise its engagement with a nation which once was its second biggest oil supplier. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit Tehran shortly to bolster ties.

"Permission has been granted to NIOC for purchasing property for an office," a finance ministry official said.

Indian refiners are looking at nearly doubling buying of crude oil from Iran's national oil company, NIOC to 20 million tons this year and it having a permanent office would help trade.

Also, Iran has sought permission for three of its banks to open branches in India.

"Bank Pasargad and Parsian Bank want to open offices in India while Saman Bank is interested in opening a subsidiary," the official said. "The Iranian request is being looked into by relevant authorities including the Reserve Bank of India."

Establishment of banking channels is key to Iran regaining the trade it lost due to sanctions. But while the sanctions were listed in January, it still is not able to access past oil dues, including nearly USD 6.5 billion from Indian refiners, as it is yet to be accepted in global banking system.

Iran has ended the three-year old system of getting paid 45 percent of the bill on selling crude oil to India in rupees and keeping the rest 55 percent in abeyance for opening up of banking channels.

The 55 percent component of oil dues now total to nearly USD 6.5 billion and will be remitted once banking channels are established.

Iran plans to use its bank branches in India to settle not just the oil trade but also that of other commodities.

(Source: Business Standard)

China April exports, imports decline more than expected

China's exports and imports fell more than expected in April, underlining weak demand at home and abroad and cooling hopes of a recovery in the world's second-largest economy.

Exports fell 1.8 percent from a year earlier, the General Administration of Customs said on Sunday, reversing the previous month's brief recovery and supporting the government's concerns that the foreign trade environment will be challenging in 2016.

April imports dropped 10.9 percent from a year earlier, falling for the 18th consecutive month, suggesting domestic demand remains weak despite a pickup in infrastructure spending and record credit growth in the first quarter.

"Both exports and imports came in weaker than expected, in line with the soft trade performance across Asia, pointing to another challenging year for emerging markets," said Zhou Hao, senior emerging market economist at Commerzbank in Singapore.

China's exports to the United States – the country's top export market – fell 9.3 percent in April from a year earlier, while shipments to the European Union – the second biggest market, rose 3.2 percent, customs data showed.

China's cabinet has vowed to take steps to boost exports, including encouraging banks to boost lending, expanding export credit insurance and raise tax rebates for some firms.

China had a trade surplus of \$45.56 billion (31.58 billion pounds) in April, versus forecasts of \$40 billion.

Economists polled by Reuters had expected April exports to fall 0.1 percent, after a surprise 11.5 percent rise in March, and expected imports to fall 5 percent, following March's 7.6 percent decline.

Momentum may weaken

China's economic growth slowed to 6.7 percent in the first quarter – the weakest since the global financial crisis, but activity picked up in March as policy steps to boost the economy, including six interest rate cuts since late 2014, seemed to be taking effect.

Concerns of a hard-landing in China had eased after the strong March data, but analysts have warned the rebound may be short-lived.

Economists expect a slowdown in credit growth and industrial production in April although inflation could accelerate. Key economic data is expected over the next two weeks.

"The market has to prepare a little bit for the downside risk in other Chinese data and some sort of market correction might be inevitable," Zhou said.

An official factory survey and Caixin's private-sector gauge for April painted a mixed picture of the health of the manufacturing sector.

The official purchasing managers' index (PMI) showed factory activity expanded for the second month in a row in April but only marginally, while Caixin's manufacturing PMI pointed to 14 straight months of sector contraction.

China's central bank said on Friday that it will fine tune policy in a pre-emptive and timely way, as the economy still faces downward pressure despite signs of steadying.

Amid shrinking global demand, China still managed to grow its share of world exports to 13.8 percent last year from 12.3 percent in 2014, indicating the country's export sector remains competitive despite higher costs.

(Source: Reuters)

Netherlands seeks long-term agro-ties with Iran

➔1 The signed contracts seek to improve future bilateral cooperation in energy, finance, banking and insurance, as well as transportation, health and water management besides finalizing economic agreements and exchanging experiences and data in different fields.

Reviewing the latest situation for economic cooperation in the joint meeting,

Van den Berg referred to the existing investment opportunities and capacities in Iran and underlined expansion of bilateral cooperation.

Trade between the two countries stood at \$650 million in the past Iranian calendar year of 1394 (ended on March 19, 2016), with Iran's imports from the European country of more than \$600 million.



Dutch Minister of Economic Affairs Henk Kamp (L) and Iranian Agriculture Minister Mahmoud Hojjati in the second session of Iran-Netherlands Agricultural Cooperation Meeting in Tehran on Sunday

Petchem exports rise 26% in post-sanction Iran

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Since the implementation of the nuclear deal between Iran and P5+1 in January, exports of petrochemical products has witnessed a 26-percent hike, Marzieh Shahdaie, the managing director of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said on Sunday.

"Iran's Petrochemical transactions with the world have been eased since January thanks to the strengthened banking and insurance relations between Tehran and international banks and institutes," IRNA quoted the NPC managing director addressing a news conference on the sidelines of the 21st International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhi-



PICTURE OF THE DAY Shana/ Hasan Hosseini



Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh (R) giving an Iranian handicraft as a gift to Omani Minister of Oil and Gas Mohammed bin Hamad Al Rumhi in Tehran on Saturday. Zanganeh mentioned the progress of constructing Iran-Oman gas pipeline as the main subject of his meeting with Al Rumhi.

Greek finance minister says IMF contingent measures impossible to legislate

Greece is applying reforms to meet bailout pledges but extra contingency measures demanded by the IMF are impossible to legislate, its finance minister said in a leaked letter to euro zone finance ministers before Monday's Eurogroup meeting.

The euro zone's 19 finance ministers will gather in Brussels on May 9 to discuss Greece's reform program and a new set of contingency measures that Athens is asked to adopt to ensure it can achieve agreed fiscal targets in 2018.

A successful conclusion of the bailout review would unlock bailout funds under a financial aid program, agreed by Greece and euro zone countries in July, and pave the way for debt relief talks.

While Greece's leftist-led government has mostly reached agreement with its official lenders on a 5.4 billion euro (£4.2 billion) package of measures to hit a 3.5

percent primary budget surplus target in 2018, the IMF thinks this will be tough to achieve.

The International Monetary Fund says the package would suffice if the 2018 primary surplus target is cut to 1.5 percent, but that extra savings are needed to attain the 3.5 percent target, pushing for contingency measures worth 3.6 billion euros.

"Any package above 5.4 billion euros is doomed to be seen by Greek citizens and financial analysts ... as socially and economically counterproductive," Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos said in the letter.

"There is no way such a package can be passed by the current government, or by any democratic government that I can imagine."

The finance ministry had no comment.

Tsakalotos said the two-percentage point difference on the primary surplus target was very large, rendering

the IMF's demands for contingency measures of 2.0 percent of GDP "quite problematic".

Noting that there is no constitutional way to pass contingency measures in Greece, he said the government would have to legislate steps and promise to annul them if they proved unnecessary.

"Can you imagine going to parliament and instead of an expected package of 5.4 billion euros, (try to pass) one of 9.0 billion euros?" Tsakalotos asked in the letter.

Instead, Athens has offered an automatic mechanism of spending cuts across ministries if the 2018 target starts looking unattainable, to ensure it will be able to meet the agreed fiscal goal set for 2018.

"I believe that such a mechanism, coupled with the reforms package, is more than adequate to close the first bailout review," Tsakalotos said.

(Source: Reuters)

Enel has presented informal offer for Metroweb stake: source



Italian utility Enel has presented an informal offer to buy a majority stake in fiber network company Metroweb as part of its plans to roll out a high-speed Internet network, a source familiar with the matter said on Saturday.

The offer would see Enel acquire the 54 percent stake in Metroweb currently owned by infrastructure fund F2i for around 400 million euros, valuing the whole of Metroweb at 776 million euros, the source said.

The preliminary, informal bid was presented to state-owned Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze (CRF), which owns the rest of Metroweb and a minority stake in F2i, the source added. Effectively, any friendly bid for control of Metroweb would need CRF's consent.



Uber to launch UberX service in Berlin: Welt am Sonntag

Ride-hailing service Uber aims to launch its UberX service, which uses licensed professional drivers, in the German capital Berlin after failing to find enough drivers in some of the country's other cities, Uber's Germany chief Christian Freese told a newspaper.

"We are planning to start UberX in Berlin in June," weekly Welt am Sonntag quoted Freese as saying in an interview published on Sunday. A German court last year banned San Francisco-based Uber from running services using unlicensed cab drivers and set stiff fines for any violations of local transport laws by the pioneering online taxi firm. The venture capital-backed company in Germany has since limited itself to drivers that hold a passenger transport license, among other legal requirements, through its UberX and UberBlack smartphone apps.



Cyber-attacks: Two-thirds of big UK businesses targeted

Two-thirds of big UK businesses have been hit by a cyber-attack in the past year, according to government research.

Most of the attacks involved viruses, spyware or malware, the Cyber Security Breaches Survey says. A quarter of large firms experiencing a cyber breach did so at least once a month.

Digital Economy Minister Ed Vaizey said it was "absolutely crucial businesses are secure and can protect data".

In some cases the internet-linked attacks cost millions of pounds.

The survey's results have been released alongside the government's Cyber Governance Health Check, launched following the TalkTalk cyber-attack in October last year.



# How to travel in uncertain times

Given the recent wave of terrorist attacks and crises, some people are unsure whether to go ahead with trips they've planned. Others are wondering where on earth it is safe to travel nowadays.

Since a terrorist incident can happen anywhere at any time, it's impossible to know the risk of one destination over another. But we can each come to grips with our own comfort level. Risk scientists will tell you that there are two factors that determine the risks that each of us is willing to take.

One is risk perception—our estimation of how dangerous a place is, which could have little to do with reality. Two people may look at Istanbul and, because they have different sets of information, one sees risk there, the other doesn't.

The second factor is risk tolerance—our individual threshold for danger. Two people can agree on the facts and see the same degree of risk in Istanbul, but one person is willing to accept that risk and the other is not. First, you estimate the risk. Then you decide whether it's tolerable.

### Consider what travelers currently at your destination are reporting

You can find such dispatches in TripAdvisor's forums. For advice about a city or country, go to that destination's forum and search recent posts about safety, or ask a question yourself. As an example, a few days after the November 2015 attacks in Paris, a traveler asked, "Cancel a trip to Paris this weekend?"

### Read your government's advice for travel to your destination

Most governments provide safety and security information to their citizens planning travel to, or currently traveling in, foreign countries.

Do a Web search for your government's foreign-service website (you can try typing "<name of country> government travel advice" into your search engine) and check the advice for your travel destination.

### Get a second or third opinion

Sometimes government advisories may be politically influenced. Consider checking what a couple of other nations' governments have to say. For example, English-speaking Americans might want to check the travel advice issued by Canada and the United Kingdom.

### Note which locations are identified as risky, then look at a map

Look at the distance between your travel destination and the place where there has



Turkish police officers stand guard near the Blue Mosque in Istanbul's tourist hub of Sultanahmet (Photo: Getty Images)

been an incident or that is perceived as risky. Would you avoid England because of attacks in Paris? Would you avoid Beverly Hills because of shootings in San Bernardino? Remember that every big city, including those that are among the world's most popular travel destinations, have areas that are dangerous and where tourists (and most locals) should not go.

Peruse your destination's local newspaper online.

You'll find a directory of newspapers around the world, many of them in English or languages other than the spoken tongue it was published in, at online-newspapers.com.

### Put your risks in the proper perspective

As you watch dramatic news stories repeated over and over on television, remember that the news media does not show images of the vast majority of people at a destination living their everyday normal lives—because that's not news.

Remember that security is always stepped up after a terrorist incident.

In every place I've visited shortly after a terrorist attack (including Beirut, Cairo, Istanbul, Mumbai, and New York City), there have been so many guards with machine guns and metal detectors set up—at tourist sights, in hotel lobbies, etc.—that another incident in that place at that time would have been unlikely.

Remember that terrorists want to create surprise and drama by finding a new, unexpected place to attack.

### Some ways to minimize your risk

If you're waiting for an all-clear signal to travel, you'll probably be waiting for a very long time. If you decide to go ahead with a trip, here are a few smart things you can do to be prepared for any situation.

### Find out how your government can help you in an emergency abroad

Your government's embassy or consulate in the destination you're visiting may be able to offer assistance. Check whether you can register your travel plans in advance, to help your government contact you or your family in the event of an emergency.

If you're a U.S. citizen, for example, you can register your trip with your embassy and consulates abroad via the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, which makes it easier for the embassy to send you safety alerts, contact you in an emergency, and help family and friends contact you.

### Avoid big crowds

Remember that a terrorist wants to inflict as much damage as possible—which means seeking out public areas with a ton of people. As best you can, avoid demonstrations, rallies, sports games, and train stations during rush hour. Here's how you can avoid the biggest crowds at tourist sites.

### Follow useful Twitter feeds

Twitter gives you breaking news and can provide potentially life-saving information in an emergency. Follow your government's travel-advice twitter feed.

Also follow the twitter feed of your

country's embassy in the destination you're visiting. The @RedCross feed and Google's Crisis Response Team, @GoogleCR, are worth following too, as are the local airport's feed, which may post updates about airport delays and shutdowns, and the feeds of local hotels, which usually have an emergency action plan and may be offering help or a landline.

### Choose a hotel where you can monitor the news

Make sure your hotel has reliable high-speed Internet access, so you can easily check local news Web sites. Make sure your in-room television has a range of news channels from around the world, such as CNN, BBC, and Al-Jazeera.

### Program your phone with emergency numbers

Find out the local emergency numbers for the country you're in.

### Rent a satellite phone or satellite messaging device

In an emergency you probably can't rely on your cell phone, as cellular networks often get cut off.

### Use hotel-arranged taxis

Use a vetted driver, or have your hotel call you a cab, rather than hailing a taxi off the street or taking the bus or public transportation. If you do use public transit, try to avoid rush hour.

### Consider membership in an emergency-assistance program

Should a terrorist attack, a political threat, violent crime, or similar affect your trip, you get access to a 24/7 Crisis Response Center, a veteran security expert to advise you, and response services to come to the rescue if necessary. You get that on top of MedjetAssist's regular travel protection: Should you end up hospitalized during a trip, they'll arrange bedside-to-bedside air medical transport back home to a hospital you trust.

### Focus on those risks that are most likely to affect your trip

Wherever you travel, you are far more likely to be a victim of ordinary street crime than terrorism. So avoid flashy jewelry and other signs of wealth or influence. Carry a mini-flashlight so you don't get caught in the dark. And don't make yourself a target by photographing government buildings, military installations, airports, train stations, policemen, guards, or anyone who does not want his/her photo taken.

(Source: Trip Advisor)

## NEWS

### Iran's CHTHO to promote Halal tourism

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization (CHTHO) plans to hold the third edition of Iran Tourism Festival, which aims to promote Halal tourism and the country's potentialities in this section.

This edition of the festival calls for nationwide contribution of trip trotters to tourism industry, CHTHO Deputy Director for Tourism Affairs Morteza Rahmani-Movahhed announced in a press conference on Saturday.

The festival will be held in four sections, namely professional and non-professional photos, travelogue, innovative proposals, and 60-second films, he added.

Applicants can submit their works to the secretariat of the festival until August 5, he said.



### Iran, BiH discuss improvement of tourism cooperation

Chairman of Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers of Denis Zvizdic hosted the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to BiH Seyed Hossein Rajabi on Saturday.

They discussed visa liberalization of between BiH and Iran, as well as the solving of issues regarding the establishment of a payment system, which is a major obstacle for the strengthening of economic cooperation.

Ambassador Rajabi informed the Chairman Zvizdic about activities on the establishment of a flight route between Teheran and Sarajevo, with the aim of developing tourism and improving cooperation in the field of culture and economic relations.

Chairman Zvizdic also expressed satisfaction with good political relations between Iran and BiH. He greeted the decision on the abolition of sanctions that was reached after the Report by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Zvizdic said that the Council of Ministers of BiH will accelerate the procedure of harmonizing the previously reached decision on the implementation of international sanctions for Iran with the decisions by the United States of America, the United Nations Security Council and the European Union on the abolition of sanctions. Chairman Zvizdic expressed hope that the previous cooperation with Iran will continue and improve. He said that BiH is interested in investments from Iran and highlighted the major possibilities in that field. (Source: akta.ba)

## A CLOSER LOOK

### The history of Persian ceramics

Pottery making in the Iranian Plateau dates back to the Early Neolithic Age (7th millennium BC) with the production of coarse, unglazed wares. Later wares were made from earthenware clays with a layer of white slip (engobe). They were covered by transparent lead glazes and colors were added with oxides. Persian ceramics matured with time into more elaborate styles and techniques.

During the 7th century, the Arabs conquered Persian territory as well as Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia. A large part of North Africa was conquered next, including Egypt (see map below). In 717 CE, occupation of the Iberian Peninsula took place, making the Arab empire one of the strongest.

This set the stage for a development in Persian art forms based on Roman, Greek, Egyptian, and Central Asiatic ideas. The blending of these ideas from many regions was seen in the products of the ceramic industry. Influenced by techniques already practiced in conquered territories, Persian potters developed new forms and styles to produce the fine wares that characterize Persian ceramics. Because refined wares were mostly destined to serve and decorate the homes of the wealthy, or for export, this industry received great patronage and support.

During the 9th century under the Abbasid rulership, additional styles and techniques were adopted and refined, later evolving into even more elaborate and exquisite forms. The use of cobalt blue dates to this period, as does the use of other metallic oxides, such as copper, to produce blues and greens. Potters at this time were also experimenting with slip decorations, and were able to control the liquid slip to create elaborate and intricate decorations. Colors such as manganese purple, tomato red, olive green, yellow and brown were applied to the surface and then covered with a transparent glaze, creating a glossy and smooth finish.

(Source: calacademy.org)



### PICTURE OF THE DAY Mehr/Aryan Nasrollahi



Palangan is a village in the Central District of Kamyaran County, western Kordestan Province.

### Has Queen Nefertiti's tomb been located?

It was July of last year when British Egyptologist Nicholas Reeves announced his hypothesis that stunned scholars of the ancient world. Reeves's astonishing hypothesis was that Queen Nefertiti's tomb—long sought after but never found—is hidden within King Tutankhamun's tomb, concealed for more than 3,000 years in a secret room behind a wall of Tutankhamun's burial chamber. Now, on March 17, 2016, eight months after Reeves's hypothesis was published, the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities has announced that radar scans performed on November 26 and 27, 2015, "suggest the presence of two empty spaces or cavities" behind the north and west walls of King Tutankhamun's tomb and indicate that the cavities contain "metallic and organic substances."

In fact, back on November 28, 2015, immediately after the radar scans were conducted, the Antiquities Ministry made a similar announcement, saying that preliminary results of the scans suggested the presence of a "vacancy" behind the north wall, and adding that the vacancy "strongly indicates the existence of a new burial chamber"

(Source: biblicalarchaeology.org)



# What does Davutoglu's resignation mean for Turkey and the EU?

By Rem Korteweg

Ahmet Davutoglu's resignation comes at a sensitive moment for the EU's migration deal with Turkey. Why did the prime minister fall from the sultan's favor, and what does it mean?

Over the past few weeks Davutoglu appeared increasingly worried about the hollowing out of his position. He had every right to be frustrated.

In late April his grip on the AK Party was

weakened, as party bosses decided to stop him from appointing provincial party executives.

Davutoglu has been, of course, head of government and head of the ruling AK party in name only. The real chief sits in a 1000-room presidential palace overlooking Ankara. The Turkish presidency is supposed to be a mostly ceremonial function, but having worked with Recep Tayyip Erdogan for at least a decade, did Davutoglu really think he was anything but a pawn?

Perhaps Erdogan feared a palace coup. As a true, self-styled sultan, Erdogan worries about potential challengers. His vigorous crackdown on the media is an attempt to crush criticism and dissenting opinion. His focus on the Gülen movement is fueled by a conviction that there is a conspiracy out to topple him. He now seems to have turned his gaze to his inner circle. As a former foreign minister, Davutoglu built a strong international network.

#### ■ Pro-Western face

European leaders liked the soft-spoken,



cerebral, English-speaking former professor. Davutoglu was also easier to deal with than Erdogan, whose hot temper, pride and lack of a foreign language often makes meetings difficult. Davutoglu was the gentler,

liberal, pro-Western face of the AK party's leadership and the list of disagreements between him and the president was growing. Was Erdogan worried that Davutoglu could challenge his power? Was he a Turkish Icarus flying too close to the sun?

→9

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# What next for Turkey's AKP after Davutoglu's exit?

In Turkey, prime ministers normally lose their job when they lose an election, or they lose the majority of the seats in the parliament due to a break down in their party. Turkey's current Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu had none of those problems. He had won a sweeping election victory just six months ago and his party is more intact than ever. Yet, still he had to give a farewell speech on May 5. He announced that there will be a surprise snap party congress in 17 days to choose the new party leader, but he himself will not run. "This is not my decision," he said, "but a necessity."

The whole of Turkey knows what the necessity is: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who had nominated Davutoglu for the post of prime minister back in August 2014, had recently changed his mind. In the 20 months that has since passed, an ever-deepening rift emerged between the two men, and in Ankara rumors had spread the past few months that Davutoglu soon would be gone. Just four days before Davutoglu's resignation, a new blog by an anonymous hard-core Erdoganist exposed all the details, as reported in Al-Monitor May 3. Accordingly, Davutoglu had "betrayed" Erdogan by collaborating with the Western powers and their "agents" that conspire against "the CHIEF."

## ■ More moderate and less authoritarian

In fact, the only way Davutoglu "betrayed" Erdogan was that he tried to be relatively more moderate and less authoritarian. Unlike Erdogan, for example, Davutoglu seriously considered forming a coalition government with the main opposition party after the elections on June 7, 2015, when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) lost the parliament majority. Unlike Erdogan, he opposed the jailing of journalists and academics who were put on trial. And unlike Erdogan, he tried to build a consensus with environmentalist protesters rather than demonizing them as political provocateurs. That's why, compared to Erdogan, Davutoglu became a relatively less negative figure in the eyes of the opposition circles. For Erdoganists, however, all this translated into "treason."

Here is something ironic: In August 2014, Erdogan had preferred Davutoglu to Abdullah Gul, whose presidency was ending and who was planning to run for the leadership of the AKP. Then, Gul was also found too moderate and too liberal — not fit for fighting ferociously against the endless conspiracies Turkey is supposedly facing. Gul, as the founder of the AKP, also had his own political persona and charisma and would not be "loyal" to Erdogan.

Now, less than two years later, Davutoglu has turned also into a problem for not being loyal enough to Erdogan. That's why virtually every political observer in Turkey expects that he will be replaced by someone who will be loyal to the president. Here are the top three names that are being speculated right now:

Berat Albayrak: the minister of energy. What makes Albayrak, 38, more than an energy minister is the fact that he is Erdogan's son-in-law, and is also known to be a key name in his most inner circle. Hence, those who know the inner workings of the AKP well think that Albayrak would be the most ideal candidate to head the Prime Ministry. The only problem is that he is too young and inexperienced.

Binali Yildirim: As the longtime transportation minister, Yildirim, 61, is probably the most likely candidate. He has no



AHMET DAVUTOGLU

charisma, but has a good reputation as an able manager of Turkey's major transportation projects and is a close confidant of the president.

Bekir Bozdogan: As the justice minister since late 2013, Bozdogan, 51, is known to be the perfect yes-man for Erdogan, realizing all the "reforms" that destroyed much of the independence of the judiciary in the past three years. He has no charisma, no fame, but Erdogan's full trust.

The point is that the new prime minister will be "a low-profile figure," as an Erdogan adviser said on TV after Davutoglu's departure. Other pro-Erdogan writers are politely saying that this will create "harmony" between the president and his prime minister. But the more explanatory term is "obedience": Perfect harmony will be achieved only with a perfectly obedient prime minister.

## ■ The new AKP chair

As for the calendar of events, here is what will happen: On May 22, in a big hall in Ankara, thousands of AKP delegates will gather to choose the new party chair. A few days before, Erdogan will make clear who he prefers for the job. That person will run as the only candidate, get all the votes and become the new AKP chair. Meanwhile, Davutoglu will continue his life, for the time being, as one of the more than 300 parliamentarians of the AKP.

**The person will run as the only candidate, get all the votes and become the new AKP chair. Meanwhile, Davutoglu will continue his life, for the time being, as one of the more than 300 parliamentarians of the AKP.**



RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

The new AKP leader will immediately be appointed by Erdogan as the new prime minister as well. He will make a list of Cabinet members, get Erdogan's approval and start working. In this new Cabinet, those in the current government who are known as "close to Davutoglu" will most probably no longer be there. One of them could be Lutfi Elvan, a deputy prime minister; the other could be Mehmet Simsek, the other deputy prime minister who is responsible for the economy and who has been one of the few remaining trusted figures by international investors.

Will all this solve Erdogan's problem of not having enough power? Not really, for Erdogan wants to turn his de facto power into a constitutional reality. That's why he still wants a "presidential system" with an all-powerful presidency. For this he needs to change the entire constitution, but the AKP does not have enough seats for that.

So, Erdogan will either try to gain more seats in the current parliament, or call for new elections when he feels the time is right. The first option can develop from the cooperation with the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), whose leader, Devlet Bahceli, has lately been flirting with the AKP to suppress the political rebels in his own party. Or it can develop from the jailing of a few dozen deputies of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), for links with terrorism and running a mini-election for the emptied seats, which the AKP is likely to win.

The second option, yet another early general election, is what those in Ankara consider possible also. Accordingly, early elections at the right time — perhaps this autumn — can push both the pro-Kurdish HDP and the nationalist MHP below the 10% threshold, giving the AKP more than enough seats to present its new constitution, and the "presidential system," overnight.

Thus, Erdogan's march toward absolute power continues. Davutoglu could have been only a slight nuisance on that path. But Erdogan has no tolerance for such annoyance; he

## Why September 11 tragedy traces back to Saudi Arabia

Why is Washington still hesitating to release the 28 pages of the Joint Congressional report over the 9/11 terror attacks, a small section of the 422-page document, U.S. analyst Daniel R. DePetris wonders, pointing to the fact that Saudi Arabia has no objection to the publication of the report.

According to Daniel R. DePetris, an associate analyst at the Raddington Group, there are no visible obstacles in the way of publishing the redacted 28-page section of the document. Even Riyadh has recently signaled that it is not against the report being in the public domain.

## ■ White House's excuses

And still the White House is cooking up excuses why there is no need to publicize the inquiry.

"The 28 pages have taken on a mystical aura. The fact that the documents have been scurried away behind a giant vault in the Capitol and under lock and key for the last fourteen years naturally generates speculation that the George W. Bush and Obama administrations are trying to protect an important Middle East ally from public embarrassment and global censure. Why, the reasoning goes, would the U.S. Government keep the 28 pages classified if Saudi Arabia didn't have anything to hide?" DePetris writes in his article for the National Interest.

The analyst points out that administration officials, executive officer and co-chairs of the 9/11 Commission have recently voiced yet another argument on why the document should not be released.

And the argument is that "there is nothing new in the 28 pages that the American people don't already know."

Remarkably, Emma Ashford and Christopher A. Preble of the U.S.' Cato Institute pointed to the fact that the document hardly contains any new data and some of the purported revelations are already known to the public.

## ■ U.S.-Saudi relations

They argue that the deteriorating



U.S.-Saudi relations have nothing to do with the case: Ashford and Preble emphasized that the inquiry found "no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded the organization" that carried out the deadly 9/11 attacks.

"The case for concealing the nature of the U.S.-Saudi relationship was never very strong. Nor is the case for blacking out those twenty-eight pages. Some secrets need protecting, but this is one story that needs to be told," Preble insisted in his April article for the National Interest.

According to New York-based geopolitical analyst Ulson Gunnar, it does not really matter whether or not the famous 28 pages will be released. The case is clear: it was Saudi Arabia that created and sponsored al-Qaeda over past several decades and Washington has turned a blind eye to Riyadh's glaring misdeeds.

The analyst refers to the BBC's 2004 article "Al-Qaeda's origins and links" that narrated that al-Qaeda "grew out of the network of Arab volunteers who had gone to Afghanistan in the 1980s to fight under the banner of Islam against Soviet Communism."

"During the anti-Soviet terrorist Bin Laden and his fighters received American and Saudi funding. Some analysts believe Bin Laden himself had security training from the CIA," the article read.

It is well documented that Washington and Saudi Arabia armed and trained terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

(Source: Sputnik)

## How do you debate Trump?

Months away from their expected nominations, there's already ample reason to expect Clinton vs. Trump to be the ugliest, most cringe worthy presidential contest of the modern era. It promises to be a half-year slog through the marital troubles, personal peccadilloes, financial ambitions, social-media habits and physical appearances of "Dangerous Donald" and "Crooked Hillary," two labels that the campaigns and their allies are already deploying.

That doesn't mean Hillary Clinton shouldn't try to elevate the debate. Deep beneath the accumulating rancor is a fascinating and potentially illuminating contest between a longtime Democrat and a come-lately Republican who both claim to speak for working-class people who feel betrayed by the political system. Both candidates are appealing to some of the nation's most beleaguered citizens — lower-income whites for Trump, and racial minorities for Clinton. And both candidates won big victories among the 19 states where unemployment exceeds the national average, many of them in the South.

Though Donald Trump's ideas have so far been both muddled and changeable, his proposals may challenge Clinton to present her domestic and foreign policy positions with greater power and clarity to draw a sharp contrast with a Trump campaign that is more headline than story.

During the primaries, Trump has compensated for his lack of depth with personal attacks and one-liners, a tactic Clinton should avoid emulating.

As the campaign cycle enters a more serious phase, says Julian Zelizer, professor of history and public affairs at Princeton University, "Trump is going to need more than name-calling and scandal politics to overcome his lack of experience and worries that he's not suited to the job."

Trump's appeal to working-class Americans rests on promises to wall off America from competition from foreign workers and goods. His line, "It's not free trade, it's stupid



trade," is hardly an invitation to a thoughtful debate. Yet it will be Clinton's challenge to counter by explaining her own evolving position on trade pacts, which has led her to oppose agreements she once supported. Going further, she can offer ways to assist workers who have been hurt by trade, as well as by general manufacturing job losses that have little to do with trade.

## ■ America First foreign policy

Trump's opposition to trade deals is one element of a broader isolationism that can be discerned through the haze of his recent "America First" foreign policy address. In that speech, he threatened to walk away from various aspects of international engagement, from trade with China to NATO.

"We have not had a fundamental debate in a presidential campaign between American engagement in the world and isolationism since 1952, between Taft and Eisenhower," says Max Boot, a conservative foreign policy analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations. "It's easy to ridicule Trump's cockamamie, half-baked proposals, and they ought to be ridiculed. But maybe it does force Clinton to articulate very clearly why we need to stay engaged in the world."

Clinton's camp is preparing her for the worst: the prospect of debating a candidate with no policy details and a full arsenal of insults. "Her best strategy is to simply stay on the substance and don't let him rankle her," says Elaine Kamarck, a Clinton White House policy official now at the Brookings Institution. She'll help herself "if he continues to spout off, and she simply talks to America about the issues of the day." (Source: The NYT)

## COMMENT

### Israeli rejectionism as policy

### What Israel seeks is not peace but pacification

By Sharif Nashashibi

Israel's rejection of a new peace initiative by France was unsurprising, and its excuse flimsy.

"Israel adheres to its position that the best way to resolve the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is direct, bilateral negotiations," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. However, the French initiative does not preclude direct, bilateral negotiations.

What it does do is propose an initial peace conference on May 30, which is reportedly expected to include some 30 countries and international organizations. That is the problem: Israel does not like outside mediation from any party except the U.S., because it knows that Washington — its closest and strongest ally — will never be a truly honest, even-handed broker.

Under U.S. auspices, Israel can act as belligerently as it likes towards the Palestinians, because there will be no consequences. The most that can be expected is relatively soft verbal criticism, couched in terms of having Israel's best interests at heart. That, ultimately, is the point of U.S. mediation — an outcome that primarily benefits its ally.

## ■ Overwhelming frustration

Take U.S. Vice President Joe Biden's expression last month of "overwhelming frustration" with Israel, and his criticism of the "steady, systematic expansion" of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land.

He did not say this was morally wrong, a violation of international law, or speak out of concern for the Palestinians. He said Israel's colonial project is leading to "a one-state reality, and that reality is dangerous." Dangerous to Israel's Jewish demographic supremacy, of course.

Open criticism might be relatively uncharacteristic of U.S. administrations, and certainly there have been tensions between Netanyahu and U.S. President Barack Obama. However, this is meaningless because it is business as usual regardless of what Israel does and says.

As a prime example, just a week after Biden's criticism, a White House official said the Obama administration was ready to offer Israel "the largest single pledge of military assistance to any country in U.S. history."

If Israel is generously rewarded for behaving badly, what incentive does it have to behave otherwise?

This is particularly true of U.S. election cycles, when presidential hopefuls fall over themselves to profess loyalty to Israel. Whether Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump become the next president, both will be more staunchly and overtly pro-Israel than Obama has been, so Israel can simply bide its time until he is out of office in a matter of months.

## ■ Best-case scenario

Some argue that because Trump is not beholden to pro-Israel donors in the way that Clinton is, he may be more independent on the issue.

However, even if that is the case, his "America first" foreign policy — which is widely regarded as isolationist — will benefit Israel in the sense that it can be left completely alone to deal with the Palestinians as it wishes.

This is its best-case scenario because of the overwhelming imbalance of power between the two sides on the ground and at the negotiating table, and because its tactics will not come under outside scrutiny.

Given all of the above, initiatives such as France's are a side-show that Israel can reject or ignore at will. Netanyahu's reaction may result in Paris cancelling the forthcoming peace summit altogether. Even if it goes ahead, it will be meaningless because it will not result in any repercussions for Israel, either for its rejection of the initiative or its ongoing oppression of the Palestinians.

Any initiative not proposed by the U.S. would share the same fate, because in that case Israel does not have to bother with the facade of involvement.

Remember the Quartet, comprising the UN, U.S., EU and Russia? It still officially exists, though it has achieved nothing since it was established in 2002, because no pressure has been applied on Israel to take it seriously.

As such, the Quartet is left to its own irrelevance. So too is the UN, which should be central to a solution to the conflict, but has been relegated to simply a member of the Quartet, its numerous Security Council resolutions that Israel violates simply gathering dust, and new ones thwarted by U.S. veto power.

## ■ Direct talks

Netanyahu insists on direct talks with the Palestinian Authority (PA), but what is the point when his government is replete with members and parties that oppose a Palestinian state? He himself vowed during his last election campaign that this would not happen under his watch.

As a PR ploy, however, he expresses his desire for peace and entertains the notion of a Palestinian state, while presenting a growing list of preconditions that make it all but impossible, and rejecting the PA's legitimate precondition that Israel stop expanding its settlements.

Meanwhile, Israel rejects all forms of resistance (armed and peaceful) to its occupation and colonisation of Palestine, which is approaching half a century — the longest military occupation in modern history.

The only scenario it will accept is Palestinians' total submission to their subjugation. For Israel, the "peace process" is about process over peace, and what it seeks is not peace but pacification.

It is merely a means for Israel to buy time and cover to entrench its occupation and colonisation until they are accepted as an irreversible fait accompli — a point that more and more people believe has already been reached.

It is much like Netanyahu's statement last month that "the time has come after 40 years for the international community to finally recognise that [Syria's] Golan Heights will remain for ever" in Israeli hands. Whatever the outcome of peace talks, he added, "the border will not change" — as if there is any point or possibility of such talks given this stance.

Israeli officials condemn any mention of a one-state solution with the Palestinians by those who desire it, or a one-state reality for those who fear it. The irony, however, is that Israel itself is ensuring the very outcome it so vehemently rejects. (Source: Al Jazeera)



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## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Chinese bug declared world's longest insect

A bug over half a meter long discovered in southern China has been declared the world's longest insect, Chinese state media says.

A stick insect measuring 62.4 centimeters found two years ago in the southern province of Guangxi has broken the record for length amongst the world's 807,625 known insects, the official Xinhua agency said Thursday, citing the Insect Museum of West China.

The previous record-holder was a Malaysian 56.7-centimeter-long stick insect discovered in 2008 and now on display in London's Natural History Museum.

Tipped off by locals about a huge beast half a meter long but as thick as a human index finger, scientist Zhao Li had been on the hunt for the bug for six years before he finally glimpsed and captured one.

"I was collecting insects on a 1,200-meter-tall mountain in Guangxi's Liuzhou City on the night of August 16, 2014, when a dark shadow appeared in the distance, which looked like a tree twig," Zhao said, according to Xinhua.

"As I went near, I was shocked to find the huge insect's legs were as long as its body," he added.

The bug has been dubbed *Phryganistria chinensis* Zhao in his honor, and a paper about it will soon be published.

More than 3,000 varieties of stick insects have been discovered so far, Xinhua said.

(Source: AFP)

## Honeybee-inspired model to help build flying robots

Led by Alexander Cope from University of Sheffield, the study shows how bees estimate the speed of motion or optic flow of the visual world around them and use this to control their flight.



The model is based on honeybees who, despite having a brain of only one million neurons (in comparison to the human brain's 100 billion), are excellent navigators and explorers and use vision extensively in these tasks.

"Understanding how bees avoid walls and what information they can use to navigate, moves us closer to the development of efficient algorithms for navigation and routing which would greatly enhance the performance of autonomous flying robotics", said Cope.

"This is the reason why bees are confused by windows since they are transparent they generate hardly any optic flow as bees approach them," added professor James Marshall.

The model shows how bees are capable of navigating complex environments by using a simple extension to the known neural circuits, within the environment of a virtual world.

It then reproduces the detailed behavior of real bees by using optic flow to fly down a corridor and also matches up with how their neurons respond.

This research ultimately shows that how a bee moves determines what features in the world it sees.

The research, published in PLOS Computational Biology, is an important step in understanding how the bee brain processes the visual world and will aid the development of robotics.

(Source: Z News)

## Iranian teenage boy pleads for help to rid skin disease

**MEDICAL** The tearful plea from **de s k** Mohammad Javad Yaghoubi, suffering from a rare skin disease, Ichthyosis vulgaris is enough to shake up your world.

Ichthyosis vulgaris is a skin condition that causes dry, dead skin cells to accumulate in patches on the surface of skin, the disease is also known as "fish scale disease" since the dead skin accumulates in a similar pattern to a fish's scales.

Born premature to a low-income family of four, the 16-year-old boy Yaghoubi now lives in Sari, Northern Iran with his parents and younger sister Melina.

Yaghoubi's father, 43, who is a security guard for forestry of wood and paper industry in Mazandaran, picks up extra shifts at work to keep up with his son's



medical treatment.

That only rubs salt into the wound, as the father's time away from home has only piled up Yaghoubi's mother's responsibilities.

The stay-at-home Yaghoubi's mother, Azam Sadat Jafari, has looked after her son ever since his birth; thought the indefatigable woman has yet to lose hope.

She feels wholeheartedly that someday her son's pain will be washed away.

The high school student Yaghoubi also has a dream, he envisions a day when he has shaken off the disease and is a member of Red Crescent relief and rescue team.

Ichthyosis vulgaris doesn't have a known cure yet, but the goal of medical treatment is to manage the condition of patients.

## 1st skin-to-eye cell transplant partially restores AMD patient's vision

Japanese scientists have successfully completed the first skin-to-eye stem cell transplant in humans. The procedure managed to partially restore the vision of an elderly woman suffering from age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

The results of the procedure, which took place in 2014, were shared at the 2016 conference of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology in Seattle earlier last week.

Scientists took a small 4 millimeter (.15 inch) piece of the patient's skin from her arm and modified its cells, effectively reprogramming them into induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSC), Science Alert reported.

Because pluripotent stem cells have the capability to differentiate into almost any type of tissue within the body, the skin cells taken from the arm could be repurposed into retinal tissue.

From there, the cells were developed into retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) and cultured in the lab to grow into an ultra-thin sheet. This sheet was then transplanted behind the retina of the patient.

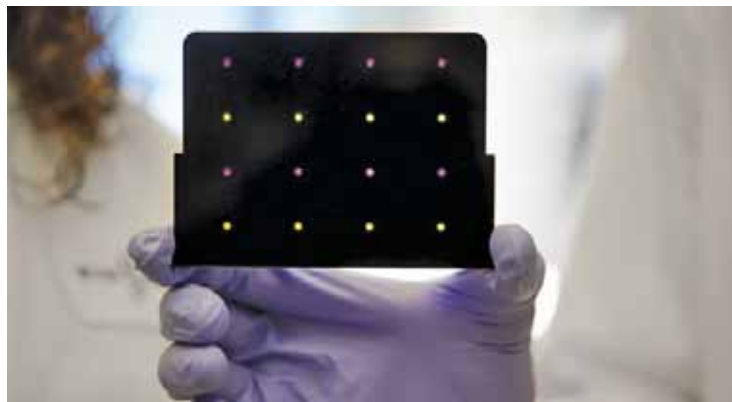


Although the procedure took place in 2014, scientists held off on reporting the results until now, as they were focused on monitoring the patient's progress and gauging how well the modified cells lasted.

## ■ Procedure highly successful

Now, they have reported that the procedure was highly successful, with the transplanted cells surviving without any adverse events for over a year.

## A new paper-based test for the Zika virus



A new paper-based test developed at MIT and other institutions can diagnose Zika virus infection within a few hours. The test, which distinguishes Zika from the very similar dengue virus, can be stored at room temperature and read with a simple electronic reader, making it potentially practical for widespread use.

"We have a system that could be widely distributed and used in the field with low cost and very few resources," says James Collins, the Termeer Professor of Medical Engineering and Science in MIT's Department of Biological Engineering and Institute for Medical Engineering and Science (IMES) and the leader of the research team.

An outbreak of the Zika virus that began in Brazil in April 2015 has been linked to a birth defect known as microcephaly. Many infected people experience no symptoms, and when symptoms do appear they are very similar to those of related viruses such as dengue and chikungunya.

## ■ Antibodies against Zika

Currently, patients are diagnosed by testing whether they have antibodies against Zika in their bloodstream, or by

looking for pieces of the viral genome in a patient's blood sample, using a test known as polymerase chain reaction (PCR). However, these tests can take days or weeks to yield results, and the antibody test cannot discriminate accurately between Zika and dengue.

"One of the key problems in the field is being able to distinguish what these patients have in areas where these viruses are co-circulating," says Lee Gehrke, the Hermann L.F. von Helmholtz Professor in IMES and an author of the paper.

Collins, Gehrke, and colleagues from Harvard University's Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering and other institutions described the new device in the May 6 online edition of Cell.

The paper's lead authors are Melissa Takahashi, an IMES postdoc; Dana Braff, an MIT graduate student; Keith Pardee, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto and former Wyss Institute research scientist; Alexander Green, an assistant professor at Arizona State University and former Wyss Institute postdoc; and Guillaume Lambert, a visiting scholar at the Wyss Institute.

(Source: EurekAlert)

## Black hole in nearby galaxy 660m times more massive than the sun



Thanks to the ultra-precise measurements of the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA), a network of 66 radio telescopes in Chile, scientists have "weighed" a black hole roughly 660 million times greater than our own sun.

The supermassive black hole, found in Galaxy NGC 1332 located about 73 million light-years from Earth,

is a bewildering one, with its staggering mass and a giant disc of cold gas circling it at around 1.1 million mph. The disc is usually invisible, but shines with carbon monoxide emissions when viewed with ALMA, allowing scientists to determine its orbit speed and mass.

The given calculation comes with a measurement uncertainty of about 10 percent — the most accurate measurement ever taken, thanks to ALMA's array of over 60 antennas able to observe space in the millimeter and sub-millimeter wavelengths.

ALMA, in fact, is capable of determining the masses of supermassive black holes through "resolving gas kinematics on small angular scales in gal-

axy nuclei," said study researcher and Rutgers professor Dr. Andrew J. Baker.

According to Baker, understanding how black holes — believed to swirl at the center of every galaxy, including the Milky Way — supermassive black holes form lends insight into how they profoundly influence the formation of the galaxies in which they live.

Black holes form with matter that turns so dense that not even light can escape gravity's pull. During the infancy of the universe, gas was so aplenty that many black holes grew into supermassive sizes by swallowing it up, emitting intense energy amounts.

These supermassive black holes appear like mega-bright quasars if one looks back in time at the distant universe. Yet, as one looks closer to our planet, the sight is of galaxies with little gas (already converting into stars) and no quasars.

A supermassive black hole, for instance, has been spotted in an old galaxy known as NGC 1600, with barely any new star formation and is situated in a "relative desert" in the universe.

(Source: Tech Times)

## Researchers develop algorithm to turn phone into a clinically-accurate spirometer

A research team from the University of Washington has adapted a smartphone-based spirometry test to work with any kind of phone, including feature phones and landline phones, and to deliver clinically accurate results.

Back in 2012, the University developed a smartphone app, SpiroSmart that would use the measure lung function using the phone's microphone. But in attempting to put the device to work in low-resource settings, researchers discovered that smartphones were often unavailable, but cell phones in general were much more ubiquitous.

Furthermore, since the only sensor SpiroSmart used was the microphone, the same service could be provided via a 1-800 number.

"We wanted to be able to measure lung function

on any type of phone you might encounter around the world — smartphones, dumb phones, landlines, pay phones," Shwetak Patel, a professor of computer science, engineering, and electrical engineering at UW told the University's Office of News and Information. "With SpiroCall, you can call a 1-800 number, blow into the phone and use the telephone network to test your lung function."

## ■ Clinical grade spirometers

The team will soon present a paper at a conference demonstrating that the accuracy of SpiroCall is within 6.8 percent of clinical grade spirometers. The acceptable margin for error in spirometry is 5 to 10 percent. This is even after accounting for the decrease in sound quality that occurs when the test has to be transmitted over a

phone line or satellite connection.

"We had to account for the fact that the sound quality you get over a phone line is worse," Elliot Saba, a UW electrical engineering doctoral student, who co-wrote the paper told the university. "You can imagine how listening to someone play a song over a phone line would sound compared to listening to it on your music app — there's a similar difference with a spirometry test."

SpiroSmart -- the original app -- is currently undergoing the FDA clearance process. In preparing for clearance, researchers have collected data from more than 4,000 patients both in the United States and in India and Bangladesh, each time collecting both traditional spirometry data and data collected from the app.

(Source: mobihealthnews.com)



The United States military has deployed more than 200 U.S. Marines in the port city of Mukalla in the central province of Hadramout, Yemeni media say.

The forces were deployed in the important seaport and oil terminal on Saturday, Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah news website reported.

The amphibious assault ship USS Boxer with more than 1,200 sailors and Marines as well as a group of vessels aboard were also stationed offshore in the Gulf of Aden.

Yemen's southern coast is now under the control of U.S. troops, who are deployed to the region under the pretext of battling al-Qaeda militants.

On Friday, an Apache helicopter and six Black Hawk choppers also arrived in the al-Anad Air Base in the southwestern province of Lahij.

The deployment of U.S. troops comes a year after the withdrawal of its forces from Yemen. On March 21, 2015, the U.S. evacuated its remaining forces from the airbase "due to the deteriorating security situation" a day after al-Qaeda captured the nearby city of al-Houta.

Pentagon also announced on Friday that it sent a group of its commandos to

## U.S. deploys over 200 soldiers in Yemen



Yemen.

"The AQAP (al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) remains a significant

security threat to the United States and to our regional partners and we welcome this effort to specifically remove

AQAP from Mukalla and to degrade, disrupt and destroy AQAP in Yemen," said Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman.

### ■ Direct peace talks fail

Meanwhile, representatives of Yemen's former fugitive regime withdrew from direct peace talks with Ansarullah movement in Kuwait. The Saudi-backed delegation said that they pulled out of the negotiations since no progress has been made so far.

Now, the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, has to shift back to indirect negotiations and separate consultations. The Saudi-backed delegation has repeatedly left the negotiating table since the start of the talks on April 21.

The peace talks on Yemen entered its third week on Thursday but there has yet to be a breakthrough to establish peace as delegations trade accusations of violating the ceasefire that took effect on April 11.

The Ansarullah movement says ceasefire violations by the opposite side indicate that they are not sincere in reaching a solution to end the conflict in the Arab world's poorest country.

(Source: agencies)

## Saudi king sacks ministers in major cabinet rejig

➔ Naimi is one of the most powerful figures within the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries). He served more than 20 years in the post of oil minister. Many say he was at odds with Salman's son, Prince Mohammed, a man in his early 30s who reportedly has the final say on many issues in the kingdom.

Other ministries also saw modifications to name and missions, with ministries of labor and social affairs merging to form a single entity while the ministry of water and electricity was totally abandoned. The name of ministry

of pilgrimage, which was previously known as Hajj, was changed to include the Umrah, an off-season pilgrimage less important than the main Hajj ritual.

A royal statement issued earlier in the day said the changes in the cabinet were based on some "integrated strategy and several expert studies," adding that the reforms were meant to enable the kingdom continue its "growth and development process." It said the new ministries and bodies will be better able to serve the interests of Saudi Arabia and its citizens. It also wished

health and good luck for King Salman who ordered the reforms.

The overhaul comes amid efforts by Saudi Arabia to shore up its finances as the kingdom has struggled year after year with budget deficits as a result of a slump in oil prices.

The Saudi regime is also engaged in a deadly campaign against its southern neighbor, Yemen. The war has further drained Saudi Arabia's vast financial resources.

(Source: Press TV)

## Prominent Pakistani anti-militant activist shot dead in Karachi

Gunmen shot dead a prominent Pakistani rights activist, known for his outspoken stance against the Taliban and other radical groups, in the southern port city of Karachi late on Saturday night, police said.

The police said Khurram Zaki was killed at an outdoor cafe in central Karachi, while a companion was wounded.

A faction of the Pakistani Taliban, the Hakeemullah group, claimed responsibility for the attack in a phone call to Reuters, saying Zaki had been targeted for his stance against radical cleric Abdul Aziz.

The police could not verify the Hakeemullah faction's claim, and said the group has previously taken responsibility for attacks it did not carry out in Karachi, a teeming metropolis of 20 million people that is known for its complex mix of ethnic, sectarian and political violence.

"Zaki was sitting at a cafe where he was targeted by four armed men arriving on two motorcycles," Muqadas Haider, a senior police official said on Sunday.

Zaki was known for his outspoken stance against the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a sectarian militant group, the Pakistani Taliban, and radical cleric Abdul Aziz.

In December 2015, Zaki lead street protests against Aziz, demanding the cleric be arrested and charged with hate speech for allegedly justifying attacks, such as the Peshawar school massacre where 134 schoolchildren were killed in 2014.

In 2007, Aziz and his followers were engaged in a standoff with government forces at his mosque in the capital Islamabad, culminating in an eight-day military operation that saw Pakistani commandoes raid the mosque.

Aziz has since been exonerated of all criminal charges by Pakistani courts, but still calls for the overthrow of the government and for a strict version of sharia law to be imposed.

Zaki had confided to friends that he was on several militant "hit lists", Jibran Nasir, a fellow activist who was also involved in protests against Aziz, told Reuters on Sunday.

Nasir said that Zaki did not specify which groups specifically had threatened him.

According to a statement released after Zaki's death by a website he helped run, the activist had been "a target of a systematic hate campaign" by an extremist political leader and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Targeted killings are common in Karachi, although violence has declined significantly since the launch of a paramilitary operation in the city almost three years ago.

Rights activists are increasingly among those targeted in Karachi. In April last year, prominent activist Sabeen Mahmud was shot and killed while traveling in her car.

(Source: Reuters)

## Trump: GOP unity would be nice, not essential

With a growing number of prominent Republicans refusing to fall in line, Donald Trump is standing firm in his assertion that the Republican Party doesn't have to be unified because he will gain Democratic votes to win in the fall.

"I think it would be better if it were unified, I think it would be — there would be something good about it," Trump said in an interview with ABC's "This Week" airing Sunday. "But I don't think it actually has to be unified in the traditional sense."

George H.W. Bush and his son, George W. Bush, the only former Republican presidents still living, said they would not back Trump's candidacy. Two former Trump rivals for the nomination, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, are among those who have also said they don't plan to back Trump.

Trump played down his problems unifying the GOP as he continued to assail Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton, whom he's dubbed "Crooked Hillary."

Trump is once again raising former President Bill Clinton's marital infidelities, a preview of how the billionaire businessman is likely to respond to general-election attacks from Hillary Clinton and her allies about his treatment of women.

"She's married to a man who was the worst abuser of women in the history of politics," Trump said of Clinton on Saturday as he addressed supporters at the Spokane Convention Center just days after becoming the presumptive Republican nominee.

Trump appeared to be responding to news that Priorities USA, the lead super PAC backing Clinton, has already reserved \$91 million in television advertising that will start next month. Much of the negative advertising against Trump is expected to focus on belittling statements he's made about women in the past.

But Trump declared on Saturday, "Two can play that game."

Deriding a culture of political correctness in which, he says, men are "petrified to speak to women anymore," Trump also defended himself as a great supporter of women and sought to downplay past comments he's made about women in venues like the Howard Stern radio show in the days before he was a politician.

He said some were made in the name of entertainment, while others, like his criticism of actress and talk show host Rosie O'Donnell, were warranted.

"Who the hell wouldn't speak badly about Rosie O'Donnell? She's terrible," he said.

(Source: AP)

## Protesters march in New York against gun violence

More than 1,000 protesters have marched in New York City to demand an end to the epidemic of gun violence across the United States.

Hundreds of parents and families joined the rally from the Brooklyn Bridge to New York City Hall on Saturday.

The New York chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, which advocates for reforms to reduce gun violence, organized the annual event, now in its fourth year.

Moms Demand Action has sought to spread the organization's message that the country needs stronger gun laws.

The rally comes as parents of New York City school children are concerned with the rising number of weapons found on campus this year. Just in the past couple months three guns were found in three different New York City schools.

The U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms. Gun-rights groups, including the NRA, argue that restrictions on gun purchases would not improve public safety.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), firearms are the cause of death for more than 33,000 people in the United States every year, a number that includes accidental discharge, murder and suicides.

### ■ 33 arrested in San Francisco for protesting police brutality

Elsewhere, at least 33 protesters have been arrested for calling on the mayor of San Francisco, California to fire the police chief amid growing anger over last year's killing of an unarmed black man.



The protesters were arrested on Friday night after converging at San Francisco's City Hall which resulted in clashes with deputies in riot gear, media reported late on Saturday.

The demonstrators wanted the mayor to fire Police Chief Greg Suhr whose mismanagement has led to dozens of brutality and corruption lawsuits, many of which are kept away from the media in order to deflect public criticism.

The protest follows the controversial police killings of Mario Woods, Alex Nieto, Amilcar Lopez, and most recently, a homeless man named Luis Gongora.

Earlier this month, racist text messages in which a San Francisco police officer referred to African-Americans as "nigs," Mexicans as "beaners" and Indians as "disgusting" put further strains on the fraught relationship between community members and police.

The protesters were detained on suspicion of trespassing and failure to disperse, said San Francisco Sheriff's Department spokeswoman Eileen Hirst.

Hirst said she saw deputies holding batons and using them to corral the crowd, but did not witness any officer hitting protesters with them.

On April 31, protesters joined five hunger strikers, four men and one woman, who had refrained from eating over police brutality in San Francisco.

The hunger strikers, dubbed the "Frisco Five," had been on a hunger striker for 16 days before they were taken to the hospital. Their protest camp outside the Mission District police station was packed up.

In January, the U.S. Justice Department announced that it would review the San Francisco Police Department after the December 2 shooting death of Mario Woods, 26, on a city street.

(Source: Press TV)

## JUMP

## What does Davutoglu's resignation mean for Turkey and the EU?

➔ Less sensational, Davutoglu may have believed he could dampen Erdogan's authoritarian tendencies. Schooled as a political scientist, Davutoglu most certainly believed in respect for the Turkish constitution.

He may have disagreed with Erdogan's push to centralize power despite the result of the November general elections. Those elections failed to provide the necessary parliamentary majority Erdogan so desperately wanted to change Turkey's constitution into a fully presidential system.

But now we know that Erdogan's ambitions will not be derailed by something so trivial as democratic process. Davutoglu will be replaced by someone who is even more loyal to the president; more loyal even than a university professor who owes it to Erdogan to have risen through the ranks of Turkish politics, unelected, to become the country's prime minister. Perhaps Erdogan thinks he can now only rely on family; his son-in-law is rumored to be among the leading contenders for the job.

It comes at a precarious moment in the EU-Turkey relationship and it presents a headache for German chancellor Angela Merkel and other European leaders.

The migration deal wars and all was negotiated by Davutoglu. It bears his fingerprints. If the EU does not want the deal to fall apart, European leaders will need to rebuild cooperative relations with whoever becomes the next prime minister, and do so quickly. A new prime minister will not be appointed before May 22nd. Three weeks of uncertainty await.

Once again, Erdogan has caught the EU off guard. The row between Davutoglu and Erdogan came on the same day as the European Commission's announcement that visa-free travel is within reach for Turkey. Visa-free travel to the EU would be the single-most important achievement in Ankara's negotiations with the EU since the agreement on the EU-Turkey customs union in 1995.

Was the timing a coincidence, or with the prize of visa-free travel in sight did Erdogan believe he could get away with pushing his prime minister out and take another step towards consolidating his rule? Mister Erdogan has been in power for over a decade. And he has just made it very clear, once again, that he has no intention of going anywhere soon.

(Source: The Spectator)

## Former British spy bosses say nation's exit from EU would pose threat

A British vote to leave the European Union next month could make the country more vulnerable to militant attacks and cause instability across the continent, two former senior British intelligence officials said.

John Sawers, who stepped down as head of the MI6 foreign intelligence service in 2014, and Jonathan Evans, who led the MI5 domestic spy agency until three years ago, warned that a British exit, or Brexit, could weaken intelligence-sharing between Britain and neighboring countries.

"Counterterrorism is a team game, and the EU is the best framework available — no country can succeed on its own," they said in an article for the Sunday Times newspaper.

Britons will vote in a referendum on June 23 on whether to leave the 28-member EU, a decision with trade, investment, defense and political ramifications that stretch far beyond Britain's borders. Britons are evenly split over whether the country should stay or go, opinion polls indicate.

National security has become a key battleground between rival campaigners since more than 150 people were killed in the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group attacks in Paris and Brussels.

Those wanting Britain to leave the 28-member bloc say an exit would hand the country greater control over its borders. Those backing membership, including Prime Minister David Cameron, say the EU helps to coordinate intelligence-sharing.

A euroskeptic lawmaker for the Conservative Party cast doubt on whether the comments were genuine, saying, in a personal capacity, that he had spoken to one of the authors in the last three weeks and he had expressed the opposite opinion — that leaving the EU would make no difference to our security.

Julian Lewis, chairman of parliament's Defense Select Committee, said he was "disappointed" to see the article, which was challenged by other lawmakers campaigning to leave the EU.

Justice Secretary Michael Gove told the BBC that the argument was "flat wrong" and that many security experts did not think that a Brexit would harm Britain.

Sawers and Evans said modern intelligence work relied on the sharing of large data-sets and that Britain could be restricted in the information it received if it was not part of the EU.

The two men, who do not often speak out on national matters, said their concerns about the vote went beyond Britain's security and that the removal of one of Europe's main military powers could unsettle the EU itself.

"If the UK were to withdraw from the EU, the destabilizing effect on the EU itself — already beset with economic difficulties, the migration crisis and a resurgent Russia — could be profound," they said.

"Those who are enemies of democracy would rejoice. In our judgment, there is a real risk that such a destabilization could, in time, lead to the fragmentation of the EU and the return of instability on the continent."

Elsewhere, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said in remarks published Sunday that a Brexit would have unforeseeable consequences on future European cooperation.

"A negative result of the referendum would certainly have unpredictable consequences on European cooperation about which I don't wish to speculate now because I believe that Britons will decide rationally," Juncker told Germany's Funke Media Group.

"All Europeans would very much like to keep Britain in the family," he added.

(Source: AFP)



IRAN'S WILDLIFE

Sharks in Persian Gulf needs accreditation schemes

ARTICLE

By Farnaz Heidari

M.Sc. in Environmental Science Engineering

Archaeological surveys in Abu Dhabi have recovered various items such as shark vertebrae and teeth from sites that are over 7,000 years old. This could indicate that the exploitation of shark resources in this region is a tradition and part of the cultural heritage of the various populations that lived along the coastline.

Dr. Rima Jabado works as a zoologist, ecologist and marine biologist in Environment Agency of Abu-Dhabi. As founder and lead scientist of Gulf-ELASMO-Project, Jabado tries hard to promote citizen science and make a reliable data for advancing research and conservation.

In an interview with the Tehran Times she explained about some different characteristics of Persian Gulf sharks.



Photo by Hamed Moshiri

"Through market and landing site surveys, I have been able to confirm 30 species of sharks from this water; they have different characteristics in the sense that they vary in sizes (the smallest species have a maximum size of about 70-80 centimeters while the larger species can reach up to 4 meters)," she said.

The whale shark, *Rhincodon typus* is believed to reach over 15 meters and is planktivorous (feeds on microscopic organisms floating in the sea), she pointed,

adding, a species like the bull shark, *Carcharhinus leucas*, is known to also frequent freshwater systems including estuaries and rivers.

Each species has specific characteristics in terms of behavior, habitat used, diet, she noted.

Hard to grasp the behavior of sharks

It is really hard to grasp behavior of sharks.

Dr. Jabado addressed some basic methods for gathering information in this field explaining "there are many gaps regarding our understanding of sharks in the region;" adding, "before I started my project, we didn't even had a definitive list of species that occur in the Gulf (Persian Gulf) and that was the most important objective for me."

Without knowing which species occur in these waters, their distribution and abundance, it's impossible to plan further research and put together conservation plans, she highlighted.

"I have gathered a lot of information on the various species but to effectively protect these species, we still need more data on their biology, the nursery areas they utilize, their population structure, and their movements (whether they stay in the Gulf or move between the Indian Ocean and here)," she added.

She went on to say that "I would never have been able to collect all my data without the help of over 80 volunteers that took time off their busy schedules to come to markets across the country and on boat surveys with me."

"I sent out a few emails through some organization in the UAE, and many people got back to me, which was very exciting which meant that the community was very interested in sharks and also that I could give something back by exposing them a little to sharks and their plight," she pointed.

"I am now trying to put together a website where volunteers and the community in general can also report sightings of sharks from markets or from diving which would allow data to be collected year round," Jabado said.

A big gap for Iran

There is some research on sharks that is undergoing in Iran, but Dr. Jabado explained that "there should be definitely more work undertaken and since Iran is one of the top shark fishing nations in the world, gaining a better understanding of the fishery and the species that are affected is crucial for the conservation of sharks in this area."

Vulnerable species

Increasing demand of shark products in Asia market is a big challenge for survival of sharks. Some shark species are more vulnerable especially in our region.

The demand for shark products, including meat and fins, is increasing in Asia; some of the species that are most in demand are the various species of hammerhead sharks and the sharks from the *Carcharhinidae* family that have 'black fins', Dr. Jabado said.

"It's difficult to say which species are most vulnerable because we don't have a regional assessment on the status of any of the species," she regretted.

"Our data depends on the status of these sharks from other regions of the world, therefore we really need to get further information on the sharks in these waters," she said.

Some of the most common species captured in the fisheries here include the spot-tail shark, *Carcharhinus sorrah*, and the milk shark, *Rhizoprionodon acutus*, she noted.

She also pointed that her project did not investigate the population structure and stocks of these species; however, she has been collaborating with many different institutions and they are conducting genetic analysis on several shark species that are important in regional fisheries.

All of these analysis will give a better indication on the status of shark stocks. However, stock assessments need to be undertaken for each species to gain a better understanding of whether populations are depleting.

Widespread practice

"Now countries such as United Arab Emirates and Oman asked some of top international marine specialists for help in conservation terms, but unfortunately there is a big gap in Iran. Iran needs expertise in a number of areas, including the environment, she said.

She additionally mentioned that "it is vital for us to protect our ecosystems and habitats especially our marine heritage needs more and more attention."

Dr. Jabado concluded that "the Gulf is a small body of water and I believe that for most species of sharks, the UAE and Iran share populations, therefore it would be crucial to collaborate and conduct research together."

Reports from many countries in the Gulf (Persian Gulf) show that fish stocks are depleting and have reached worrisome levels, she highlighted, adding, it is probable that many shark stocks are also facing declines due to overfishing and other threats.

"It is therefore crucial that all countries in the region start collecting data on their shark fishery and develop some conservation measures," she noted.

Donald Trump's election would derail Paris climate deal, warns its architect

A climate change denier as US president would dramatically threaten global action to cut carbon emissions, says ex-French foreign minister Laurent Fabius



The election of Donald Trump would derail the landmark agreement on climate change reached in Paris last December, the architect of the accord has warned.

Trump is now virtually certain to be the Republican candidate for president and has said "I am not a great believer in manmade climate change", leading to fears he would attempt to unpick the historic agreement if he became president.

Without naming Trump, the former French foreign minister Laurent Fabius told an audience in London: "Think about the impact of the coming US presidential elections. If a climate change denier was to be elected, it would threaten dramatically global action against climate disruption."

He said: "We must not think that everything is settled."

In response to a speech by Barack Obama at the opening of the Paris climate summit, Trump said: "I think one of the dumbest statements I've ever heard in politics, in the history of politics as I know it, which is pretty good, was Obama's statement that our No 1 problem is global warming."

Under the Paris agreement, 195 nations have agreed to limit global warming to no more than 2C, with an aspirational limit of 1.5C, in order to stave off the worst effects of climate change.

At a ceremony in New York last month, 175 countries formally accepted the Paris accord, bringing it closer to coming into force. The UN is now pressing to begin the implementation of the deal, needing the formal

agreement of countries with 55% of global emissions, which will require countries to take action on emissions and to provide financial assistance to the developing world.

Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, the two remaining Democratic candidates, are both in favor of action on greenhouse gas emissions and support the Paris accord.

The US Congress, dominated by Republicans, may also oppose the actions needed on emissions to fulfil US commitments under the Paris agreement, even if a Democrat is elected president in November. However, Fabius noted, the deal was carefully crafted in Paris to ensure that the US president would have the authority to sign up to it.

This was the subject of a last-minute hitch in the Paris talks, when as the final draft was published US negotiators balked

at the inclusion of a clause saying countries "shall" commit to fulfilling the agreement, instead of the previous wording which was "should". If the former had been included, it would have caused legal problems in the US as Congress could have claimed the president had exceeded his authority.

However, Fabius insisted the change of wording, subsequently dropped, was a "mistake" rather than a deliberate attempt at sabotage, which has since been the subject of conspiracy theories. He pointed out that all countries, after a short discussion, quickly agreed to the change, and this would not have happened if they had wanted the "shall" to be included.

"John Kerry came to me and said if it is 'shall' we can't do it. I came to Christiana Figueres [the UN climate chief] and

we came to the previous version and the previous version was 'should'," he explained. "If it was a mistake in writing, you can change it - if it was a real thing [it would not have been possible]. I said it was really not intentional, it was a mistake. We had three versions of the text. [Shall] was never discussed."

Fabius, who is now president of France's constitutional council, said he was "désolé bien sur" that Laurence Tubiana, France's chief official at the talks, had not been chosen to succeed Figueres when she steps down in July.

That job has gone to Patricia Espinosa, Mexico's ambassador to Germany and former foreign minister. Fabius said she was "very competent". The French government had asked UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon to reopen nominations to consider Tubiana's candidacy.

Countries must press ahead with the implementation of the Paris accord, Fabius added. He warned of "risks associated with reluctant countries".

He refused to be drawn on whether a British exit from the EU would harm progress on climate change, but said that when he was foreign minister he had urged the UK to stay. He met Philip Hammond, UK foreign secretary, on Wednesday but details of what was discussed were not disclosed.

He also said he had been concerned over the prospective TTIP agreement when he was in office. François Hollande, France's president, has said he would not accept TTIP in its current form.

(Source: The Guardian)

Benefits of cycling and walking 'outweigh air pollution risk' in cities

Study finds only 1% of cities in world have such high levels of pollution that the activities could prove detrimental to health

The election of Donald Trump would derail the landmark agreement on climate change reached in Paris last December, the architect of the accord has warned.

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Pollution in Delhi, India. Photo by: Chandan Khanna

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IN FOCUS

Mehr/ Edrin Sadeqi



Jow-Kandan is a village in Talesh, Gilan province, with enchanting beauties.

Man who threw alligator now throwing self on mercy of court

**WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP)** — The Florida man who threw an alligator through a drive-thru window is now throwing himself on the mercy of the court.

The Palm Beach Post reports that 24-year-old Joshua James agreed in court Friday to plead guilty to unspecified misdemeanor charges on May 31 and let Judge Barry Cohen decide his sentence.

James was arrested in February on charges that he threw the 3 1/2-foot gator into a Wendy's last October. He was charged with several felonies, including assault with a deadly weapon.

James told WPTV that he is sorry for throwing the alligator and said it was stupid stunt. He had found the gator by the side of the road.

No one was hurt by the gator, which was captured and returned to the wild.



# I want to win gold medal at Rio: Hamid Sourian

**T I S P O R T S** Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Hamid Sourian wants to claim a gold medal at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

Six-time world and Olympic champion Sourian stormed to four technical falls and booked his ticket for Rio 2016 on Friday, the opening day of the "Last Chance" Olympic Games Qualifying Tourney in Istanbul.

"It feels good to finally earn qualification (for Rio 2016)," the defending Olympic Games champion said after his 10-0 semifinal victory over Dmitry TSYMBALIUK (UKR). "But my goal now is to win the gold medal in Rio."

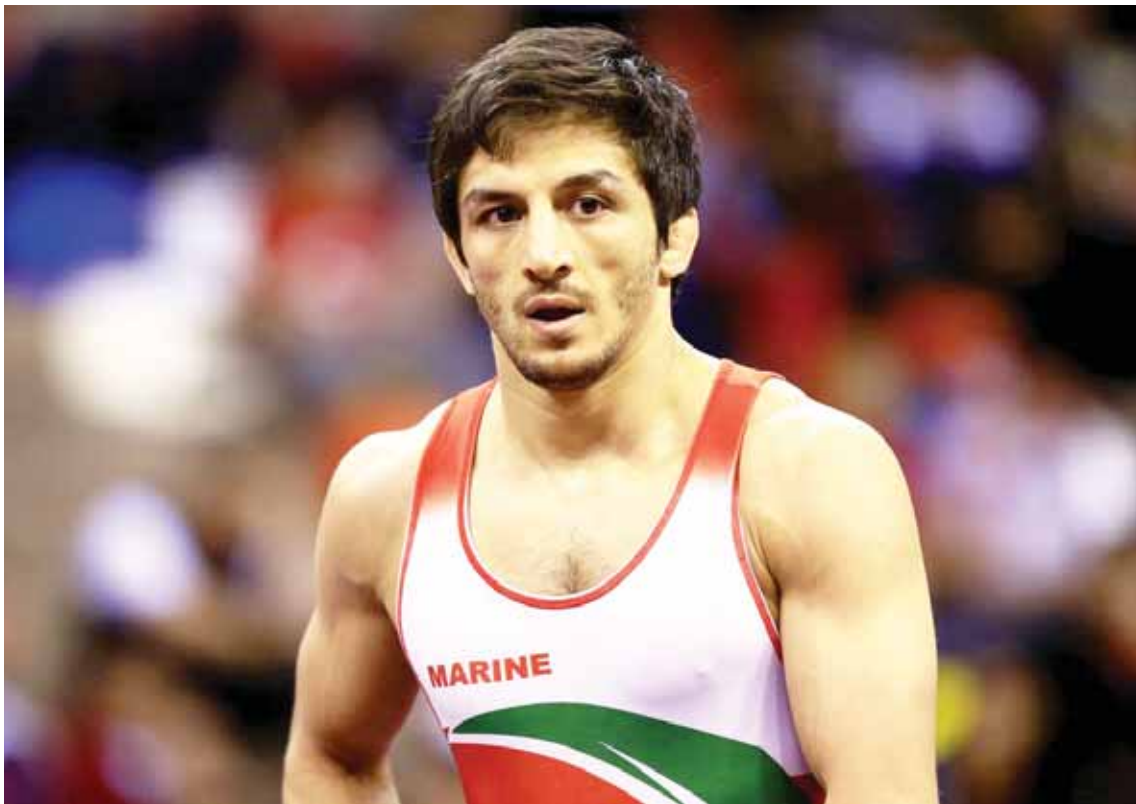
Sourian dismissed losses in earlier qualifying events in Kazakhstan and Mongolia this spring, explaining "I had a little trouble losing the weight, but with the Olympic Games as my motivation, I knew I had to do it here."

On Friday, Sourian dominated from the opening whistle, wrapping up Ivan LIZATOVIC (CRO), a bronze medal finalist at the European championships, and Erik WEISS (GER) in slightly over a minute each.

With the ticket to Rio 2016 on the line, Sourian took European bronze medal winner Dmitriy TSYMBALIUK (UKR) to his back with a bodylock to bear hug, then added a pair of gut wrenches to end the semifinal bout, 8-0, at 1:25.

Sourian's triumph sends him to a third Olympic Games and gives Iran an entry in all 12 men's events – freestyle and Greco-Roman.

In Friday evening's finals, Sourian did not let up against Jesse THIELKE (USA), wrapping up the Golden Grand Prix Final bronze medalist with a quick takedown and three gut wrenches for an 8-0 technical fall in just 36 seconds.



## Iran has great potential in basketball; Dirk Bauermann

**T I S P O R T S** Iran coach Dirk Bauermann says that the country has great potential in a lot of different ways.

"Basketball is extremely popular here in Iran, especially the national team, which people follow with great interest. Iran has great potential in a lot of different ways. There's a ton of good, talented young players who I think deserve a chance to compete at the highest level," Bauermann said.

"We started our training camp a few days ago with a much younger group than in past years, I think that was

a necessary decision. Our veteran guys have done so much for the country, but we all sat down together and decided that it would be in everybody's best interest, at least this summer, if we go with younger guys," the German coach stated.

"Hamed Haddadi is going to be really important, even more than in recent years, in terms of leadership and being more of a focal point offensively. But otherwise it will be a young group so it should be an interesting summer," Bauermann added.

## Esteghlal Khuzestan goes IPL top, Persepolis wins, Esteghlal beaten in Tehran

Persepolis football team beat Gostaresh Foolad 4-2 in the 29th week of Iran Professional League to stay on course for winning the title.

Farshad Ahmadzadeh opened the scoring for Persepolis in the 31st minute while Mohammad Ansari made it 2-0 in the 42nd minute.

Gostaresh's Mohammad Ebrahimi made it 2-1 for the host thanks to a wonderful free kick from edge of the penalty box.

Persepolis captain Omid Alishah found the back of the net to make it 3-1 in the 69th minute with a header and he opened the goal with a rocket shot 16 minutes later.

Darioush Shojaeian scored for Gostaresh three minutes before the final whistle to make it 4-2 but it was too late for the host to come back.

In Tehran, Tractor Sazi defeated Esteghlal 3-2 in front of more than 80,000 fans at the Azadi Stadium to dent Esteghlal's title hopes.



Esteghlal's Amin Haj Mohammad put the host in front in the 14th minute but Brazilian Augusto leveled it seven minutes later for Tractor Sazi.

Soroush Rafiei made it 2-1 for Tractor Sazi with a shot

from inside the box. Sajjad Shahbazzadeh leveled it for Esteghlal two minutes into the second half but Hajmohammadi's vital error in defense in the 79th minute put an end to the game. Cameroonian Aloys Nong took advantage of Hajmohammadi's mistake in defense and put the ball into the back of the net in a one on one situation with Mehdi Rahmati.

Esteghlal dropped to third with 51 points and will only win the title when Persepolis and Esteghlal Khuzestan lose on the final day and the team beat Saba.

Elsewhere in Mashhad, Esteghlal Khuzestan edged past Padideh 1-0 to go top with 54 points. Hassan Beyt Saeed scored the sole goal of the game for Esteghlal Khuzestan with a header in the 30th minute.

Furthermore, already-relegated Esteghlal Ahvaz lost to Saipa 2-1, Malavan drew 1-1 with Saba, Naft Tehran beat Foolad 2-1, Rah Ahan defeated Sepahan 1-0 and Zob Ahan beat Siah Jamegan 3-1.

## Jorge Lorenzo wins crash-stewn French GP



Yamaha's Jorge Lorenzo stayed clear of the trouble in a chaotic French Grand Prix to take victory and the MotoGP points lead at Le Mans.

From pole, Lorenzo was never really challenged, despite an early push from Ducati's Andrea Dovizioso - who vaulted from fifth to second off the line - and then Andrea Iannone.

However, when Iannone started a chain of crashes for leading riders on lap eight and Dovizioso's pace dropped, Lorenzo pounced out front to pull away.

His lead was up to 2.7 seconds at the end of 10 laps, and with relentless consistency he marched home to win the 28-lap race by 10.654s.

Valentino Rossi finished as his closest challenger, from seventh on the grid, but other than Iannone's demise he wasn't directly a beneficiary of the chaos.

Rossi fought clear of early traffic to hunt down Dovizioso and Marc Marquez, then second and third, and moved past the pair with clean moves on consecutive laps.

Two laps after Rossi had moved into second place, Dovizioso and Marquez fell behind him at Turn 7, with identical but

completely separate crashes.

Dovizioso joined his team-mate Iannone on the sidelines, while Marquez rejoined and brought his damaged Honda home in 13th, one lap down, but claiming three valuable championship points.

It means Lorenzo moves to 90 points and the lead of the championship, five ahead of Marquez and 12 clear of Rossi.

Maverick Vinales came home in third place, his maiden MotoGP podium and Suzuki's first since the 2008 Czech Grand Prix.

Dani Pedrosa was another big mover coming from 11th place on the grid after a qualifying fall, and while his run to fourth was aided by crashes ahead, he did move past Pol Espargaro and Aleix Espargaro, who finished fifth and sixth.

On his return from injury, Pramac Ducati's Danilo Petrucci was seventh, ahead of Hector Barbera and Aprilia pair Alvaro Bautista and Stefan Bradl.

A total of eight riders failed to finish, with a suspected engine problem for Scott Redding the only one not due to a crash.

(Source: AutoSport)

## Usain Bolt wanted Jurgen Klopp instead of Louis van Gaal at Man Utd



Lifelong Manchester United fan Usain Bolt believes Louis van Gaal is not the right fit for the club and says he wanted to see Jurgen Klopp appointed at Old Trafford.

Bolt, who has won six Olympic gold medals and will compete at the Games in Rio this summer, believes players do not want to play for the Dutchman and criticised his style of football.

United currently sit fifth in the Premier League going into Saturday's fixture with Norwich and are four points behind Manchester City in the race for Champions League qualification but do have an FA Cup final against Crystal Palace to look forward to.

Van Gaal accepts he "cannot afford" to lose any of the club's four remaining fixtures this season, but Bolt says he is not the right man for the job and revealed he would rather the club had appointed Klopp before he joined Liverpool.

"It [the season] has been up and down - I wouldn't say I'm happy. I think a lot of players don't want to come to the team under Van Gaal, I think players

don't want to play for him," the Jamaican sprinter told TV2 Norway.

"He plays a different style of football which Manchester United doesn't really play. We are more of an attacking team and he likes to pass the ball.

"I'm not saying he's not a good coach but, personally, I just think he's not right for Manchester United.

"I actually wanted to see Klopp, the Liverpool coach, because when we had Sir Alex Ferguson we were more of an attacking team and Klopp is an attacking coach, he really plays attacking football."

In the past Bolt, 29, has said he would love to turn to football when he retires from athletics and it appears as though he is still keen to turn out for United.

"If I got a chance to play for the team, I would love to play for Manchester United, even if it is just one game," he said.

"It would be great because it is my favourite team. I have supported them for years so if I got a chance to play one or two matches I'd be happy."

(Source: SkySports)

## FOOTBALL

### Borussia Dortmund expecting Mats Hummels to decide on future soon

Borussia Dortmund chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke is expecting Mats Hummels to decide on his future in the next week.

Dortmund have stressed that they have yet to reach any agreement with Bayern Munich over a transfer amid growing suggestions the Germany defender could sign a new deal at the Westfalenstadion.

Hummels, 27, has just over a year remaining on his current contract and Dortmund issued a statement last week confirming that their captain was keen to re-join Bayern.

"The decision is up to him, the ball is in his court," Watzke told Sky. "I think he will decide soon. I believe that decision will come during the next week."

Dortmund have already said that the transfer fee, reported to be around €40 million, is "non-negotiable."

There are now serious questions as to whether Hummels does remain keen on the deal, with both Suddeutsche Zeitung and kicker reporting on Friday that, although his family are keen on a return to Munich, the player himself would prefer to continue his career at Dortmund.

Dortmund boss Thomas Tuchel was asked about the situation at his news conference on Friday morning but said: "I can't tell you anything new."

The club's slim Bundesliga title hopes were ended on Saturday when Bayern won at Ingolstadt -- though Dortmund themselves suffered a shock defeat at Eintracht Frankfurt anyway.

Dortmund finish their league campaign next week at home to Cologne before then facing Bayern in the DFB Pokal final the following week.

(Source: Soccermet)

### Francesco Totti plays 600th league game as Roma go second

Francesco Totti came off the bench to make his 600th league appearance for AS Roma as they beat in-form Chievo 3-0 at home on Sunday to climb to second place in Serie A.

The victory moved Roma up to 77 points with one game left in the race for the second automatic Champions League berth, one ahead of Napoli who play Torino later on Sunday.

Radja Nainggolan slammed home the opener in the 18th minute before Antonio Rudiger doubled the home side's lead with a 39th-minute header.

Miralem Pjanic added a third when he was picked out by an excellent pass from the 39-year-old Totti and he finished calmly past Albano Bizzarri.

Totti, whose future at the club beyond the end of the season remains uncertain, was introduced as a 59th-minute substitute for Mohamed Salah and the club's beloved captain received an emotional ovation in what may be his final match at the Stadio Olimpico.

(Source: Reuters)

### Chelsea and Tottenham target Mario Mandzukic is committed to Juventus

Mario Mandzukic has assured Juventus that he is "100 percent" staying at the club despite being linked with a move away.

Mandzukic joined the Serie A outfit last summer and despite some injury problems this season, he's scored four goals in his last six league games.

The former Atletico Madrid striker has been linked with Chelsea and Tottenham but he's squashed those rumours revealing he's very happy in Turin.

"I want to stay here, 100 percent. I am happy at Juve and next season we can do even better," Mandzukic said.

"The important thing is to maintain the squad and introduce a couple of stars. That way we can fight to win the Champions League.

"I knew this was a big club with a fantastic tradition behind it, but unless you get to experience it for yourself, you can't realise how perfectly the club is organised, the mentality and temperament, which are unique.

"I am really impressed with the organisation here and I have been at other big clubs. Especially during moments of crisis, the directors and staff really protected the squad.

"I am very happy here and I feel extraordinary! I had bad luck with injuries, but now I feel great and that is why I'm happy."

(Source: ESPN)







## Poem of the day

Has anyone ever produced a mirror out of mud and straw?  
Yet clean away the mud and straw,  
and a mirror might be revealed.

Rumi

## Prayer Times

Noon:13:01 Evening: 20:18 Dawn: 4:28 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:04 (tomorrow)

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## NEWS IN BRIEF



### Zurich Iranian Film Festival announces lineup

**TEHRAN** — The 2nd Zurich Iranian Film Festival has announced its official selection totaling 28 features, documentaries and shorts that will go on screen in its various sections.

Among the feature-length dramas are "Immortal" directed by Hadi Mohaqeq, "Avalanche" by Morteza Farshbaf, "A Romantic Robbery" by Amir-Shahab Razavian, "Lantouri" Reza Dormishian and "Nahid" by Ida Panahandeh.

The lineup also includes documentaries "Residents of a One-Way Street" by Mehdi Baqeri and "Iranian Ninja" by Marjan Riahi as well as the short films "The Gambler" by Karim Lakzadeh and "Pain" by Ali Asgari.

The festival dedicated to covering striking aspects of immigration, integration and women's issues will be held in the Swiss city from May 26 to June 1.



### Nariman to perform at Tehran center

**TEHRAN** — Nariman, an all-female Iranian ensemble, is scheduled to give a concert at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center on May 11.

The band led by santur virtuoso Golnaz Jamshidi will perform a wide repertoire of folk and traditional Persian music and some pieces from traditional Armenian music.



### Kamkars to raise funds for children with cancer

**TEHRAN** — The Kamkars, Iran's major Kurdish music ensemble, will perform a concert at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on May 26 to raise funds for children suffering from cancer.

The concert has been organized by the Mahak Charity Society, a Tehran-based major medical center for children with cancer, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its establishment.



### Intl. Green Film Festival announces jury

**TEHRAN** — The 5th International Green Film Festival announced the jury on Sunday.

The president of the Green Me Global Festival in Berlin, Nicolai Niemann, the co-founder of the Fredd Festival of Toulouse in France, Antonin Haddad, and New Guinean environmental activist Theresa Kamau-kas are among the members of the jury.

The jury also includes Ahmad Zabeti Jahromi and Alireza Shojanuri, both from Iran.

The 5th International Green Film Festival will be held in Tehran and several other Iranian cities from May 13 to 20.

## NEWS

### Gunther Uecker op art adorns Tehran museum

**TEHRAN** — Tehran's Imam Ali (AS) Religious Arts Museum hosted Gunther Uecker and a large number of Iranian art enthusiasts for the opening ceremony of the German op artist's exhibition "Tribute to Hafez".

The exhibition is displaying Uecker's collection inspired by the ghazals of Persian poet Hafez.

"I always think about memories from Iran and my friendship with Iranians," Uecker said during the ceremony and added that his deep affection for Hafez led him to create the collection, which he called "a song full of colors".

"The aroma of the heaven in the open meadow of zeal, above which the wind of the Orient blows, drove me to embellish the poems of the poet and place a crown upon his head," he stated.

An envoy of the German Embassy, Marian Schuegraf, also delivered a short speech.

She pointed to a chapel display of Uecker's most comprehensive art and design at the Reichstag building in Berlin and added, "If you want to know how much value Germany places on Uecker, you should visit the chapel in the Reichstag building."

She also called Uecker's "Tribute to Hafez" a tribute to Iran, its people and culture.

The exhibition will run until July 5 and then will move to Germany for another showing.

# Visitors satisfied with new venue for Tehran book fair

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There was a brief opportunity to speak with Iran Cultural Fairs Institute Director Amir-Masud Shahramnia, who was at the fair to hear from visitors and help remove the obstacles.

"I think the obstacles have been removed; this is the first year and we know that there are problems. Some of the problems cropped up during the first days and there will be more in the coming days, but I think the old location has been exchanged for a better and more suitable one, nearer to other international venues," he told Tehran Times.

He added, "It is a more quiet place, the publishers feel comfortable, people also feel the same, but we need to do more at the Ministry of Culture (and Islamic Guidance) to give better service to the visitors. We also need to provide additional public facilities, but on the whole, visitors and officials are satisfied".

He also gave his opinion about the children's pavilion and said, "Here it is better, there is good ventilation, a good atmosphere, and there are a variety of programs and we have interesting things to offer the children".

Other people were interviewed, including Zahra Khoeini from Masaa Publications, a publisher offering books on Islamic psychology.

"This is the first time that we are attending. It is very good but I think the organizers could dedicate larger spaces to the publishers, since the venue is so big and there is plenty of unused space left," she said.

The fair has also dedicated a large hall named Yaas to books published in the past Iranian calendar year



People visit the 29th Tehran International Book Fair at Shahre Aftab on May 7, 2016. (IRNA/ Mehdi Qorbani)

(March 21, 2015 to 2016).

The Assembly of Islamic Revolution Publishers in this hall offers small packages of books each offering the names of books and publishers useful for a specific topic.

For example the "Magic Lamp" package contains a list of best books published on how to develop the activities of children.

Mohammad Shams, an MA student in psychology from the city of Qom, explained more about the packages and said, "All books mentioned in these packages have been read by a number of experts. People can trust the books offered in these packages since they are quite useful for them."

"Tomorrow Is Too Late to Read" is the motto of this year's fair, which will run until May 14.

## Shahrdad Rohani appointed conductor of Tehran Symphony Orchestra

**TEHRAN** — Maestro Shahrdad Rohani, who has led some prestigious orchestras, including London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, took on a new role as conductor of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra on Sunday.

The appointment was announced in a press release by the Rudaki Foundation after Ali Rahbari quit his job as conductor in protest over a new decision by the foundation's Artistic Council for Orchestras to set up a center with the assigned task of managing the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and National Orchestra.

Rohani has been the guest conductor for Minnesota Orchestra, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, San Diego Symphony and the American Youth Philharmonic Orchestras.

**New decision by Rudaki Foundation sparks controversy in Iran orchestras**

The decision, which was made during a session of the council on Saturday, provoked controversy.

It was deemed as offensive to Ali Rahbari, the conductor and music director of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, and Farhad Fakhreddini, the



Shahrdad Rohani conducts a stringed orchestra during the 31st Fajr International Music Festival at Milad Tower in Tehran on February 15, 2016. (Tasnim/Mohammad Delkesh)

director of National Orchestra.

Consequently, Rahbari and Fakhreddini left the session in protest over the decision.

After Hassan Rouhani won the presidential election in 2013, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance asked Rahbari and Fakhreddini to direct the two orchestras, which had almost been dissolved under the administration of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"I think that Mr. culture minister and his assistant want to undermine my long career in the world," Rahbari told the Persian service of ILNA on Saturday.

He called the decision a snub and said that he would never tolerate it.

According to Rahbari, the foundation was scheduled to sign new contracts with the orchestra's musicians who have threatened to abstain from performing if their contracts were not

renewed.

He said that the orchestra may shut down as a result.

Meanwhile, the orchestra is scheduled to perform the closing concert at the 33rd Shanghai Spring International Music Festival on May 18.

Due the recent disagreements in the management of the orchestra, Rahbari said that the concert will likely be cancelled.

Earlier in March, Rahbari quit his job over interventions by some people whom he called "inexpert individuals who have no knowledge of orchestral music."

However, he returned in early April after Culture Minister Ali Jannati and Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs made a promise to justify the interventions.

Eighty-year-old maestro Fakhreddini, who founded the National Orchestra in 1998, also said on Saturday that he no longer would be the conductor of the orchestra.

"I am the founder of the orchestra and they should ask my view about any plan for the orchestra," Fakhreddini told reporters after left the council's session.

PICTURE OF THE DAY Honaronline/Siamak Zomorrodi-Motlaq



Tehran Auction Director Alireza Sami-Azar visits an exhibition of photos by Soroush Milanizadeh at Tehran's Mojdeh Gallery on May 7, 2016. The exhibition entitled "Woman vs. Woman" runs until May 20.

## Iranian reciter finishes fourth at Malaysian Quran contest

**TEHRAN** — Iranian reciter Seyyed Mostafa Hosseini took fourth place at the 58th International Al-Quran Recital and Memorizing Assembly, which was held at the Putra Jaya Trade Center in Kuala Lumpur from May 2 to 7.

The first prize went to Wan Ainuddin Hilmi Abdullah from Malaysia and Awangku Muhammad Adibul Amin from Brunei took the runner-up title.

Reciters from Indonesia and the Philippines took the third and fifth places respectively, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Sunday.

About 120 reciters and memorizers of the Holy Quran's verses from 69 countries took part in the competition.