

TEHRAN TIMES

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12

12 Pages | Price 10,000 Rials | 38th year | No.12562 | Sunday | MAY 29, 2016 | Khordad 9, 1395 | Sha'aban 22, 1437

New parliament sworn in



POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran's new parliament was sworn in on Saturday amid Iranian's high hopes for a healthier economy.

The opening session was attended by senior political and military officials including President Hassan

Rouhani, Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani, Defense Minister Hossein Dehqan, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, and Expediency Council chairman Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

According to the parliament's charter, an age factor

will tell who will preside over the opening session.

Accordingly, the opening session is presided over by a four-member presiding board. The two oldest and youngest will be the speaker and deputy speaker, first secretary, and second secretary, respectively. →2

Countering terrorist backers is first step to contain terrorism: Rouhani

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that the first step in fighting terrorism, especially Daesh terrorism, is to counter the countries that provide terrorists with modern weapons and financial help.

"Some countries should be aware of the fact that supporting and using terrorists (as a tool) to achieve their political and regional objectives is not a good option and will not yield to result," Rouhani said during a meeting with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius in Tehran.

Rouhani added, "All countries' determination and cooperation are essential in fighting terrorism." →2



1st Iranian-built decentralized power plant operational

Iran now among few countries holding the modern technology

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The first domestically-built decentralized power plant with the capacity of supplying electricity for a town with a population of more than 5,000 was put into operation in Tehran on Saturday, IRNA reported. "With the capacity of generating three megawatt amperes (MVA), the plant is designed to meet the demands of deprived areas under critical conditions," Ali Sarbaz-Hosseini, the board of directors' chairman of Nama Mad Pasargad Company which has implemented the project, said in the inaugural ceremony of the power plant. →4

Iranian ensemble to perform at Venice Biennale Music

ART TEHRAN — Iranian ensemble Mehraein will give a performance during the 60th International Festival of Contemporary Music at the Venice Biennial, which will be held from October 7 to 16.

The performance will be held in two parts on October 16, the organizers have announced.

The renowned Italian ensemble Divertimento is also scheduled to join Mehraein in the first part of the concert, while the second part will be dedicated to traditional Iranian music.

Mehraein features Saman Samimi and Mehdi Khayami on kamancheh, Karen Keyhani on santur, Milad Mohammadi and Alireza Farhang on tar and Mohammadreza Raisi on percussion.

"The great interest and curiosity have been aroused by the Divertimento Ensemble's project featuring three works by three Iranian composers Alireza Farhang, Karen Keyhani and Mehdi Khayami who rely on soloists playing the traditional instruments of Persian music," Ivan Fedele, the director of the festival has mentioned.

"Their very personal language has cross-fertilized the Western and Middle-Eastern traditions to produce an evocative synthesis," He added.

Saudi Arabia trying to stop Iran's economic rise: Bloomberg

The Saudi kingdom is mobilizing its allies in the Persian Gulf region to make sure that, more than four months after the lifting of sanctions on the Islamic Republic, Iran's opening-up to the global economy doesn't go smoothly. Last month the Saudis scuttled a bid to stabilize crude prices because it would have allowed their bitter foe to grab a larger share of oil markets. And in Dubai, once their main gateway to the world, Iranian businessmen privately complain of increasing restrictions.

It's a rearguard action by the Saudis as the U.S. reassesses its role in the Middle East and investors are drawn to the allure of Iran as the world's last untapped major frontier market. Still, there are other drags on doing business with Iran that play into the Saudi effort: European banks are still reluctant to do business in the Islamic Republic for fear of possible U.S. sanctions.

"The contest over Iran's status in the region -- whether it is to be isolated or accepted as a normal regional player -- is likely to continue over the next few years," said Paul Pillar, a professor at Georgetown University. "The Saudis, in the pro-isolation camp, may not win this contest. But they have allies in the person of hardliners in the U.S. who opposed the nuclear agreement."

The Saudis and Iranians are already at loggerhead over the battlefields in Syria and Yemen. Their long-troubled relationship got worse when Saudi Arabia executed a top Saudi Shiite cleric in January, and an Iranian mob responded by attacking the kingdom's embassy in Tehran.

Since the easing of sanctions early this year, a key Saudi concern has been that Iran will use the proceeds of a potential wave of investment to step up engagement in regional conflicts. That's one reason the Saudis are doing their bit to ensure the investment never arrives.

"What has concerned people is some of the rhetoric that has been used by the Saudis around cutting trade with Iran, and what sort of formal and informal mechanisms and obstacles they can use to put pressure on businesses not to go into Iran," said Henry Smith, a director at

Global Risk Analysis in Dubai.

Trade Ties

Dubai is a city that's always had close ties to Iran, but these days business licences for Iranian nationals aren't being renewed easily. It's also difficult for citizens to get residency, and bank accounts are coming under increased scrutiny, according to Iranian businessmen.

Officials contacted by Bloomberg in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates didn't immediately comment.

Times Aerospace, a UK-based company that organizes events in Dubai, cancelled its Aviation Iran gathering this year because of political tension. "There are a lot of sensitivities at the moment with Iran in the Gulf," Mark Brown, director of the group, said in an interview. "We recognize that it's inappropriate at this moment

Saudi Arabia couldn't stop the Iran nuclear deal from being signed. Plan B is to limit Iran's ability to reap its benefits.

to hold an Iran-related event."

Saudi Arabia is also using oil as a weapon against Iran. Ahead of a meeting in Doha last month, where producers were planning to freeze production, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said in two interviews with Bloomberg that the Saudis would only go along with the plan if Iran agreed to participate. That effectively torpedoed the deal, since Iran has ruled out curbs on pumping because it's trying to recover markets lost during the sanctions years.

No hesitation

"Oil policy was one of the instruments," said Mustafa Alani, head of defense and security department at the Gulf Research Center. "The other thing is to counter Iranian investment in the region. Under King Salman it has become a clear-cut policy. There is no hesitation."

Also last month, Saudi Arabia banned Iran's Mahan Airline from flying through Saudi air-

space. Shipping insurers and brokers have been advising clients since February that ships carrying Iranian crude will not be permitted to enter Saudi or Bahraini waters, according to an April report by Control Risks. It said ships that have been to Iran as one of their last three points of entry must also receive special approval.

Saudi rulers are complementing those efforts with attempts to deepen Iran's political isolation in the Middle East.

U.S. ties

Last month, Jordan recalled its ambassador to Iran shortly after a visit by the Saudi deputy crown prince. Ten days later, it signed an accord that could pave the way for multi-billion-dollar Saudi investments. In February, the kingdom scrapped a \$3 billion deal to supply much-needed weapons to the Lebanese military, citing the rising influence of Hezbollah.

The Saudi moves take place against the backdrop of cooler ties with the U.S., in part because of the Iranian nuclear deal. In interviews published by The Atlantic magazine, President Barack Obama said the Saudis must "share" their region with Iran, and was reported describing the U.S. relationship with the kingdom as "complicated."

The Saudi push is a "patchwork campaign," Shashank Joshi, a senior research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute in London, said by phone. The Saudis can't do much to block Iran at the global level, he said, but they're "applying pressure on Iran wherever they are able to do so, to limit its political and economic influence."

But one hurdle for the Saudis is that the other (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council states, key to the effort, may not be totally on board.

Bahrain was the only other country in the six-member GCC to follow the Saudis in cutting diplomatic ties this year. Kuwait recalled its ambassador to Tehran in January and the United Arab Emirates reduced its diplomatic representation to the level of charge d'affaires.

The UAE has more at stake than the kingdom: Iran was its third largest trading partner in 2015, after India and China.

Iran to hold cyber war games in coming months

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Head of Iran's Civil Defense Organization Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali said the country plans to stage specialized war games in coming months to increase its cyber defense capabilities.

Speaking to the Tasnim News Agency, Brigadier General Jalali pointed to cyber threats against Iran, saying that many hostile countries have established cyber armies and the Islamic Republic is one of their possible targets.

"Holding specialized cyber war games is one of the priorities (of the Civil Defense Organization) this year," the official said, adding that the exercises are aimed at monitoring and eliminating any problems and weaknesses in the country's cyber defense network.

The remarks came after reports on Wednesday that the Statistics Centre of Iran had been subjected to a cyber-attack by online "hackers."

While some news reports say members of Daesh (ISIL or ISIS) terrorist group were behind the cyber-attack, others say that the attack was carried out by a group supported by the Saudi government. Brigadier General Jalali had previously warned that Saudi Arabia was planning a large-scale cyber-attack against Iran.

'Modi's Iran visit was a major turning point in ties'

NEW DELHI (IRNA) — Former Indian Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan believes that the recent visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Iran was a major turning point in ties between Iran and India.

In an exclusive interview with IRNA in New Delhi, Phunchok Stobdan, said, "The visit was historic and a major turning point in our bilateral relations. The atmosphere was extremely positive. A new era of optimism has begun."

Expressing optimism about the possibility of implementation of the agreement between Iran and India on development of the Iranian port of Chabahar, he said, "A lot of political investment has already been made." →9

IACEC marks Africa Day, stronger economic ties with African nations stressed

POLITICAL TEHRAN — African Unity (OAU) on the same day in 1963. In the session, Mohammad Ahmed Kisuule, the Ugandan ambassador to Tehran who is the head of African ambassadors in Iran, invited Iranian business owners to enter African markets.

Also, Hassan Khosrojerdi, head of IACEC, welcomed attending African ambassadors,

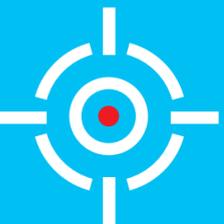
calling for establishing consortia to study investment opportunities in Africa.



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Another speaker of the gathering was Yaser Kanani, head of IACEC public relations and international affairs.

According to Kanani, a major goal of the gathering was to introduce Iranian companies and investors to African ambassadors, contributing to expansion of ties between Iran and African countries.



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Soleimani: Iran to help Iraq as needed

TEHRAN — Iran will take action as much as needed and requested by Iraqi officials to counter terrorism, Qassem Soleimani, commander of Iran's Quds Force, said on Friday.

The Islamic Republic has played a great role in Iraqi resistance against Daesh and has helped mobilize the public against the shadowy group, Mizan quoted him as having said.

"If Iran had not resisted the Takkfiri attack, the Daesh would have formed a government in Syria by now," Soleimani said elsewhere in his remarks.



Confusion still haunting Iran-Saudi talks on Hajj

TEHRAN — The head of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization has said Saudi Arabia has refused to accept Iran's conditions on arrangements for Iranians to attend Hajj pilgrimage.

In a televised interview on Friday night, Ohadi said 6 out of the 11 obstacles were removed in the latest round of talks with Saudi officials, while 5 remain unsettled.

Ohadi, who had led a six-member delegation to Saudi Arabia for talks, upon return to Tehran on Saturday said until Sunday it will be clear whether Iran will send people on Hajj or not.



Kuwait repatriates 47 prisoners to Iran

TEHRAN — Kuwait has repatriated 47 Iranian prisoners to the Islamic Republic, al-Qabas newspaper reported on Saturday.

The repatriation was authorized by Khalid al-Dayin, Kuwait's deputy interior minister, who is in charge of punitive affairs.

The prisoners were flown to Iran according to a recent agreement between Tehran and Kuwait.



Iran downplays Saudi hackers' attacks

TEHRAN — A group of Saudi hackers launched cyber-attacks on a number of Iranian government websites, but failed to incur major damage, Passive Defense Organization chief Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali announced on Saturday.

"Saudi Arabia sought to materialize its threats through such attacks but it was mostly a type of show-off," Jalali told FNA.

In related remarks, ICT Minister Mahmud Vaezi said one of the hackers was found with a European IP address.



Pakistan urges more border crossings with Iran

TEHRAN — Pakistan's commerce minister says establishment of more border crossings between Iran and Pakistan would help boost bilateral trade.

According to the Associated Press of Pakistan, Khurram Dastgir made the remarks during his visit to Taftan-Mirjaveh border on Friday.

Khurram Dastgir said border posts will help transform the brotherly relations into trade partnership.

He viewed that these posts will mobilize import of agricultural products to Iran.

The increased investment in infrastructure by the government will connect Pakistan and neighboring countries with the international trade routes, he added.



Rafsanjani: Security in Iran can be an example for the world

TEHRAN — Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, chairman of the Expediency Council, said on Saturday that if the media outlets in the world show fairness Iran's "power and security" can be introduced as good examples of a "democratic system" to the world.

While the Middle East is in a volatile situation, Iran held Majlis and Assembly of Experts elections in a calm atmosphere, the YJC quoted him as saying.

Rafsanjani also praised the people's massive participation at the elections.

Zarif urges Europe to facilitate banking transactions

POLITICAL DESK TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday that Europe should take essential steps to facilitate banking transactions with Iran.

Zarif made the remarks in a meeting with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius whose country is a member of the European Union.

"We expect that Europeans objectively and tangibly take necessary steps for facilitating banking transactions so that we can see its effects on our country's economy," Zarif remarked.

According to the nuclear deal between Tehran and great powers Iran should limit its nuclear activities and instead economic sanctions against the country be lifted, however some European banks are still hesitant to resume interactions with Iran.

On May 12, Secretary of State John Kerry told European bankers in London that they will not be penalized for conducting

or facilitating business with Iran and should not be affected by what he described as "misinterpretations or mere rumors" about U.S. sanctions on Iran.

On May 19, Kerry, European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and their counterparts from France, Germany and the UK, the governments pledged to provide more information and assistance to encourage companies to resume business ties with Tehran.

'Mutual interests'

Zarif said Iranian institutions are ready to expand economic cooperation with the Lithuanian corporations within the framework of mutual interest.

Zarif also expressed hope that political and parliamentary cooperation between Iran and Lithuania would be expanded, saying the Iranian parliament is ready to boost cooperation with the Lithuanian parliament.

Commenting on the Syrian crisis, he said that conflict in the country can be



settled only by respecting the people's will and Syrian sovereignty.

The Lithuanian foreign minister called for expansion of relations with Iran.

Zarif and Linkevicius also signed a memorandum of understanding for political interactions between the two countries.

New parliament sworn in

Leader, president call on Parliament to focus on economy



The age-based group then determines an interim presiding board in the second session to be replaced shortly after by the main one via voting.

Iranians took to the polls on February 26 and April 29, when the runoff was held, to decide who will represent them in the 290-seat body.

During the first round, 222 hopefuls were decided and the other 68 ones secured victory in the run-off.

The new parliament is distinguished from its previous versions in a number of ways. It includes a record 18 women, a first after the 1979 Revolution.

Also, a fresh crop of reformist figures could win seats after almost ten years of domination of their principlist rivals.

Moreover, all 30 seats up for grab in Tehran were swept by reformist figures topped by former vice president-cum-minister Mohammad Reza Aref.

Although none of the major political factions succeeded to win a majority, reformists grabbed 42 percent of the ballots, followed by Principlists (near 29 percent), and independents (22.41 percent) with the remaining 7 percent taken by religious minorities and candidates endorsed by both Reformists and Principlists, according to Press TV.

Whatever the parliamentary make-up, Iranians will expect a change of tack and this has been mainly influenced by the performance of the previous parliament, particularly when it comes to the economic sector.

In addition to all challenges inherited from the Ahmadinejad administration such as, inter alia, high inflation rate and unemployment, the new parliament should act in more harmony with the incumbent government so as to find a way out of the economic stagnation.

Moreover, with the government and parliament moving in unison, it would be less challenging to cope with the environmental crisis Iran is facing due to years of low precipitation and mismanagement. A more realistic confrontation with the issue will guarantee a greener Iran.

How successful the two will be in hashing out disputes over the above-cited issues hinges on, to a great extent, who will be the next parliament speaker. Two options are on the table.

One is the reformist Mohammad Reza Aref who secured the heaviest share of public backing in the metropolis of Tehran in the February parliamentary elections.

In his recent interviews, Aref laid emphasis on seeking a "participatory approach" in the parliament, saying managing the Majlis is more than presiding over the leg-



islative body.

Leader urges MPs to prioritize resistance economy

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also issued a message outlining the MPs' international and internal tasks, calling for vigilance against regional and international "turbulent conditions."

"The turbulent conditions in the region and the world and international adventurism by hegemonic powers and their followers have confronted Islamic Iran with more complicated conditions than before. The country's authority for facing such conditions requires vigilance and firm determination and initiative by all officials," Ayatollah Khamenei, according to leader.ir.

Referring to domestic duties of MPs, Ayatollah Khamenei noted, "The revolutionary and legal duty upon you dear representatives is to make Majlis a firm fortress against tactics and trickery and excessive demands of the arrogance and a shining of confidence point for the pious and revolutionary people."

Also, the Leader drew the attention of MPs to economic challenges the country is facing, attaching great importance to implementing the principles of resistance economy.

In this regard, he said, "Materializing a resistance economy along with its obligatory requirements and making serious efforts for broadening and deepening Islamic culture constitute two urgent priorities of the present time."

Among other priorities MPs should bear in mind, the Leader said, "There are other important priorities in different sectors pertaining to national might and strengthening of security and immunity of the country that guarantee the establishment of social justice and independence and progress of the country."

Countering terrorist backers is first step to contain terrorism: Rouhani



Certain countries in the region allied to the West have been overtly or covertly supporting extremist groups. For example at a House Foreign Affairs panel hearing on May 24, both Republicans and Democrats took turns accusing Saudi Arabia of being a front of extremism. Lawmakers said Saudi support for the propagation of radical Islam has fueled religious violence around the world.

According to Al Monitor, terrorism subcommittee Chairman Ted Poe, R-Texas, said, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia still spends billions of dollars every year exporting the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam through its networks of building mosques and schools throughout the

world, including in the United States."

Post-nuclear deal opportunities

Rouhani also highlighted the importance of expanding economic ties between Iran and Lithuania, suggesting that the two countries should use the post-nuclear deal opportunities to expand cooperation.

Linkevicius said that Lithuania seeks to expand relations with Iran.

Lithuania enjoys good capabilities in areas of nanotechnology and biotechnology and can share experiences in these spheres with Iran, he added.

The Lithuanian foreign minister met separately with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Saturday.



Moscow plans to expand ties with Tehran, diplomat says

Russia will use decreasing tensions around Iran to expand ties with Tehran in many spheres, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Friday.

"We think that it is important to use decreasing tensions around Iran, as well as our participation in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, to give an impetus to expanding partner ties with Tehran in all spheres," Ryabkov noted.

The diplomat added a meeting between 5+1 group

(five permanent members of UN Security Council and Germany) and Iran at the level of political directors is not planned.

"Session of the commission of Iran and P5+1 group are held when necessary, there is no concrete schedule," Ryabkov said. "We hold events at the expert level, there are now no relevant plans to hold a meeting at the level of political directors because the agreement is being implemented in the

routine mode. Experts are working rather intensively in Vienna," he added.

"Another meeting of International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors is drawing closer, and the report of the general director on this matter will be discussed there," the diplomat noted. "There are no problems, there is nothing here that requires political participation," he concluded.

(Source: TASS)

White House blocks transfer of cluster bombs to Saudi Arabia

Frustrated by a growing death toll, the White House has quietly placed a hold on the transfer of cluster bombs to the House of Saud regime as the Arab ally continues its bloody war on Yemen, United States officials tell Foreign Policy.

It's the first concrete step the U.S. has taken to demonstrate its unease with the Saudi bombing campaign that human rights activists say has killed and injured hundreds of Yemeni civilians, many of them children.

The move follows rising criticism by U.S. lawmakers of America's support for the oil-rich monarchy in the year-long conflict. Washington has sold weapons and provided training, targeting information, and aerial refueling support to the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen. It has also sold Riyadh millions of dollars' worth of cluster bombs in recent years.

Asked about the hold on the shipments, a senior U.S. official cited reports that the Saudi-led coalition used cluster bombs "in areas in which civilians are alleged to have been present or in the vicinity."

According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, Saudi-led forces have dropped CBU-105 munitions in multiple locations around Yemen, including Al-Amar, Sanhan, Amran, and the Al-Hayma port.

Cluster bombs contain bomblets that scatter widely and kill or injure indiscriminately. Sometimes bomblets fail to detonate immediately and can kill civilians months or even years later. The weapons were banned in a 2008 international treaty that arms sales giants, including the United States and Russia, refused to sign.

Responding to humanitarian concerns, the United States has scaled back exports of cluster bombs and demanded changes in the munitions' performance, such as banning those with a higher fraction of submunitions that do not explode on impact. A 2009 U.S. law prohibits exporting cluster bombs that have a failure rate of above 1 percent. It also says the weapons cannot be used "where civilians are known to be present" and only against "clearly defined military targets."

The CBU-105 Sensor Fuzed Weapon has been touted for meeting the 1 percent requirement. But a February report by Human Rights Watch cited evidence the weapon was used in two attacks in Yemen, and had a failure rate that exceeded 1 percent. "The evidence raises serious questions about compliance with U.S. cluster munition policy and export rules," said Steve Goose, arms director at Human Rights Watch.



The group has investigated at least five attacks in Yemen involving CBU-105s in four governorates since the war began. In December, the group documented an attack on the Yemeni port of Hodaida that injured a woman and two children in their homes. Two other civilians were wounded in a CBU-105 attack near Al-Amar village, according to local residents and medical staff interviewed by Human Rights Watch.

The Obama administration has issued several statements of "concern" about the violence in Yemen, but has yet to formally announce any reduction in military or tactical support for the coalition. A U.S. official touted the fact that Washington's "engagement" with Riyadh has led to the kingdom's commitment to an inquiry into civilian deaths in the conflict.

While praising the decision to hold the sale of cluster bombs to Riyadh, prominent humanitarian groups told FP it's not enough.

It remains unclear if the Obama administration's hold will affect a tranche of cluster bombs poised for shipment to Saudi Arabia, or simply all future requests.

The United States concluded a contract for the manufacture of 1,300 CBU-105 weapons to Saudi Arabia in 2013. The final shipment of such weapons can take years to complete, but U.S. officials have repeatedly refused to clarify if the order's final tranche was delivered.

The Saudi Embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment.

Since March 2015, when Saudi Arabia launched its military campaign against Yemen, at least 6,200 people have died

and nearly 3 million have been displaced from their homes. Although aid workers have stressed Yemen's dire humanitarian situation, counterterrorism experts note the protracted fighting and chaos has allowed al Qaeda's affiliate in the Arabian peninsula to strengthen its position in the country.

Though the conflict is in its second year, it is only beginning to be eyed skeptically by U.S. lawmakers.

A proposed defense spending bill approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee calls for creating a capital fund to expedite the supply of precision guided bombs for "partner and allied forces."

Although the bill does not specify which allies lawmakers have in mind, human rights groups and at least one senator are concerned that the provision could be used to make it easier to deliver more sophisticated bombs to Saudi Arabia.

Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) proposed an amendment on Thursday to strip the language out of the defense bill on grounds the provision could enable Saudi Arabia to expand its air campaign despite the mounting civilian toll, his office said.

The senator was also concerned that the provision in the defense bill could make it easier for an administration to involve the United States "in other foreign entanglements with limited oversight," Murphy spokesman Chris Harris told FP.

Murphy on Thursday also proposed another amendment, along with Re-

publican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, to impose stricter conditions on future sales of bombs to Saudi Arabia. The proposal would require the U.S. president to certify that the Saudi government is demonstrating an effort to target terrorist groups, minimize harm to civilians, and enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance before Congress can consider selling or transferring air-to-ground munitions.

"Saudi Arabia is an important partner, but the United States needs to recognize when a friend's actions are not in our national interest," Murphy said in a statement.

"There's no evidence that the Saudi campaign in Yemen, enabled by the United States, advances our interests or makes us any safer," Murphy said. "In fact, the civil war in Yemen is prolonging human suffering and playing into the hands of the same terrorist groups that are working to attack Americans."

The United Nations is trying to broker a peace deal between the fugitive Yemeni government and Ansarullah (Houthi) movement.

On Thursday, after a series of delays and theatrics, United Nations special envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said peace talks were back on track in the host city of Kuwait after being suspended last week.

Ahmed said both sides indicated willingness to hold talks to reach a resolution, though similar promises have been made in the past.

(Source: Foreign Policy)

NEWS

Infighting leaves 30 ISIL terrorists dead in northern Syria

At least 30 members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group have reportedly died and dozens more suffered injuries in the latest wave of infighting between anti-Damascus and foreign-sponsored militant groups operating inside conflict-ridden Syria.

The deadly clashes broke out between ISIL terrorists on one side and fighters from rival militant outfits in the town of Marea, located about 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) north of Aleppo, on Saturday, Arabic-language Suriya al-Mubasher news website reported.

Military sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, reported that three vehicles rigged with explosives were destroyed in the process.

Takfiri militants also seized a considerable amount of munitions and heavy machineguns belonging to ISIL following the skirmishes, and arrested two ISIL terrorists.

Separately, there are reports that Syrian fighter jets have carried out a series of aerial attacks against militant positions in Jaroud Qarah and al-Jarajir districts of the strategic, mountainous region of Qalamoun, located about 330 kilometers (205 miles) north of the Syrian capital, Damascus.

Elsewhere in the eastern city of Deir Ezzor, Syrian army units and allied popular defense groups dealt a heavy blow to ISIL.

On Friday, Syrian army forces thwarted an al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) offensive on military posts near the northern village of Ma'an, which is administratively part of Hama Province.

A military source, requesting not to be named, told Syria's official news agency SANA that more than 50 ISIL terrorists were killed during the clashes, and nine vehicles destroyed. Two of the vehicles were reportedly armored and equipped with heavy machineguns.

An army unit, in cooperation with popular defense groups, also seized a car loaded with ammunition and weapons and belonging to ISIL on the road linking the city of Athriya to militant-held Raqqah, located on the north bank of the Euphrates River and about 160 kilometers (99 miles) east of Aleppo.

■ Syria: '100,000 trapped' near Turkey as ISIL advances
Meantime, more than 100,000 Syrians were trapped near the Turkish border as ISIL terrorists advanced on two strategically-vital towns.

Doctors Without Borders (MSF/Médecins Sans Frontières) evacuated most of its staff and patients from al-Salamah hospital - the organization's largest facility in the country - near the town of Azaz in Aleppo province on Friday as ISIL neared.

"We are terribly concerned about the fate of our hospital and our patients, and about the estimated 100,000 people trapped between the Turkish border and active frontlines," Pablo Marco, MSF operations manager for the Middle East, said in a statement.

Turkey has closed its border to all but seriously wounded Syrians.

Marea and Azaz fell to opposition forces in 2012 and have been vital stops along a rebel supply route from Turkey.

ISIL has tried to advance on the towns for months. In a statement on Friday, it said it had launched a "surprise attack" and seized a series of villages near Azaz.

Staffan de Mistura, United Nations special envoy for Syria, has estimated that more than 400,000 have been killed in the five-year war. The UN stopped keeping an official count in 2014.

More than 4.8 million Syrians have become refugees in neighboring countries - Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq - as well as Europe, according to the UNHCR.

At least 7.6 million Syrians have been forced from their homes within the country's borders.

(Source: agencies)

Iraqi civilians flee Fallujah amid security operation against ISIL

Hundreds of people have fled the Iraqi city of Fallujah as government forces continue with a major operation to liberate the city, one of the remaining strongholds of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group in Iraq.

A group of civilians numbering in the hundreds made it out of the city — where people are being prevented by ISIL from exiting — on Friday with assistance from Iraqi forces.

An estimated 50,000 civilians still remain trapped in the ISIL-held city by nearly 1,000 terrorists.

There has been no reference to the toll among Iraqi forces in the operation.

Fallujah is 70 miles west of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. ISIL overran Fallujah in January 2014, some six months before the terrorist group launched a major offensive in Iraq and took over some other areas.

According to Lieutenant General Raed Shaker Jawdat, the commander of the Iraqi Federal Police Forces, security forces have so far managed to evacuate 760 people, mostly women and children, from the northern outskirts of Fallujah.

ISIL "gave us food that only animals would eat," said a woman identified as Umm Omar, who fled Fallujah along

with over 10 members of her family.

Tens of thousands of Iraqi forces launched a massive operation on May 22 to recapture Fallujah, the first Iraqi city to fall to ISIL.

Meanwhile, Iraqi forces destroyed the terrorist group's telecommunications center and two bomb-laden cars in al-Jisr area in northern Fallujah, killing at least four ISIL terrorists in the process.

Separately, Oday al-Khidran, a commander of the Popular Mobilization units fighting alongside Iraqi security forces, said on Friday that they discovered the largest ISIL-dug tunnel network connecting different neighborhoods of Fallujah.

He said the terrorist group used the tunnels to minimize its losses and protect its front lines.

Iraqi military officials on Friday announced the death of three senior ISIL commanders in the northern city of Mosul — another larger city held by ISIL — during an air raid by Iraqi jet fighters.

Local news outlets cited a statement issued by the Iraqi Joint Operations Command as adding that the airstrikes also killed at least 11 terrorists who accompanied the commanders and demolished two of their vehicles.

■ Fallujah: Iraqi forces 'closing in' on ISIL-held city

Elsewhere, Iraqi forces have surrounded Fallujah and completed the first phase of their assault to retake the city from ISIL terrorists, officials have told Al Jazeera.

A defense ministry spokesman said on Saturday that Iraqi forces were closing in on Fallujah, which has been under ISIL control since January 2014.

"Phase one is over and we have achieved our objectives," Brigadier Rasool Yahya told Al Jazeera. "Our forces have isolated and surrounded the city of Fallujah."

Security forces have safely evacuated many residents away from the outskirts of the city - but some 50,000 people are still trapped inside.

Iraqi military officials insisted that safe corridors would be established to allow civilians to flee, but residents said ISIL checkpoints along the city's main roads have made escape nearly impossible.

Fallujah is one of only two major Iraqi cities - the other being Mosul - still controlled by ISIL.

Coalition officials estimated earlier this week that 500-700 ISIL terrorists remain in the city, according to a U.S. military estimate, hiding amongst the civilian population.

(Source: agencies)

Turkey to add Gulen movement to list of terror groups: president

The movement of the United States-based scholar Fethullah Gulen will be officially registered as a terrorist organization, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said, stating that the decision was taken in the National Security Council (MGK/Milli Güvenlik Kurulu) meeting on May 26.

"We took a new decision. We said that it [the Gulen movement] is an illegal terrorist organization," said Erdogan at an event in the Central Anatolian province of Kirsehir on May 27.

"We took a recommendation decision regarding the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization. We have sent it to the

government and we're now waiting for the cabinet decision. We will register it as a terrorist organization. It will be tried in the same category as the PYD [Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat]/Democratic Union Party] and the PKK [Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê/Kurdistan Workers' Party]," he said, referring to other groups that Turkey formally lists as "terrorist."

Erdogan also claimed that the movement had tried to "tear the nation and the ummah apart," but the Turkish government would "never allow it to do so."

"Some of them have escaped



and some of them are in jail," he said.

Gulen has long been accused by leading Justice and Development Party (AKP/Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) lawmakers, President Erdogan and his inner circle of forming and heading a terrorist organization to topple the Turkish government through insiders in the police and other state institutions.

A Turkish court in December 2014 issued an arrest warrant for Gulen, who has lived in self-imposed exile in the United States since 1999.

(Source: Hurriyet)

Saudi attacks on Yemen continue despite truce

The House of Saud regime has launched fresh airstrikes on Yemen despite an ongoing round of United Nations-backed peace talks aimed at ending the conflict in the country.

Saudi jets on Saturday carried out bombardments on Masloob district in northern Jawf Province, with no immediate reports available on the potential casualties.

Attacks had also been launched in Amran Province late on Friday, with reports suggesting that residential neighborhoods across the northern province were targeted by at least 50 rounds of Saudi air strikes.

Riyadh's attacks on Yemen come despite UN-mediated talks in Kuwait between representatives of the Saudi-backed former regime and a delegation comprising of the ruling Ansarullah (Houthi) movement and allies.

The Ansarullah delegation on Saturday submitted a protest to the UN officials over the attack in Amran, saying such blatant cases of truce violation could lead to a full collapse of the peace talks.

Sources in the capital Sana'a said the Ansarullah were pondering a withdrawal from the talks if the other side keeps breaching the terms of the truce.

On Thursday, the UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said that hope was emanating from the talks as the warring parties started discussing details of a comprehensive agreement.

The development came a few days after representatives of Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi accepted to end their one-week boycott of the talks and began face-to-face negotiations with Ansarullah.

The Saudi-backed delegation has urged the Ansarullah movement to begin to implement a UN Security Council resolution, withdrawing from the capital Sana'a and other places they control and surrendering their arms.

However, the Ansarullah have refused to give in, setting their own preconditions, including a full halt to aerial and ground attacks by the House of Saud regime in support of Hadi that have left close to 10,000 killed in Yemen over the past 14 months.

(Source: Press TV)

NEWS

2-month non-oil trade hits \$12.4b in Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's non-oil foreign trade in the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year of 1395 (March 20- May 20, 2016) reached \$12.4 billion according to the latest report of Iran Customs Administration, IRIB news reported on Saturday.

Imports, including field corn, soybean, rice, and some specific auto parts stood at \$5.49 billion, down 13.54 percent compared with last year's similar period. Imported goods mainly originated from China, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Russia, South Korea, Turkey, Germany, and India.

Exports, which chiefly comprised gas condensate, petroleum gases and liquefied hydrocarbon gases, liquefied propane, and bitumen, reached \$6.85 billion, indicating a 14.68 percent drop compared with the corresponding period of last year. China, Iraq, the UAE, South Korea, and India were the main export destinations.

According to Iran's Customs Administration, in the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 19, 2016, the value of the country's non-oil trade reached over \$83 billion.

In the past year, the Tasnim news agency reported, Iran exported \$42.415 billion worth of goods while its imports reached \$41.499 billion, showing a 16.11 percent decrease in the value of exports and a 22.53 percent decline in the value of imports when compared to its previous year.

Japan plans new \$90b budget to boost economy

The Japanese government is planning to present a second supplementary budget of between \$45.3 billion and \$90.7 billion for this fiscal year, an official said on Saturday.

The government is expected to present the budget in a special legislative session after Upper House elections in the summer, according to local news agency Kyodo.

The new supplementary budget will be used to fund more public work projects and will be the second such budget for the present fiscal year after the approval of a \$7 billion budget to finance reconstruction of areas in southwestern Japan affected by the mid-April earthquakes, EFE news reported.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had raised the idea of another supplementary budget following discussions with G7 leaders during a two-day summit at Ise-Shima National Park which ended Friday. (Source: Business Standard)

Is Norway the new France? Planned offshore oil strikes could hit Shell hard

By James Burgess

As oil investment in Norway is projected to drop again in 2017 for the third year in a row as low oil prices hammer the industry, the specter of a massive offshore workers' strike looms large.

Talks with Wood Group over pay and working conditions have broken down, after failure to reach an agreement when the energy services company proposed pay cuts of 22-30 percent.

The Unite union is now balloting hundreds of workers for a strike vote for a strike that would affect eight North Sea oil and gas platforms run by Royal Dutch Shell.

Media quoted Unite officer John Boland as saying: "Nobody here wants to take industrial action but Wood Group is being unreasonable - pay cuts of up to 30 percent are totally unjustified and we won't stand for it."

This comes as oil companies in Norway are expected to spend only \$18.5 billion next year, down 7.6 percent expected this year, according to Statistics Norway, which noted that the "fall is dominated by decreases within exploration, field development and fields on stream".

While it does show a slowdown in the rate of growth, keeping in mind that investment for 2016 had dropped 14.8 percent, the situation has also led to a marked increase in labor disputes in the country.

Labor disputes have tripled since oil prices began to slump in mid-2014, according to Energy Voice, citing Norwegian media reports.

In the meantime, Russian Gazprom is said to be considering acquiring a stake in OMV Norway in connection to a swap agreement signed by Gazprom's Norwegian subsidiary and OMV in April. If talks lead to a deal, OMV would acquire one development share in two Siberian blocks in the Urengoykoye gas field, while OMV would transfer some Norwegian assets to Gazprom. (Source: oilprice.com)

JUMP

1st Iranian-built decentralized power plant operational

1 ->

"The Islamic Republic now stands among the few countries, namely the U.S., Russia, and Germany, with the modern technology to build such a plant," he added.

According to Sarbaz-Hosseini, the power plant fully meets the international standards and can compete with its American and European rivals.

Domestic building of the decentralized power plant has reduced the end price of the product down to one fifth of its similar foreign sample.

As IRNA reported, Houshang Falahatian, the deputy energy minister, previously announced that attracting domestic investors to build decentralized power plants across Iranian provinces has been one of the main goals of the energy ministry.

Iran soon to regain its oil market share: Rouhani

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran will retake its pre-sanction oil market share in the near future, Shana quoted President Hassan Rouhani as saying on Saturday.

The president made the remarks in the inauguration ceremony held Saturday morning for the start of new Iranian parliament.

In the event, Rouhani noted that during the past four years Iran lost \$180 million of its oil revenues per day because of the sanctions.

"If we had those financial resources, which we lost due to the sanctions, we could have had a better employment condition and higher economic growth today", he added.

Western sanctions cut Iran's oil output to 2.7 million barrels per day (bpd) from 3.9 million bpd. The sanctions barred foreign investments in the Iranian oil industry and also limited a low ceiling of 1 million bpd on the country's oil exports.

On May 4, National Iranian Oil Com-



pany Managing Director Rokneddin Javadi said that Iran's oil output now stands at 3.7 million bpd, stressing that the country has already been able to return its oil production to pre-sanctions levels.

'5% economic growth planned for this year'

Touching upon the economic stability over the past three years, the presi-

dent said, "We managed to pass through harsh economic conditions with double-digit inflation and negative growth rates and we hope to reach a single-digit inflation rate this year."

Rouhani also noted that the country's economic growth was three percent in the Iranian calendar year of 1393 (March 2014- March 2015) and one percent in its next year, adding, "Iran will reach a five percent growth this year and we will do everything in our power to make sure this goal is achieved."

Iran's economic growth is forecasted to grow by 4 percent in 2016 and by 3.7 percent in 2017, according to the April 2016 report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The World Bank has also forecasted Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) to grow by 5.8 percent in 2016 and by 6.7 percent in 2017.

The IMF has also predicted Iran's average economic growth by 2021 at 4 percent.

11th International Energy Conference of Iran to start Monday

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The 11th International Energy Conference (IEC) of Iran as the greatest event of the country in the field of energy will kick off on Monday, IRIB news agency reported on Friday.

"Discussing the ways of meeting future energy needs and also providing safe energy for current and future generations are the most important goals of this international conference." IRIB quoted Davoud

Manzour, the secretary of the conference, as saying.

Manzour noted that in this two-day conference, high-ranking officials including Ali-Akbar Salehi, the vice-president and director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Sattari, the vice president for science and technology affairs, Hamid Chitichian, the energy minister, Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, minister of Oil, and Mohammadreza Ne'matzadeh, the minister of in-

dustry, mining and trade, will lecture.

"Energy dynamics in changing world" is set as the main theme for this year's conference, Manzour said.

The secretary also noted that more than 1,500 researchers, specialists and managers from the country's energy sector as well as universities and scientific and research institutes will attend the conference which is set to be held on 30-31 May.

"60 international experts from 22 coun-

tries, including Britain, the U.S., Germany, Turkey, Austria, Canada, Japan, Italy, Belgium, Greece, Australia, China, Finland, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Jordan, Pakistan, Spain, India, the United Arab Emirates, Finland and Lebanon will also attend the conference." He added.

Concurrently, an exhibition will also be held to provide an opportunity for companies and institutions to showcase their latest achievements in the field of energy.

Russia and Southeast Asia might become economic partners

The geopolitical situation in Southeast Asia is favorable for Russia and allows Moscow to expand its cooperation with ASEAN countries.

Current economic challenges in Russia and the unfavorable international situation with its traditional Western partners are forcing Moscow to pay more attention to

the East. Apart from Russia's extensive economic and political cooperation with China, the Kremlin is looking to expand its cooperation with the countries of Southeast Asia, which are very attractive both economically and technologically.

In this context, on May 19-20, Russia hosted the ASEAN-Russia Summit in

Sochi and commemorated 20 years since dialogue was first established with ASEAN countries.

The Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that was created almost 50 years ago is rather special among regional interstate associations. The ten ASEAN member countries span over 4,480,000

square kilometers (1,729,737 square miles) and have a population of over 600 million. Their combined gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015 amounted to \$2.6 trillion, or 7 percent of gross world product (GWP), which legitimately makes the organization a key global player.

(Source: russia-direct.org)

PICTURE OF THE DAY IRNA



Steel sheet rolls in Mobarakeh Steel Company, the biggest steel producer in Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) and one of the largest industrial complexes operating in Iran. The company, located 75 km southwest of the country's central city of Isfahan, has the annual production capacity of 33.5 million tons of different steel products.

China to open e-commerce, other sectors to foreign investment

China will lift restrictions to investments by foreign firms in a range of service industry sectors, including e-commerce, logistics, accounting and auditing, the China Securities News quoted commerce minister Gao Hucheng as saying.

Gao said China would also promote the orderly opening of other service fields including finance, education, culture and health care, the report published on Saturday said without elaborating or giving a time-frame.

China's trade in services would exceed \$1 trillion by 2020, the minister predicted.

The Ministry of Commerce has previously said the value of China's services trade was expected to exceed \$750 billion this year.

The Chinese government has been attempting to guide the economy away from a reliance on investment and exports to one largely orientated towards services and underpinned by domestic demand.

Gao's comments come on the eve of bilateral meetings in early June between China and the United States at which U.S. officials are poised to press their Chinese counterparts to take steps to improve the business and investment climate and open Chinese growth sectors to U.S. investment. (Source: Reuters)

NEWS IN BRIEF



How four words rewrote Bayer-Monsanto deal script

Monsanto Co President Brett Begemann uttered those words last week to a small group of investors and a Reuters reporter when asked how the world's largest seed company he helps lead might fit with German drugs and crop chemicals group Bayer AG.

Those four words, said on the sidelines of a New York conference, set off a series of events leading to the disclosure of Bayer's confidential, \$62 billion bid for Monsanto, the largest all-cash corporate takeover offer on record.

Bayer had sent a confidential acquisition proposal to Monsanto on May 10. Media reports surfaced two days later that Bayer was considering a bid.



Telefonica said to lean toward keeping O2 after failed sale

Telefonica SA is leaning toward holding on to its British O2 unit rather than seek another buyer after a plan to sell the U.K. wireless carrier was blocked by European Union regulators, according to a person with direct knowledge of the matter.

While Telefonica's priority is to reduce leverage, the company is better off with O2 in its portfolio than without it, said the person, who asked not to be identified discussing internal company deliberations. The company will continue to seek ways to raise cash and reduce its debt pile, the second-highest among European phone operators, said the person. The person didn't say whether the company will pursue a partial sale of O2's stock through an initial public offering.



General Motors bounces back while Ford's sales slip in China

General Motors reported an impressive 7.5% sales gain in China by selling 277,979 vehicles in April due to solid sales growth of SUVs and premium cars. The Detroit carmaker has been able to bounce back strongly after a sales decline in March.

In contrast, the American automaker's crosstown rival Ford Motor witnessed a sales slump of 11% year over year. Ford's auto sales decline in China for the month of April was a major setback. It has been reported as the company's steepest decline since it began reporting monthly retail numbers instead of wholesale volumes in May 2015. However, both companies saw great demand for high-end crossovers and SUVs. SUVs have been a bright spot for both U.S. automakers.

Smart ways to stay healthy on a road trip

Is there anything that screams "freedom" and "summer" more than a few friends, a dusty car, and the open road?

Bring smart snacks

Fill a cooler with ice or cool packs and load it with plenty of nutritious, easy-to-eat snacks like low-sugar yogurt cups (choose plain or Greek to avoid megadoses of sugar), string cheese, fresh fruit, homemade granola bars, cut-up veggies and hummus, healthy trail mix (keep track of portions to stay out of dangerfood territory), unsalted nuts, dried seaweed snacks, or preservative-free meat jerky.

Choose water

Bring a few reusable (BPA-free) water bottles and fill 'em up at every rest

stop. If overnight lodgings include a freezer, chill bottles while you sleep for ice-cold H2O all day long. Avoid soda and creamy, sweet coffee drinks, which pack unnecessary sugar and fat and (if caffeinated) actually contribute to dehydration.

Stretch your legs (and shoulders and neck)

Stop frequently (at least a few times a day) to get out of the car, move around, and do a few stretches. The hip flexors, lower back, shoulders, and neck are most likely to tense up after a few hours at the wheel. If the road runs along a national park or other hiking terrain, consider making a pit stop every once

in a while for a short walk in the woods.

Don't forget the SPF.

No trucker burn here! Windshields and windows might keep the bugs out of the car, but they don't fully protect our skin from the sun. Slather on some broad spectrum SPF 30 or higher at regular intervals to keep skin safe.

Keep eyes on the prize

A good set of sunglasses is essential to protecting eyes from the sun. Exposure to too much sunshine can damage vision and even cause certain kinds of eye cancers. Light-colored eyes are often more sensitive to light, so blue, green, or grey-eyed guys and gals should take especial care to protect peepers from the sun. Bring along a pair of high-quality sunnies that protect against UVA, UVB, and HEV light. A polarized pair can help cut down on glare, making driving safer and more enjoyable.

Practice perfect posture

Especially if driving for more than one day, comfort in the driver's (or passenger's) seat is essential. Adjust the seat and bring pillows and seat supports to make the car seat as comfy (and ergonomically correct) as possible. Sit up tall and take frequent breaks to roll the shoulders, stretch the neck, and realign posture.

Stay engaged at the wheel

Don't just sit there like a bump on a log! It's not exactly an hour-long cardio-fest, but even when sitting in traffic you can suck in the abs and squeeze the glutes to keep muscles working.

Choose meals wisely.

There are only so many carrot sticks a person can eat before hankering for a real, hot meal. From fast food drive-ins to gas station markets, road food is notoriously unhealthy. For a lighter meal, look for grilled items, plenty of greens, and don't be shy about asking for a sauce on the side.

(Source: greatist.com)

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Managing Director of Sarakhs Special Economic Zone: SEEZ equipped with wide rail connecting to Central Asia



Sarakhs Special Economic Zone (SEEZ) is equipped with wide rail connecting to the Central Asia.

Announcing the above in an interview with our correspondent, Managing Director of Sarakhs Special Economic Zone Ahmad Sadeghi-Golmakani said: "The Zone is equipped with a wide rail network which can be connected to the Central Asian states."

Speaking in an international conference entitled "Golden Opportunities of

Transit and Transportation Sector in Sarakhs Special Economic Zone", he said: "Islamic Republic of Iran has significant status in the region due to having excellent geographical situation."

As a bridge linking Asia and Europe, Islamic Republic of Iran is considered as the best and most economical access way to Central Asian states, free waters and Persian Gulf littoral states, he maintained.

Every year, frequent cargo consignments are shipped from European and Southeast Asian states to Central Asia and vice versa, he said, adding: "Rail line is the best possible means for transporting cargos, based on which, many problems are created in this respect due to the vivid difference of rail lines of Central Asian countries and Russia with Iranian rail lines."

To remove the existing problem, Sarakhs Special Economic Zone has added a wide and normal rail line to the independent side rail line of the zone, he observed.

With the design of loading and unloading facilities and setting up vast docks in the vicinity of rail lines and also installing large tanks to store various kinds of fuels, a golden chance has been created in rail transport sector at the entrance gate of Central Asia, the senior official of the Zone added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said: "Excellent situation of the Zone is considerable in four geopolitical, economic, security and cultural dimensions."

He acknowledged that the aforementioned salient specifications have turned the Zone into one of the most important hubs in world's transport industry, so that the Zone has paved suitable way for importing and exporting goods from across the globe via rail lines of this Zone.

Given the above issue, import and export from across the world is done via this Zone, he said, adding: "Attraction of investor in industrial and production areas for promoting production and exporting to other countries is considered as main activities of the Zone."

Setting up large industries such as steel, petrochemical, tile

and ceramic manufacturing units in Sarakhs Special Economic Zone will pave suitable ground to focus on infrastructures of transport industry in this Zone, he opined.

There are high potentials in rail transport sector of the Zone, he said, adding: "Construction of rail line inside the Zone as long as 51 km will pave suitable way for acceleration of transportation trend and reduction of its relevant costs."

Existence of industrial and production units with high capacity, most modern and equipped warehouses to store various types of goods and also double-circuit cooling house, regarded as the most equipped cooling house in east part of country, etc. will complete transport cycle in the Zone, he emphasized.

Benefitted from wide and normal rail line as long as 51 km, Sarakhs Special Economic Zone is considered as a transport hub for loading and unloading cargos in northeastern country and Central Asia, the managing director noted.

Considering the huge volume of transiting corns from Central Asian states, loading and unloading equipment, which will be set up in the Zone in the very near future, can help develop and flourish transport situation in the Zone, he maintained.

Hefty fund has been invested by Astan-e Qods Razavi in Sarakhs Special Economic Zone, he said, adding: "Materializing economic objective in the country has been followed up strictly by Astan-e Qods Razavi."

He pointed to the naming the current year after "Resistance Economy, Action and Implementation" as recommended by Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution and said: "Special economic zones should be paid due attention for materialization of objectives of resistance economy."

In the end, Managing Director of Sarakhs Special Economic Zone Ahmad Sadeghi-Golmakani said: "Once problems facing investment are settled, more job opportunities will be generated in the Zone and neighboring areas as well."



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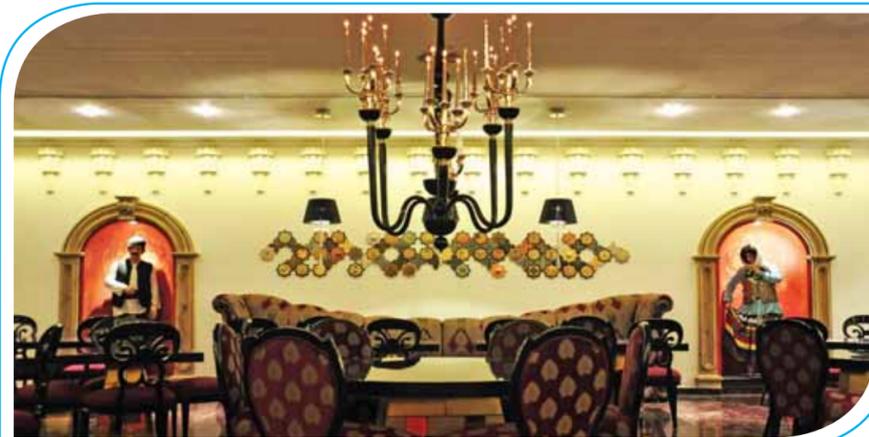
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Turning words into a nuclear-free reality

"We come to ponder a terrible force," President Obama said of his purpose in going to the Hiroshima memorial on Friday, the only sitting American president to do so in the 71 years since the United States dropped the first atomic bomb, killing 140,000 people. He mourned the victims and called for a global "moral awakening" on nuclear weapons. His message would have been all the more powerful had he also announced concrete plans for

bringing the world a step closer to his nuclear-free vision.

Visits to war memorials are often fraught, and this one more than most. There were debates about whether Obama should go at all, whether he should meet survivors of the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and whether he should apologize for America's decision to drop the bombs, which ended World War II in the Pacific.

President Obama made no apol-

ogy and affirmed that Japan was responsible for the war, which "grew out of the same base instinct for domination or conquest that had caused conflicts among the simplest tribes."

That was important, given that Japan's Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, has often sought to rewrite the history, portraying Japan as a victim of the war as well.

Start of moral awakening

As for the future, Obama said it

could be one in which "Hiroshima and Nagasaki are known not as the dawn of atomic warfare, but as the start of our own moral awakening."

Reprising the soaring words of his 2009 speech in Prague, he declared, "We must have the courage to escape the logic of fear and pursue a world without nuclear weapons, while acknowledging that it is unlikely to happen soon."



President Obama with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Friday at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial.

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Central banks can't go it alone anymore

Whether through signals from the Group of Seven meeting this week or in the outcome of the latest round of European negotiations on Greece, officials of advanced countries increasingly are acknowledging that the problems facing their economies require a new response to take over from the overlong use of narrow short-term tools.

This recognition has been too long in the making and, judging from the regrettable lack of credible and detailed action plans, still needs time to be translated into progress on the ground.

Before the G-7 meeting in Japan, several member countries indicated they understood that their individual and collective policy stances needed to evolve. Germany warned against continued over-reliance on central banks, simultaneously stressing the need for structural reforms. Canada and Japan urged a more aggressive and imaginative use of fiscal policy. And the U.S. warned Japan to resist the temptation to intervene to depreciate the yen.

Earlier this week, Greece's European partners concluded that they needed a greater emphasis on debt relief for that beleaguered economy. In a conference call with reporters on Wednesday, an International Monetary Fund official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said there is there was agreement among all stakeholders that Greece's debt was "highly unsustainable" and needed relief. In addition, the official said the parties "accept the methodology that should be used to calibrate the necessary debt relief. They accept the objectives in terms of the gross financing need in the near term and in the long run. They even accept the time periods, a very long time period, over which this debt has to be met through 2060."

These notable developments reflect an important evolution in mindsets, which are shifting more decisively toward looking at structural and secular conditions, and away from an excessive emphasis on cyclical considerations. This shift is driven by three developments: recurring disappointing economic growth despite extraordinary monetary policy stimulus and, in the case of Greece, eye-popping bailout packages; concern that the benefits of unconventional central bank involvement are being offset by a mounting risk of collateral damage and unintended consequences; and recognition that the political context is becoming more complicated as anti-establishment movements gain momentum amid growing popular mistrust of "elites" both in government and the private sector.

Such thinking should, one would hope, lead to the implementation of pro-growth structural reforms, tax



reform in conjunction with lessened fiscal austerity; debt relief for segments with crushing debt overhangs; and effective global policy coordination.

Nonetheless, the translation of greater collective awareness into credible actions remains frustratingly patchy.

Yet greater awareness is a critical ingredient of durable mindset adaptations and related course corrections, so there is hope that the advanced economies are getting closer to putting in action a much-needed comprehensive policy response. So if not this time, maybe next time. Still, time is not on their side.

A troubling aspect of structural impediments to growth is that the longer they remain unaddressed, the deeper they become embedded in the system. Today's growth shortfalls become harder to reclaim

A troubling aspect of structural impediments to economic growth is that the longer they remain unaddressed, the deeper they become embedded in the system.

even as tomorrow's growth potential is undermined. That, in turn, erodes the potency of any given policy response.

These unsettling economic consequences are amplified by fluid political conditions. Anti-establishment movements are benefiting from the recent history of insufficient growth whose limited benefits have accrued to a small (and already well-off) segment of the population. As the system awaits policy actions, politics is likely to further erode support for established political parties and simultaneously reduce the potential for constructive bipartisan policy making. Meanwhile, the alternative -- a radical shift to the implementation of the more extreme policies advocated by anti-establishment movements -- is likely to be contained by the checks and balances in the system. Indeed, the experience of the Syriza party in Greece provides a vivid illustration of the constraining effect of these institutional guardrails.

Advanced economies should be congratulated for their willingness to incorporate a larger dose of structural and secular considerations into their economic deliberations. But every quarter they wait to enact credible and comprehensive measures adds to the difficulty of removing the impediments to inclusive growth and makes the political context even more complicated.

(Source: Bloomberg)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Brexit 'serious risk to growth' says G7

A declaration at the G7 meeting in Japan says a vote by the UK to leave the European Union would pose a "serious threat to global growth".

In its final statement, the group warned that a UK exit from the EU would reverse the trend of increased global trade, investment and jobs.

The meeting brings together the world's leading seven industrialized nations.

The final communiqué set global growth as a priority for dealing with threats to the world's economy and security.

But the warning about the economic consequences of the UK leaving the European Union comes as Britain prepares for a referendum on 23 June.

Prime Minister David Cameron has been campaigning for Britain to stay within the 28-country bloc with recent polls suggesting a lead for those who support remaining within the EU.

That Brexit has been seen as a serious risk to the world economy at the G7 shouldn't surprise anyone.

The G7 finance ministers meeting over the weekend in Sendai came to the same conclusion. (Source: BBC)

N Korea could be linked to cyber-attacks on banks, security firm says

A top cyber-security firm is investigating whether North Korea could be linked to attacks on banks in recent months.

Symantec said it had evidence that the same group attempted to steal money from a bank in the Philippines, one in Vietnam and Bangladesh's central bank.

It also said the rare malware deployed was similar to that used in the hacking of Sony Pictures in 2014.

The U.S. government said North Korea was behind the Sony hack.

If North Korea is found to be behind the bank attacks, it would be the first time a country has been detected stealing money in a cyber-attack, Symantec's technical director Eric Chien told Reuters.

In February this year, hackers stole \$81m (£55m) from the central bank of Bangladesh.

According to Symantec, it was the same group that attempted to steal \$1m from the Tien Phong Bank in Vietnam and attacked a bank in the Philippines. (Source: BBC)



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- Protection against macular degeneration
- Improve cardiovascular health

NEWS IN BRIEF

CO claims life once again

MEDICAL TEHRAN — A 37-year-old gardener in Bostan-Abad, northwest Iran, lost his life to carbon monoxide poisoning in an attempt to keep warm on a cold night, an official at East Azarbaijan province's disaster management and medical emergency center reported on Friday.

According to IRNA, Habib Hosseinqolizadeh asserted, upon receiving an emergency call, paramedics were dispatched at once to the scene, but the man's body was found lifeless in suspected carbon monoxide poisoning, he said.

To keep warm, the night before, the victim had employed charcoal to heat up his place of stay, a wrong decision that cost him his life.

Carbon monoxide is a toxic (poisonous) gas, but, being colorless, odorless, tasteless, and initially non-irritating, it is very difficult for people to detect.

The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion, said Hosseinqolizadeh.

CO symptoms are often described as "flu-like." If you breathe in a lot of CO it can make you pass out or kill you.

Once someone realizes such symptoms in a closed environment, Hosseinqolizadeh explained, he should exit the location straightaway and seek medical help.

Initial treatment for carbon monoxide poisoning is to immediately remove the person from the exposure without endangering further people. Those who are unconscious may require cardiopulmonary resuscitation on site.

Scientists spot possible oldest animal

Just in case scientists needed a reminder of how enigmatic deep-sea life is, an incredibly large sea sponge was discovered near Hawaii.

Seven thousand feet below the surface, a deep-sea expedition stumbled upon a "sponge the size of a minivan," the largest ever recorded, according to researchers. Since the discovery in 2015, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has been studying the mysterious creature. Their findings were recently published in the scientific journal *Marine Biodiversity*.

The "largest portion of our planet lies in deep waters, the vast majority of which has never been explored," Daniel Wagner, science lead for the expedition, said in a NOAA press release. "Finding such an enormous and presumably old sponge emphasizes how much can be learned from studying deep and pristine."

Giant-sized sea sponges are not uncommon. Several different types are known to grow to large sizes and provide key ecological functions in the regions where they live. They can provide habitats to other smaller creatures and filter seawater.

Prior to the recent find, a colony of *Aphrocallistes vastus* Schulze, a type of sea sponge, was found in 1887 near western Canada. It remained the largest sea sponge ever documented for more than 100 years and measured more than 11 feet in length, 3.6 feet in height and 1.6 feet in width, according to the study.

(Source: *The CSM*)

Emory researchers show how Zika may infect placenta, fetus

The placenta is supposed to help nourish a fetus in utero, get rid of waste and protect the growing embryo from infection.

But with the Zika virus, the placenta doesn't shield a fetus from the disease; instead it appears to help the disease grow and travel to the developing fetus's brain.

This is the finding of a new study by Emory University researchers, who are trying to determine exactly how the virus makes its way into fetal neural cells causing horrible birth defects.

Tainara Lourenco stands in the entrance of her stilt home in Recife, Brazil. Unemployed, Lourenco lives in a slum at the epicenter of Brazil's tandem Zika and microcephaly outbreaks, in the state of Pernambuco.

Only a few viruses can make their way past the placental wall and go on to infect a growing fetus: rubella, HIV, herpes and hepatitis B and C. Zika joins that list.

■ Immune system

According to the Emory study in the scientific journal *Cell Host Microbe*, the virus infects immune cells in the outer portion



Researchers are still trying to figure out the exact mechanism the virus uses to get from those outer cells to the compartment.

of the placenta and grows there. As the virus replicates, it doesn't kill the cell, but somehow moves from those cells to the innermost portion of the fetal compartment.

Researchers are still trying to figure out the exact mechanism the virus uses to get from those outer cells to the compartment. Determining that will help in the race to develop a vaccine for the only known mosquito-borne virus that causes severe birth defects. But the Emory researchers believe they have identified the type of cells in the placenta that are most likely to harbor the virus and set up a devastating chain of events.

The research team used cells from placenta donated by five non-infected women who had full-term births through C-sections at either Grady Memorial or Emory Midtown hospitals. The team found something surprising: the virus didn't kill the cells that may protect against infection, called Hofbauer cells, which are made by the growing fetus. Zika continued to reproduce.

(Source: *ajc.com*)

New way to make microwaves will change the world

The Adventurer is a portable battery-powered microwave the size of a Thermos. Campers, hikers, and anyone else away from the grid can make a hot meal in minutes without a fire. Camp cooking could get a whole lot easier.

The three-pound Adventurer is more than a handy piece of kit, though. This is one of the first fruits of a new technology that could not only nuke your lunch on the go, but also make an impact in areas as diverse as crop protection and oil extraction.

The microwave oven was famously discovered by accident in 1946 when Raytheon engineer Percy Spencer found the peanut cluster bar in his pocket had melted while he was working with a military-grade radar magnetron. The idea took some time to catch on; by 1986 only a quarter of households had one. Now microwaves are ubiquitous, and America has warmed to the idea of microwaving popcorn, instant meals, and even, in rare cases, healthy food.



■ The heart of microwave

Over all those many decades, though, the heart of the microwave oven has stayed the same. It is the cavity magnetron, developed during WWII for radar. It is big, heavy, and inefficient. The transformer that steps up the voltage from the wall outlet to the Magnetron's operating voltage emits a loud hum, accompanied by the sound of the fan needed to keep-

ing the Magnetron cool, as well as the noise from the turntable that makes sure the food heats evenly.

The military moved away from magnetrons many years ago and now uses solid-state microwave sources. These are transistor-based devices that are compact and more efficient at turning electricity into electromagnetic radiation with less waste heat (it's like comparing an LED to an old-fashioned light bulb). Now we're starting to see consumer-grade gadgets finally move away from the old technology and into the world of solid-state.

Enter the Adventurer. This microwave-on-the-go is built around an LDMOS ("laterally diffused metal oxide semiconductor") microwave source made by Dutch company NXP, similar to those used for microwave communications systems. "LDMOS operates on 50 volts, rather than the 3,000 volts that Magnetrons in traditional microwave ovens need," says Professor Alwyn Seeds of University College London.

(Source: *Popular Mechanics*)

How satellites are helping to fight climate change

They may be many, many miles up in the air, but satellites have a vital role to play when it comes to analyzing our planet and its climate.

In the U.S., for example, NASA says it has over a dozen "Earth science" spacecraft and instruments in orbit, and is conducting research on everything from solar activity to rising sea levels, air pollution and "changes in sea ice and land ice."

The European Space Agency (ESA), based in Paris, is also keen to stress just how important the relationship between space and our climate is.

The "data we get from space in influencing people about climate change is very, very important," Philip Haines, the European Space Agency's head of telecom business development, told CNBC's Sustainable Energy.

The ESA says that climate change is arguably the "greatest challenge facing mankind in the 21st century," and for Haines, the data gathered from up in the heavens is invaluable.

"(A) picture tells 1,000 words, and having a picture of the arctic ice shrinking so you can see how it's changing is much more powerful than going off and having some measurements that you make (in) a report just in a table or a document," Haines added.

■ Radar observations

To give just one example, at the end of last year radar observations from ESA



satellites were used to inform a study which showed that a glacier in Greenland was losing "five billion tons of ice a year to the ocean."

The "satellites are offering a new way of looking at farming production, energy generation and general global conservation by giving a global view of vegetation and water, and atmosphere and climate," the ESA's Ian Downey said.

Satellites were offering farmers, agronomists (who study the science of using food for different purposes) and food producers efficiencies of production, harvest and transportation, Downey added.

They were "also providing important information about the energy resources from the wind from the sun and from biomass fuels," he said

(Source: *CNBC*)

New technique captures the activity of an entire brain in a snapshot

When it comes to measuring brain activity, scientists have tools that can take a precise look at a small slice of the brain (less than one cubic millimeter), or a blurred look at a larger area. Now, researchers at Rockefeller University have described a new technique that combines the best of both worlds—it captures a detailed snapshot of global activity in the mouse brain.

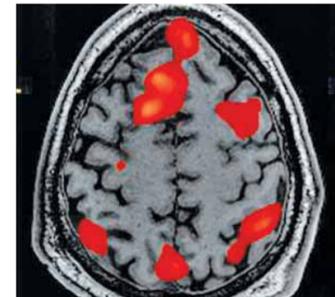
"We wanted to develop a technique that would show you the level of activity at the precision of a single neuron, but at the scale of the whole brain," says study author Nicolas Renier, a postdoctoral fellow in the lab of Marc Tessier-Lavigne, professor of the Laboratory of Brain Development and Repair, and president of Rockefeller University.

The new method, described online on May 26 in *Cell*, takes a picture of all the active neurons in the brain at a specific time. The mouse brain contains dozens of millions of neurons, and a typical image depicts the activity of approximately one million neurons, says Tessier-Lavigne.

The "purpose of the technique is to accelerate our understanding of how the brain works."

■ Live brain activity

"Because of the nature of our technique, we cannot visualize live brain activity over time -- we only see neurons that are active at the specific time we took the snapshot," says Eliza Ad-



ams, a graduate student in Tessier-Lavigne's lab and co-author of the study. "But what we gain in this trade-off is a comprehensive view of most neurons in the brain, and the ability to compare these active neuronal populations between snapshots in a robust and unbiased manner."

Here's how the tool works: The researchers expose a mouse to a situation that would provoke altered brain activity -- such as taking an anti-psychotic drug, brushing whiskers against an object while exploring, and parenting a pup -- then make the measurement after a pause. The pause is important, explains Renier, because the technique measures neuron activity indirectly, via the translation of neuronal genes into proteins, which takes about 30 minutes to occur.

(Source: *EurekAlert!*)

Grilled meat increases chances of developing cancer, scientists find

A Texas university study now shows that eating not only red meat, but white meat in large quantities could also increase the risk of developing cancer. The reasons point to a combination of cooking methods as well as genetic predisposition.

A team at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston compared diets of 659 patients diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma (RCC) to 699 similar people without cancer. The study looked at what kinds of meat people ate, how they cooked it, besides their genetic makeup.

Those who ate the most grilled meat -- red or white -- had higher risk of kidney cancer. However, it has not always been clear why eating more meat elevates cancer risk, explained Stephanie Melkonian, Ph.D., postdoctoral fellow, Epidemiology and lead author of the study.

Looking for an explanation, they narrowed out the

cooking method where high temperatures produce carcinogenic substances. The team looked for cancer causing mutagens, two in particular -- 2-amino-1-methyl-6-phenyl-imidazo (4,5-b) pyridine (PhIP for short) and amino 3,8-dimethylimidazo (4,5-f) quinoxaline (MeIQx for short). They identified a 54% increased risk associated with PhIP intake and a nearly twofold increase associated with MeIQx intake.

"We found elevated RCC risk associated with both meat intake and meat-cooking mutagens, suggesting independent effect of meat-cooking mutagens on RCC risk," said Xifeng Wu, MD and Ph.D., professor, Epidemiology and senior author of the study.

■ High intake of meat

Besides the high intake of meat, those with two genetic mutations were most affected by the grilled meat risk. A high meat intake was particularly harmful for a

subgroup of the population carrying variations of the gene ITPR2.

This gene has even before been associated with kidney cancer and obesity risk, the results point to exposure to meat-cooking mutagens. Future experiments will probe the link between mutagen intake and genetic susceptibility.

While advising people to consume meat in moderation, the researchers advise a well-balanced diet, complete with fruits and vegetables. The high risk group also ate fewer fruits and vegetables than people who did not have cancer.

Kidney cancer is among the 10 most common cancers in both men and women, according to the American Cancer Society which notes rising incidence of kidney cancer since the 1990s.

(Source: *International Business Times*)

An international human rights organization has called on the United States administration to press the Bahraini regime over the immediate release of Sheikh Ali Salman, secretary general of Bahrain's main opposition bloc, the al-Wefaq National Islamic Society.

"The Bahraini authorities have a chance on Monday to reverse Sheikh Salman's alarming conviction. His imprisonment contradicts promises of reform and makes an inclusive political settlement unlikely," Brian Dooley, the director of Human Rights Defenders program at the U.S.-based Human Rights First, said on Friday.

He added, "If the U.S. government is serious about helping Bahrain escape its political crisis, it should publicly call for his immediate release so he can be part of a much-needed dialogue with the government."

On Thursday evening, clashes broke out between Bahraini regime forces and dozens of demonstrators in Bilad al-Qadeem, a suburb of the Bahraini capital, Manama, during a protest against the continued imprisonment of Sheikh Salman.

Regime forces fired shots and used

U.S. urged to secure release of Bahraini dissident



tear gas to disperse the crowd. The protesters responded by throwing petrol bombs at police. Two officers were reportedly injured.

Earlier in the day, a similar demonstration was held in the village of Buri, located about 13 kilometers (eight

miles) southwest of Manama, where participants demanded the unconditional freedom of the prominent Bahraini opposition leader.

Sheikh Salman was arrested in December 2014 on charges of attempting to overthrow the Manama regime and

collaborating with foreign powers. He denies the charges, saying he has been seeking reforms in the kingdom through peaceful means.

In June 2015, a Bahraini court sentenced him to four years in prison on charges such as insulting the Bahraini Interior Ministry and inciting others to break the law. He was acquitted of seeking regime change.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has repeatedly called on the Manama regime to release the al-Wefaq leader.

Since February 14, 2011, anti-regime protesters have held numerous demonstrations on an almost daily basis in Bahrain, calling for the House of Khalifah to relinquish power.

In March that year, the House of Saud (UAE) troops were deployed to the country to assist the Bahraini regime with its crackdown on the peaceful protests.

Scores of people have been killed and hundreds of others injured or arrested in the crackdown.

Bahrain also hosts the US Navy's Fifth Fleet.

(Source: Press TV)

U.S. troops' use of YPG insignia in Syria 'unauthorized'



Elsewhere, United States troops who were photographed in Syria wearing the emblem of a Kurdish armed group on their uniforms have been ordered to remove the patches, a military spokesman said.

The Americans, part of a U.S.-led coalition battling the ISIL, were working alongside a coalition of Kurdish and Arab troops north of ISIL's de-facto capital Raqqa, and wore the insignia of the People's Protection Units (YPG/Yekineyen Parastina Gel?).

The images of the Special Forces soldiers - published by the AFP news agency - upset Turkey, which considers the YPG a "terrorist" group.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu denounced the U.S. as "two-faced" and said the badges were "unacceptable".

"It is unacceptable that an ally country is using the YPG insignia. We reacted to it. It is impossible to accept it. This is a double standard and hypocrisy," Cavusoglu said.

Ankara also raised the issue with the U.S. State Department.

The troops were supporting the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which is headed by the YPG, in an offensive

against ISIL, in Raqqa province.

The U.S. says it has about 300 soldiers serving in training and support roles in Syria and has acknowledged that they work with the SDF.

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member Turkey regards the YPG as an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê), which has fought for autonomy in Turkey's largely Kurdish southeast for three decades.

Washington considers the PKK "terrorists", but backs the YPG in the fight against ISIL.

On Friday, U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner declined to discuss the photos, saying he did not want to talk about where they were located in Syria.

"We understand Turkey's concerns, and let me make that clear," Toner said. "And we continue to discuss this as well as other concerns that Turkey has regarding [ISIL]."

Asked at a briefing on Thursday if it was appropriate to wear such insignia, Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said that when Special Forces operate in some areas, they do what they can to blend in with the community to enhance their own security. (Source: agencies)

Texas braces for possibly more rain after flooding kills 1



At least one person is dead and three others were missing after torrential thunderstorms caused flooding in Texas, officials said as they braced for the possibility of more rain over the long Memorial Day weekend.

"It's not going to take very much rain to get us in those flood stages again," Washington County Judge John Brieden said on Friday.

The forecasts through the holiday weekend called for scattered or isolated thunderstorms in Central and Southeast Texas. But officials say they will be monitoring local rivers and waterways, which could rise out of their banks in the coming days due to the heavy rains.

Other parts of the country saw heavy rains Friday, as well, especially in central Kansas, where the Wichita Eagle reports that an 11-year-old boy is missing after he was swept away in a swollen creek.

In Washington County, Texas, located between Austin and Houston, mobile homes washed away in the flooding and multiple houses had water inside, Brieden said.

He said there had been more than 50 water rescues from houses and vehicles since the rains started on Thursday morning. (Source: AP)

But one person drowned and another person was missing after their vehicle was swept away, Brieden said.

And officials in Travis County, which saw up to 9 inches of rain in some parts, were still searching for two people missing from a vehicle on a flooded roadway, according to Lisa Block, an emergency services spokeswoman.

The Washington County seat, Brenham, received 16.62 inches of rain on Thursday, breaking the city's daily rainfall record, said National Weather Service meteorologist Wendy Long.

Brieden said about 40 children spent the night at a Brenham elementary school after buses were unable to get them home. He said that in some areas buses couldn't get down flooded roads. A couple of buses had to be rescued as one broke down and another was trapped when waters rose nearby.

The National Weather Service said it determined that an EF-1 tornado hit Thursday in Bryan, about 100 miles northwest of Houston. Bryan officials said 153 homes were damaged, including 53 with major damage. (Source: AP)

BSI unveils 1st VTM device

ECONOMY To increase satisfaction and save cost and time of its dear customers, Virtual Teller Machine (VTM) was unveiled in Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) in the presence of Managing Director of the bank Lalehgani, a number of senior managers and IT experts of banks.

Chief Executive of the bank was the first speaker who pointed to the modern progresses in the field of banking services in the country and said: "Today, using new software and hardware services has been turned into an undeniable necessity in banking activities and in this line,

Bank Saderat Iran has put the qualitative and quantitative development of electronic services atop agenda."

The Bank intends to unveil a new electronic service each month, he said, adding: "For this purpose, the bank installed first Virtual Teller Machine in its Jomhuri Branch No. 239 in order to offer quality round-the-clock banking services to the noble customers."

Of the salient advantages of VTM, he pointed to opening deposit, issuing card instantly, presenting statement, paying installments of facilities, transferring money (SAT-NA) and requesting for checkbook, receiving and paying

cash fund, etc. As the largest bank in Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Bank Saderat Iran carries out more than 700 million financial transactions per month and has issued 57 million electronic cards for applicants, he said, adding: "With installing more than 451,000 Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) across the country, the bank plays a leading role in developing and boosting modern banking network."

In the end, Chief Executive of the bank said: "Management of the bank has taken effective steps in current year (started March 20, 2016) in order to materialize most of its objectives."

31st establishment anniversary of SINA Bank observed

ECONOMY May 28 coincided with 31st establishment anniversary of SINA Bank.

On the occasion of 31st foundation anniversary of the bank, Managing Director of the bank Eng. Pishro congratulated this significant event to the industrious staff, personnel, shareholders and beneficiaries of the bank.

The bank owes its success to the unsparing and unflinching efforts of its staff, he said, adding: "The bank has thus far managed to take giant strides in line with materializing most of its objectives and meeting customers' demands in the best form possible."

Upon taking advantage of world's most modern banking technology and relying upon its competent and the most exercised manpower as well as offering widespread banking services, the bank managed to attain numerous achievements, he maintained.

Given the above issue, SINA Bank was introduced as the most transpar-

ent bank in terms of disclosure of information and easy access of dear fellow countrymen to the bank's performance indicators, he observed.

Of the other salient achievements of the bank, it should be referred to winning first rank in money-laundering campaign, and also winning second rank in performance indicators of fast-moving banking network system (SHETAB), he said, adding: "By signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with governor-generalships across the country, the bank has managed to help generate employment in less advantaged areas of the country, grant facilities to productive sectors in disadvantaged regions, support knowledge-based plans and grant guarantee letters, etc."

In the end, Managing Director of the bank Eng. Pishro expressed his special thanks to the hardworking staff, personnel and directors of the bank who took giant strides in line with materializing most objectives of the bank."

EORC and Japan's JCCP resume cooperation

ECONOMY Japan Cooperation Center, Petroleum (JCCP) and Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) resumed their activities after a hiatus.

It should be noted that Chief Executive of Japan Cooperation Center, Petroleum (JCCP) Tsuyoshi Nakaei traveled to Iran along with Deputy Coordinating and Supervision Manager of the company on Wednesday May 25 in order to participate in the inaugural ceremony of Refinery Repair and Maintenance Management Training Course.

Production Planning, Refining and Engineering Head of Esfahan Oil Refining Company Eng. Hashem Al-Hosseini was the first speaker who briefed the visiting delegation on performance of the company and said: "EORC has implemented a master plan with environmental approach within the three giant frameworks entitled "improving process and optimization", details of which have been put atop agenda."

He pointed to the preliminaries of

this giant project and said: "Project for construction of gasoline complex was put into operation in the past Iranian calendar year in 1394 (ended March 19, 2016)."

Once obstacles are removed, other projects of the company will be put into operation in due date, he maintained.

EORC observes requirements of international environmental standards strictly, he said, adding: "For this purpose, the company has taken giant environmental strides, the most important of which can be referred to gasification of furnaces, operation of osmosis using reverse engineering method for maximal extraction of wastewater and conclusion of separate contracts with companies trusted by Department of Environment (DoE), etc."

It should be noted that JCCP is comprised of consortia of a number of Japanese companies and has thus far offered quality training services to more than 1,400 Iranian manpower, the report ended.

JUMP

Turning words into a nuclear-free reality

6 → Obama made headway by concluding the 2010 New Start Treaty, which mandates cuts in the strategic nuclear warheads deployed by America and Russia.

Beyond that, his vision has run aground. Much fault lies with Russia, which opposes more arms reduction; the Senate, which refuses to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; and Pakistan, which has blocked talks on a treaty to halt production of fissile material.

Yet Obama has undercut his own record with a \$1 trillion program to rebuild the American nuclear arsenal over the next 30 years. A new Pentagon report shows that he has eliminated fewer nuclear weapons than any president since the end of the Cold War. Neither Obama nor Abe addressed Japan's 47 tons of separated plutonium from its energy program. It could be used to make thousands of nuclear weapons, is a tempting terrorist target and raises the risk of a wider race to stockpile plutonium.

South Korea and China, for instance, have expressed interest in acquiring reprocessing plants. A plan to end Japan's reprocessing would have been a fitting achievement for the historic visit. Other initiatives, like canceling America's new air-launched, nuclear-armed cruise missile, are still possible. Soaring words alone will not rid the world of nuclear weapons. (Source: The CSM)

Putin: Romania, Poland may now be in Russia's cross-hairs

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned Romania and Poland they could find themselves in the sights of Russian rockets because they are hosting elements of a United States missile shield that Moscow considers a threat to its security.

Putin issued his starkest warning yet over the missile shield, saying that Moscow had stated repeatedly that it would have to take retaliatory steps but that Washington and its allies had ignored the warnings.

Earlier this month the U.S. military -- which says the shield, is needed to protect from Iran, not threaten Russia -- switched on the Romanian part of the shield.

Work is going ahead on another part of the shield, in Poland. "If yesterday in those areas of Romania people simply did not know what it means to be in the cross-hairs, then today we will be forced to carry out certain measures to ensure our security," Putin told a joint news conference in Athens with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras.

"It will be the same case with Poland," he said. Putin did not specify what actions Russia would take, but he insisted that it was not making the first step, only responding to moves by Washington. "We won't take any action until we see rockets in areas that neighbor us."

He said the argument that the project was needed to defend against Iran made no sense because an international deal had been reached to curb Tehran's nuclear program. The missiles that will form the shield can easily reach Russian cities, he said. "How can that not create a threat for us?" Putin asked.

He voiced frustration that Russia's complaints about the missile shield had not been heeded.

"We've been repeating like a mantra that we will be forced to respond... Nobody wants to hear us. Nobody wants to conduct negotiations with us."

Crimea issue closed

Elsewhere, Putin sounded a defiant note over Crimea, the Ukrainian region which Russia annexed in 2014. Moscow said it was acting on the will of the Crimean people, who voted to join Russia, but Western governments say it was an illegal land grab.

"As far as Crimea is concerned, we consider this question is closed forever," Putin said. "Russia will not conduct any discussions with anyone on this subject." (Source: Reuters)

'Modi's Iran visit was a major turning point in ties'

1 → The fact that the proposal was lying down for the last 13 years and only now has got sharp attention speaks about India's sincerity and commitment to implement it."

"It is not just the governments but the private sector and business lobby are also keen to implement the Chabahar agreement. The political framework is now being laid," said Stobdan who accompanied Modi during his visit to Iran.

Advising Iran to be serious in implementing the Chabahar agreement, the seasoned diplomat said, "Iran too has to be sincere this time. Earlier agreement to link Turkmenistan to Bandar Abbas with railway wasn't satisfying. Also it is important for Iran not to mix with its plan with Pakistan or China's OBOR project."

Elaborating on the importance Chabahar port for India, he said, "I see it as a more than energy and connectivity project. Certainly it is a strategic project."

Describing Iran's future as very bright and exciting after lifting of the international sanctions, he said, "Iran is changing rapidly and beyond expectation. I have been to Iran many times in the past. But this time change is visible in every sense. I think Iran is going to have a very exciting future, which is what the Iranian people want."



FOOD FOR THOUGHT



It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop. Confucius

LEARN ENGLISH

Recovering from an Illness or Injury

Julio: Hi, Aunt Louisa, it's Julio.
Paula: ...And Paula. I'm on the **extension** in the kitchen.
Julio: Anyway, we just wanted to call and wish you a **speedy recovery**. Get plenty of **bed rest** and **take it easy**. Avoid **greasy** or **spicy** foods and drink lots of liquids. You don't want to become **dehydrated**.
Paula: Don't listen to him. You need to stay active and not **get in the habit of sitting around**. You'll recover faster if you get up and move around a lot.
Julio: That's terrible advice. She needs rest and to eat right. You know what they say: "**Feed a cold, starve a fever**."
Paula: What does that old adage have to do with anything? What you need, Aunt Louisa, is to **alternate between a heating pad** and an **ice pack**.
Julio: What are you talking about? Aunt Louisa has a bad cold.
Paula: What?! I thought she had a **sore** back!

(Source: eslpod.com)

Words & phrases

- extension:** one of many telephone lines connected to a central system in a large building, which all have different numbers
- speedy:** happening or done quickly or without delay; quick
- recovery:** the process of getting better after an illness, injury etc.
- bed rest:** confinement of an invalid to bed as part of treatment
- take it easy:** to relax and not do very much
- greasy:** covered in grease or oil; oily
- spicy:** food that is spicy has a pleasantly strong taste, and gives you a pleasant burning feeling in your mouth; hot
- dehydrated:** to lose too much water from your body
- get in the habit of:** start doing something regularly
- sitting around:** to sit somewhere and relax or do nothing
- feed a cold, starve a fever:** expressing the common belief that eating more will cure the common cold, and eating less will cure a fever
- adage:** a well-known phrase that says something wise about human experience; proverb
- alternate between:** if two things alternate, or if you alternate them, they happen one after the other in a repeated pattern
- heating pad:** a pad used for warming of parts of the body in order to manage pain
- ice pack:** a bag containing ice that is put on injured or painful parts of your body to keep them cold
- sore:** a part of your body that is sore is painful, because of infection or because you have used a muscle too much

QUIZ OF THE DAY

160) What does the idiom mean?
He is all thumbs.
a) he has big hands
b) he is good at catching things
c) he is clumsy
(Quiz No. 159 answer: a)

PHRASAL VERB

Stick together

- Meaning:** support each other
- For example:** Good friends always stick together.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Every man is the architect of his own fortune

- Explanation:** life is what you make it



Without water, everything withers

Fundraisers donate \$230,000 in Tehran charitable ceremony

SOCIAL TEHRAN — Some 8 billion rials **d e s k** (nearly \$230,000), both in cash and in kind, was donated during a charity fundraising ceremony in Tehran on Friday.

The ceremony was arranged by Ashura Charity Foundation and the contributions are scheduled to be spent on treating refractory patients and supporting underprivileged families.

The money is provided with thousands of philanthropist ranging from employees to the merchants and it would be poured into treating patients with cancer and providing dowries for those brides-to-be who cannot afford to buy things themselves, the Ashura Charity Foundation CEO told IRIB.

"Compared to the last year the contributions have increased by 30 percent," Tahmouresh Yavari said.

Currently treatment expenses for 260 patients suffering from cancer are being covered by Ashura Charity Foundation and 40 brides-to-be are provided with dowry, Yavari added.

Recognizing underprivileged patients, paying no interest loans to them worth of 1.2 billion rials (nearly \$35,000), and donating medical equipment worth of 650 million rials (nearly \$19,000) are of the most important activities of the foundation, he noted.



(File photo) A charity bazaar for orphans in Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi province, held on the occasion of the New Year in 2015.

Fines for using handheld devices while driving more than tripled

SOCIAL TEHRAN — The 300,000 rials fine **d e s k** (nearly \$8) has more than tripled to 100,000 rials (nearly \$30) for using handheld devices while driving, the deputy traffic police of Tehran said.

Those who use cell phones and any other handheld communications and entertainment devices as well as hands-free devices while steering a car will face a \$30 fine, Hassan Abedi said.

Abedi explained that 32 percent of the collisions are caused by distracted driving as the driver fail to focus on the road and doing something other than keeping their hands on the wheel and their eyes on the road.



He went on to say that it is illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or email using hand-held and that they are punishable by law.

Drinking, eating, talking to the passengers or arguing with them are of the other causes of losing attention and not focusing on the road, he said, regretting, unfortunately using cellphone is one of the primary reasons of lack of focus while driving.

Research shows that drivers who use cell phones are four times more likely to be in a collision than drivers who focus on the road. And when drivers take their eyes off the road for more than two seconds, their crash risk doubles.

WHO rejects calls to relocate Olympics over Zika fears

The World Health Organization has rejected calls from 150 leading scientists to relocate or postpone the Olympic Games because of the Zika virus outbreak in Brazil.

The Games would "not significantly alter" the spread of the virus, which began in Brazil a year ago and is linked to serious birth defects, the WHO said.

It was responding to an open letter from 150 leading doctors, researchers and medical ethicists, who argued the threat from the virus meant it would be "unethical" for the Games to go ahead.

The experts fear athletes and fans travelling to the event could become infected with the mosquito-borne disease and spread it to their home countries on their return.

When pregnant women become infected, Zika can cause babies to be born with unusually small heads and under-developed brains.

The letter also asked whether the WHO's reluctance to recommend any delay or relocation was due to a conflict of interest between the organization and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which work closely together.

Responding to their concerns, the WHO said: "Based on the current assessment of Zika virus circulating in almost 60 countries globally and 39 in the Americas, there is no public health justification for postponing or cancelling the games."

"The best way to reduce risk of disease is to follow public health travel advice."

The IOC has also said it sees no reason why the Zika outbreak means the Games should be relocated or delayed.

Since the outbreak began in Brazil last year, the disease has spread to 58 countries around the world and the WHO has declared a global health emergency.

Brazil remains the hardest hit by the disease, with 20,000 reported cases and 1,300 confirmed cases of microcephaly.

The disease has also spread across the Atlantic to the island of Cape Verde, off the coast of Africa, and there are fears it is only a matter of time before it reaches continental Africa.

Tessa Jowell, the former minister for the Olympics who was in charge of London's successful bid to host the 2012 Games said the Zika virus was "a matter of great concern".

Speaking to Sky News, Jowell said: "It's a matter of great concern because there appears to be a medical disagreement between the WHO and these experts who have issued this advice this morning. The important thing not just for athletes but also the hundreds of thousands of people who will be travelling to Rio is that they are given the best evidence-based precautionary advice. Asked if the games should be moved



or cancelled, Jowell said: "Well obviously it's very difficult logistically, close to impossible, to move or cancel the games so close to the start. But in a way, that's not a consideration. The consideration of the IOC will be balancing the risks of the public's health, the health of athletes and the health of people travelling to Rio, against the organization of the games."

(Source: Independent)

World's scariest school run? Chinese children tackle 800-metre cliff

Children as young as six from Atuler village in Sichuan province have to scale a huge rock face using rickety ladders

Authorities in south-west China have vowed to come to the aid of an isolated mountain village after photographs emerged showing the petrifying journey its children are forced to make to get to school.

To attend class, backpack-carrying pupils from Atuler village in Sichuan province must take on an 800-metre rock face, scrambling down rickety ladders and clawing their way over bare rocks as they go.

Images of their terrifying and potentially deadly 90-minute descent went viral on the Chinese internet this week after they were published in a Beijing newspaper.

The photographs were taken by Chen Jie who used his WeChat account to describe the moment he first witnessed the village's 15 school children, aged between six and 15, scaling the cliff. "There is no doubt I was shocked by the scene I saw in front of me," he wrote, adding that he hoped his photographs could help change the village's "painful reality".



LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Urologic robotic surgery tested on animal in Iran appears to be promising

Urologic robotic surgery, which has been tested on an animal to remove its gallbladder in Iran, appears to be promising, said Nasser Simforoosh, urologist.

Robot-assisted surgery is almost common in the field of urology worldwide and Iranian scientist just recently succeeded in building such robots in Sharif University of Technology, Simforoosh explained.

"These assisting robots used to be exclusively produced in the U.S. and due to the imposed sanctions on Iran we were not able to benefit such technology in our country," he noted.

"We are going to screen a film of these domestically produced robots while performing a surgery in the 8th Iranian Endourology and UroLaparoscopy Congress 2016," he highlighted.

اعمال جراحی اورولوژی در مدل حیوانی به کمک ربات‌ها در ایران با نتایج مثبتی همراه بوده است

ناصر سیم فروش، اورولوژیست گفت: اعمال جراحی در حوزه رشته اورولوژی به کمک ربات‌ها که تاکنون از آن برای جراحی کیسه صفرا در مدل حیوانی استفاده شده با نتایج مثبتی همراه بوده است.

سیم فروش توضیح داد: اعمال جراحی در حوزه رشته اورولوژی به کمک ربات‌ها در دنیا معمول است و اینکه اخیراً این ربات‌ها از سوی متخصصان ایرانی در دانشگاه صنعتی شریف ساخته شده است.

وی خاطر نشان کرد: این ربات‌ها به طور انحصاری تنها توسط آمریکا ساخته می‌شود و چون فروش آن به ایران جزو موارد تحریمی است ایران نمیتوانست از این تکنولوژی بهره ببرد.

وی اظهار داشت: ما قصد داریم تا، فیلم استفاده از ربات‌های جراح ساخته شده از سوی متخصصان کشورمان در هشتمین کنگره اندورولوژی و یورولاپاراسکوپی سال ۲۰۱۶ را به نمایش بگذاریم.

I wanted to hire Teymourian for Shimizu, says Afshin Ghotbi

S P O R T S Former Team Melli and Persepolis football team head coach Afshin Ghotbi who has recently appointed as the new head coach of Thai club Buriram United is happy to find a job in Thailand and wants to lead his new side to glory.

"Thailand has started a huge investment in football as they want to become one of the Asia's powerhouses. I'm glad to be here as the new head coach of Buriram United and I will try my best to lead this team to the glory," Ghotbi said.

Former Persepolis coach who spent four season with Shimizu S-Pulse stated that he tried to hire Iranian players to play in J-League but the club couldn't afford it.

"I wanted to sign Andranik Teymourian when I was in charge of Shimizu S-Pulse but the club couldn't afford it as we were struggling financially," he said.

The 52-year old coach also stated that Iran could qualify for 2018 World Cup under Carlos Queiroz.

"Iran has a lot of talented players and I believe with Carlos Queiroz in charge, this team has the potential of not only qualify for the World Cup but even qualifying from the group stage," he added.



Payam Sadeghian joins Machine Sazi

S P O R T S Former Persepolis and Team Melli midfielder Payam Sadeghian has signed a one-year contract with the newly promoted side Machin Sazi on Saturday.

Sadeghian is the third signing of Machine Sazi after defender Habib Gordani and Brazilian goalkeeper Thiago Santos.

Sadeghian, who joined Naft Tehran from Persepolis last summer, couldn't regain his top form and after falling out with the management at Naft he signed with Saba and reunited with former coach Ali Daei in January 2016.

He has stated on his official Instagram account that he has lost his motivation in Iranian football and he is eager to move abroad but he finally ended up in Tabriz to play for Machine Sazi.

"I love Machine Sazi as my father



played here. I'm happy to return to my home town and I would like to do my best in next season Iran Professional League," Sadeghian told reporters.

Sadeghian, who has played in all of Iran's youth ranks, has scored one goal in five appearances for Iran national team.

Carlos Queiroz names Iran squad for two friendly matches

Carlos Queiroz announced Iran's 23-man squad for their upcoming friendly matches against Macedonia and Kyrgyzstan.

Team Melli has been scheduled to face Macedonian team in a friendly match on June 2 in Skopje.

Queiroz's men will also play Kyrgyzstan on June 7, the Iranian media reported.

■ **The Squad:**

■ **Goalkeepers:**

Alireza Haghighi, Alireza Beiranvand, Mohammadreza Akhbari

■ **Defenders:**

Jalal Hosseini, Pejman Montazeri, Morteza Pouraliganji, Mohammad Tayebi, Ezzatollah Pourghaz, Milad Mohammadi, Ehsan Hajisafi, Ramin Rezaeian, Daniel Mahini

■ **Midfielders:**



Ashkan Dejagah, Kamal Kamyabinia, Saeid Ezzatollahi, Darioush Shojaeian, Masoud Shojaei, Alireza Jahanbakhsh

■ **Strikers:**

Mehdi Torabi, Vahid Amiri, Mehdi Taremi, Sardar Azmoun, Karim Ansarifard

(Source: Tasnim)

Raul Lozano happy with win over Australia

Iranian national volleyball team's coach Raul Lozano is satisfied with a win over Australia in the Men's World Olympic Qualification Tournament.

Iran beat Australia 3-0 (25-19, 25-17, 25-18) at Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium on Saturday.

"I am happy for this result. We did a good job in attack and of controlling our errors. It's good to win the first match," Lozano said.

"This was a special match because we know each other well. We lost to them last year. Since I took over in April I

have been working with the team on improving efficiency and reducing errors. I have analyzed the team carefully," the Argentine added.

"We are here to give our best performance," Iran Lozano said. "We expect to qualify for the Olympics. France and Poland are the strongest teams here. One is a World League champion and the other is a world champion."

Iran missed out on the two available spots in the last Olympic qualification tournament after it fell third behind Serbia and Australia, but the four spots available in the tournament

give them a fighting chance to make it to its first-ever Olympic Games.

Eight strong teams are competing for the Men's Olympic Qualification Tournament from May 28 to June 5 at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium.

The qualification tournament in Tokyo, which also serves as the Asian qualification tournament, will provide the top ranked Asian team and the top three ranked teams with the four Rio 2016 Olympic Games qualification slots available.

(Source: Tasnim)

Bayern will reject all offers for Lewandowski - Rummenigge



Robert Lewandowski is not for sale at any price, Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has insisted.

The Poland striker's agent caused a stir on Friday when he announced that Real Madrid had made an approach over the prospect of a move to

the Santiago Bernabeu.

Lewandowski was quoted as telling Spiegel that he is tempted by the thought of "a new impulse" in his career after six years in the Bundesliga with Bayern and Borussia Dortmund.

Rummenigge, however, says the 27-year-old will stay at the Allianz Arena next season regardless of any significant transfer bids from Madrid or elsewhere.

"One thing I know for sure: Robert Lewandowski will play at Bayern Munich the next season," he told Kicker. "No one must have any thoughts about that."

"The decision is like this: we will not give Robert Lewandowski to another club, no matter what they offer to us. We have no breaking point with Robert."

(Source: OmniSport)

Lionel Messi exits Argentina friendly win vs. Honduras with back injury



Lionel Messi was taken off in the second half of Argentina's 1-0 friendly defeat of Honduras on Friday with a bruised lower back.

The Barcelona star collapsed on the ground after a knee to his torso and was seen holding his back as he

gingerly walked off the field in the 64th minute.

Television cameras then showed trainers rubbing the five-time Ballon d'Or winner's lower back on the sidelines before taking him into the tunnel.

Sevilla midfielder Ever Banega came on as Messi's replacement.

Tests performed after the match revealed the 28-year-old has a deep bruise in his lumbar region.

It was reported earlier on Friday that Messi is scheduled to fly to Spain on Saturday to appear before a judge at the Audiencia de Barcelona on June 2.

He is then expected to fly directly to Santa Clara, California, to rejoin the team for Copa America preparations.

(Source: ESPN)

FOOTBALL

Zlatan Ibrahimovic's agent cools Manchester United talk

Zlatan Ibrahimovic's agent has cooled talk that the striker is heading to Manchester United.

The 34-year-old is a free agent after his PSG contract ended, and Sky sources understand Manchester United are the only Premier League option he has considered, with his former manager Jose Mourinho named as their new boss on Friday.

But his agent Mino Raiola says they have yet to decide their next move, and insists they are in no hurry to rush to a conclusion.

"Does it have to be United that Zlatan goes to? Will the whole of Sweden not sleep if it does not happen?" Raiola told Swedish newspaper Expressen.

"We have yet to decide, it'll be a surprise in the end. Everyone talks about United, which is why I don't talk to journalists a lot.

"There are clubs in England and Europe, some outside of Europe, but everyone thinks he must go to Manchester United. It's not true."

Ibrahimovic said in the week that he has already decided what his next move will be, and he confirmed on Thursday that he has had "concrete offers" from England, Italy and other clubs including some outside of Europe.

Sky Sports News HQ understands he has also been considering an offer from China and that United are not prepared to match the financial terms Ibrahimovic can earn from an unnamed Super League club, worth £53m over two seasons.

Raiola, meanwhile, says the only guarantee is that Ibrahimovic will not be retiring.

"We're not in a hurry. I only care about securing something of quality," the agent said. "We'll see what happens, we have a good time ahead of us now."

"The only thing I can guarantee is that he will not quit. But where he will play next season, I can not say anything about."

"Zlatan Ibrahimovic is King and the club that buys him do not have to pay a transfer fee."

"This means that Ibrahimovic, who just finished a record season at PSG, can get an extra high salary. He is in a good bargaining position."

(Source: SkySport)

Murray aware of Nadal injury during practice last week

Andy Murray knew nine-times French Open champion Rafael Nadal was struggling with a wrist injury when he practiced with the Spaniard during the build-up to Roland Garros.

"I practiced a bit with him last week and I knew there were some issues with the wrist," world number two Murray, who is through to the last 16 in Paris told Eurosport.

"He's won this nine times and was playing really well so for him to withdraw from the tournament, it would have to be a pretty serious injury. It's a great shame for Rafa and the fans and a shame for the tournament."

Fourth seed Nadal, who will be 30 next week, stunned the tournament on Friday when he announced he was pulling out despite dropping only nine games in his first two rounds.

He said the problem was with a tendon in his left wrist and that scans had shown he was in danger of a serious injury if he did not stop playing.

It was a huge blow to the tournament as Nadal had been expected to face world number one Novak Djokovic in the semi-final, having lost to the Serb in the quarters last year.

Seven-times grand slam champion John McEnroe called Nadal's latest injury "extremely disappointing".

"We've seen him play for many years and it's always been a concern about how his knees would hold up," the American told Eurosport in his daily spot.

"After last year, we all hoped he would be able to get his health and fitness back and get his game together and it looked like that was happening."

"We all know how much he wanted (title) number 10 and we were looking forward to seeing play Novak in the semis."

Former French Open champion Mats Wilander said the decision had been a no-brainer for Nadal.

"A slight miss-hit and that's going to hurt like crazy," the Swede said. "He's turning 30 in a few days and still has two or three years left so this was an obvious decision."

(Source: Reuters)

Mamadou Sakho handed Euro 2016 lifeline after Uefa doping ban expires

The Liverpool defender Mamadou Sakho has been handed a Euro 2016 lifeline after Uefa chose not to extend his suspension from football after a positive drugs test.

The France international was provisionally banned for 30 days on 28 April after being notified by European football's governing body of an anti-doping offence relating to a test taken after March's Europa League quarter-final against Manchester United at Old Trafford.

However, Uefa has decided not to extend that suspension, which is due to expire on Saturday, as they have launched their own investigation into whether the fat-burning substance the centre-back took should even be on the banned list.

As a result the case against Sakho remains on file pending those investigations but with his suspension lifted he is technically available for selection by national team boss Didier Deschamps, with national teams having until 31 May to submit their final squads for this summer's tournament in France.

Sakho submitted his defence to Uefa's disciplinary committee on Monday and as part of that his legal team questioned whether the substance in the supplement should even be on the prohibited list given some apparent scientific evidence on its effects.

Rather than set a date for a hearing to consider the defender's case Uefa has instead ordered their own disciplinary body to first look into whether the substance should even be on the Wada list.

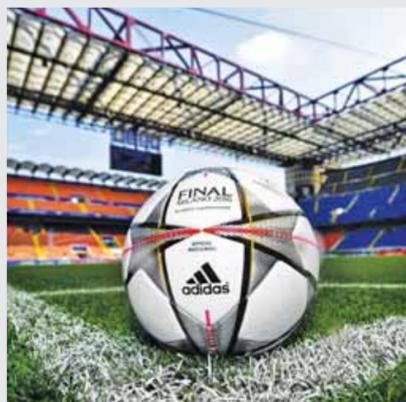
(Source: Guardian)



INSTAGRAM



@johntery.26 Family Holiday



@uefachampionsleague Want this stunning #UCLfinal @adidasfootball?



@giorgiochiellini #Nutella #Italia



Poem of the day

Ah! wheel of heaven to tyranny inclined,
'Twas e'er your wont to show yourself unkind;
And, cruel earth, if they should cleave your breast,
What store of buried jewels they would find!

Khayyam

Prayer Times

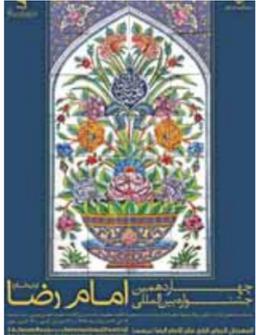
Noon:13:02 Evening: 20:34 Dawn: 4:07 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:50 (tomorrow)

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■ www.eshtarak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co. Tel: 88911433
■ Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
■ Printed at: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

NEWS

Imam Reza (AS) Intl. Festival set for August

T I A R T T E H R A N — The 14th Imam Reza (AS) International Festival will be held simultaneously in Mashhad and three other Iranian cities during August, the organizers announced in Tehran last Wednesday.



"Making distinct movies on the theme of Imam Reza (AS) is a high priority in the Cinema Organization of Iran," the director of the organization, Hojjatollah Ayyubi said.

The director of Imam Reza (AS) International Art and Cultural Foundation, Seyyed Javad Jafari, said that so far, the festival has received about 700 submissions from filmmakers from around the world.

Yazd, Goragan, and Khorramabad also play host to the 10-day festival, which will showcase a vast array of art and cultural programs.

The event will kick off on August 4, which is the birthday of Hazrat Masumeh (SA), the sister of Imam Reza (AS).

Winners will be announced on August 14 that marks the birthday of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Imam of the Shia Muslims.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran museum to spotlight Hou Hsiao-Hsien cinema

T I C U L T U R E T E H R A N — The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) is scheduled to review films by Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-Hsien during a comprehensive program, which will begin this evening.

A lineup seven movies, including "A Time to Live, a Time to Die," the winner of the FIPRESCI Prize at the 1986 Berlin International Film Festival, and "A City of Sadness," which gained Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1989, will be screened during the program.

The program runs through June 19 following the screening of "The Assassin" that won the award for best director at the Cannes Film Festival in 2015.

Born in 1947, Hou is also a screenwriter, producer and actor internationally known for making dramas that recounts major upheavals in the history of his homeland.



Tehran Intl. Short Film Festival receives submissions from 117 countries

T I C U L T U R E T E H R A N — Filmmakers from 117 countries have applied for various sections of the 33rd Tehran International Short Film Festival, the organizers announced in a press release on Saturday.

The Iranian Youth cinema Society (IYCS) is the main organizer of the festival, which will be held from November 8 to 14.



Iranian short films line up for Italian festival

T I C U L T U R E T E H R A N — Over ten Iranian short films are competing in 10th River Film Festival (RiFF), which opened in Padova, Italy on Saturday.

"Fish" by Saman Hosseinpur, "The Other" by Hadi Anani, "Caspian Fishermen" by Mohammad-Hossein Abedini and "See You Soon" by Sara Gohari are among the movies.

The festival will run until June 10.

"Warcraft" cast meet their wax doubles in London

LONDON (Reuters) — The stars of new action fantasy "Warcraft" met their characters' wax doubles on Friday at a new exhibit dedicated to the movie at London's Madame Tussauds museum.

Actor Travis Fimmel who plays Lothar, Paula Patton who plays Garona and Toby Kebbell who plays Durotan, turned out for the unveiling of the waxwork figures, posing alongside them for photographs.

"Warcraft" began its worldwide cinema rollout this week.

Sohrab Sepehri Tree Trunk paintings lead Tehran Auction

T I A R T T E H R A N — Two paintings from Sohrab Sepehri's Tree Trunk series were the most expensive works sold at the 5th Tehran Auction on Friday.

One of the paintings fetched 30 billion rials (over \$860,000) and another took in 15.5 billion rials (over \$447,000) at the art sale, which was held at the Parsian Azadi Hotel.

Two paintings from the series were also the most expensive works sold at the previous edition of the auction in 2015.

A painting of a vase by New York-based Iranian expressionist Manuchehr Yektai sold for 14.7 billion rials while master miniaturist Mahmud Farshchian's "Elevation" fetched 12.5 billion rials.

Eighty works from classical and modern Iranian artists were placed on sale at the auction, but only "Rara Avis" by painter Bijan Rafati with an estimate of 400 to 600 million rials failed to find a buyer. Forty-six works were sold above the estimates.

The auction smashed last year's record by grossing over 253 billion rials (over \$7.3 million). The art sale last year grossed 214 billion rials (over \$6.1 million).

The auction began with a short speech by auctioneer Hossein Pakdel, during which he congratulated Iranian director Asghar Farhadi over the triumph of his latest film "The Salesman" at the 69th Cannes Film Festival.

The first work that went under the hammer at the auction was an untitled painting by the U.S.-based Iranian artist Nasser Ovissi, which was sold for 950 million



Tehran Auction employees hold a painting from Sohrab Sepehri's Tree Trunk series during the 5th edition of the auction at the Parsian Azadi Hotel on May 27, 2016. The artwork was the first top seller, fetching over \$860,000. (Honaronline/Aidin Qeshlaqi)

rials. Actress Elnaz Shakerdust was the buyer of the artwork.

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Ali Jannati and some his aides also joined art dealers and collec-

tors in attending the auction.

"I'm here to show the government's support for the auction that has been organized by the private sector," Jannati told the reporters at the auction.

Film Festival of Defenders of Holy Shrine to announce winners Monday

T I A R T T E H R A N — The organizers of the 1st First Film Festival of Defenders of Holy Shrine, promoting the culture of resistance, will announce winners during a ceremony to be held at the IRIB International Conference Hall on Monday.

Organized by the Fars News Agency in collaboration with Katibeh Navaye Fatemei Cultural Institute, the festival means to praise the bravery of the defenders and protectors of the holy shrine of Hazrat Zeinab (AS) in Syria against terrorist attacks.

Documentaries and music videos showcasing the

roles of the defenders and the martyrs, highlighting the resistance of the people of Syria, Iraq and Palestine, and the roles of Iran and Hezbollah resistance movement in promoting the culture of resistance in the region, as well as revealing imagery showing the brutality of the ISIL terrorist group, were received by the secretariat of the festival.

The top works were selected by a team of jury members for the final awards that included Ebrahim Hatamikia, Alireza Rezadad, Mostafa Razaq-Karimi and Mohammad Khazai.

"The Clouds Are on the Way" (Mohammad-Ali Farisi), "The Commander" (Mohammad-Hadi Nematollahi), "Abu Wahab" (Hossein Palizdar), "Blood and Olive" (Mostafa Aqamohammadlu) and "Bridge" (Amir-Hossein Noruzi) are among the documentaries competing in the festival.

Also included are several music videos including "A Place to Live" (Mohsen Purmohiabadi), "Male" (Omid Hassanzadeh), "We Are Leaving" (Ahmadreza Davari), "Departure" (Mohammad Shakeri) and "Arghavan" (Mahdiyaz Oqabi).

PICTURE OF THE DAY Honaronline/Sharareh Samei



Pianist Eduard Kutrowatz and tenor Herbert Lippert from Austrian perform at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on May 24, 2016.

KARA winners showcasing artworks at Mohsen Gallery

T I A R T T E H R A N — Mohsen Gallery in Tehran is displaying works by the winners of the 2nd Kooshk Artist Residency Awards (KARA) in an exhibition, which opened to the public on Friday.

Cartoons, sets of installation and video art by Sujin Lim from South Korea, Esmeralda Kosmatopoulos from Greece and Asaki Kan from Japan are on display at the exhibition. The artists have created the works during their stay in Tehran since May 1.

Adriana Salazar from Colombia and Zoya Siddiqui from Pakistan also won the Kooshk Artist Residency Awards, but Kan had to replace them when they failed to obtain a visa for Iran after the jury had picked them among the four preliminary winners.

The program has been initiated to emphasize a balance between working in a personal space and working in collaboration with other artists and interacting with viewers and the environment.

Friends celebrate 74th birthday of cartoonist Kambiz Derambakhsh

T I A R T T E H R A N — Friends, fans and relatives gathered at Tehran's Imam Ali (AS) Religious Arts Museum on Friday to celebrate the 74th birthday of Kambiz Derambakhsh, a cartoonist famous for his quick and simple cartoons.

The cartoonist thanked his wife, son and daughter who have tolerated the difficult days with him over the years and expressed his thanks to Mahmud Salahi, the Art and Cultural Organization of Tehran Municipality director, for his special attention and care to artists, the Persian service of Honaronline reported on Saturday.

"The birthday celebrations held annually at the museum are the most precious things I have seen over these years," Derambakhsh said, adding that he is not sad about his age and he believes that a young boy of 18 is still living and working inside his body.

He also paid tribute to painter and illustrator Parviz Kalantari who died last week and called the

artist a piece of the puzzle of Iran's contemporary art. "He was a wonderful man and a great artist, and I want to remember his name here at this ceremony," Derambakhsh remarked.

He went on to say, "I was always busy with painting ever since I was a child. I used to draw on everything; I drew on all the pillows and sheets at home. I was 14 when I began my collaboration with a magazine. I used to wake up at 6 in the morning and make the drawings, and deliver them to the office and then leave for school.

"The drawings used to take a long time to dry. We had a hard time working and nobody helped one another. I am telling these things to let the youth know that their work is much easier now so instead they can spend more time studying," the artist explained.

Veteran graphic designer Bahram Kalhornia was the next speaker on stage. He called Derambakhsh an artist whose works are a great treasure of unique



(Persian) literature.

In his brief words Salahi also said the celebrations are arranged so that families and friends of the artists gather and meet each other. "We intend to remind others that one more year in the artistic life of an artist has passed," he remarked.