

TEHRAN TIMES



General Soleimani visits Badreddin family 2

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Bombardier, Siemens willing to boost share of Iran market

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Mahnaz Abdi

Like many other international companies, Bombardier Inc. and Siemens AG are willing to develop their activity in the Iranian market in the post-sanction time, although they consider banking barriers, which are still in place, an obstacle getting in the way.

The following is what some directors of the two international giants that are participating in Iran RAILEXPO 2016 (running from May 15 to 18 in Tehran) told the Tehran Times.

■ 'Bombardier interested to participate in upcoming opportunities'

"Now, after having a new situation (lifting of sanctions) we as many others have an interest to participate in the upcoming opportunities and when you see the number of exhibitors and particularly the foreign participants, you see there is an appetite of the outside industry to participate in the Iranian market opportunities," said Dieter Brandenburg, the chief representative of Bombardier in Iran.

Questioned about the changes he observes in Iran after the sanctions, he said, "The obvious change to me is to see really more foreigners in Tehran. So many delegations are travelling to Iran to really evaluate the market opportunities," although he added, "I must underline 'evaluate' because you have a lot of potential, yes, many times people are saying that you should provide also financing, and financing is still an issue for the present situation for many projects, because there are still some limitations and restrictions in terms of financial transactions."

"Apart from the financial issue, I really don't see a downside in business in Iran. I really see the potential and I really see the opportunities foreign companies have and I see the way Iran is playing its part is right in terms of trying to develop its industry. I really see a positive trend, but again financial part is still an issue," Brandenburg noted.

See page 4

Iranian MPs reaffirm support for Hezbollah

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian MPs wrote a letter to Hezbollah Secretary General Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah on Monday reaffirm-

ing the Islamic Republic's support for the Lebanese resistance group.

The letter, signed by 251 legislators, followed the death of top Hezbollah

commander Mustafa Badreddine in Syria.

The MPs expressed condolences over the martyrdom of Badreddine. →2

Tehran, Beijing ink long-term oil co-op MOU

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's Oil Ministry and China's National Energy Administration signed a five-year memorandum of understanding (MOU) for cooperation in oil industry, Shana news agency reported on Sunday.

Amir Hossein Zamaninia, Iran's deputy oil minister for international affairs, and Zhang Yuqing, the deputy head of China's National Energy Administration, signed the MOU in Tehran on Sunday.

"The MOU covers various fields including crude oil and gas condensate exploration and development, oil and gas equipment manufacturing and investment in various oil, gas, refining and petrochemical projects," Zamaninia said.

Also on Monday, Iran's Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh met with Zhang Yuqing in Tehran.

Addressing the press after the meeting, the Iranian minister expressed satisfaction with the signed MOU and said, "Iran and China have a very good relationship in energy sector and we hope for expanding the relations in post-sanctions setting".

Zanganeh also noted, "In the MOU, we have emphasized the manufacturing of equipment in Iran and it was decided that the Chinese companies invest in the country". Renovating Abadan Refinery and developing the second phases of North Azadegan and Yadavaran oil fields, all in southwest of Iran, managing flare gases, petrochemical projects and financial issues were among other important topics discussed in the meeting, the minister added.

ARTICLE

By Bijan Bonakdar and Roozbeh Aliabadi

Iran and the next U.S. president

The Middle East presents variety of complicated partnerships for the next United States president. In recent years, the U.S. has been experiencing a strategic reversal of its position in the Middle East. In the past, Washington's posture in the region was more assertive but more recently it has shifted towards greater restraint, particularly during Barack Obama's second term. However, it appears that neither postures have particularly worked well for the United States.

Today, nationalism, religious fanaticism, and political extremism are on the rise and will complicate the future of stability in the Middle East. Furthermore, the traditional allies of the U.S. have difficult relations with Washington. There are ongoing civil wars and unrest in at least five countries where the U.S. has either directly or indirectly supported regime change (Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, and Syria). At its current state, the Syrian civil war in particular risks creating even greater regional sectarian conflict. And U.S. traditional partners throughout the region are more vulnerable than they were just a few years ago.

→9

"Muhammad(s)" declared Iran's box office hit of the year

ART TEHRAN — "Muhammad (S), the Messenger of God", renowned Iranian director Majid Majidi's latest film about the Prophet of Islam (S), became Iran's box office hit of the year after grossing over \$1.8 million at Iranian movie theaters, the Farabi Cinema Foundation announced on Sunday.



Saman Moqaddam's comedy drama "Sperm Whale" with \$1.4 million comes next and Masud Jafari-Jozani's comedy "Iran Burger" stands third earning about \$857,000.

"In Specified Time" directed by Vahid Amirkhani, "Guinness" by Mohsen Tanabandeh and "I'm Not Salvador" by Manuchehr Hadi took the fourth to sixth places.

"Crazy Castle" by Abolhassan Davudi, "Time to Love" by Alireza Raisian, "Princess of Rome" by Hadi Mohammadian, "The Ice Age" by Mostafa Kiai and "Absolute Rest" by Abdorreza Kahani were among the list of Iran's box office hits.

Iranian security originates from inside, Zarif says

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that Iran is independent and its security is rooted inside the country.

During a conference on role of court in protecting the civil rights, he said that a combination of military and economic capabilities gives a country power.



The Judiciary establishes security through countering crimes and creating a "mental atmosphere" in which the citizens feel secure, he said.

The chief diplomat also said that some of Iran's neighbors are dependent on the other countries to establish security, but Iran is independent in this respect.

German, Iranian panel discussion on Cold War to launch in Tehran

TEHRAN — Co-hosted by the Faculty of History of the University of Tehran and the German Embassy, a panel discussion on the Cold War will provide an opportunity to learn more about the conflict which shaped an important part of the 20th century.

The German historian Dr. Ulrich Mahler and his Iranian colleagues Prof.

Ahmadi from the University of Tehran and Mr. Kaveh Bayat will take a closer look at the economic, social and political effects of the Cold War on Iran and Germany.

The panel discussion of German and Iranian historians complements the exhibition "The Cold War: Causes-History-Impact" currently on display at the Central Library of Tehran

University. The exhibition, developed by the Berlin Centre for Cold War Studies and the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship, offers an overview of the global causes and consequences of the Cold War.

The event will take place at the Central Library of Tehran University on Wednesday, May 18 at 3 p.m.

Sanat Naft promoted to Iran Professional League

SPORTS TEHRAN — Sanat Naft Abadan has secured promotion to the Iran Professional League with a 2-1 win over Fajr Sepasi Shiraz on Monday.

Two goals from Mohammad Shadkam and Amin Zaleykani were enough for Abadan-based team to seal maximum points for



them and move them two points clear of Fajr Sepasi in the Azadegan league.

Paykan and Machine Sazi had already secured their promotions to the IPL.

The trio will replace Esteghlal Ahvaz, Rah Ahan and Malavan in the Iranian Professional League.

Iran ready to support Algeria's economy diversification process

Iranian officials affirmed Monday in Tehran that their country is ready to support Algeria in the economy diversification process, notably in the sectors of industry and mines, agriculture, mechanical industry and housing.

During the second Algerian-Iranian Business Forum, President of the Ira-

nian Chamber of Commerce Mohsen Jalalpour underlined the huge potentials possessed by the two countries to achieve this objective, namely in the sectors of industry and mines, agriculture, mechanical industry, housing, energy, steel industry, transport, pharmaceutical industry and car industry.

In this regard, Jalalpour expressed his country's willingness to help Algeria through visits of experts in order to define bilateral projects of partnership.

He added that Iran has the required potentials to achieve this goal, besides it represents a gateway between Central Asia and MENA region. (Source: AllAfrica.com)

Tehran can become Russia's major trade partner in absence of Turkey

Iran's minister of Communications and Information Technology said Tehran can replace Turkey as Russia's major trade partner, official IRNA news agency reported on Sunday.

Russia has downed its economic relations with Turkey due to some political problems and Moscow is

willing to increase ties with Tehran, Mahmoud Vaezi said.

The head of Iran-Russia Joint Economic Commission also said that Turkey may lose 4.5 billion US dollars each year due to the Russian sanctions. Following the nuclear deal, Iranian businessmen should seize the opportunity to compete with their

foreign rivals and have active presence in the domestic and international markets, Vaezi added. Relations between Russia and Turkey have soured after Turkish forces shot down a Russian Su-24 jet near the Turkish-Syrian border on Nov. 24, 2015 for alleged airspace violation.

Russia has imposed a

comprehensive set of sanctions against Turkey after the incident. The import of Turkish foodstuffs and other agricultural products to Russia have been curtailed. Charter flights in both directions have been halted, and the visa-free travel regime between the two countries has been suspended. (Source: Xinhua)

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MEDIA MONITOR



**Makarem Shirazi
reprimands Faezeh
Hashemi for meeting
Bahaists**

TEHRAN — Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi on Monday rebuked Faezeh Hashemi, the daughter of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, for meeting Bahai figures.

The grand ayatollah said the meeting is a crime and is religiously indictable, ISNA reported.

Rafsanjani, currently chairman of the Expediency Council, also criticized Faezeh, saying she "should make up" for what she did.



**General Soleimani
visits Badreddin
family**

TEHRAN — Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani met on Monday the family of Hezbollah commander Mustafa Badreddin who was martyred in a mortar attack in Syria last week.

Soleimani met the martyred commander's family at their home in Beirut, Al-Akhbar reported. According to the paper, the general said the death of Badreddin is a great loss to the Islamic ummah.



**'Principlists were
influential in ratifying
vital legislations'**

TEHRAN — The leader of the principlist parliamentary group has said his group played a decisive role in approving many vital legislations.

Qolam-Ali Haddad Adel made the remarks in a goodbye meeting of the group on Monday, as the current Majlis term is running out, ISNA reported.



**U.S. conceded defeat
by firing Navy officer,
Iranian general says**

TEHRAN — The U.S. Navy's decision to strip the commander of a squadron whose sailors were captured by the IRGC after straying into the Iranian territorial waters in January signifies that Washington has conceded defeat, a top Iranian general believes.

Speaking to Tasnim, Ahmad Vahidi, head of the Strategic Center of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, said Americans sacked the commander to make up for the disgrace they faced after the IRGC captured U.S. sailors in the Persian Gulf.

The former defense minister went on to say that Americans suffered a "psychological defeat" after the IRGC's great job.



**"Iran to resume
nuclear work with
'higher speed' if West
violates deal"**

TEHRAN — A senior Judiciary official called on Western countries not to violate or undermine a recent deal between Iran and world powers on Tehran's nuclear program.

Speaking in Tehran on Monday, Mohammad Javad Larijani, head of the Judiciary department for human rights, noted that Iran has made major accomplishments in the field of nuclear technology but put some restrictions on its nuclear program under the deal, Nasim reported.

He warned Western countries against impairing the deal otherwise Iran would resume its previous work "at a much higher speed".

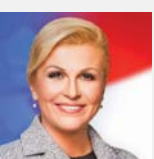


**Iran promises more
drills in response to
U.S. opposition**

TEHRAN — Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force has blasted the U.S. for expressing opposition to Iran's military maneuvers in the Persian Gulf, saying the Islamic Republic will stage more war games in response to Washington's opposition.

"We will not cancel any drills and will improve them and make them more frequent," Amir Ali Hajizadeh told reporters in Tehran on Monday, Fars reported.

He underlined that facing the U.S. failure in complying with its undertakings under the nuclear deal Iranian officials attach more importance to making progress in different fields, including military areas, to defend the country.



**Croatia's president
due in Iran**

TEHRAN — The Croatian president is due in Tehran on Tuesday upon an official visit by her Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani.

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic is slated to arrive in Iran in the afternoon and will stay three days, IRNA reported. She is leading a politico-economic delegation prepared to sign several MOUs with a similar body of Iranian officials.

Iranian special committee releases report on U.S. seizure of Iranian assets

Committee suggests taking 2\$b issue to Supreme National Security Council

POLITICAL THERAN — The special committee tasked with looking into the U.S. seizure of \$2 billion of Iranian assets issued its 16-page report on Monday, branding the action as "international banditry".

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled on April 20 that almost \$2 billion in frozen Iranian assets must be turned over to American families of people killed in the 1983 bombing of a U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut and other attacks allegedly blamed on Iran.

President Rouhani had tasked the committee with investigating the case in more details, headed by Economy Minister Ali Tayyebnia.

The money, which belongs to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), had been blocked under U.S. sanctions before the court ruling.

Condemning the court's vote, the report sees it in breach of the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act (FSIA), calling for taking whatsoever measures to get the



money back from Washington.

"The act shows the U.S. violation of international law and its confrontation with justice in international arena," the report says.

The report also reprimands the Ahmadinejad administration for its negli-

gence, questioning it for not acting seriously.

The document recommends the government to consider the issue in the Supreme National Security Council, which addresses only subjects with a national scope.

Finally, the communique lists a number of other unfair rulings issued and passed against the Islamic Republic over the past years.

In a tour of Kerman province on May 10 President Hassan Rouhani said the former government had about ten-month time between 2007 to 2008 to withdraw the sum from the "hands of America" but why it did not happen is a matter of question.

The ruling has come in for strong flak from Iranian officials including Rouhani who threatened to take the United States to international arbitration over case, vowing Iran will spare no efforts in upholding the people's rights.

Denouncing the seizure of the frozen assets as "highway robbery," Foreign Minister Zarif has vowed to retrieve the sum anyway.

This is the first serious confrontation between Tehran and Washington after the successful signing of the nuclear deal in July 2015.

Iran calls on world to end Israeli plots against Palestinians

POLITICAL THERAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Monday calling for an international campaign against the Zionist regime of Israel's plots against the Palestinian people.

The statement said that Iran supports the Palestinians' "solidarity and national reconciliation" in countering the Zionist regime.

Israel's actions in occupying Palestine, executing the innocent Palestinians and expanding settlement are mentioned in the statement as examples of Israel's crimes.

The statement said that Israel is making efforts to marginalize the Palestine issue which is the first priority

of the world of Islam but some Arab countries in the Mideast region are ignoring Israel's crimes.

The issue has caused concerns for the Palestinians and liberal thinkers in the world, the statement added.

The statement also said the "strategic objective" of making efforts to end the occupation of Palestine and boost the country's national unity will lead to defeat of the Zionist regime.

On 15 May, 1948, Israel declared independence, the date recognized as Nakba Day.

During the 1948 Palestinian war, an estimated 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled, and hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages were depopulated and destroyed.



Iranian MPs reaffirm support for Hezbollah



"Fighting the occupying Zionists and Takfiri groups is the art of the great men and today Hezbollah is shining like a sun in the sky of jihad and resistance by leadership of you and the sparkle of its lights will shine the world," the letter read out.

Badreddine was martyred in a blast at a base near Damascus airport by artillery shells, Hezbollah said on Friday.

"Investigations have showed that the explosion, which targeted one of our bases near Damascus International Airport, and which led to the martyrdom of Commander Mustafa Badreddine, was the re-

sult of artillery bombardment carried out by takfiri groups in the area," Hezbollah said in a statement.

The statement said the death "will increase our determination... to continue the fight against these criminal gangs and defeat them".

On Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also wrote a letter of condolence to Nasrallah, relaying to him "that martyrdom of this great commander Mustafa will further strengthen resistance forces against the Zionist and terrorism".

Other Iranian officials including De-



fense Minister Hossein Dehqan, Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, senior politician Ali Akbar Velayati, and Ahmad Vahidi former defense minister and current chief of the

Strategic Center of the General Staff of the Armed Forces have sent messages offering condolences over the death of the commander.

According to the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar, IRGC Quds Force chief General Qassem Soleimani has said the death of Badreddine is a loss for the Islamic ummah. The general made remarks after he met with the family of Badreddine in Beirut on Saturday night.

Badreddine was believed to have commanded Hezbollah's military operations in Syria.

Aref says employment and livelihood are major challenges

POLITICAL THERAN — Mohammad Reza Aref, a senior reformist who secured the heaviest share of public backing in the metropolis of Tehran in the February parliamentary elections, said on Monday that employment and livelihood are the major challenges the country is grappling with.

"The most concerned issue of the people and country is employment and livelihood," the former vice president said on Monday, speaking to a gathering attended by heads of different political factions and a number of lawmakers-elect.

Aref, who is seen to be the main rival to incum-



bent Parliament speaker Ali Larijani who won a re-election in the religious city of Qom, had earlier said he would form a bloc named "Hope" in the next parliament which will start its work on May 28.

Aref also said he saw the Hope bloc and moderate and independent MPs in the same camp.

The reformist figure had also vowed to seek change of tack in the upcoming parliament, citing people's hope for a different parliament.

Earlier, Aref had called for more harmony between the upcoming parliament and government to address issues such as unemployment, inflation, etc.

Zarif to attend Syria meeting in Vienna

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is set to attend the meeting of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), which will be convened in the Austrian capital of Vienna to discuss the latest developments in Syria.

Heading a political delegation, Zarif is scheduled to leave Tehran for Vienna later on Monday.

On the sidelines of the ISSG meeting, the Iranian team might hold talks with European and US officials about ways to remove obstacles in the way of implementing last year's nuclear agreement reached between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — the United States, France, Britain, China and Russia — plus Germany started implementing the JCPOA

on January 16. The two sides signed the agreement on July 14, 2015 following two and a half years of intensive talks.

Under the JCPOA, all nuclear-related sanctions imposed on Iran by the European Union, the Security Council and the US were lifted. Iran has, in return, put some limitations on its nuclear activities.

Iran, Russia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia as well as representatives of the European Union and the Arab League are among countries participating in the ISSG meeting on Tuesday. The 17-nation ISSG aims to discuss the stalled negotiations, challenges in maintaining the February ceasefire and the UN delivery of humanitarian aid to various areas across the war-ravaged country.

Russia and the United States have

agreed to use their influence with the Syrian government and militant groups, respectively, to reinforce a shaky Syria-wide cessation of hostilities.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. 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.

Also in Vienna on Monday, US Secretary of State

John Kerry and Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni co-chaired international talks on Libya.

Participants included representatives from a host of European and Middle Eastern nations and international organizations including the EU, the UN, the Arab League and the African Union.

The stated objective of the talks is providing support for the government of Prime Minister Fayez al Sarraj in its fight against Daesh terrorists and advancing further political support to his Government of National Accord.

(Source: Press TV)



Official says Western media ignoring realities in Iran

POLITICAL THERAN — Keyvan Khosravi, spokesman of the Supreme National Security Council, said on Monday that media should win "trust" otherwise they will lose their influence in convincing the public opinion.

During a meeting with a German media delegation in Tehran, he said that the Western media do not cover many realities in Iran.

Democracy in Iran, inefficiency of the sanctions, and developments in the country are the realities that have been

ignored by the Western media outlets, he remarked.

Pointing to the nuclear agreement between Iran and the 5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany), he said that the West had no choice but negotiating with Iran.

NEWS

S. Korea, U.S., Japan plan joint drills on N. Korean threat

South Korea, the United States and Japan will hold their first joint military training next month focused on cooperating to detect signs of missile launches from North Korea and trace missile trajectories, a Seoul defense official said on Monday.

The drills, set for around June 28, will be held on the side-lines of biennial multinational naval exercises scheduled for waters off Hawaii from June to August, which the three countries regularly attend, the official said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity, citing department rules.

The trilateral drills will involve Aegis-equipped ships from the three countries, but they will not involve missile-interception training, the official said. The three countries have held joint search-and-rescue drills in the past.

The training follows a 2014 intelligence-gathering pact among the three countries, designed to better cope with North Korea's increasing nuclear and missile threats.

It was the first such agreement among the three countries. An international standoff over North Korea has recently deepened after Pyongyang carried out its fourth nuclear test in January and a long-range rocket launch in February.

Washington regularly holds military drills with South Korea and Japan — which together host about 80,000 American troops — and shares intelligence with them on a bilateral level. But Seoul and Tokyo don't, largely a result of lingering public resentments in South Korea against Japan over its 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

The Korean Peninsula was divided into a U.S.-backed South Korea and a Soviet-supported, socialist North Korea at the end of the Japanese occupation. The two Koreas fought a devastating three-year war in the early 1950s that ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

(Source: AP)

Kabul locked down as minority Hazaras protest over power line

Afghanistan's capital was under lockdown on Monday as thousands of minority Shia Hazaras launched protests over a multi-million-dollar power transmission line, in what could snowball into a political crisis for the beleaguered government.

Security forces blocked key intersections with stacked-up shipping containers in Kabul as the protesters sought to march on the presidential palace, demanding that the electricity line linking energy-rich central Asia pass through a central Hazara-dominated area.

The protest spotlights the turbulent politics in the war-torn nation and follows a massive rally last November galvanized by the beheadings of a group of Hazaras, which symbolized growing public discontent with President Ashraf Ghani's regime.

"Tens of thousands of people are expected to join the massive protest and march towards the presidential palace," Hazara lawmaker Arif Rahmani told AFP.

"We want the power line to cross through Bamiyan, which has seen no development in 15 years. We are demanding justice, not charity."

The 500 kilovolt TUTAP power line, which would connect the Central Asian nations of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan with Afghanistan and Pakistan, is regarded a crucial infrastructure project in the electricity-starved region.

But it has been mired in controversy, with leaders from the minority group demanding that the line be routed through Bamiyan, which has a large Hazara population.

The line was originally set to pass through the central province but the government decided to reroute it through the mountainous Salang pass north of Kabul, saying the shorter route would expedite the project and save millions of dollars in costs.

Hazara leaders in the ethnically divisive nation lashed out at the Pashtun president, saying the decision to reroute the line was a sign of the government's discriminatory policies.

Potential for violence

The rally, so far peaceful, comes in the midst of the Taliban's annual spring offensive launched last month and authorities have warned that it could be targeted by insurgents.

"Staging peaceful protests is the civil right of every Afghan citizen," the interior ministry said in a statement.

"We respectfully request that our countrymen not allow the enemy (to) misuse this opportunity and disrupt public security."

The dispute, which highlights the challenges of modernizing the war-torn country, threatens to overshadow TUTAP, which could help ease nationwide power blackouts.

Hazara protesters repeatedly heckled Ghani during an anti-corruption summit in London last week.

The president faces rising unpopularity amid endemic corruption, rampant unemployment and growing insecurity in Afghanistan.

The three million-strong Afghan Hazara community has been persecuted for decades, with thousands killed in the late 1990s by al-Qaeda and the mainly Pashtun Sunni Taliban.

There has been a surge in violence against the community, with a series of kidnappings and killings in recent months that have triggered a wave of fury on social media.

In November, thousands of protesters marched coffins containing the decapitated bodies of seven Shia Hazaras through the Afghan capital.

Their bodies were found in southern Zabul province, which is under Taliban control and has been the scene of clashes between rival militant factions.

Ghani called the killings "the shared pain of a nation", and accused the militants of trying to divide Afghanistan.

(Source: AFP)

Al-Qaeda turns to Syria, with a plan to challenge ISIL

Al-Qaeda's top leadership in Pakistan, has decided that the terrorist group's future lies in Syria and has secretly dispatched more than a dozen of its most seasoned veterans there, according to senior American and European intelligence and counterterrorism officials.

The movement of the senior al-Qaeda extremists reflects Syria's growing importance to the terrorist organization and most likely foreshadows an escalation of the group's bloody rivalry with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ Daesh), Western officials say.

The operatives have been told to start the process of creating an alternate headquarters in Syria and lay the groundwork for possibly establishing an emirate through al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, the al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra), to compete with the ISIL, from which al-Nusra broke in 2013. This would be a significant shift for al-Qaeda and its affiliate, which have resisted creating an emirate, or formal sovereign state, until they deem conditions on the ground are ready. Such an entity could also pose a heightened terrorist threat to the United States and Europe.

Al-Qaeda operatives have moved in and out of Syria for years. Ayman al-Zawahri, the group's supreme leader in Pakistan, dispatched senior extremists to bolster the al-Nusra Front in 2013. A year later, Zawahri sent to Syria a shadowy al-Qaeda cell called Khorasan that American officials say has been plotting attacks against the West.

But establishing a more enduring presence in Syria would present the group with an invaluable opportunity, Western analysts said. A Syria-based Qaeda state would not only be within closer striking distance of Europe but also benefit from the recruiting and logistical support of fighters from Iraq, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.

Zawahri released his first audio statement in several months in early May, and it seemed to clear the way for the al-Qaeda figures to use the al-Nusra Front to form an emirate in Syria with his blessing.



Some al-Nusra leaders, however, oppose the timing of such a move, so the affiliate has not yet taken that step.

The Islamic State moved quickly to impose harsh, unilateral control over territory in Iraq and Syria and declare its independence. The al-Nusra Front has painstakingly sought to build influence over areas it wants to control and with other Syrian rebel groups opposed to the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

American officials say the ISIL has largely eclipsed al-Qaeda in the global extremist hierarchy, with al-Qaeda hemorrhaging members to its more brutal and media-savvy rival. Many of the Khorasan operatives, including their leader, Muhsin al-Fadhli, have been killed in eight American airstrikes in northwest Syria since September 2014.

The ISIL has between 19,000 and 25,000 fighters, roughly divided between Iraq and Syria, American intelligence analysts estimate. The al-Nusra Front has about 5,000 to 10,000 fighters, all in Syria. An emirate would differ from the Islamic State caliphate in the scale of its ambition, in that an al-Nusra emirate would not claim to be a government for all the world's Muslims.

Some senior American and European intelligence and law enforcement officials say the small but steady movement of important al-Qaeda operatives and planners to Syria is a desperate dash to a haven situated perilously in the middle of the country's chaos. These officials say al-Qaeda operatives in Syria are determined but largely contained.

"There's always been a steady trickle, and it remains," said Col. Steve Warren, a military spokesman in Baghdad for the American-led campaign in Iraq and Syria.

Nonetheless, the presence of a senior cadre of experienced al-Qaeda leaders in Syria — some with multimillion-dollar American bounties on their heads — has raised alarms in Washington as well as in the allied capitals of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

The evolving assessment about al-Qaeda and the al-Nusra Front in Syria comes from interviews with nearly a dozen American and European intelligence and counterterrorism officials and independent analysts, most of whom have been briefed on confidential information gleaned from spies and electronic eavesdropping. They also analyzed the public statements and social media commen-

tary among al-Qaeda and al-Nusra Front members.

One of the operatives Western intelligence officials are focused most intently on is Saif al-Adl, a senior member of al-Qaeda's ruling body, known as the Shura Council, who oversaw the organization immediately after Osama bin Laden was killed by Navy SEALs in Pakistan in 2011. It is unclear whether Adl is in Syria, North Africa or somewhere else, American intelligence officials said.

Adl, a former colonel in the Egyptian military who is believed to be in his 50s, is listed on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorist list and was indicted in the 1998 United States Embassy bombings in East Africa. He is the subject of a \$5 million American bounty.

It is unclear how and when al-Qaeda might form an emirate in Syria that would hold territory and most likely harden its position toward more moderate Syrian opposition groups. Thela- Nusra Front was created in 2012 as an offshoot of al-Qaeda's affiliate in Iraq — which under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi later declared itself the ISIL — to fight Syrian government. That same year, the United States designated the al-Nusra Front as a terrorist organization.

But in 2013, the al-Nusra Front balked at joining Baghdadi when he announced the creation of the ISIL, and instead pledged allegiance to Zawahri in Pakistan. This ignited an often bloody rivalry between al-Nusra and ISIL terrorists in Syria.

Now al-Qaeda's top leadership is looking to stanch its losses in Pakistan and score a propaganda coup in Syria by establishing a formal emirate. A portion of al-Nusra's leadership, however, supports continuing the group's more pragmatic strategy of cultivating local support.

Many of the Syrian rebel groups that are fighting alongside al-Nusra against Assad's government reject the idea of forming an emirate, fearing it would further splinter the opposition to Assad.

(Source: The New York Times)

Senate report on CIA torture, one step closer to disappearing

The United States CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) inspector general's office — the spy agency's internal watchdog — has acknowledged it "mistakenly" destroyed its only copy of a mammoth Senate torture report at the same time lawyers for the Justice Department were assuring a federal judge that copies of the document were being preserved, Yahoo News has learned.

Although other copies of the report exist, the erasure of the controversial document by the CIA office charged with policing agency conduct has alarmed the U.S. senator who oversaw the torture investigation and reignited a behind-the-scenes battle over whether the full unabridged report should ever be released, according to multiple intelligence community sources familiar with the incident.

The deletion of the document has been portrayed by agency officials to Senate investigators as an "inadvertent" foul-up by the inspector general. In what one intelligence community source described as a series of errors straight "out of the Keystone Cops," CIA inspector general officials deleted an uploaded computer file with the report and then accidentally destroyed a disk that also contained the document, filled with thousands of secret files about the CIA's use of "enhanced" interrogation methods.

"It's breathtaking that this could have happened, especially in the inspector general's office — they're the ones that are supposed to be providing accountability within the agency itself," said Douglas Cox, a City University of New York School of Law professor who specializes

in tracking the preservation of federal records. "It makes you wonder what was going on over there?"

The incident was privately disclosed to the Senate Intelligence Committee and the Justice Department last summer, the sources said. But the destruction of a copy of the sensitive report has never been made public. Nor was it reported to the federal judge who, at the time, was overseeing a lawsuit seeking access to the still classified document under the Freedom of Information Act, according to a review of court files in the case.

A CIA spokesman, while not publicly commenting on the circumstances of the erasure, emphasized that another unopened computer disk with the full report has been, and still is, locked in a vault at agency headquarters. "I can assure you that the CIA has retained a copy," wrote Dean Boyd, the agency's chief of public affairs, in an email.

The 6,700-page report, the product of years of work by the Senate Intelligence Committee, contains meticulous details, including original CIA cables and memos, on the agency's use of waterboarding, sleep deprivation and other aggressive interrogation methods at "black site" prisons overseas. A 500-page executive summary was released in December 2014 by Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the committee's outgoing chair. It concluded that the CIA's interrogations were far more brutal than the agency had publicly acknowledged and produced often unreliable intelligence. The findings drew sharp dissents from Republicans on the panel and from four former CIA directors.



But the full three-volume report, which formed the basis for the executive summary, has never been released. In light of a U.S. Court of Appeals ruling last week that the document is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act, there are new questions about whether it will ever be made public, or even be preserved.

After receiving inquiries from Yahoo News, Feinstein, now the vice chair of the committee, wrote CIA Director John Brennan last Friday night asking him to "immediately" provide a new copy of the full report to the inspector general's office.

"Your prompt response will allay my concern that this was more than an 'accident,'" Feinstein wrote, adding that the full report includes "extensive information directly related to the IG's ongoing oversight of the CIA." CIA spokesman Boyd declined to comment.

(Source: Yahoo News)

Netanyahu summons minister over Nazi analogy

PM Benjamin Netanyahu has summoned minister of military affairs Moshe Ya'alon to an urgent meeting for supporting a senior officer who has likened the atmosphere in Israel to that of Nazi Germany.

The summon late Sunday came after Ya'alon said Israeli commanders should continue to speak their minds in an apparent reference to the controversy that followed comments by Deputy Chief of Staff Maj.-Gen. Yair Golan.

Golan stirred an uproar earlier this month after saying he was concerned by some of the extremist voices within Israel, likening it to the atmosphere in 1930s Germany before Hitler came to power.

Netanyahu's office issued a statement, saying he "remains firm in his conviction that the comparison that was made to Nazi Germany was inappropriate and damaged Israel in the international arena."

During a sit-down which was scheduled to take place on Monday morning

at Netanyahu's office, the Israeli premier was expected to reprimand Ya'alon for his remarks, the Jerusalem Post said.

Meanwhile, right-wing extremist lawmakers denounced Ya'alon for his support.

"The IDF (Israeli military) is not a junta. Its job is to implement the decisions of the civilian leadership and not to disagree with it and chart its own policy," Likud lawmaker Oren Hazan said.

Some on the right believe that this may be the beginning of the end of Ya'alon's tenure as minister of military affairs, a job that has reportedly been offered to former hardline foreign minister Avigdor Liberman.

After Ya'alon's speech, "I would be very surprised if the prime minister keeps Ya'alon in his current position," Israeli lawmaker Bezalel Smotrich commented on his Twitter feed.

Golan, on the other hand, has be-



come more vocal in offering his opinions on the current state in Israel. He is once again in the headlines, with Channel 2 News releasing a recording from a decade ago.

Golan, then the commander of the West Bank military division, purportedly says, "It is unimaginable that in an effort

to ensure our soldiers' safety, we can destroy whole apartment buildings."

"Killing women, children, uninvolved civilians. Unacceptable. The use of force in civilian areas must always be kept under control, and restricted to the minimum necessary," he is heard saying.

His remarks echo the arguments surrounding the case of Israeli sergeant Elor Azaria who has been charged with manslaughter for killing an immobilized Palestinian in Hebron (al-Khalil) on March 24.

In the recording, Golan gives an example from his personal experience.

"Four soldiers were standing at a checkpoint in the West Bank. A man comes to the checkpoint, and he is removed from his car by the soldiers. He then sees a soldier checking a woman for weapons, touching her body, and this offends his Islamic traditions."

(Source: Press TV)

NEWS

Curbing inflation, preserving economic stability top priorities for Iran: IMF deputy

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— The first deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), David Lipton, in a Tuesday meeting with the governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Valiollah Seif identified reining inflation, maintaining economic stability, and managing liquidity as the high priorities of the Islamic Republic in post-sanction era, Merh news agency reported.



During his three-day stay in Tehran, The IMF deputy's discussions with Iranian senior officials mainly focus on the IMF's continuing dialogue with Iran, and Iran's economic developments and policy initiatives, following the recent lifting of sanctions.

Lipton arrived in Tehran on Sunday heading a delegation comprised of five senior directors of the IMF.

Doha Bank hints at entering Iran

Doha Bank, Qatar's fourth largest lender by assets, said that while it expects to see consolidation in its PGCC operations in 2016, the bank is still eyeing expansion into new markets that may potentially include Iran.

"We are looking at options for new markets. It's an opportunity in certain locations now — you have seen sanctions being lifted in certain countries, so if the regulators and shareholders approve, we will look at it. It is still subject to so many ifs and buts," R. Seetharaman, chief executive officer of Doha Bank, told Gulf News.

"The bigger picture is to recognize that sanctions are lifted, but it [the Iranian market] has to be fully operational. It's still a work in progress. There are a lot of regulatory elements required, but as and when that happens, we'll be ready," He said.

His comments come just a day after U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, spoke in London, telling European banks they have nothing to fear in doing business with Iran. (Source: Gulfnews)

Bombardier, Siemens willing to boost share of Iran market

1→

"We really hope that by progressing in the negotiations with the local partners in parallel the financial side will become more normal," he stressed.

Thomas Siegemund, the director for Platform Management Mass Transit Global Product & Engineering in Bombardier, said, "What we are currently looking for is the opportunities here in the rail sector in Iran, also looking for partners to work together. We have already some business which we have done in the past, but now with lifting of the sanctions, of course there are much more new opportunities in Iran and we are currently exploring to find out which of the opportunities could turn into business."

Also, Ali Khalatbari, the local representative of Bombardier in Iran, referred to transfer of technology the priority of the company for business in the Iranian market.

"For Bombardier having gained now over the last year in depth knowledge of what the market requires, the most critical point is transfer of technology. We are working with Mapna [a group of Iranian companies involved in implementation of power, oil & gas, railway and other industrial projects] and IRICO [Iranian Rail Industries Development Company] and other companies



Dieter Brandenburg, the chief representative of Bombardier in Iran

to carry out the projects with manufacturing the units here in Iran rather than importing from Europe."

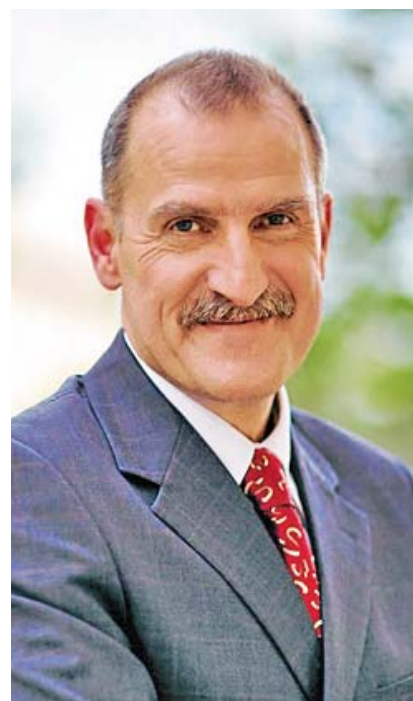
■ **'Working with Iranian customers a pleasure for Siemens'**

"Iranian customers are very open. It is a pleasure to work with them," said Joerg Scheifler, the senior executive vice president of Siemens LLC Mobility Middle East.

"Since we have been here for more than one hundred years, including locally manufacturing and other activities, we are very happy that the sanctions are lifted. We see a great potential to increase our business activities with Iran. As I've been in the Middle East, I have seen many customers from different countries and I can tell you that Iran's railway is actually one of our main customers as you have more than 10,000 kilometers of rail and we want to support you to modernize your railway. We want to help you bring your technology level to the current state of the art, because you are a little bit behind due to the sanctions," he explained.

The Siemens' manager said he sees no downside for business in Iran, while there are only upsides to do so. "There are many projects, customers love Germany", he said while adding, "I from this industry would prefer that the financing facilities develop a little faster. Financing still is not so easy, but other than that, it's a very interesting market."

"Despite the sanctions, we were



Joerg Scheifler, the senior executive vice president of Siemens LLC Mobility Middle East

quite active in Iran. We have locomotive factory here with our partner Mapna. So, our relationship with rail industry in Iran is quite deep and long," Scheifler noted.

S. Korea's Iran crude imports jump over 67% y/y in April

South Korea's imports of Iranian crude oil jumped 67 percent in April from the same month a year earlier, soaring after international sanctions were lifted on Iran's disputed nuclear program.

Seoul brought in 863,557 tons of Iranian crude oil last month, or 210,996 barrels per day (bpd), compared with 516,918 tons a year ago, the data showed. In the first four months of the year, the world's fifth-largest crude importer shipped in 3,820,054 tons, or 933,367 bpd, of

crude from the Middle Eastern country, versus 1,918,056 tons in the same period in 2015, according to the data.

Iran has increased production and exports more quickly than expected. Output has reached some 3.56 million bpd, up 300,000 bpd and the highest since late 2011, prior to the introduction of sanctions, the IEA said. Overall, South Korea shipped in nearly 12 million tons of crude last month, or 2.93 million bpd. The total was 13 percent higher than the 10.59 million tons imported in

April of 2015, the customs data showed.

Overall, South Korea shipped in nearly 12 million tons of crude last month, or 2.93 million bpd. The total was 13 percent higher than the 10.59 million tons imported in April of 2015, the customs data showed.

Final data for last month's crude oil imports will be released by state-run Korea National Oil Corp later this month.

(Source: Reuters)

When trains and tracks connect provinces and horizons.

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Some weird types of tourism

While touring new places, we are exposed to new sights, new foods, new arts, and new civilizations. The cultural impact of tourism as an event is undeniable, but let's not underestimate the significance of tourism in economic terms, since it is very important for the economy and a sector that can definitely create growth prospects and new positions of work.

But what happens when tourism rises to another level and seek more than the ordinary things the "pop-culture" tourism of our times requests? What happens when tourism becomes another field of human activity where the alternative view on it stimulates the human curiosity and interest?

■ Suicide tourism

Without a doubt this is the most macabre type of tourism we could ever imagine, and unfortunately, in most cases, for these "holidays," the airplane ticket is one way with no return. As the title suggests, suicide tourism is related to suicide and euthanasia.

Most people who embark on these tours want to bring their lives to an end. Usually they are either people with physical disabilities or patients suffering from emotional problems such as clinical depression.

Suicide tourism is mostly organized for large groups of people seeking destinations where euthanasia is permitted. The main goal of some people on suicide tours is to achieve the decriminalization of euthanasia in countries around the world, but there are also smaller groups seeking ideal scenic sites as places to end their lives. In the US, the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco is one of the most popular.

■ War tourism

Sometimes this is referred to as "suicide tourism," and not unfairly so. The significant difference between this type of tourism and Atomic or Dark tourism is that in this case, the tourist visits an active war zone to experience what it's like to be in the middle of bombs, bullets, and grenades. War tourists are often extreme sports lovers as well, and generally they are after adventures that give them big



Ghetto tourism was used with the spread of hip-hop culture over the past fifteen years.

shots of adrenaline.

There was a record high number of war tourists during the war in Afghanistan – as well as reported cases of visitors who lost their lives. For the more peaceful, less danger-seeking war tourists, there are groups that specialize in visiting inactive war zones, where things can be a little more relaxing for everybody involved.

■ Shark tourism

Well, the name says it all in this case, and in all honesty you probably can't get a creepier or more dangerous type of tourism than this. Shark tourism is actually a subgenre of another type of tourism – ecotourism. It appeals to all these people who love sharks and their bloody jaws; anything related to the Great White shark (and other less harmful sharks) is what's on offer in these touristic experiences.

Experienced divers and protective cages are must-haves for this adventurous kind of tourism. Despite the high professionalism and excellent organization of the professionals who operate shark tours, there have been a few accidents, and even some fatalities.

■ Ghetto tourism

Ghetto tourism is probably the newest on this list — the term was used for the first time back in the mid-2000s. With the spread of hip-hop culture over the past fifteen years, more and more people be-

came curious about the places where this specific genre of music and lifestyle began. In the past few years, the American ghettos of Detroit, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles have become tourist spots, mostly because of young people interested in this specific lifestyle, graffiti, music, and clothing.

At one time, the highlight of this kind of tourism used to be Real Bronx Tours, bus rides conducting tourists through some of the most notorious ghettos of New York City. But unfortunately for the visitors, Real Bronx Tours ended just this year after local authorities and neighborhood residents complained of feeling insulted by the way their neighborhoods were portrayed.

■ Dark tourism

Dark tourism revolves around anything that has to do with death, disaster, tragedy, and in a few cases, even the afterlife. The locations where multiple deaths took place are high on the agenda of the tourists who follow this kind of tourism, and the historical value of the places where deaths occurred seems to matter a lot as well. Sites where mass suicides took place – and various castles, for some reason — seem to be among the most favored spots. One of the most visited sites around the world is Romania's Poenari Castle, where Dracula lived – and killed.

■ Tolkien tourism

Despite the astonishing success of "The Lord of the Rings" books and films, when we first heard about this specific type of tourism, we didn't know what to think.

Sure, "Lord of the Rings" is a cultural and pop phenomenon with millions of fans and fanatics all over the world, but we could never imagine that it would become the reason for travelling and tourism. Tolkien tourism is about two things: on the one hand, dedicated and hardcore fan visits to the Lord of the Rings fictional "planet" and on the other hand, visits to every site of importance mentioned in the films or books.

New Zealand is the ultimate country of attraction because it was the main location of the film series by Peter Jackson. The two British hot spots for hardcore fan tourism are Oxford and Birmingham, where Tolkien tourists can contact the Tolkien Society and take in anything from artifacts to art and from libraries to pubs – anything, as long as it's related to Tolkien in any possible way.

■ Atomic tourism

This is a type of tourism that sprang up after the dawn of the Atomic Era. Curious tourists fascinated with the Atomic Era can visit places important to the history of the Atomic Age, places where significant incidents related to atomic power took place. There are museums that specialize in atomic weapons, but naturally the most visited sites are the actual places where atomic bombs were dropped or detonated.

Needless to say, that means that Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the two most visited places when it comes to atomic tourism, while you can learn every detail about the Chernobyl Nuclear accident and its effect on those who lived and worked around the area of the Chernobyl Museum in Kiev which is arguably the most visited museum of this kind of tourism. Before you decide to visit however, it will be wise to arrange for a translator or a local guide since pretty much all of the exhibits are in Russian.

(Source: toptenz.net)

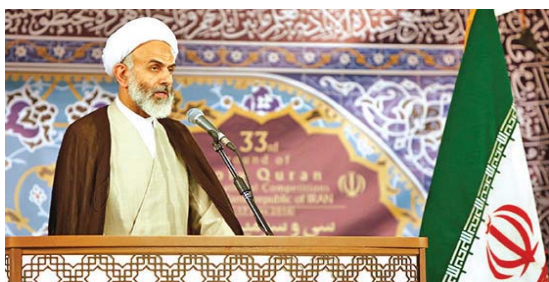
Model of Iranian Muslim woman should be emphasized in Female Quranic Activist Seminar

A model of Iranian Muslim woman should be highlighted in Female Quranic Activist Seminar.

Announcing the above in an interview with our correspondent, Head of Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization and Leader's representative Hojatoleslam Ali Mohammadi said: "Clarification and introduction of a model of Iranian Muslim woman should be put atop agenda in upcoming Female Quranic Activist Seminar based on sublime advices envisioned in the holy Quran and glorious statements of Prophet Muhammad (S)."

Addressing a great number of Quranic enthusiasts, reciters and memorizers participated in 33rd Intl Competitions of the Holy Quran, he pointed to the Holy Quran that heals diseases especially mental, psychic and moral abnormalities and advised people to resort to the Holy Book in order to get rid of daily problems."

He termed the Holy Book as the greatest divine blessing and said: "Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) has advised



people repeatedly to establish very close relationship with two divine blessings i.e. "Holy Quran" and "Ahl al-Bayt (progenies and descendants of the Holy Prophet)."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to "disunity", "discord" and "division" as one of factors behind degeneration and backwardness in society and said: "For significance of the said issue, the current year's motto of the 33rd Intl. Competitions

of the Holy Quran is named after "One Book, One Ummah."

The Leader's representative in the organization pointed to "tyranny" and "oppression" and "infringing on the rights of others" as second factor in degeneration and backwardness in society and said: "In previous decades, nations stood away from the Holy Quran and were doomed to failure."

The senior official of the organization referred to the concept of "prodigality" as the other factor behind degeneration and backwardness of communities and reiterated: "The Almighty God in the verses of the Holy Quran reiterated that the extravagant were doomed to failure."

He termed "patience" and "perseverance" as the main factor behind success which has been reiterated in the Holy Quran.

In the end, Head of Endowments and Charity Affairs Org. Hojatoleslam Ali Mohammadi said: "A model of Iranian Muslim woman will be showcased in upcoming Female Quranic Activist Seminar based on recommendations of the Holy Quran."



identified in foreign division, nine of whom will be honored as well, she ended.

Official: Female Quranic Seminar, a giant step towards realizing guidelines of supreme leader of Islamic Revolution

Organizing Quranic Seminar, special of female, is a giant step towards materialization of sublime recommendations of supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Announcing the above in an interview with our correspondent, Advisor to the Head of Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization for Women's Affairs

and Secretary of 7th Intl. Seminar to Honor Female Quranic Activists Ma'soumeh Farzaneh said: "Female Quranic activists have made an epic for our society and Islamic Revolution and are considered as a source of pride for the country."

This prestigious Quranic seminar (special of female) is held for seven years in line with

identifying, organizing and introducing female to Quranic circles, she maintained.

The secretary of 7th Intl. Seminar to honor Female Quranic Activists said: "A number of 600 female Quranic activists have been introduced in domestic division, 12 of whom will be honored."

Of total 150 female Quranic activists

21 female Quranic activists honored

A number of twenty one female Quranic activists were appreciated in the presence of Head of Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization Hojatoleslam Ali Mohammadi and Vice President for Women's Affairs Shahrzad Molaverdi.

In the same direction, a number of 13 and eight domestic and foreign female Quranic activists were honored respectively in 7th Intl. Quranic Seminar (special of women).

The names of female Quranic activists are as follows:

■ In Domestic Sector:

- Fariba Alasvand from Qom,
- Zinat al-Sadat Emami from Isfahan,
- Ensieh Khaz'ali from Tehran,
- Elaheh Hadian Rasnani from Tehran,
- Fariba Maghsoudi from Tehran,



- Batoul Es'haqian Darcheh from Isfahan,
- Iman Sahhaf from Tehran,
- Maryam Khatib from Khorasan Razavi Province,

- Khadijeh Selgi from Gilan Province,
- Fatemeh Shirazi from Tehran
- Sousan Shojaei from Ilam,
- Fatemeh Alian from Tehran,
- Fatemeh Rahmani from Tehran

■ In Foreign Sector:

- Zeytouneh Sobhan from Indonesia,
- Samireh Adami Lotoli from Bosnia,
- Susan Hassan Abdullah from Yemen,
- Ala Riyaz Mohammad from Norway,
- Iman Ali-Haji from Bahrain,
- Eslam Baladeh from Guinea,
- Diana Tohfeh from Lebanon
- Kowsar Hadi Mohammad from Iraq

Final stage of 33rd Intl. Competitions of Holy Quran holds

The final stage of 33rd International Competitions of the Holy Quran was held on Monday, May 16 in Congregational Prayers site (Mosalla) of Imam Khomeini (RA) in two divisions of memorization and recitation of the Holy Quran.

Hereunder are the names of contestants at the final stage of the competitions:

■ Memorization of Holy Quran:

- Mohammad-Ali Abdullah from Australia,
- Mojtaba Fardani from Iran,
- Abdol-Aziz Ahmad from Egypt,
- Mohammad Taher-Hassan from Niger,
- Mohammad Sharif from Bangladesh,
- Abdullah Yousef Esmail from Kenya,
- Khaled Sankari from Ivory Coast,
- Recitation of the Holy Quran:
- Hamed Valizadeh from Iran,
- Mohammad Javid Akbari from Afghanistan,
- Seyyed Abbas Ali from Germany,
- Bahreiddin Saeed from Indonesia,
- Mustafa Ali from the Netherlands

Abdol-Ghafour Joharchi wins top rank in Intl. Quranic Competitions in visually-impaired division



Abdol-Ghafour Joharchi, representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, won the top rank in the 1st Round of Visually-Impaired Intl. Quranic Competition held in Congregational Prayers site (Mosalla) of Imam Khomeini (RA).

The winners of the Quranic competitions (special of visually impaired) are as follows respectively:

- Abdol-Ghafour Joharchi from the Islamic Republic of Iran,
- Ahmet Sarikaya from Turkey,
- Saberin Mohammad Zaeibi from Tunisia

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Apt. in Shahrak-Qarb
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Diba: 09128103206

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Upper than ParkWay
400 sq.m, 4 bdrs, furn, SPJ, quite bldg., **Diplomatic**, \$4000
Diba: 09128103206

Apt. in Elahieh
2nd Fl., 300 sq.m, 4 bdrs, furn & unfurn, SPJ, **4000 USD**
Diba: 09128103206

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Top currency traders warn White House race may echo Brexit chaos

Traders wanting to know what November U.S. presidential election will mean for the dollar need look no further than the UK.

The pound plunged to a seven-year low and volatility soared, exceeding all other Group-of-10 nations, on risks created by a referendum on European Union membership. Given the tough talk on dollar strength from candidates vying for the White House, the greenback is just as vulnerable to politics, according to Deutsche Bank AG, JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Standard Bank Group Ltd.

Republicans and Democrats have each accused China of purposely weakening its currency to gain a trade advantage, reflecting voter unease linked to a 14 percent slide in manufacturing jobs during the past decade. As rhetoric becomes action, countries that have sought more competitive exchange rates will be in the firing line, spurring foreign-exchange volatility, Deutsche Bank's Alan Ruskin wrote in a May 6 note. China, Japan and Germany were placed on a currency manipulator watch list by the Treasury Department last month.

"Given that there is an anti-globalization, anti-free trade strain that's running through the American electorate, the strong dollar is going to be a potential victim," said Paresh Upadhyaya, director of currency strategy in Boston at Pioneer Investments, which oversees about \$236 billion. "The markets will start to price in a risk premium for the U.S. dollar and for U.S. financial markets."

■ Brexit precedent

Upadhyaya, who holds a degree in economics and international relations and worked at Putnam Investments LLC in the mid-1990s when the U.S. was embroiled in a battle with Japan about cheap vehicle imports, sees the dollar weakening versus the euro, yen and sterling.

JPMorgan's John Normand, head of foreign exchange, commodities and international rates research, said investors



should favor the euro and yen should any trade conflicts emerge post-election. Steven Barrow at Standard Bank warns of a "pre-vote wobble" for the dollar -- reminiscent of the pound's response to Brexit -- and a 20 percent slide for the greenback within months if Donald Trump were to win the White House.

■ Volatility rises

The sudden realization that politics left the pound exposed came in February when British politicians settled on June 23 for a long-discussed referendum on exiting the world's largest single market. Sterling volatility jumped by the most since

1998 on March 23, precisely three months before the vote.

The dollar's day of reckoning may come as early as July, when the Republican and Democratic parties hold conventions to formally select candidates. Trump is the presumptive nominee for the Republicans while Hillary Clinton leads for the Democrats. Dollar-yen volatility has climbed an average 1.6 percentage points in the three months before presidential elections over the past two decades, options prices show.

"Too strong a dollar has already come into the frame as an issue," said Ruskin, the New York-based global co-head of for-

eign-exchange research at Deutsche Bank, the world's second-largest currency trader. "Anything that is disruptive to trade or is perceived as likely to be disruptive to trade is a new source of uncertainty."

■ Grand master

Trump this month called China the "grand master" of devaluation, saying the country is killing the U.S. on trade and that dollar strength damages American competitiveness. Clinton plans to "take on foreign countries that keep their goods artificially cheap" by appointing a trade prosecutor and adding penalties, according to a campaign website.

U.S. manufacturing jobs have tumbled to about 12.3 million last month from 14.2 million in April 2006, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show, with many of those jobs moving offshore. Automakers including General Motors Co. and Ford Motor Co. have shifted production abroad, with GM importing models made in China and Ford creating 2,800 jobs at a new \$1.6 billion factory in Mexico. The U.S. trade deficit has grown to \$40 billion, from \$7.8 billion two decades ago.

"Most of the outcry is among domestic manufacturers who are finding it hard enough to compete against what they feel are unfairly priced Chinese products and then, to make matters worse, they don't see the yuan as free-floating," said David Schwartz, a partner at Thompson Hine LLP law firm who specializes in trade disputes. "Our major trading partners, if nothing else, have been put on notice."

"Currency wars have played out globally, but U.S. protectionism hasn't been an issue," said Turner, who's been analyzing markets for 25 years. "You hope you're not going back to those dark days of the early 1990s because protectionism is bad for everyone but, listening to some of the speeches from the candidates at the moment, you might have a small amount of concern."

(Source: Bloomberg)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Central bankers' wisdom faulted as gold holdings surge 25%

The great gold rush of 2016 is gathering pace. Holdings have now surged by a quarter on concern about the impact of negative interest rates in Europe and Japan and the Federal Reserve's intentions, with investors taking advantage of lower prices over the past two weeks to enlarge their stakes.

Holdings in exchange traded funds have gained 25 percent since bottoming at a seven-year low on Jan 6. To reach 1,822.3 metric tons, the most since December 2013, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. In the past two weeks as prices lost 1.6 percent, the ETFs swelled 63.2 tons, rising every day.

Gold is the best-performing major metal this year after silver amid rising concern over the effectiveness of policy making by the world's top central banks, and whether the Fed will be able to tighten further. Demand jumped to the second-highest level ever in the first quarter, according to the World Gold Council, and billionaire hedge fund manager Paul Singer has said gold's rally may just be beginning.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Goldman surprised by sudden oil-market turn as glut vanishes

The global oil market has flipped to a deficit sooner than Goldman Sachs Group Inc. had expected.

A decline in production driven by unexpected supply disruptions as well as sustained demand have led to a "sudden halt" to the market surplus, Goldman analysts including Damien Courvalin and Jeffrey Currie wrote in a report dated May 15. That prompted the bank to raise its U.S. crude price forecast to \$50 a barrel for the second half of 2016 from a \$45 estimate in March.

The unexpected outages caused by everything from wildfires in Canada and pipeline attacks in Nigeria will keep the market in deficit through the second half of this year, according to Goldman. Still, the return of some of the output and higher-than-expected U.S., North Sea, Iraq and Iran production means the bank predicts the shortfall will be at 400,000 barrels a day versus the 900,000 previously expected. A shift back to a surplus is seen in early 2017, it said.

"The physical rebalancing of the oil market has finally started," the Goldman analysts wrote. (Source: Bloomberg)



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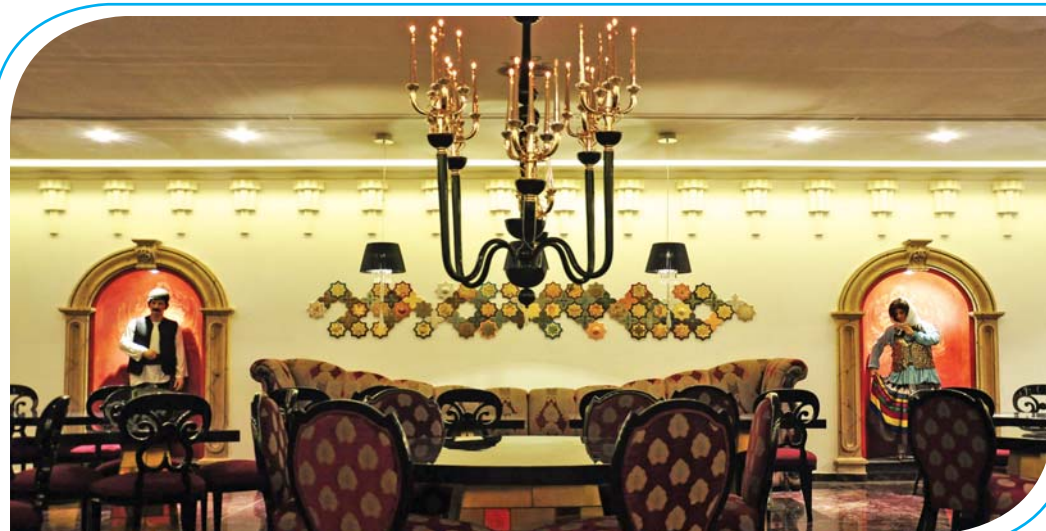


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NEWS IN BRIEF

Sleep hormone melatonin may be responsible for type 2 diabetes

A new experimental and clinical study from Lund University in Sweden shows that the sleep hormone melatonin impairs insulin secretion in people with a common gene variant. "This could explain why the risk of type 2 diabetes is greater among, for instance, overnight workers or people with sleeping disorders", says Professor Hindrik Mulder who is responsible for the study.

Melatonin is a naturally occurring hormone that helps maintain our circadian rhythm. The amount of melatonin varies throughout the course of the day, and is affected by light. When it's dark, the level of melatonin increases, peaking at night. It is often referred to as the "hormone of darkness", and used as a sleeping drug or to prevent jet lag, among other things.

A "third of all people carry this specific gene variant. Our results show that the effect of melatonin is stronger in them. We believe

that this explains their increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes", says Hindrik Mulder.

The findings, which are published in the scientific journal Cell Metabolism, are the result of many years of work. Already in 2009, the researchers behind this new study were able to present an extensive gene mapping study that showed that the gene variant of the melatonin receptor 1B, which is common in the population, increases the risk of type 2 diabetes.

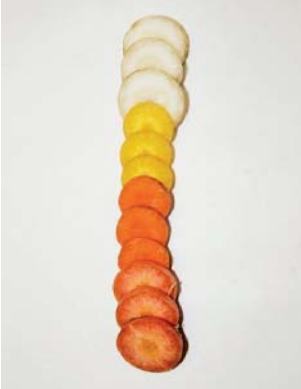
The gene variant causes the level of the melatonin receptor on the insulin cell surface to increase, which makes the cells become more sensitive to melatonin and impairs their ability to secrete insulin.

(Source: news-medical.net)

Scientists peel back the carrot's genetic secrets

Researchers said on Monday they have sequenced the genome of the carrot, an increasingly important root worldwide, identifying genes responsible for traits including the vegetable's abundance of vitamin A, an important nutrient for vision.

The genome may point to ways to improve carrots through breeding, including increasing their nutrients and making them more productive and more resistant to disease, pest and drought, the researchers said.



The vitamin A in carrots arises from their orange pigments, known as carotenoids. The study identified genes responsible for carotenoids as well as pest and disease resistance and other characteristics. In addition to eyesight, vitamin A also is important for immune function, cellular communication, healthy skin and other purposes.

The researchers sequenced the genome of a bright orange variety of the vegetable called the Nantes carrot, named for the French city. The carrot genome contained about 32,000 genes, a typical total for plants, which average around 30,000 genes, which is more than the human genome.

"Carrots are an interesting crop to work on because of their wide range of diversity. They are familiar to everyone, and generally well-regarded by consumers, but like most familiar things, people don't necessarily know the background stories," said University of Wisconsin horticulture professor and geneticist Phil Simon, who led the study published in the journal Nature Genetics.

Worldwide carrot consumption quadrupled between 1976 and 2013 and they now rank in the top 10 vegetable crops globally, the researchers said. In the past four decades, carrots have been bred to be more orange and more nutritious, with 50 percent more nutrients.

(Source: Reuters)

Researchers say 4.5b-year-old volcanic material sheds light on Earth's formation

Volcanic material found in Baffin Island in Canada, and separately near the Solomon Islands, may serve as virtual "birthmarks" for our planet, as the debris was spewed out some 4.5 billion years ago, about 50 million years removed from the birth of our solar system.

Researchers believe that the volcanic material could provide some valuable clues into the earliest days of Earth and how our planet was born, showing them the nuances of the different processes that took place when Earth was being formed.

"What we've found are surviving parts of Earth's primitive mantle that have been preserved for four and a half billion years, and I think that's kind of exciting!" said University of Maryland researcher Richard Walker. He notes that this is the first definitive sign that parts of Earth's mantle still exist up to the present, despite the fact that it had formed during its primary accretion period.

■ Accretion of material

Researchers believe Earth became as big as it is today, thanks to the accretion of material from collisions with progres-



Researchers believe that the volcanic material could provide some valuable clues into the earliest days of Earth and how our planet was born, showing them the nuances of the different processes that took place when Earth was being formed.

Scientists just solved a long-standing mystery about sense of smell

Humans are capable of sensing a wide variety of smells, from the first flowers that bloom in spring.

Scientists still don't understand every aspect about how our sense of smell works — but now, a team of researchers may have solved a long-standing mystery about our noses and brains.

Millions of olfactory receptor neurons sit at the back of your nose and relay smells to your brain.

Each smell we inhale sends tons of odor molecules to the backs of our noses, where all those neurons are waiting.

Each neuron only has one kind of receptor on it, so it can only sense certain types of odor molecules.

Somehow, all those receptors are equally distributed, allowing us to sense a wide range of smells. But why?

"Over the past decades, neuroscientists have been trying to uncover how nature accomplishes these two goals: selecting one, and only one, type of olfactory receptor



for each neuron, while at the same time ensuring that all receptor types are represented in the whole population of neurons," Jianhua Xing, senior investigator on the new study, said in a statement.

■ Handy mechanism

What they found: It turns out there's a handy mecha-

nism that makes sure all the smell receptors are evenly distributed around your nose.

It's a principle in physics called cooperativity. Cooperativity just means that individual pieces in a system act collectively instead of independently. We see it in all kinds of other biological systems, like the way proteins fold and the way a school of fish swims.

In this case, the researchers created a model that shows how olfactory neurons use cooperativity to function within a system of three layers. The findings line up with previous experimental evidence.

"We are amazed that nature has solved the seemingly daunting engineering process of olfactory receptor expression in such a simple way," Xing said.

The research will help pave the way for new experiments to test how olfactory neurons work.

(Source: Business Insider)

Curiosity rover records seasons happening on Mars

Curiosity has now been on Mars for two Martian years, allowing the rover to observe a pair of seasonal cycles. This has produced a highly detailed record of these changes on the Red Planet for the first time.

Having a second year of observation allows astronomers to differentiate between authentic seasonal changes and random weather conditions. One example was a significant release of methane detected by the spacecraft during its first year exploring Gale Crater. This event was not repeated the second year, and the cause behind the release remains a mystery.

Nevertheless, astronomers interpreting data from Curiosity have recorded a more subtle cycle of methane levels that do appear to be seasonal.

Other changes that appear to correlate with changes of the season include concentrations of water vapor, temperature, air pressure and the amount of ultraviolet light reaching the tawny surface.

■ Repeated patterns

"Curiosity's weather station has made measurements nearly every hour of every day, more than 34 million so far. The duration is important, because it's the second time through the seasons that lets us see repeated patterns," said Ashwin Vasavada of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Temperatures recorded in Gale Crater fall as low as 148 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, and climb to a comfortable 60.5 degrees Fahrenheit during the height of a balmy summer day.



Like the Earth, the rotational axis of Mars is tilted, resulting in a yearly cycle of seasons. However, Mars follows a far more elliptical orbit than the Earth, resulting in exaggerated seasons in the southern hemisphere. The thin atmosphere of that alien world does not hold in heat, so temperatures at night plummet, even during the height of summer.

"Mars is much drier than our planet, and in particular Gale Crater, near the equator, is a very dry place on Mars. The water vapor content is a thousand to 10 thousand times less than on Earth," said Germán Martínez from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

The Curiosity rover was launched from Earth in 2011, touching down on the alien surface a year later. Mars takes 687 Earth days to orbit once around the sun.

By analyzing seasonal changes on Mars today, researchers hope to better understand what the Red Planet was like billions of years in the past.

(Source: Tech Times)

Home-based pulmonary rehabilitation as effective as hospital-based

Home-based pulmonary rehabilitation may be equally effective in improving fitness and quality of life as a traditional center-based program for COPD patients, according to new research presented at the ATS 2016 International Conference.

"We know that pulmonary rehab is a highly effective treatment for COPD because it improves exercise capacity and symptoms and keeps people out of the hospital," said Anne Holland, PhD, professor of physiotherapy at Alfred Health and La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. "But less than 10 percent of all COPD patients in developed countries enter a pulmonary rehab program."

According to Dr. Holland, a number of factors contribute to that fact, including lack of programs and inadequate or no medical reimbursement. Another factor, she said, is that for people who are short of breath, traveling to a hospital or other medical facility for rehabilitation on a regular basis "may seem impossible."

■ At-home program

Dr. Holland and her colleagues created a unique 8-week at-home program and compared the results with their hospital's traditional outpatient program in a randomized controlled trial of 166 patients.

After an initial visit from a physiotherapist, those in the home program decided on their own exercise program and reviewed their fitness goals and progress on a weekly call with a health care professional. The caller was trained to motivate patients by asking questions that helped



patients focus on what improvements were important to them. Those in the traditional program attended twice weekly sessions at the hospital. Each session included group exercise and education.

At the end of the pulmonary rehabilitation and a year later, blinded assessors measured change in six minute walk distance (6MWD), the primary outcome. Patients also completed validated questionnaires to measure changes in dyspnea-related quality of life (Chronic Respiratory Questionnaire) and self-efficacy (Pulmonary Rehabilitation Adapted Index of Self-Efficacy, or PRAISE).

Results on all measures were comparable between participants in the two study arms immediately following program completion. Among home-based participants, 6MWD increased by 28 meters, compared to 29 meters for center-based participants. Neither group, however, retained primary or secondary gains 12 months later -- a finding consistent with previous studies.

(Source: EurekAlert)

New technology detects blood clots with simple in-home test

For millions of Americans at risk for blood clots, strokes and hypertension, routine lab tests to monitor blood-thinning medications can be frequent, costly and painful.

But researchers at the University of Cincinnati -- supported by the National Science Foundation -- are developing materials and technology for a simple in-home screening that could be a game changer for patients with several life-threatening conditions.

Patients with cardiovascular disease, hypertension, atrial fibrillation, congestive heart failure, kidney disease and others who are at risk for blood clotting are especially vulnerable when blood-thinning medication levels get too weak or too strong. This imbalance can quickly lead to ischemic (clotting) or hemorrhagic (bleeding) strokes if not detected in time.

"We have developed a blood screening device for patients on medications like Coumadin, warfarin or other blood thinners who need to monitor their blood-clotting levels on a regular basis," says Andrew Steckl, UC professor of electrical engineering in the College of Engineering and Applied Science.

■ Blood coagulation

"Patients can soon monitor their blood coagulation characteristics from home quickly and painlessly before making needless trips to the lab or hospital."

Using nanofiber membranes inside paper-based porous materials housed within a plastic cassette, the researchers can quickly reveal the level of the blood's ability to clot, and all from the convenience of the patient's living room with a simple finger stick to draw a

drop of blood.

While slight changes in the level of coagulation properties will occur normally depending on certain food intake and overall health conditions, Steckl says a major change in levels immediately shows up on the paper-based test stick resulting in clotting patterns registering on one end of the spectrum or the other and will put up a red flag before any physiological trouble starts.

This interdisciplinary research includes faculty and doctoral-student colleagues from the University of Cincinnati's James L. Winkle College of Pharmacy, the UC Nanoelectronics Laboratory and the UC Department of Electrical Engineering & Computing Systems in the UC College of Engineering and Applied Science.

(Source: Science Daily)

The death toll from a coordinated assault by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group on a natural-gas plant outside Baghdad has risen to 14, Iraqi officials say.

The announcement takes the total number of fatalities from Sunday's bomb attacks in or close to the capital to at least 29.

The attack on the government-run plant started at dawn with a suicide car bomber hitting the facility's main gate in the town of Taji, about 20km north of Baghdad.

Then several suicide bombers and fighters broke into the plant and clashed with security forces, leaving 27 soldiers wounded, an official said.

ISIL, on the other hand, said in an online statement that four fighters with machine guns had killed the guards at the plant which it said the Iraqi army was using as a headquarters.

When reinforcements arrived, they set off a parked car bomb before clashing with the security forces and detonating their suicide vests.

A spokesman for Baghdad Operations Command said three of the facility's gas storages were set alight before security

Iraq death toll rises after coordinated ISIL attacks



forces were able to bring the situation under control.

In a statement to the press, Hamid Younis, Deputy oil minister, said firefighters managed to control and extinguish a

fire caused by the explosions. Younis said technicians were examining the damage.

The electricity ministry said two nearby power stations had halted operations due to a cut in gas supplies from the Taji

plant.

It was not clear how long it would take to restore flow to the power stations, which provided 153 megawatts to the already overstretched national grid before the attack.

In Sunday's assault, a car bomb targeting a shopping area in the town of Latifiyah, about 30km south of Baghdad, killed seven people, including two soldiers, police and hospital officials said.

They said that 18 people were also wounded in the attack, four of whom were soldiers.

Elsewhere in Baghdad, three separate bomb attacks targeted commercial areas, killing at least eight civilians and wounding 28 others, police added. Medical officials confirmed the casualty figures.

The attacks killed a total of 29 people across the country.

Since Wednesday, more than 140 people have been killed in a spate of bombings in Baghdad and elsewhere.

Attacks in its Shia neighborhoods marked Wednesday as the year's bloodiest day for Baghdad, with death toll crossing the 90 mark.

(Source: agencies)

David Petraeus: Anti-Muslim bigotry aids terrorists



ARTICLE

By David Petraeus

Almost 15 years after the 9/11 attacks, and five years since the killing of the chief architect of those attacks, the United States and the world face a resurgent threat from terrorism. This stark reality should inform the national debate as we prepare to elect our next commander in chief.

As states across the Middle East have collapsed into civil war, extremist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) have exploited the upheaval to seize vast swaths of territory, which they have used to rally recruits, impose totalitarian rule over the people trapped in these areas and plot attacks against the rest of the world. Few responsibilities that our next president inherits will be more urgent, important or complex than thwarting these terrorist plans, reversing the conditions that have enabled their rise and combating the broader extremist ideology that animates them.

It would be a mistake to minimize the continuing risk posed by these groups. Although al-Qaeda's senior leadership ranks have been dramatically reduced, and while encouraging progress is being made against the ISIL in Iraq and, to a lesser degree, Syria, these remain resilient and adaptive organizations. While extremist networks do not pose an "existential" threat to the United States in the way that Soviet nuclear weapons once did, their bloodlust and their ambition to inflict genocidal violence make them uniquely malevolent actors on the world stage.

Nor can they be "contained." On the contrary, from Afghanistan before 9/11 to Syria and Libya today, history shows that, once these groups are allowed to establish a haven, they will inevitably use it to project instability and violence. Moreover, the fact is that free and open societies such as ours depend on a sense of basic security to function. If terrorism succeeds in puncturing that, it can threaten the very fabric of our democracy — which is, indeed, a central element of the terrorist strategy.

For that reason, I have grown increasingly concerned about inflammatory political discourse that has become far too common both at home and abroad against Muslims and Islam, including proposals from various quarters for blanket discrimination against people on the

basis of their religion.

Some justify these measures as necessary to keep us safe — dismissing any criticism as "political correctness." Others play down such divisive rhetoric as the excesses of political campaigns here and in Europe, which will fade away after the elections are over.

I fear that neither is true; in fact, the ramifications of such rhetoric could be very harmful — and lasting.

As policy, these concepts are totally counterproductive: Rather than making our country safer, they will compound the already grave terrorist danger to our citizens. As ideas, they are toxic and, indeed, non-biodegradable — a kind of poison that, once released into our body politic, is not easily expunged. Setting aside moral considerations, those who flirt with hate speech against Muslims should realize they are playing directly into the hands of al-Qaeda and the ISIL. The terrorists' explicit hope has been to try to provoke a clash of civilizations — telling Muslims that the United States is at war with them and their religion. When Western politicians propose blanket discrimination against Islam, they bolster the terrorists' propaganda.

At the same time, such statements directly undermine our ability to defeat extremists by alienating and undermining the allies whose help we most need to win this fight: namely, Muslims.

During the surge in Iraq, we were able to roll back the tide of al-Qaeda and associated insurgents because we succeeded in mobilizing Iraqis — especially Sunni Arabs — to join us in fighting against the largely Sunni extremist networks in their midst. Later, we took on the Shia militia, with the important support of the Shia-majority Iraqi security forces.

Likewise, the rapid ouster of the Taliban regime after 9/11 was made possible by our partnership with Muslim fighters of the Afghan Northern Alliance. And in South-

The rapid ouster of the Taliban regime after 9/11 was made possible by our partnership with Muslim fighters of the Afghan Northern Alliance. And in Southeast Asia, it was by working with the government of Indonesia

east Asia, it was by working with the government of Indonesia — the most populous Muslim-majority country in the world — that Jemaah Islamiah, once one of al-Qaeda's most capable affiliates, was routed.

The good news is that today, hundreds of thousands of Muslims are fighting to defeat the terrorists who wish to kill us all. This includes brave Afghan soldiers fighting the ISIL and the Taliban, as well as Persian Gulf forces in Yemen battling both Houthis (Ansarullah) and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. And it includes Arab and Kurdish forces who are battling the ISIL in Iraq and Syria. In fact, we should do more to support these partners of ours.

Inescapably, clearing territory of entrenched terrorist networks and then holding it takes boots on the ground. The question is — whether in Yemen, Libya, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Nigeria or Mali — do the bulk of those boots need to be our own or those of local Muslim partners?

I fear that those who demonize and denigrate Islam make it more likely that it will be our own men and women who ultimately have to shoulder more of this fight — at greater cost in dollars and lives.

We should also acknowledge that patriotic Muslim Americans in our intelligence agencies and armed forces — many of them immigrants or children of immigrants — have been vital assets in this fight with radical Islam.

It has also been through building ties of trust and cooperation between law enforcement and Muslim communities in the United States that we form our most effective defense against homegrown radicalization and lone-wolf attacks.

Again, none of this is to deny or diminish the reality that we are at war with extremism — a fanatical ideology based on a twisted interpretation of Islam. Nor is it to minimize the need for smart, intelligence-driven measures to prevent terrorists from infiltrating our borders and exploiting our immigration policies. But it is precisely because the danger of extremism is so great that politicians here and abroad who toy with anti-Muslim bigotry must consider the effects of their rhetoric. Demonizing a religious faith and its adherents not only runs contrary to our most cherished and fundamental values as a country; it is also corrosive to our vital national security interests and, ultimately, to the United States' success in this war.

David Petraeus is a retired U.S. Army general who commanded coalition forces in Iraq from 2007 to 2008 and Afghanistan from 2010 to 2011 and served as CIA director from 2011 to 2012. (Source: The Washington Post)

Turkey and U.S. bomb ISIL positions inside Syria

Turkish and the United States-led coalition forces have struck Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) targets north of the Syrian city of Aleppo, killing at least 27 fighters, according to state-run Anadolu Agency and other media reports.

Turkish artillery and rocket launchers fired into Syria while warplanes from the U.S.-led coalition carried out three separate air campaigns, Anadolu said on Monday citing military sources.

Five fortified defense posts and two

gun posts were also destroyed in the attack less than 10km from Turkey's Syria border.

Turkish and coalition forces have carried out a series of such strikes recently to prevent further attacks on the Turkish border town of Kilis, which lies just across the frontier from ISIL-controlled territory in Syria, and has been regularly struck by rockets in recent weeks.

The U.S. and Turkey have for months been discussing a military plan to drive ISIL from the border.

Elsewhere in Aleppo, fighting con-



tinued as government-backed armed groups said they took back two villages north of the battered Syrian city from ISIL.

Government's deadly airborne raids also destroyed a fifth-century church, the Church of Saint Simeon Stylites in the village of Daret Azza, according to Syrian activists.

The fighting was focused around a strategic area that leads in and out of the rebel-controlled eastern Aleppo.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

NEWS

Iran and the next U.S. president

➞ The strategic tools used historically by previous presidents do not appear to work well in the Middle East. However, two recent opportunities created by the Obama Administration should provide a glimpse of hope for the next president as well as more room for political maneuverability that a version of collective engagement might succeed in the region: The ability of the Obama Administration to rally Sunni nations to join the coalition against ISIS. But more importantly, the nuclear deal with Iran that offers a truly unique but limited opportunity to improve overall relations with Tehran.

The next U.S. president cannot ignore or undermine the fact that Iran's role is vital and must be properly addressed and managed, with collaborative approach that could yield a new trilateralism that might encompass the long-term strategic pivot to Asia easier, reinforce trans-Atlantic ties, and provide greater support to manage instability in the Middle East. These complexities require the next Commander in Chief to show more political flexibility and Iran will be a consequential illustration and ultimately test-case of this intent.

It should be a constant reminder to the next administration that in addition to China, Iran also presents a distinctive opportunity for the United States to capitalize on some common interests with a long-time adversary and to reduce the potential for conflict and help enhance broader regional stability. The next U.S. president should consider two important developments when assessing the future relationship with Iran. The first is the nature of the July 2015 nuclear deal; the second is Iran's broader role in the Middle East. Iran's influence in the region has grown in recent years, in part because of the disruption created by the U.S. invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, therefore any attempt to limit this role will be disadvantageous to the United States and the region.

Despite their many differences, the next American president should not disregard the fact that Iran and the United States share a strategic interest in the free flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz. They also share an interest in successful implementation of the JCPOA, at least in the short-term. Also, with the rise of ISIS, Iran and the United States are reluctantly cooperating to defeat a common enemy, even though both nations have been unwilling to formalize these cooperative arrangements. The next step in defeating ISIS may require U.S.-Iranian cooperation in Syria for a new formula. There is further room for improving U.S.-Iranian relations, which, if achieved, could affect the future of the Middle East.

The difficult task for the next U.S. president is to rebuild ties with traditional yet increasingly vulnerable allies as it creates a new relationship with Iran, a new approach should be designed for the Middle East despite the constant pressure of partisan politics in Washington. Therefore, a hybrid approach is urgently needed. The daunting task of designing a regional strategy for the Middle East is the least well defined compared to the strategy with Europe or Asia. But it is vital for the next president to realize that he or she must seek to contain the consequences of the violent chaos that currently exists in the region without drawing the United States so deeply that it is unable to focus on challenges of greater strategic relevance in Europe but most important Asia. In that respect U.S. enhancement of partnership with Iran is vitally important for that very cause.

In order to achieve a partnership that is more fluid than those in Europe and Asia the next U.S. president must attempt to construct a more cooperative relationship with Iran despite fundamental differences in the post-JCPOA era. In the course of successful implementation of JCPOA the next U.S. president should also think about launching new regional initiatives, including a broader regional security summit that must and should include Iran. This approach will help design a new balance for the Middle East.

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ISIL covers fighters' hefty bills in Turkish hospitals, leaked phone taps reveal

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist groups wounded fighters on the Syrian battlefield regularly travel to Turkey for complex and costly medical treatment, according to tapped phone calls apparently ignored by Ankara's security forces, and handed to the media by opposition MP Erem Erdem.

Transcripts of phone recordings that were obtained by international media conversations with Ilhami Bali, a 'prominent' figure within ISIL terrorist group, who has a €1.3 million bounty on his head, shed additional light on the lucrative business of medical treatments apparently offered by Turkish medical facilities to the terrorists.

According to the information previously made public by Erdem, ISIL terrorists and their families regularly get escorted back and forth through the Syrian-Turkish border with the help of local middlemen and a lack of counter-measures from authorities.

While Ankara staunchly denies offering any safe havens for wounded ISIL members, or any links with the terrorist group whatsoever, several phone taps point to the contrary, echoing numerous earlier reports of the terrorist group's cozy ties with Turkey.

Some of those who are returning from Syria are often in need of urgent medical assistance, according to intercepted conversations. If everything goes smoothly and the smugglers are not detained by Turkish authorities, the wounded terrorists get expensive, board and undergo complicated medical procedures which sometimes amount to thousands of dollars, while the bills are then taken care of by the ISIL.

(Source: RT)

The ABM system and the reemergence of the U.S.-Russia Cold War

➞ Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, claims that the creation of new anti-missile sites in Romania violates the 1987 arms reduction treaty that banned land-based cruise and medium-range missiles, and has sought legally binding guarantees that the United States' plans to deploy missile defense technologies in Eastern Asia are not directed against Russia.

How to satisfy Moscow's demands for legal guarantees remains to be seen. The question is: are the problems technical, military, or political? Perhaps more importantly, China and Russia have expressed similar concerns over U.S. military cooperation with South Korea. They both see the U.S. deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system in South Korea as posing a clear threat to Russia's and China's security.

Are Russian fears warranted? The Aegis defensive umbrella is apparently related to preparing the ground for establishing a site in Poland, which is known to be-

come a replacement to the U.S. air base in Germany. Could this development be part of a broader attempt to move the center of NATO operations from Germany to Poland? If the answer is yes, this may explain why such a prospect is worrisome when seen from the Russian standpoint. Andrey Kelin, a senior Russian Foreign Ministry official, has noted that this fear results largely from a newly emerging perception of threat among some Russians that all "this is part of the military and political containment of Russia." The revival of the Cold War rivalry in the formerly communist-ruled Eastern Europe, Kelin adds, could exacerbate an already tense situation between Russia and the West more generally and between Moscow and Washington more particularly.

Arguably, Russia is justified in seeing these missile defense systems as fundamentally belligerent tools. Just because they pose no clear and present danger to Russia, it does not follow that removing the mutual deterrent capabilities of evenly

matched nuclear forces can be perceived in any neutral sense. Removing the ability of one state to effectively respond to a ballistic missile attack cannot be viewed simply as defensive. Rather, it is by its nature an offensive and provocative act that could bear unforeseen—if not unthinkable—consequences. It appears that Russian officials are trying to drive home one key point: the U.S.-led alliance is likely to encircle Russia and undermine its strategic assets around the Black Sea and its naval fleet operations there. Whether this site may be upgraded in ways that could pose threats to Russian security remains to be seen. If Russia and the United States fail to bridge their differences over the U.S. missile defense system in Europe, the consequences are likely to be destabilizing for the region and beyond. The ineluctable question is: Are we in a nuclear arms race again? The evidence points in that direction.



"A mother loves her children unconditionally. However they wrong her, she'll carry on loving them."
Alaa Al Aswany

NEWS

Passenger pleads guilty to pulling hijab from Muslim woman's head

A man who admitted yanking a Muslim woman's hijab from her head during an airline flight pleaded guilty Friday to a charge of obstruction of a person's free exercise of religious rights, according to the plea agreement filed in the U.S. District Court in New Mexico.



Gill Parker Payne, 37, of Gastonia, North Carolina, will serve two months of home detention under the terms of the plea agreement. A sentencing date has not been set. The judge does not have to accept the agreement.

The incident occurred on a December 11 Southwest Airlines flight from Chicago to Albuquerque, New Mexico, according to a news release from the Justice Department. The woman is identified only as "K.A." in court documents.

"I grabbed the back of the hijab" The "defendant's admission of facts" in the the plea agreement says:

"I stopped next to her seat, looked down at K.A., and told her to take off her hijab, stating something to the effect of, 'Take it off! This is America!' I then grabbed the back of the hijab and pulled it all the off, leaving K.A.'s entire head exposed. As a result, K.A. felt violated and quickly pulled the hijab back up and covered her head again."

Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Vanita Gupta, head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, issued a statement Friday:

"No matter one's faith, all Americans are entitled to peacefully exercise their religious beliefs free from discrimination and violence. Using or threatening force against individuals because of their religion is an affront to the fundamental values of this nation, and the Civil Rights Division will continue to be vigilant in protecting the religious liberties guaranteed to all Americans."

The incident occurred while the plane was about to land in Albuquerque.

When reached for comment, a Southwest spokesman said: "We have procedures in place to report and escalate situations involving inappropriate behavior by our customers, including alerting local law enforcement officials. We do not tolerate discrimination or inappropriate behavior by any of our customers toward another."

The maximum sentence on the charge is one year in prison, a fine of \$100,000, probation for up to five years and restitution.

(Source: CNN)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Apricot cookies



"These cookies have a great tart and sweet taste. These are not just a Christmas cookie, but they get asked for every year! You can substitute cranberry sauce for apricot preserve, or try doing half apricot and half cranberry, yum!"

Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup white sugar
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup apricot preserves
- 1/3 cup confectioners' sugar for decoration

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
- Cream the butter and sugar in a medium size mixing bowl. Mix flour, baking powder, salt, egg and vanilla extract into the butter-sugar mixture. Cool dough in the refrigerator for 1 hour.
- On a lightly floured surface roll dough out to 1/4 inch thick. Cut the dough into rounds with a round cookie cutter or glass. Using the tip of a teaspoon place a small drop of apricot preserves into the middle of the circle. Brush edges with water and fold the dough over so that the cookie is in the shape of a half-moon; seal edges Arrange on ungreased cookie sheets.
- Bake for 8 to 12 minutes, or until golden brown. Dust the cookies with powdered sugar while still hot.

Iran to recruit women officers for sports events

TEHRAN —The Iranian police is to employ women officers for different fields such as sports events, Hassan Karami, commander of the special units of the Law Enforcement Force, said here on Monday.

"Women have played effective and decisive roles in different crises and their presence in police force is a need," he added.

It is planned that the security of sports

stadiums to be guaranteed by female forces when women's games are to be held, the police official said.

Currently, Iran is in a suitable situation from the security viewpoint and it has reached an acceptable level of security in different dimensions, Karami noted.

Today, the special units of the Law Enforcement Force have both scientific and social attitudes toward the society, said the brigadier.



Next parliament to change approach toward women: MP

TEHRAN — The next parliament will create changes in laws on women-related issues, Parvaneh Salahshouri, a newly elected member of the parliament, said here on Monday.

Regarding the change in the number and approach of female members of the next parliament, it is predicted that the view of members of the parliament toward women will face a considerable change, IRNA quoted her as saying.

Women's role-making and their active presence led to a record of number of women being elected in the parliament's history, Salahshouri added.

The next parliament is to review the possibility of stud-



ying different majors in universities by female students, adding that gender discrimination should be removed in some fields of study.

Referring to a one-hundred increase in the number of female MPs in the next parliament, Salahshouri noted that people voted to select women candidates to meet their requests in women-related issues.

Voting results published on April 30 showed the new Iranian parliament set a new record in the Islamic Republic, with the previous highest number of female MPs being 14.

The next parliament will start its work on May 28.

Meet Gaza's first and only female competitive runner

Though circumstances are tough for professional athletes in the military-occupied Gaza strip, one young runner trains with all her heart.

A 15-year old Palestinian from the Gaza strip, Inas Nofal, is the enclave's first and only female competitive runner.

"Running is my life," Nofal told Al Jazeera. "Before I go to sleep, I think about which routes I'll run the next day."

Her biggest supporter is her father Mahmoud, who often follows Nofal and her coach from his car, ready to jump in if

his young daughter faces any harassment from authorities or the community.

"Some people object to girls running and say bad things. It upsets me, but I try to hide it from Inas, because I don't want it to discourage her from her dream," Mahmoud said. He is hopeful his daughter will help change how society views girls and women.

Nofal began running last year, with the support of a local coach, Sami Nateel, who a runner himself previously, now trains Palestinian youth.

Still, living under Israeli occupation means many challenges for the young runner, where facilities for professional athletes are limited in Gaza. And just last month, her and dozens of other runners from Gaza were denied permits by Israel to visit Bethlehem to take part in the Palestine Marathon.

But Nofal remains hopeful.

"I dream of running outside Gaza, where there are open spaces to run," she said.

(Source: teleSUR English)



For Muslim women in Canada, a sense of vulnerability

The recent Environics Institute survey of Muslims in Canada reveals a community that belies facile stereotypes – no more so than when you analyze the results along gender lines.

For example, the survey (for which I served as an unpaid consultant) found that fewer Muslim women share the optimism about Canada felt by their male counterparts. And while both groups believe that their Muslim and Canadian identities are very important, when asked to choose between the two, women choose their Muslim identity at a far higher rate. As a corollary, fewer women than men believe that immigrants should set aside their cultural backgrounds and try to blend into Canadian culture. Furthermore, more female immigrants have indicated that their attachment to Islam has increased since moving to Canada.

The survey, based on telephone interviews with 600 Muslims across the country, also provides an interesting snapshot of gender-based attitudes toward community institutions. For example, only 33 percent of Muslim women attend a mosque at least once a week for prayer, compared with 62 percent of men. The lack of female attendance is not surprising, given that many mosques do little to encourage female participation. Interestingly, a core of about 20 percent of women (and men) is unhappy with opportunities for women

to play leadership roles in Muslim organizations. This could provide the basis for an unmosqued movement, or the creation of women's mosques.

When it comes to family life, a whopping 90 percent of Muslim men and women believe the responsibility for caring for the home and children should be shared equally. However, more men believe that the father must be the master in the home, placing the Muslim level of support for family patriarchy roughly equal to that of Canadians in the 1980s. However, today's younger Muslim generation rejects patriarchy at roughly the same level as that of other Canadians.

Muslim women are less optimistic about relations with non-Muslims than men are, the survey found. A greater number worry about the reaction of Canadians toward Muslims, believing that the next generation of Muslims will face more discrimination. They are also more concerned about media portrayal of Muslims, and stereotyping by colleagues and neighbors.

It seems the crux of the matter lies in discrimination, as 42 percent of Muslim women (compared with 27 percent of men) say they have experienced some form of discrimination or ill-treatment during the past five years. Such incidents occurred mainly in public places – stores, restaurants, banks, public transit. Of women

who experienced xenophobia, 60 percent said they are identifiably Muslim. This ratio is reversed among the 25 percent of Muslim women who experience difficulties at border crossings. As a result, women worry far more about discrimination, unemployment and Islamophobia than men.

The discrimination concerns are real, as illustrated by employment statistics from the 2011 National Household Survey, in which the unemployment rate of Muslims was 14 percent, compared with the national average of 7.8 percent, despite Muslims having high levels of education. The unemployment rate was highest in Quebec (17 percent), which was double the provincial average. In comparison, the national unemployment rate of visible minorities hovered around 10 percent.

Even Canadian-born Muslims, who graduated from a Canadian institution, fared worse than the national average, with an unemployment rate of 9.5 percent. One can only imagine the difficulties in finding employment for the 60,000 Muslim women who head a single-parent household.

Clearly, Muslim women feel more vulnerable about the future, given that they bear a greater brunt of discrimination than their male counterparts.

(Source: The Globe and Mail)

IN FOCUS ISNA/Mohsen Esmailzadeh



Women pick pink roses in Farkhad village in the Tabadkan rural district, Khorasan Razavi. They use pink roses, called Mohammadi flowers, to make rosewater.

French ex-ministers launch campaign against harassment of women

A number of French former ministers have launched a campaign to "systematically denounce" all kinds of sexual abuse against women in France.

"We will no longer keep quiet," said 17 former ministers, all women, in a statement published by the Journal du Dimanche weekly paper on Sunday.

We promise to "systematically denounce all sexist remarks, inappropriate gestures and inappropriate behavior," they added.

The ex-ministers said in their joint statement that when they entered the male-dominated realm of politics, they were forced "to either submit to or fight against sexism."

They said it is now time for a change in that pattern. "It's not for women to adapt to these environments. It's the behavior of certain men that needs to change."

The group of former ministers encouraged French women to stand up for their rights and make use of the "judicial arsenal" provided by the law in their efforts against male dominance.

(Source: Press TV)

I'd like to continue my career in Europe: Mehdi Taremi

T T S P O R T S Persepolis international striker Mehdi Taremi stated that he will most likely leave the Iranian most popular team in order to continue his career in Europe.

"Every player wants to play in Europe's top league and I'm no exception of that. I'm studying the offers and will choose my next team in the coming weeks. I'm now 24-year-old and it's getting late to move to Europe because I want to improve and become a complete player," Taremi said in an interview with his official website.

"I would like to thank our fans who supported us from the first week, when we were at the bottom of the league, until the final week. We could have won the league if we had scored more goals but this is football and can't predict it," Taremi added.

Persepolis defeated arch-rival Esteghlal 4-2 in Tehran derby on April 15. Taremi netted a brace in the crucial match, set up a goal and missed a penalty.

"Winning the derby was one of the best moments of the season. With respect to Esteghlal and its fans, it was an easy game which we knew that we would win it before the game," the 24-year-old striker added.

Taremi, who has scored 18 goals in 23 appearances for Persepolis, won the top scorer award of 2015-16 Iran Professional League season. It is reported that he has received offers from Russia, Turkey and Italy.



Iran football 5-a-side to participate at Brazil's tournament



T T S P O R T S Iran football 5-a-side will participate at an international tournament, which will be held in Brazil.

The blind football competition will take place in Rio de Janeiro from May 30 to June 5.

Hossein Rajabpour, Sadeq Rahimi, Mohammadreza Momenasab, Kambiz Mohkam, Behzad Zadalasghar, Amir Pourrazavi, Ahmadrza Shah-Hosseini, Rasoul Baseri, Meysam Shojaeian and Mehrdad Abbasi have been invited to the Iran football 5-a-side.

Javad Felfeli will coach the team in the event, Paralympic.ir wrote.

The tournament is part of Iran's preparation for the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

The Olympic Tennis Centre will host the football 5-a-side matches at Rio 2016. Eight teams, divided into two groups of four, will compete for gold from September 9 to 17.

The top two teams in each group will qualify for the semi-finals.

Iran has been pitted against host Brazil, Morocco and Turkey in Group A.

Group B consists of Argentina, China, Mexico and Russia.

AIBA president Ching-Kuo Wu to visit Iran

T T S P O R T S President of the International Boxing Association (AIBA) Ching-Kuo Wu landed in Tehran, Iran on Monday to meet with Iranian sports officials.

Ching-Kuo Wu, who has been invited by President of Iran Boxing Federation Ahmad Nategh Nouri, is scheduled to meet Iranian Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports

Mahmoud Goudarzi on Tuesday.

Ching-Kuo Wu, who is also Chair of Culture and Olympic Heritage Commission of the International Olympic Committee, will meet Kioomars Hashemi, President of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on Wednesday.



Coach Dragan Skocic leaves Foolad by mutual consent

T T S P O R T S Foolad Khuzestan head coach Dragan Skocic has terminated his contract by mutual consent after surviving the team from relegation and finishing in 12th place.

In November 2015 after poor results with Foolad, Skocic was linked with the vacant head coach position at Sepahan but the job went to his compatriot Igor Stimac.

"I wish the best for Foolad in the next season. I worked there for two years and I have a lot of good memories with the players and the fans. I did my best during the last two years with a great group of players at Fool-



ad who I will defiantly miss them," Skocic said.

The Croatian coach is a candidate for Esteghlal job as the Blues are going to fire Parviz Mazloumi after Hazfi Cup final.

Iran footvolley team comes 2nd at Asian championship

Iran finished in second place at the 3rd edition of the Asian Footvolley Championship in Thailand on Sunday.

Iran B lost to Thailand A 2-0 in the final match, while Thailand B defeated Australia in the bronze medal match.

Thailand has finished first in the two previous edition.

Footvolley was created by Octavio de Moraes in 1965 in Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana Beach.

Footvolley started in Rio de Janeiro; however cities like Recife, Salvador, Brasília, Goiania, Santos and Florianopolis have players who have been playing footvolley since the 1970s.

The first International Footvolley event



to occur outside of Brazil was in 2003 by the United States Footvolley Association on Miami Beach at the 2003 Fitness Festival. This event led to international player and teams in pursuit of federation statuses.

(Source: Tasnim)

Mario Gotze meets Carlo Ancelotti to discuss Bayern Munich future

Mario Gotze has confirmed he has held talks on the phone with incoming Bayern Munich coach Carlo Ancelotti, but rejected reports he has been told he should look to find another club.

Gotze, 23, ended the season on a high on Saturday as he scored his first competitive goals since October in the 3-1 win against Hannover.

However, that brace at the Allianz Arena might be his last goals for the club having endured a difficult time since joining from Borussia Dortmund three years ago.

The forward has one year left on his contract and he could move on this summer.

"I am fairly relaxed," Gotze told Bild on Saturday. "We've won the German championship. I have won my fifth German championship. The joy outweighs everything."

Last week, Sueddeutsche Zeitung reported that Ancelotti had told Gotze that his position at the club was unlikely to



change and that a move might be the best solution.

"I don't know how the editors came up with this," Gotze said. "I wasn't aware someone listened. There are only a

handful of people who know what has been discussed. That's enough, and that's all I will reveal."

The forward has been linked with a return to Dortmund, but also with a switch to Liverpool -- under his former Dortmund boss Jurgen Klopp -- and Chelsea, and in the past has said that he could delay a decision about his future until after Euro 2016.

But Gotze refused to go into more details as he told Bild: "I am under contract until 2017. We have an important match next weekend. Those are two facts."

Next weekend, Bayern play their last match of the season in the DFB Pokal final against Dortmund at the Olympiastadion in Berlin.

"I can promise that I will give it my all next weekend," Gotze said. "I know that I still have a valid contract. We'll see about the rest."

(Source: ESPN)

Italy judge acquits incoming Chelsea boss Antonio Conte in match-fixing case

An Italian judge acquitted Antonio Conte, the incoming Chelsea boss, for allegedly doing nothing to halt a 2011 match-fixing scandal while in charge of Siena.

Judge Pierpaolo Beluzzi said Conte, who will coach Italy's national squad during this year's European Championship before taking up his new post at Chelsea, was ac-

quitted because the accusations of sporting fraud were baseless.

Conte, who has already served a four-month touchline ban imposed by the Italian federation (FIGC) in connection with the case, has always denied any wrongdoing.

Italian prosecutor Roberto Di Martino had reportedly stated he would be seeking

a six-month suspended prison sentence and an 8,000 euros (£6,400) fine for Conte.

Leonardo Cammarata, Conte's lawyer, had responded to that by saying: "It's no surprise...We're prepared to refute this in fact and law. We're confident of our arguments."

(Source: Reuters)



FOOTBALL

Rashford named in provisional England squad

Manchester United's teenage forward Marcus Rashford was the surprise pick in England manager Roy Hodgson's provisional 26-man squad for the Euro Championship named on Monday.

Arsenal midfielder Jack Wilshere was also included despite missing nearly all the season with injury while winger Andros Townsend, relegated from the Premier League with Newcastle United, was recalled. There was no place for Theo Walcott.

Rashford, 18, made his United debut in February and has scored seven goals in 16 appearances in all competitions, including two on his Premier League debut.

Hodgson selected five strikers in his provisional list which will be reduced to 23 before the tournament, with Leicester City's Jamie Vardy, Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane, Manchester United captain Wayne Rooney and Liverpool's Daniel Sturridge the others.

"Marcus Rashford is one of the contenders," Hodgson, whose side are among the favourites for the tournament in France after qualifying with a 100 percent record, told a news conference.

"Competition is strong and he deserves to be selected for the main squad but I am pleased someone who has had an outstanding end to the season has a great future. He will have the chance to knock someone off their perch."

Walcott was not the only experienced player left out of a youthful-looking squad. There was no place for Manchester United midfielder Michael Carrick or Everton defenders Leighton Baines and Phil Jagielka.

"I am of course disappointed not to make the squad, but I have spoken with Roy and respect his decision," Arsenal's Walcott said on Twitter.

Liverpool's Jordan Henderson, who returned from five weeks out with a knee injury on Sunday, is one of 11 midfielders in the squad, although he must prove his fitness.

"You always have players who you want to have had a few more games, but also you want some players to have played less. I was happy to see Jordan back and these three matches can help with fitness," Hodgson said.

Vardy was joined by his fellow title winner Danny Drinkwater while Tottenham Hotspur, who led the pursuit of Leicester before a late collapse, have five players in the squad including PFA Young Player of the Year Dele Alli.

England have warm-up matches against Turkey, Australia and Portugal before they kick off their Euro 2016 campaign against Russia in Marseille on June 11.

(Source: Reuters)

Police Commissioner demands inquiry into Man United fake bomb 'fiasco'

Manchester's police commissioner demanded an inquiry into the "fiasco" of a fake bomb left behind from a training exercise at Old Trafford that forced the abandonment on Sunday of a Premier League soccer match.

The device led to the evacuation of Manchester United's stadium shortly before the scheduled 1400 GMT kickoff of their final league game of the season against Bournemouth.

"This fiasco caused massive inconvenience to supporters who had come from far and wide to watch the match," Police and Crime Commissioner for Greater Manchester Tony Lloyd said.

It also "wasted the time of huge numbers of police officers and the army's bomb squad, and unnecessarily put people in danger," he said in a statement.

Police said the realistic-looking device, which was destroyed in a controlled explosion, had been accidentally left in a toilet by a private firm that was conducting a training exercise.

Two of the Old Trafford stands were evacuated about 20 minutes before kickoff.

The whole 75,000-seater stadium was cleared and the match was called off soon afterwards, the first time in 24 years that a Premier League match had been abandoned on security grounds.

"Whilst this in no way demeans the professionalism of the police and stewards responsible for getting the fans out, or the supporters' calmness and cooperation during the evacuation, it is unacceptable that it happened in the first place," said Lloyd.

Lloyd, who oversees Manchester police but has no operational role, is also the city's interim mayor.

United Executive Vice Chairman Ed Woodward said the club would investigate the incident fully.

The game has been rearranged for Tuesday. United are almost certain to miss out on qualification for next season's Champions League after local rivals Manchester City drew at Swansea City on Sunday, putting City three points ahead in fourth place and with a vastly superior goal difference.

United are also due to play Crystal Palace in the FA Cup final on Saturday.

(Source: Reuters)



NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran to host Intl Holy Quran Exhibition in June

IT CULTURE

TEHRAN — The 24th International Holy Quran Exhibition will be held at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla from June 13 to 28.

Several Iranian and international Quranic publishers and software companies, and artists will showcase their works at the exhibit.

The exhibit is held annually during the holy month of Ramadan, which is known as the spring of the Quran in the Islamic countries.



Vocalist Aminollah Rashidi to perform in Tehran

IT CULTURE

TEHRAN — Ninety-one-year-old vocalist Aminollah Rashidi will perform a number of his most memorable hits with the Ramesheh Orchestra at the Andisheh Hall of the Art Bureau in Tehran on May 26.

The orchestra composed of 60 musicians will be conducted by Ali-Mohammad Shahi.



New translation of "Duino Elegies" comes to Iranian bookstores

IT ART

TEHRAN — A new Persian translation of renowned Bohemian-Austrian poet and novelist Rainer Maria Rilke's "Duino Elegies" by Ali Behruzi has recently been released in Tehran by Fenjan Publications.

The poems are composed of ten elegies Rilke started writing in 1912 while a guest of Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis (1855–1934) at Duino Castle, near Trieste on the Adriatic Sea.

Rilke (1875–1926) is widely recognized as one of the most lyrically intense German-language poets writing in both verse and highly lyrical prose.

NEWS

Museum shines rare spotlight on China's Cultural Revolution

JIANCHUAN, Sichuan Province (Reuters) — Tucked away in southwestern China's Sichuan province, a private collector stands virtually alone in exhibiting relics from the 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution.

Monday marks the 50th anniversary of the start of the political movement, with no official commemorations planned. Official records whitewash the details of both periods, but admit that Mao made major mistakes.

The 1958-1961 Great Leap Forward, when millions starved to death in late chairman Mao Zedong's botched industrialization campaign, and the Cultural Revolution are two of modern China's most sensitive historical events.

Fan Jianchuan, who opened his Jianchuan Museum Cluster to the public in 2005, said his relics, which refer discreetly to a "Red era", were beneficial to the nation.

"I have a saying: We don't speak. Let the cultural relics talk," Fan told Reuters TV.

"Our nation's cultural treasures need to be inherited... but it is more important to pass on the nation's experience and some lessons. That's why I have stayed with this cause for decades."

During the Cultural Revolution, children turned on parents and students on teachers after Mao declared class war, convulsing the country in chaos and violence. The upheaval affected industry as well, including the critical steel sector.

From 1967 to the end of 1968, thousands of steel mills were occupied and closed down, slashing steel output. China's cabinet, or the State Council, was forced to step in, ordering steel enterprises to cease the "struggle" and restore output.

While recent years have seen increased public discussion of both events, certain topics remain almost completely off limits, including the death of Lin Biao, once handpicked to succeed Mao but killed in a mysterious plane crash in 1971 while fleeing China having been accused of plotting a coup.

Students who toured the museum in a suburb of the provincial capital Chengdu, listened carefully as their guide explained a period in China's history that is largely missing in their textbooks.

Luo Qingsong, one of the students from Sichuan Management Professional Institute, said the Cultural Revolution could not happen again in China today.

"I think modern China is an open country and integrated into the world. I believe our party, the country and our leadership would not adopt such policies again," Luo said.

Copies of famous artworks to embellish Tehran

IT ART TEHRAN — Copies of famous works of art, including many by prominent Western and Iranian artists, will appear next week on billboards and tableaus across the capital city of Tehran.

Over 2000 billboard ads will be replaced with images by Pablo Picasso, René Magritte and Henri Matisse and reproductions of traditional Persian miniatures, carpets, calligraphy and many more for ten days, turning the face of the city into a huge art gallery.

The images selected for the project, "A Gallery as Large as a City", are copies of paintings generally kept in the world museums, director of Tehran Municipality's Beautification Organization Issa Alizadeh said in a press release published on Monday.

"There has been a slight change in the second edition of the project, making the notes on each image easier to read. We have also tried to avoid repetition of one work on several billboards in the city," he explained.

On displaying images selected from works by deceased artists, project manager Mojtaba Musavi said, "There needs to be more efforts to introduce works by deceased artists. Moreover, we have avoided showcasing works by living artists, since we need to observe the copyright law."

Musavi also said that most of Tehran's billboard spaces are run by private companies; however, they have agreed to dedicate their billboards for promoting culture across the city for a short period of time.

"Happily, people welcomed the idea last year and



A billboard displays "Garrowby Hill" by David Hockney during the project "A Gallery as Large as a City" in Tehran on May 7, 2015. (Mehri Hossein Esmaeili)

we believe this project will help the citizens raise their knowledge of art and make them more familiar with artists and their works," Musavi said.

"Our people are too busy to go to the museums and galleries," he said, adding, "So we decided to turn the entire city into a huge gallery."

“Princess of Rome” producer, director reunite for “The Elephant King”

IT ART TEHRAN — "Princess of Rome" producer Hamed Jafari and director Hadi Mohammadian are working on a new project entitled "The Elephant King" about a clumsy baby elephant.

The story of the animation is set in Africa, where an elephant rules over its group like a king. The queen bears him a son, and everybody expects the son to replace his father as heir to the throne, but the clumsy baby elephant disappoints them all.

"Like 'Princes of Rome', this animation is also made for children and young adults with an interesting story," Jafari, who is also the director of Honar Pooya Group, a private organi-

zation active in animation production, told the Persian service of ISNA on Monday.

"The animation is in the pre-production stage now and we are planning to complete the project by director Hadi Mohammadian to have it ready for the Fajr Film Festival in February," he added.

The animation will probably go on screen across the country next year, he added.

"Princess of Rome", an animation that chronicles the life of the Roman emperor's granddaughter, Malika, the mother of the 12th Imam of Shias Imam Mahdi (AS), was a box office hit last year.

PICTURE OF THE DAY  Mehr/Hossein Esmaeili



Director Hassan Fat'hi acknowledges fans upon his arrival to a ceremony held at Tehran's Milad Tower on May 15, 2016 to celebrate the end of the first season of his popular TV series "Shahzad". The series centers on a love story set in Tehran during the early years of the 1950s when Iran encountered one of its darkest historical periods. Members of the cast and crew of the series, which was distributed on Iran's home video network, were also honored at the ceremony.

British director turns attention to the U.S. with “American Honey”

CANNES, FRANCE (Reuters) — The British director of the new film "American Honey" said she had discovered a "different America" in her research for the gritty drama, and was shocked by the poverty she had witnessed.

Andrea Arnold's movie, competing for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, follows a group of teenagers traveling across the United States trying to make money selling magazine subscriptions.

As the 'mag crew' go door-to-door trying to convince anyone they come across to sign-up and give them money, "American Honey" shows the contrast between the lives of the youngsters and of the often wealthy people they meet on the doorsteps.

"I got to see an awful lot when as I was traveling and I got quite upset about some of the towns I went to, some of the poverty I saw," she told a news conference on Sunday before the screening of her film in Cannes.

"It seemed really different to me than in the U.K. because when people don't have money they can't get healthcare and they can't do things like go to the dentist and stuff like that and those kind of things really shocked me."

Amongst the mostly unknown cast is American Shia LaBeouf, the "Indiana Jones" and "Transformers" star who said he has first hand experience of growing up in a poor town.

"This is not new information to me, so it's not like I discovered that - in Bakersfield where my father lived for a stint the only thing there is a prison you know so everybody works at the prison, yeah that's not new information I am part of that under class," he said.

"American Honey" is one of the 21 films in the running for the top prize in Cannes.

Cotillard inspired by director's 'wildness' in Mal de Pierres

CANNES (Reuters) — Academy Award winning actress Marion Cotillard says the inspiration for her portrayal of the heroine, Gabrielle, in "Mal de Pierres" was the wildness and "fire" of director, Nicole Garcia.

The film - also billed as "From the Land of the Moon" - premiered at the Cannes Film Festival on Sunday and is one of 21 movies in competition for the Palme d'Or prize.

Cotillard, who won an Oscar in 2008 for playing Edith Piaf in "La Vie en Rose", says of Garcia: "I was very inspired by Nicole, she carries in her this fire, this passion, this wildness that Gabrielle carries. That was my first source of inspiration."

"She manages not to be what people would want her to be," the 40-year-old told Reuters in an interview on Sunday.

Cotillard stars as a young woman in post World War Two France, driven by her desire to find love but married off by her parents to Spanish farmer Jose, played by Alex Brendemuehl.

She sees her chance to escape the confines of her life with Jose when she meets Indochinese war veteran, Andre, played by Louis Garrel.

Adapted from Milena Agus's 2006 novel "Mal di Pietre", Cotillard and Garcia had discussed making the book into a film several years ago, but had to wait while Cotillard fulfilled other work commitments. She starred in five films last year and will feature at least in four in 2016.

"Marion was just the right person for the role," Garcia told a news conference.

"I don't know who else could have portrayed this character, it's only Marion who conveys this sensuality, my feeling is that her body is so expressive."

Garcia last presented a film - "Charlie Says" - at Cannes in 2006 and her only previous entry was "The Adversary" in 2002.