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Epic Arbaeen whets ISIS appetite for blood

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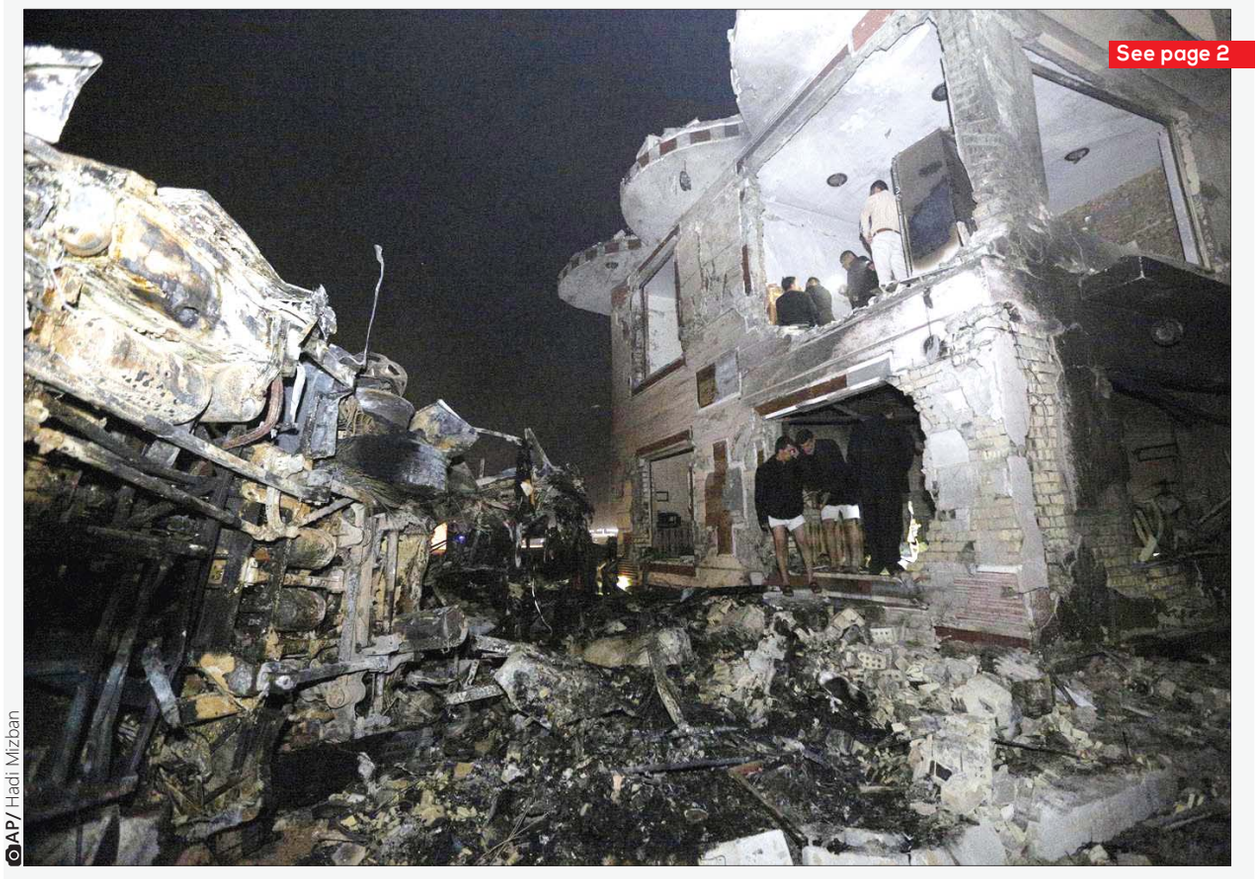


AP/ Hadi Mizban

44 dead, 100 injured as trains collide in Semnan

TT SOCIETY desk **TEHRAN —** At least 44 died and 100 got wounded after two passenger trains collided in Iran's north-central province of Semnan.

So far, 80 of the injured have been transferred to nearby hospitals and 20 got outpatient care, IRNA quoted Mostafa Mortazavi, an official with Iran's Red Crescent Society as saying.

The accident happened when a passenger train in motion crashed to another one that had stopped at the station.

The two trains collided early Friday in Haft-Khan station in the city of Shahroud, about 400 kilometers east of Tehran. Four carriages derailed and two caught fire.

The rescue teams were soon dispatched to the crash site but subzero temperature has made it difficult for rescue forces and firefighters to get to the scene timely, but eventually the firefighters succeeded in putting out the blaze, Ali Yahyaei, a provincial rescue and relief official said.

Additionally, Yahyaei pointed, the Red Crescent helicopters have arrived at the crash site, offering rescue services.

The bodies are completely burnt and are hard to identify and the number of fatalities and casualties are expected to rise, he added. →13

Algerian energy minister to discuss oil output cuts in Tehran

Algeria's Energy Minister Noureddine Boutarfa will meet his Iranian counterpart in Tehran today to discuss implementation of oil output cuts agreed in Algiers in September, an Algerian energy source said on Thursday.

Although Reuters reported that Bouterfa will meet Iranian counterpart Hamid Chitchian, but he is highly likely to meet Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, as well.

"We will do the maximum to secure the implementation of the Algiers' deal," the source said.

Algerian state news agency APS later quoted an energy ministry source confirming the Tehran visit and saying that it would involve discussions on how to reach a consensus among OPEC members when they meet in Vienna on Nov. 30.

At the September meeting, OPEC agreed on modest, preliminary, oil output cuts in the first such deal since 2008, with special conditions given to Libya, Nigeria and Iran.

Iran has refused to cap production below 4 million barrels per day as it seeks to regain market share lost under sanctions.

(Source: agencies)

Jill Stein launches vote recount bid in key U.S. states

The United States presidential candidate Jill Stein has launched an attempt to force recounts in three decisive states that won President-elect Donald Trump the November 8 election.

In a statement on her Twitter account on Wednesday evening, the Green Party leader said allegations of hacking by foreign states and voting anomalies made the results in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania unreliable.

"After a decisive and painful presidential race, in which foreign agents hacked in to party databases, private email servers and voter databases in certain states, many Americans are wondering if our election results are reliable," Stein said.

"That's why the unexpected results of the election and reported anomalies need to be investigated before the 2016 presidential election is certified," she added.

The three states at the center of the recount bid are traditional Democrat strongholds - yet this time voters backed the Republican candidate.

Trump won by around 12,000 votes in Michigan, about 27,000 votes in Wisconsin, and roughly 68,000 votes in Pennsylvania.

Democrat challenger Hillary Clinton leads the popular vote by around 2.1 million ballots, but her defeat in the three states meant that she lost out on their combined 46 electoral votes that would have secured her victory overall.

Stein has already raised $3m of the $7m needed to successfully file recount applications in the three states, at the time of publication.

The possibility of electronic manipulation of ballots in some states was raised by the University of Michigan's J Alex Halderman.

Halderman said the results of the election were "probably not" caused by a cyber-attack, but added ballots should be scrutinized regardless.

Stein has until Friday to file a recount petition in Wisconsin and until next week for the other two states.

Trump is due to take up office on January 20.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Iran: SCO, UN cooperate on conflict resolution, war on terror

TT POLITICS desk Iran's deputy permanent representative to the UN said on Wednesday that currently the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the United Nations are cooperating to resolve conflicts, prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, fight on extremism, etc.

Gholam Hossein Dehghani made the remarks during a speech at an event entitled "The UN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Jointly Countering Challenges and Threats".

"At present, the SCO and the UN co-operate actively in such fields as prevention and resolution of conflicts, fight against terrorism, non-proliferation of WMD, countering transnational crime, and illegal drugs, providing international information security," Dehqhani noted.

Following is full text of Dehqhani's speech:

First of all, I would like to thank Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov of Kazakhstan and the current Chairman of the Shanghai Cooperation organization (SCO), the UN Secretary General and Mr. Rshid Alimov, the SCO Secretary, for organizing this High Level Special Event, entitled: "The United Nations and The Shanghai Cooperation Organization; Jointly Countering Challenges and Threats".

The challenges and threats in our today's world are much more multi-faceted, inter-related and complicated than any time in the past and, thus, it requires a much more shared and collective response at the national, regional and international levels. To this end, more cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations is now much more necessary than any time in the past.

Regional organizations are better positioned to grasp the essence of the issues at hand in a realistic way and provide a better understanding of the facts on the ground. In many cases, they are also equipped with preventive mechanisms customized to the local realities and requirement.

The cooperation between the UN and its regional partners includes an ever growing number of issues. Counter terrorism and violent extremism, drug trafficking. Organized crimes, peace keeping and peace building, countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyber-terrorism, and illegal migration are fields where cooperation between the UN and the regional organizations such as SCO could gain momentum and take place.

The legal framework for interaction between the UN and the SCO on issues of international peace and security in line with Article VIII of the UN Charter was created by the signing of a Joint Declaration on Co-operation between the two Organizations' Secretariats in 2010.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Inflation rate hits 8.6% in Iran

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN —** The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has announced that the inflation rate for the 12-month period ended in the last day of the eight Iranian calendar month of Aban (November 20) compared to the same period in the previous year hit 8.6 percent, Tasnim news agency reported on Friday.

This is while the Statistical Center of Iran had put the figure at 7.5 percent.

The CBI has announced that the inflation rate in the past Iranian calendar year of 1394, which ended on March 19, 2016, compared to its previous year stood at 11.9 percent.

On June 14, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ali Tayyebnia said the country planned to reduce the inflation rate to a single digit by the coming two months.

The goal was achieved in the third Iranian calendar month of Khordad (ended on June 20) when the inflation rate hit 9.5 percent.

Curbing inflation was one of the major promises by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani during his presidential campaign. Under the previous administration, inflation skyrocketed to cross 44%.

Tehran Times/ Seyed Ruhollah Musavi

Farewell to grand Ayatollah

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** On Friday, people and officials said their farewells to the late Ayatollah Seyyed Abdul Karim Mousavi Ardebili who passed away on Wednesday due to a heart failure.

President Hassan Rouhani as well as other senior officials and clerics took part in the funeral service for the prominent religious leader in the holy city of Qom.

Addressing reporters after the ceremony, Rouhani described Ayatollah Mousavi Ardebili as a close companion of the late Imam Khomeini and also of the Supreme Leader.

Rouhani issued a statement on Wednesday, offering condolences over the death of the ayatollah and declared two days of mourning.

Ayatollah Mousavi Ardebili was born on 28 January 1926 in Ardabil, northwestern Iran.

After the Islamic Revolution, he was appointed the chief prosecutor and then head of the judiciary in 1982.

Tractor Sazi moves top, Esteghlal held by Gostaresh

TT SPORTS desk Tractor Sazi football team has moved to the top of the table after a 2-1 win over Saba in the 11th Week of Iran Pro League in Tabriz on Friday.

Mohammad Ebrahimi put the host in front in the 54th minute before Mohammad Iranpourian made it double with a penalty kick twelve minutes later.

Saba midfielder Ahmad Hassanzadeh reduced the deficit in the 71st minute but it wasn't enough as Tractor Sazi grabbed the three points and moved top thanks to the better goal average ahead of Persepolis.

Elsewhere, Gostaresh Foolad came from 2-0 behind to hold Esteghlal in front of more than 10,000 fans at Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Gostaresh defender Mohsen Hosseini scored an own goal in the 14th minute to put Esteghlal in front. Mohsen Karimi made it 2-0 for the Blues in the 23rd minute.

Brazilian striker Luciano Pereira Mendes reduced the deficit for the visitors two minutes before the half time. In the 74th minute Gostaresh keeper Fernando de Jesus Ribeiro was shown a red card after his harsh tackle on Mohsen Karimi.

10-man Gostaresh returned to the game as Alireza Naghizadeh leveled the score line in the 80th minute with a nice shot from inside the box.

Elsewhere, Sanat Naft lost 3-0 to Zob Ahan in Abadan and Padideh edged past Machine Sazi in Mashhad.

On Thursday, Persepolis was held to a goalless draw by Paykan, Naft beat Saipa 2-0, Sepahan was held to 1-1 draw by Foolad and Esteghlal Khuzestan and Siah Jamegan played out a goalless draw.

Condolences

The Tehran Times offers deepest condolences and sympathy to the bereaved families of our compatriots killed in the terrorist attack in Iraq and train collision in central Iran. May God rest their souls.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

U.S. bones are breaking: cleric

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN –** The Friday prayer leader of Tehran has said the renewal of the Iran Sanctions Act is a violation of the nuclear deal, officially called the JCPOA.

"Iran will react," Kazem Seddiqi said, Mehr news agency reported.

Elsewhere in his sermon, he said the U.S. presidential election was a manifestation of "divine wrath" in which "they so divulged each other's records."

He added the U.S. is in the falling. "One can hear its bones are breaking."

Joko Widodo: Indonesia firm to deepen ties with Iran

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** President Joko Widodo said on Friday that Indonesia is determined to expand ties with Iran in various areas.

"Close cooperation with Iran is the Indonesian government's will," he said during a meeting in Jakarta with Mahmoud Vaezi, the Iranian communications and information technology minister.

Widodo also highlighted the importance of cooperation among Islamic countries in countering terrorism.

For his part, Vaezi said terrorist acts are aimed at ruining the image of Islam.

Soleimani: Backing Basij a national duty

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN –** The commander of IRGC Quds Forces has said backing Basij is a "national duty".

Speaking at a Judiciary Basij conference on Wednesday, Qassem Soleimani said undermining achievements made by Basij is an unpardonable sin, Etelaat newspaper reported.

During the Iraqi war on Iran in the 1980s Basij emerged as a considerable force in the war fronts, he underlined.

Islamic movements such as Hezbollah of Lebanon and Palestinian Hamas were spiritually inspired by Basij, the legendary commander noted.

Rezaee: JCPOA proved U.S. is untrustworthy

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** The secretary of the Expediency Council said on Friday that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was a good test to show how untrustworthy the United States is.

"We should make a return to ourselves," Mohsen Rezaei said on Friday.

"One cannot handle the country with hopes and fears. Waiting for America so that we may import technology in order to [make and] export our products is mere dream," he said.

"America would not allow domestic capabilities to be used," Rezaee stressed.

Navy chief says Iran's defense power rising

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN –** The Iranian navy commander has underlined that the Islamic republic will continue to boost its defense capabilities.

"Iran's Naval Forces are capable enough to produce their necessary equipment with the highest technology," Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said on Friday, Fars reported.

Sayyari assured that the Iranian Navy is building modern and advanced equipment for destroyers, missiles and torpedoes. However he maintained that Iran's defense products will serve defensive rather than offensive purposes.

Iran to Djiboutian president: Go read history

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has showed strong response to Djibouti President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh's recent anti-Iran remarks.

Mr. Guelleh should study more history of the region, which is full of lessons that can illuminate the way ahead, spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Friday, IRIB reported.

In a recent interview with Asharq al-Awsat, the Djiboutian president had accused Iran of interventionism in Arab countries, blaming Tehran for much adversity that has ruined the region.

Epic Arbaeen whets ISIS appetite for blood

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** Incensed by an epic Arbaeen, the self-styled Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claimed responsibility in an online statement for a blast in Iraq which killed about 100 people, including 71 Iranian pilgrims.

The terrorist attack happened on Thursday when a booby-trapped truck went off at a petrol station in the city of Hilla 100 km (62 miles) south of Baghdad.

Five pilgrim buses were set afire by the blast, according to police sources. Reportedly, the gas station has a restaurant on its premises popular with travelers.

Iranian pilgrims accounted for most of the death toll. They were en route back to Iran after trooping into Iraq to observe Arbaeen, the 40th day of mourning for Imam Hussein (AS), a grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, and the third Shiite Imam.

This year, more than 2,500,000 Iranian pilgrims headed to Karbala to perform annual rituals in commemoration of Imam Hussein.

According to Iranian officials, at least 71 Iranian pilgrims have been killed.

Death toll is expected to rise.

Scorched corpses are extremely difficult to identify and DNA testing should be used for identification, said Majid Aqababaee, head of the Arbaeen headquarters.

"Because the corpses are shattered and scorched, for the time being it is difficult to identify them, and DNA testing is needed," he explained.

Also, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs Hassan Qashqavi appeared unaware of the latest death toll, saying, "I don't think the exact number of Iranian martyrs will be announced soon before DNA tests are performed."

The latest reports put the number of injured Iranians at 30, all hospitalized in nearby Iraqi hospitals.

"30 Iranians have been injured in the incident, five of whom hospitalized in Shomali and the rest in Hilla," said Ali Asghar Ahmadi, secretary general of Iran's Red Crescent.

The terrorist blast has drawn strong condemnation from Tehran.

President Rouhani condemned the attack, calling for a fiercer response to the blood shedding on the part of Baghdad.

He further underscored that Iran will press ahead with its multipronged efforts to contain terrorism and extremism.

"The Islamic Republic is still determined to stage all-out fight against terrorists and extremists," Rouhani remarked.

Iran's Foreign Ministry also said it was looking into the attack seriously.

"The brutal and inhumane acts will have no impact on the determination of the Iraqi government and nation as well as on Iran standing beside the oppressed Iraqi nation in relentless counterterrorism efforts," read part of an announcement carried on the official website of the Foreign Ministry.

First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri called the terrorist blast one done "out of desperation."

"Without doubt, such inhumane measures will make the Islamic Republic of Iran's nation and administration more determined in supporting the Iraqi government and nation in the war against terrorism," Jahangiri said in a message.

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani also condemned the attack, stressing that Tehran and Baghdad are more resolved than ever to battle terrorism.

"Terrorists and their supporters must know that the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue with its constructive and effective measures to fight terrorism," Larijani said on Friday.

The terrorist blast comes as Iraqi army forces and popular mobilization forces are tightening the noose around ISIS terrorists in Mosul, the group's last bastion in Iraq.

Turkey prepared to Iran tourism industry: envoy

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** Turkey's ambassador to Tehran has said his country is fully prepared to share its expertise in the tourism industry with Iran, ISNA reported on Friday.

"Turkey can also cooperate with Iran in order to share its experience in implementing tourism infrastructure projects, including building hotels," Riza Hakan Tekin said in a meeting with officials from Yazd Province.

He underlined that Iran's tourism infrastructure needs more attention.

The ambassador referred to Yazd, Shiraz, and Isfahan as being among the top destinations for Turkish tourists. Yazd is one of the oldest cities in the world and that Turkish people and officials are well familiar with this ancient Iranian city, he added.

Tourists from all over the world visit cities of Kerman, Yazd, Isfahan, and Shiraz where rich collections of historical sites and natural beauties of the country stand within or nearby.

According to Iranian officials, foreign tourist arrivals in the country have been more than doubled in comparison to global average since the nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), went into effect in January 2016.

In August, Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization announced that about 1750 tourism infrastructure projects are being implemented in Iran.

The organization said that Turkish investors will build ten hotels in Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz and Mashhad, under the terms of an agreement with Iran signed during a Turkish delegation's visit to Tehran in mid-May.

Source dismisses report Iran, U.S. have resumed nuclear negotiations

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** An informed source has dismissed a report that Iran and the U.S. have resumed negotiations on the July 2015 nuclear deal, IRNA reported on Friday.

The news comes a day after the Wall Street Journal claimed the Obama administration and its Western allies are pressing Iran to take steps to cut the amount of radioactive material it holds.

According to the WSJ, the measure is to "shore up last year's nuclear deal and discourage the incoming Trump administration from abandoning it."

"The discussions about reducing Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium started month ago, but have taken on new urgency since the election of President-elect Donald Trump created fresh uncertainty around the nuclear accord," the officials said.

In his presidential campaign, Trump strongly criticized the nuclear deal which was reached between Iran and the P5+1 nations (U.S., France, the UK, Russia, China and Germany), saying he would renegotiate the agreement.

His victory in the 2016 U.S. presidential election further raised international concerns over his campaign promises, including his reaction to the nuclear deal.

Under the deal, also known as the JCPOA, Iran agreed to limit aspects of its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

Iranian officials have on numerous occasions said the current U.S. administration has breached the nuclear deal multiple times.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that extension of U.S. sanctions on the Islamic Republic for another 10 years would surely be against the nuclear deal, warning that Tehran would retaliate if the sanctions are approved.

No Iranian boots in Mosul: IRGC chief

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** The commander of Islamic Revolution Guards Corps said on Thursday that there is no Iranian forces in the Iraqi city of Mosul to fight ISIS because there is no need of it.

"We have no Iranian forces in Mosul's (war) front, because the Iraqi forces are acting so powerfully that there is no need of the Iranian forces," Mohammad Ali Jafari told reporters on the sidelines of the Malek Ashtar festival.

Elsewhere, he said the IRGC will support any decision being taken by Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the government or the parliament if the U.S. violates the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for the nuclear deal.

The Supreme Leader warned on Wednesday that if Washington renews a 10-year extension of existing sanctions against Iran before disbanding for the year, Iran will "definitely" react as it breaches the terms of the nuclear deal.

"...if these sanctions are extended, it will definitely be a violation of BARJAM (JCPOA) and they (the Americans) should know that the Islamic Republic will definitely react to that," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said at a meeting with hundreds of Basij forces in Tehran.

On November 15, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a clean, 10-year extension to the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) by a vote of 419 to 1, mounting pressure on the Senate to follow suit. Senate Democrats favored a 10-year extension akin to the House's measure.

Also, in a campaign speech in March to a conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington U.S. president-elect Donald Trump claimed that his "number one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran". However, he later backed down from his rhetoric saying it was difficult to violate a deal which has been approved by the UN Security Council.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said on November 9 that the JCPOA is a "multilateral agreement" and that she is tasked to guarantee its full implementation.

EU foreign ministers also issued a statement on November 14 reiterating the 28-nation bloc's "resolute" commitment to the implementation of the nuclear agreement.

Iran, Pakistan hold talks on maritime security

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** Top military officials from Iran and Pakistan met in the port city of Karachi on Friday to discuss the importance of security in regional waters.

The talks took place between Mehdi Rabbani, Iranian armed forces deputy chief of staff, and Pakistani Defense Production Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain.

The sides also discussed defense cooperation. The Pakistani side called for carrying out joint naval maneuvers.

The Iranian defense delegation, headed by Brigadier General Rabbani, arrived in Karachi on Tuesday to participate in the 9th International Defense Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS 2016).

Some countries, including Turkey, China, Russia, as well as North American, South American, European, and Asian countries, have displayed military equipment at the exhibition, Fars news agency reported.

418 firms from 34 countries are participating in the event, out of which 157 are Pakistani firms.

Iranian and Pakistani naval forces held joint exercises in Pakistan's territorial waters near the port city of Karachi in October.

Turkish warplanes launch airstrikes on Syrian city of al-Bab

By Staff & agencies

Turkish warplanes have carried out a series of airstrikes on the Syrian city of al-Bab in yet another blatant act of aggression against the sovereignty of Syria.

According to the Turkish military, the airstrikes were conducted against targets in the city of al-Bab, located some 40 kilometers northeast of Aleppo, shortly before 8 a.m. (0500 GMT) on Friday.

The military claimed the attacks targeted the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, adding, it hit seven ISIL positions in the Barakah, Anifah and Abu Hayj regions of northern Syria on Thursday.

Al-Bab is one of the few remaining strongholds of ISIL.

The strikes are part of an ongoing incursion by Turkish military inside northern Syria.

On August 24, Turkish Special Forces, tanks and jets backed by warplanes from the United States-led coalition launched their first coordinated offensive in Syria. On the same day, Damascus strongly denounced the intervention as a breach of its sovereignty.

Senior officials in Damascus have said that any side willing to fight terrorism on the Syrian territory should cooperate with the government and the Syrian army.

The latest strikes were carried out after three Turkish soldiers were killed in the area on Wednesday. Turkey on Thursday claimed that a suspected Syrian airstrike had killed the three.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said on Thursday that Ankara would retaliate against the Syrian army, which has not commented on the developments.

The accusation and the threat of retaliation against Syria came even as the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), a pro-militant monitoring group, said the Turkish soldiers had been killed in an attack by the ISIL terrorists.

Rami Abdulrahman, who runs the Britain-based group, dismissed reports that it was an airstrike, saying that the soldiers were killed during an attack by ISIL in the rural area of al-Bab, near a village called Waqqah on Wednesday.

A fourth soldier reportedly died in clashes with ISIL in the city on Friday.

In its military incursion into Syria, the Turkish military is supporting militants, including the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA), fighting to topple the Syrian legitimate government of President Bashar al-Assad.

Four Turkey-backed Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters were also killed in the incidents in the same area during the past 24 hours, Turkish armed forces said in a statement on Friday.

Hundreds of Turkish troops are taking part in the operation, which President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said this week was pushing forward with the aim of capturing the Syrian city of al-Bab.

Egypt deploys pilots to boost Syrian anti-terror fight: paper

Meantime, Egypt has reportedly sent 18 helicopter pilots to Syria to support the war-torn nation in its fight against terrorism, and mulls more deployments to the same end early next year.

On Thursday, Lebanese As-Safir paper cited "well-informed Arab sources" as reporting that Egypt had dispatched the pilots to an airbase in the western Syria city of Hama on November 12, adding that the contingent was joined by four senior Egyptian military figures upon arrival.

It added that two Egyptian major generals had also been operating at the Armed Forces Staff Headquarters in the Syrian capital Damascus since last month. They have been touring frontlines, including the "Southern Front" in the city of Quneitra.

The daily cited one source "close to the Syria file" as saying that a large deployment of Egyptian troops will arrive in Syria in late January 2017 to take part in military operations "not limited to air support at Hama airbase."

Major General Ali Mamlouk, the head of Syria's National Security Bureau, had paid an official one-day visit to the Egyptian capital, Cairo, in October and held talks with senior Egyptian intelligence officials.

The two sides reached an agreement on "coordinating political standpoints" and improving bilateral "cooperation in the combat against terrorism" during the talks, official Syrian Arab News Agency reported at the time.

A month earlier, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry had announced that Cairo and Riyadh did not share common attitudes vis-à-vis the ongoing crisis in Syria.

While the House of Saud regime and its allies in the Persian Gulf region, particularly Qatar, are financially and militarily supporting the extremists fighting to unseat Syrian President, Egyptian officials have reiterated that the crisis in Syria can only be solved through political means.

On Tuesday, Egyptian President Abdul-Fattah al-Sisi said he supported the Syrian army in its war against terrorists.

Russian military finds mustard gas attack trace in Aleppo

The developments follow as the Russian military's chemical warfare defense unit has once again found traces of chemical arms used by foreign-backed militants against civilians in Syria's northwestern province of Aleppo.

This time, the Russian Troops of Radiological, Chemical and Biological Defense (RChBD), as the unit is known, found an unexploded shell containing mustard gas, RT reported on Friday.

Such projectiles were reportedly used against residents of a village in the province in September, inflicting respiratory injuries on 40 people.

According to RT, the recovered chemical round is a crude homemade 240-mm mortar shell, with a capsule in the rear. The capsule contained from 0.5 to 1.5 liters of a black oily liquid, which proved to be a chemical warfare agent.

On November 11, the Defense Ministry cited the RChBD as saying that it had found similar unexploded projectiles containing "chlorine and white phosphorus" in the 1070 district of Aleppo's capital, which bears the same name as the capital.

In September, the Russian military had warned that terrorist groups might start deploying chemical agents against the city's government-controlled areas.

At least eight people, including five civilians, suffered breathing difficulties in mid-September after ISIL terrorists fired mortar shells containing toxic gases in the towns of Harbal and Um Hosh, north of Aleppo.

Foreign supporters of the militants operating against the Syrian government have repeatedly accused Damascus of resorting to chemical weapons in Aleppo, an allegation strongly denied by Syria and Russia.

The Syrian government turned over its entire chemical stockpile under a deal negotiated by Russia and the United States back in 2013. The United Nations Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has overseen operations to remove the government chemical arsenal from Syria.

Also on Friday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called for further investigation into whether the Syrian government has used chemical weapons before the country comes under sanctions as France has proposed.

Lavrov said a special UN unit had found that many Syrian opposition forces had used chemical weapons, so an investigation should be conducted on whether government forces have done so as well.

Lavrov further said the French proposal essentially seeks to isolate the Syrian government and buy time for the militants, warning that such a plan is against France's national interest.

U.S. soldier killed in northern Syria on Thanksgiving Day

Elsewhere, the U.S. military says one of its service members has been killed in northern Syria as Americans are celebrating Thanksgiving Day.

The United States military's Central Command (CENTCOM) said the soldier succumbed to his wounds on Thursday after being wounded in an improvised explosive device blast in the town of Ain Issa, 50 km (30 miles) north of Raqqah.

The death came as the people in America were celebrating their national holiday of Thanksgiving.

U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter described the death as a "painful reminder of the dangers our men and women in uniform face around the world to keep us safe."

No further details have been provided. U.S. forces are operating in Syria despite Damascus's objection and without co-ordination with the Syrian government.

Russia censures US call for ban on Syria-bound fuel tankers

Russia has also blasted the U.S. for urging other countries to deny port access to Russian oil tankers heading to Syria to deliver fuel to Moscow's jets, which are on anti-terror mission in the country.

ICRC

Vacancy Announcement

The Mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in IRAN is seeking to fill the following vacant position in Tehran:

Public/Media Relations Officer

Main responsibilities

- Develops and maintains professional relation with print, broadcast and online media, and responds to media queries/requests
- Contributes to elaboration and implementation of public communication strategies and plans of actions
- Creates media content on ICRC humanitarian mandate and work
- Liaises with public relations departments of partner organizations
- Contributes to the development and production of dissemination materials for public audience
- Facilitates workshops/events for selected audience

Minimum required knowledge & experience:

- University degree or professional qualification in journalism, public relations and communications, or social sciences
- 4 - 6 years work experience in a similar function
- Fluent in spoken and written English and Farsi
- Excellent verbal and written communication and presentation skills
- Excellent analytical and reporting skills
- Confirmed capacity to analyse the social environment
- Ability to multi-task and work under pressure
- Ability to anticipate and plan, organized, autonomous, meets deadlines, team player, shows initiative, flexible
- Knowledge of humanitarian affairs, and working experience with an international organization is an asset

It should be noted that the position might require travelling (on mission) outside and inside the country.

All interested applicants should submit a letter of interest and a résumé in English to the following email address:

teh_hr_services@icrc.org

ALL submissions MUST be received by the closing date of 15 December, 2016

Please be informed that only shortlisted candidates will be notified for further process.

Blasts kill 6 people in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province

Several bomb blasts in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad have left at least six people dead and more than two dozen others wounded.

Attaullah Khogyani, a spokesman for the provincial governor of the capital of Nangarhar province, said the blasts took place in different parts of the city.

Khogyani said so far there are no indications as to who were behind the attacks.

Nangarhar, located at the junction of the Kabul River and the Kunar River near Laghman valley on the border with Pakistan, has been a main base for the activities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorists in eastern Afghanistan over the past months after they first emerged in the war-torn country last year.

Afghanistan, a landlocked country with a population of approximately 32 million, has been the scene of terrorist activities despite the presence of foreign troops.

Nearly 30 people were recently killed and dozens more wounded in a large bomb blast at a Shia mosque in the Afghan capital, Kabul. Afghanistan's Interior Ministry said the casualties came after an assailant detonated his explosives at the Baqir ul Olum mosque as people were preparing for prayers on November 21. It was the second blast to rock the Afghan capital on that day. Two people had been injured in the first explosion in Bagrami district of Kabul.

The emergence of ISIL in Afghanistan has raised concerns in a country that was already torn apart by decades of Taliban-led militancy and the 2001 invasion of the United States and its allies.

ISIL terrorists are mainly concentrated in Syria and Iraq but they have reportedly managed to take recruits from Taliban defectors in Nangarhar.

In August, ISIL claimed responsibility for a bombing at a Shia demonstration in Kabul, where over 80 people were killed.

Cold snap kills 20 in northern Afghanistan

Separately in Afghanistan's northern province of Jawzjan, which borders Turkmenistan, cold weather and freezing temperatures killed 20 people, mostly children.

Provincial police Chief Rahmatullah Turkistani said the deaths occurred this week in the Darzab district, where there has been heavy snowfall.

The remote area lacks electricity or medical facilities and the road has been cut off by the Taliban militants.

Authorities say aid will be air-delivered as soon as the weather clears up. *(Source: Press TV)*

Lebanese army arrests senior ISIL commander, 10 aides in border raid

Lebanese military forces have arrested a high-profile member of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group along with ten other militants during a mop-up operation in the northeastern town of Arsal on the border with conflict-plagued Syria.

Lebanese soldiers mounted an offensive in the Wadi al-Araneb suburbs of the town, located about 124 kilometers northeast of the capital Beirut, on Friday morning, pounding an ISIL position in the area and inflicting heavy losses on the extremists' ranks.

The Lebanese Army later announced in a statement that the soldiers engaged in fierce clashes with the militants as they stormed the latter's outpost. A senior ISIL commander, identified as Ahmad Youssef Ammoun but better known by the nom de guerre al-Sheikh, was critically wounded during the operation. He was transferred to a nearby hospital aboard a military helicopter.

The statement added that ten other Takfiri terrorists were also arrested, and a large amount of munitions and several explosive belts confiscated in the wake of the offensive.

The Lebanese army further noted that Ammoun was wanted for rigging vehicles with explosives, and then detonating the car bombs into several areas across Lebanon, including Beirut's southern neighborhoods.

President Michel Aoun later praised the military operation, stressing that such offensives "ensure stability and ward off terror plots."

On October 9, Lebanese security forces discovered the body of a high-ranking ISIL commander, identified as Abu Bakr al-Raqqawi, in Wadi Aata district of Arsal.

Raqqawi was purportedly behind the killing of a police officer, identified as First Sergeant Major Zaher Ezzedine, in the area last January. The Lebanese army detained ISIL terrorist commander Imad Yassine in Taware neighborhood of the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain al-Hilweh, located near the southwestern port city of Sidon, on September 22, following fierce overnight clashes between Takfiri terrorists and members of the Palestinian Fatah movement there.

(Source: Press TV)

2 killed, 4 wounded in Louisville, Kentucky, shooting

Two people were killed and four were wounded when gunfire erupted on Thursday at a park crowded with people gathered for a football tournament in Louisville, Kentucky, a police spokesman told reporters.

The police did not have a motive for the two related shootings in Shawnee Park or suspects in custody, spokesman Dwight Mitchell said. Two men were dead at the scene, and the wounded suffered non-life-threatening injuries, he said.

"When you have a tragedy like this take place, certainly it puts a damper on anyone celebrating" the Thanksgiving holiday, Mitchell said.

The shootings took place as hundreds of people gathered in the park along the Ohio River for the annual Juice Bowl Football Tournament, a tradition dating back to the 1950s.

(Source: Reuters)

Tehran to host ibex 2016 in December

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN —** The 10th International Flour and Bakery Industry Exhibition of Iran (ibex 2016) will be inaugurated at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds form December 6 to 9, the portal of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) reported.

As reported, 115 Iranian companies as well as 59 foreign ones from Italy, Germany, France, Turkey, Belgium, Austria, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Russia, Czech Republic, South Korea, Lebanon, and Poland will participate in the event.

U.S. stock futures rise; focus on retail as Black Friday kicks off

U.S. stock index futures were higher on Black Friday, with the focus on retailers to see if they will propel or hit pause on Wall Street's record-setting rally.

Trading is expected to be relatively quiet with the U.S. stock market scheduled to close at 1:00 p.m. ET. The market was shut on Thursday for the Thanksgiving holiday.

The three main U.S. indexes have hit all-time highs and closed at record levels multiple times in the past few days, most recently on Wednesday, when industrial stocks boosted the Dow .DJI and the S&P 500 .SPX to record-high closes.

Thanksgiving and Black Friday kick off the holiday shopping season, which is crucial for retailers as it accounts for as much as 40 percent of annual sales.

Online spending climbed to above $1 billion by Thanksgiving evening, surging almost 14 percent from a year ago, according to Adobe Digital Index.

Shares of Wal-Mart (WMT.N) were up 1.14 percent at $71.64 in light premarket trading. Amazon.com (AMZN.O) inched up 0.32 percent.

China's Ctrip.com (CTRP.O) jumped 9.5 percent to $44.90 after agreeing to buy UK travel search website Skyscanner in a deal valued at around $1.74 billion.

Johnson & Johnson (JNJ.N) edged up 0.4 percent after Bloomberg reported on Thursday that the healthcare company had approached Swiss biotechnology firm Actelion (ATLN.S) about a potential takeover.

Meanwhile, oil prices fell 1.2 percent amid uncertainty that the OPEC would arrive at a decision to cut production during a meeting next week. The dollar .DXY was off 0.28 percent. *(Source: Reuters)*

Italy's banking system needs intensive care

When a crisis has passed, the survivors should be wiser for it. How much Europe learnt from the global financial crisis may be tested soon, in Italy, where the banks are in a perilous state.

Italy and the EU will have to work together to prevent a systemic shock. As a first step, the EU should not insist on a rigid interpretation of its bank bail-in rules — allowing Italy the space it needs to prevent bank collapses and limit the risk of financial and political contagion.

The likelihood that further government intervention will be required is high. Yes, UniCredit, the country's largest bank, is seeking to raise €13bn capital, and Monte dei Paschi, its most troubled large bank, may close a €5bn combined debt-for-equity swap and capital increase this week. But these sums are small compared with the system's needs and the worst problems are concentrated in the smaller banks.

The woes of the banks stem from the Italian economy, which never recovered from the most recent crisis. Gross domestic product per head is 9 percent smaller in real terms than it was in 2007 and is stuck near the levels of two decades ago. Italy staggers under an ageing population and the second highest public debt load in Europe, at more than 130 percent of GDP.

Italy's financial system is based on mutual and co-operative banks which have traditionally put their role in supporting local economies above profitmaking. The country is wildly overbanked, with more branches per capital than any other OECD country. This structure, and the lack of growth, has suppressed profits at all banks and caused non-performing loans to metastasise. There are €360bn of impaired loans in the system, according to the Bank of Italy; €200bn of these are of the worst sort, the non-performing sofferenze. This is a huge number given that there is €225bn in equity on the books of the banking system. And this may understate the rot. Banks close to being bust have reason to mark the value of their assets generously.

There have been efforts at reform and repair. Some mutual banks have merged. Atlante, a €4.25bn government-funded investment fund, has absorbed bad debts. But much more consolidation is needed, and it should be followed by brutal branch-closing and cost-cutting. Atlante has expended nearly all of its buying power already.

If the government were to inject capital into the banking system, EU rules would require — at the very least — that subordinated creditors be converted to shareholders. This would be politically explosive.

Italian banks have long sold their own shares and debt to their retail customers as an attractive alternative to savings products, a disgraceful practice that should never have been allowed. It means that ordinary Italians, many in retirement, have already suffered as bank shares have fallen. They will suffer much more in a bail-in.

The referendum on Matteo Renzi's constitutional reform will take place on December 4. If the result is no, the country will enter a period of uncertainty. Combining political risk with bank collapses could have serious repercussions for all of Europe.

The bail-in of subordinated debt holders could be made palatable if a robust indemnification regime were put in place to protect retail holders up to a certain level. The EU should make sure Italy is free to fund such a scheme.

The situation in Italy will remain fluid and dangerous. This may not be the last time the EU will have to show flexibility. In return, Italy needs to make a firm commitment to a rigorous process of triage through which banks are forced to merge, close or shrink.

(Source: Financial Times)

TCCIMA opens office in Germany's Bavaria

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN —** Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA) opened its office in the southeastern German state of Bavaria, the portal of TCCIMA reported on Friday.

The opening ceremony was attended by TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari and the Executive Vice President and CEO of the Bavarian Industry Association Bertram Brossardt, who hoped that the established office will expand and bolster bilateral economic ties.

Challenges for boosting common banking and financial relations, the low pace of developing ties between German and Iranian companies, as well as the time-consuming visa-issuance procedure was among the other topics of discussion in the meeting.

TCCIMA delegation, which arrived in Bavaria on November 22, has hold talks and meetings with different German officials such as Economic Affairs, Media, Energy and Technology Minister of Bavaria State, Ilse Aigner.

India's cash crisis could kill its economic boom

India's chaotic move to replace most of its cash could slam the brakes on its red hot economy.

The country overtook China as the world's fastest growing major economy this year, but may fall behind again as the withdrawal of big rupee notes hurts business activity.

Analysts estimate India's shock decision to scrap its 500 rupee and 1,000 rupee notes -- accounting for about 86 percent of cash in circulation -- will shave at least 1 percent (and possibly much more) off India's current GDP growth rate of 7.1 percent.

"A 3 percent dip in the growth rate [for the current financial year] wouldn't surprise me," Pronab Sen, India's former chief statistician, told CNNMoney. Sen is country director for India at the International Growth Centre in London.

If that happens, India would almost certainly lose its crown to bigger rival China.

"The impact on GDP growth is clearly going to be negative in the short run," said Thomas Rookmaaker of Fitch Ratings.

How big a hit the economy will suffer "depends to a large extent on how long the cash crunch is going to take," Rookmaaker added.

No end in sight

It doesn't show signs of ending anytime soon. According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), over 5 trillion rupees ($74 billion) in old cash has been sucked out of the economy since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's abrupt announcement on Nov. 8.

So far, only 1 trillion rupees ($15 billion) have been replaced by new 500 and 2,000 notes -- equivalent to just 7 percent of the value of the defunct cash. The new notes are too small for ATMs, and refitting the machines will take weeks.

The Indian government has given people 50 days -- until Dec. 30 -- to exchange old notes. But daily and weekly limits apply.

In a country where close to 90 percent of transactions take place in cash, the shock will reverberate a while longer.

"Unavailability of notes and restrictions on withdrawals have made it difficult to carry out transactions, even for those who have legitimate wealth," Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist for HSBC, said in a recent note.

Sectors such as retail, construction and real estate rely heavily on cash and contribute about 30 percent of GDP, according to the Institute of International Finance. It estimates that the hit to those areas of the economy could pull growth down by more than 2 percent over the next two quarters.

Rupee sinks to record low

The economic fallout helped push the rupee to a record low of 68.86 to the U.S. dollar on Thursday, despite reports that the RBI was selling dollars to stop the slide.

Modi is hoping the rupee note switch will reduce tax evasion and money laundering. It still appears to have solid support among Indian voters. And analysts say the long term impact, if coupled with further policy changes, could be good for the economy.

"The [negative] impact might well be mitigated once the supply of the new notes has improved," said Shilan Shah, India economist at Capital Economics.

"I think the impact over the longer term is probably going to be quite positive, given that it's a fairly strong reflection of the government's anti-corruption drive," he added.

(Source: CNN)

Japan economic indicators seen steady but slow in Oct.

Japan's industrial output was expected to show little change in October, a Reuters poll found, suggesting uninspiring domestic and external demand hampered a steady recovery in production.

Industrial production was seen likely to slip 0.1 percent in October from the previous month, the Reuters poll of 20 analysts showed, after a 0.6 percent rise in September and a 1.3 percent growth in August.

"Compared with last year and around early this year, the trend of factory output has recovered," said Toru Suehiro, senior market economist at Mizuho Securities.

"But it has not returned to a steady recovery path due to sluggish domestic and external demand."

Analysts say production in sectors such as transport equipment and electronic parts and devices likely stayed solid, but weak exports probably undermined sectors like business- oriented machinery.

The trade ministry will release factory output at 8:50 a.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 30 (2350 GMT, Nov. 29).

The poll found the pace of decline in retail sales and household spending was likely to slow in October but both indicators were nonetheless expected to fall for an eight straight month.

Retail sales were seen falling 1.2 percent in October from a year earlier and household spending likely slipped an annual 0.6 percent, according to the poll.

"Private consumption stayed sluggish but it seems to have hit the bottom and it is in the phase of whether it will return to a moderate recovery," said Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute. *(Source: Reuters)*

PICTURE OF THE DAY — **IRNA/***Mohammad Babaiee*

The 16th International Exhibition of Household Appliances opened at Tehran International Permanent Fairgrounds on Thursday in the presence of the Iranian Industry Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh. Hundreds of domestic and foreign companies are participating in the event which will run until November 27.

Iran's logistics industry forecast to worth over $45b by 2020

The size of the Iranian logistics industry will exceed $45 billion by 2020.

Revival of economic growth is expected as phasing out of restrictions improves investor confidence, leading to consistent growth of the logistics industry from 2017.

"This industry is expected to benefit from investments related to the Iran's Sixth Development Plan, which is likely to accelerate domestic economic activities, and contribute to the development of transportation infrastructure."

Iran is a key logistics hub in the region due to geographical location advantages, with access to Europe and Asia by land route, improving connectivity and trade relations with landlocked countries in Central Asia.

Proposed logistics parks in border areas are expected to transform the warehousing segment during the forecast period, from 2016 to 2020.

(Source: frost.com)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Airbus hopes to deliver up to 80 A350 aircraft in 2017

Airbus (AIR.PA) tentatively aims to deliver as many as 80 A350 jetliners in 2017, two people familiar with the plans said on Friday.

The target marks a new stage in ambitious plans to raise output of the company's newest long-haul jet to 10 a month in 2018, but depends mainly on how successful suppliers will be in curbing delays in cabin equipment.

An Airbus spokesman declined to comment on the provisional thinking on deliveries for 2017, which would equate to production of just under 7 aircraft a month.

Airbus is expected to give details of its 2017 delivery plans in February.

British wage growth looks 'dreadful' after Brexit - IFS

Britain's wage growth prospects look "dreadful", a leading think tank said on Thursday, after official economic forecasts showed workers were unlikely to recoup losses suffered after the financial crisis within the next five years.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies - a think tank focussed on budget issues - said Wednesday's forecasts showed wages in 2021 would be lower than in 2008, after adjusting for inflation - a stagnation with no precedent since at least World War Two.

At a briefing to analyse the forecasts and Chancellor Philip Hammond's first budget statement, IFS director Paul Johnson said: "I cannot stress enough how extraordinary and dreadful that is."

Brazil president Michel Temer accused of corruption

Brazil's President Michel Temer has been accused of pressuring a cabinet minister to engage in corrupt practices.

Former Culture Minister Marcelo Calero said Mr Temer asked him to help another minister in a personal business deal.

He said he was asked to allow construction of luxury apartments in a historic district of Salvador.

Mr Calero, who resigned last week, had previously blocked the plans. President Temer has denied the allegations.

However, he admitted talking to Mr Calero about the project.

India Essar's Oct. oil imports from Iran rise 86% yr/yr: trade

Essar Oil, the top Indian buyer of Iranian crude, imported about 86 percent more Iranian oil in October compared to a year ago, according to tanker arrival data obtained from trade sources and ship-tracking services on the Thomson Reuters terminal.

The company's crude purchases from Latin America in October rose 3.6 percent from a year ago, the data showed. A group led Russian oil giant Rosneft earlier this month agreed to acquire a 98 percent stake in Essar Oil and associated port and power plant for about $13 billion, including debt.

Rosneft may supply Venezuelan oil to Essar's Vadinar refinery after a deal to buy a stake in the Indian company is finalized, the Indian company's managing director, L. K. Gupta, told Reuters in August.

Essar shipped in about 250,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil from Iran last month, a growth of about 89.5 percent from about 132,000 bpd a year ago, the data showed.

(Source: Reuters)

OPEC's last push for oil deal shifts focus to Iran, Russia

OPEC's final push to implement the Algiers supply accord and boost oil prices shifted focus to Iran and non-members such as Russia as Iraq appeared to reverse its opposition to output cuts.

The extension of shuttle diplomacy -- including a visit to Tehran from an architect of the September agreement and an unusual Vienna breakfast with non-OPEC ministers -- comes after an OPEC committee failed this week to hammer out details of how producers will share the burden of cuts. With less than a week until the crucial Vienna ministerial meeting, the refusal of just one major producer to participate could scuttle the whole deal.

Even if Iraq, second only to Saudi Arabia in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, is on board, other obstacles remain. Iran, the group's third-largest producer, is insisting it should be allowed to keep increasing output to pre-sanctions levels of about four million barrels a day. Russia's offer to freeze production at record levels -- if OPEC does a deal -- isn't good enough for some members who are asking for a cut.

"The change of direction in the positioning of Iraq increases the likelihood of an OPEC agreement," said Olivier Jakob, managing director of Zug, Switzerland-based consultant Petromatrix GmbH. "The sound bites of different oil ministers have not been enough to build confidence in OPEC and the market has turned into full wait-and-see mode."

Algeria's Energy Minister Noureddine Boutarfa will travel to Tehran on Saturday in an effort to bring a deal closer, said a person familiar with the matter, who asked not to be identified because the information isn't public. Algeria is the ninth-largest producer in OPEC and has limited international clout, but in September played a central role in clinching the preliminary agreement on output cuts that had eluded its more formidable counterparts throughout the two-year oil slump.

Boutarfa will also meet his Iraqi counterpart in Vienna on Nov. 28 or 29, although that country is now less of a problem after positive statements from Baghdad, the person said.

Oil prices rose Wednesday as Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi said his country would shoulder part of the burden of output cuts. That assertion still leaves unresolved the significant issue of exactly how much the country would reduce, and from what level, said a Persian Gulf OPEC delegate. Iraq has been disputing the OPEC supply estimates that would form the basis of cuts, saying they underestimate its production.

OPEC has asked non-members to cut production by 500,000 barrels a day, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak told reporters in Moscow Thursday. The need for a reduction of that size was reiterated by OPEC's Economic Commission Board, a panel of officials that makes recommendations for the ministerial meeting, according to an OPEC delegate.

The role of Russia is going be critical in shaping a deal, said Emmanuel Kachikwu, Nigeria's minister of state for petroleum, but Novak still insists the nation is only willing to freeze at current record levels.

In a final effort to secure cooperation from non-members -- essential if supply cuts are to make a serious dent in the oil surplus next year -- OPEC will take the unusual step of holding a breakfast meeting in Vienna with ministers from countries including Russia, just moments before the group's own top officials gather to hammer out the final terms of what could be the first production cuts in eight years, according to two people familiar with the matter.

(Source: Bloomberg)

PICTURE OF THE DAY **SHANA**/*Narges Mokhtar*

SP phase 19 gas recovery increases to 460 mcm

TT ECONOMY desk

TEHRAN – South Pars's phase 19 which according to Iran's Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) equals to two standard phases in giant South Pars oilfield (which Iran shares with Qatar in Persian Gulf) has increased production to 460 million cubic meters (mcm) in last few months. Having this phase completely operational will add about two billion cubic feet (57 million cubic meters) to South Pars's total gas output.

South Pars is divided into 24 standard phases, of which phases 1-10, 12, 15 and 16 are fully operational. Phases 17 and 18 as well as 19 are operating at half capacity.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

Iran, Indonesia call for mutual oil, gas, petchem co-op

TT ECONOMY desk

TEHRAN — Iran and Indonesia are willing to expand mutual cooperation in various fields especially oil, gas and petrochemicals, IRNA quoted Iranian Communications and Information Technology Minister Mahmoud Vaezi as saying.

According to the report Vaezi who is visiting the Southeast Asian county to attend the 12th round of Iran-Indonesia Joint Economic Committee meeting, made the remarks after a meeting with Indonesian Energy and Mining Minister Ignasius Jonan on Friday.

In the meeting the Iranian minister mentioned Iran-Indonesia good relations in all areas including oil and gas and said that both countries are determined to boost trade relations and in this regard the joint economic committee meeting could play an important role.

"Considering the two countries' experiences in oil and gas areas and also Indonesia's great market for this industry, Iran and Indonesia's cooperation in this sphere could help boosting the two countries trade turnover," Vaezi said.

The Iranian chairman of the 12th Iran-Indonesia Joint Economic Committee meeting further stressed Iranian companies' capabilities and capacities and said, "Iranian companies are willing to participate in energy and infrastructure projects in Indonesia."

Jonan for his part welcomed the development of cooperation in all fields including oil and gas, electricity and minerals, saying "The ministry is also committed to previous agreements between the two countries and will continue cooperating with the Iranian side."

The Indonesian minister also expressed satisfaction and support for the participation of Iranian companies in various projects including the construction of refineries and other oil and gas infrastructures in his country.

Indian Oil plans $5.5 billion expansion of refinery co-owned by Iran

An Indian Oil Corp unit plans to invest $5.5 billion to gradually raise the capacity of its smallest refinery co-owned by Iran to 300,000 barrels per day (bpd), its chairman said, to help meet a surge in demand for refined products in the world's fastest growing major economy.

The Nagapattinam plant operated by IOC's subsidiary Chennai Petroleum Corp requires a complete overhaul to produce the cleaner, higher grade fuels needed to meet rising demand in southern India, said B. Ashok, chairman of the two firms.

India, seen as the most important driver of world energy demand growth in the years to come, is building new refineries and expanding a number of existing plants to meet demand.

According to a 2015 report by the International Energy Agency (IEA), India will require up to 329 million tons of oil products annually by 2030. As of last year India consumed 183 million tons of refined products, government data showed.

The government is also planning a countrywide switch to the use of cleaner transport fuels compliant with Euro IV emission standards from April and with the Euro VI standards from April 2020.

CPCL's two plants, in which Iran's Naftiran Intertrade Co Ltd has a 15.4 percent stake, are located in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

Initially the oil processing capacity of the Nagapattinam plant will be raised to between 120,000 bpd and 180,000 bpd and in the next phase to 300,000 bpd, Ashok said.

Nagapattinam site has extra land available that makes expansion easier to accommodate than at CPCL's bigger 210,000 bpd Manali refinery, Ashok said.

IOC, the country's biggest refiner, has already announced separate plans to spend 500 billion rupees ($7.3 billion) by 2022 to raise its refining capacity by about 30 percent to 2.08 bpd.

Expansion of the Nagapattinam plant is not a part of that plan and IOC is also now considering raising the capacity of its Panipat refinery in northern India to 500,000 bpd from the initially planned 400,000 bpd.

Ashok said a proposal for the Nagapattinam project is likely to be considered by the board in three to four months after the preliminary studies are completed.

Asked about the cost of the plant he said, "The thumb rule is that setting up a million tons of capacity costs 25 billion rupees".

(Source: Reuters)

Eni to restart work in Iran when debt repaid, contracts known

Italian oil major Eni will start working again in Iran when it has been repaid investments previously made and when it understands the type of contracts Teheran will be offering, CEO Claudio Descalzi said on Thursday

"We are still in Iran... we never left... because they owe us a load of money and we are trying to recoup it ... We'll come back when we will have recouped all our money and we know the contracts," Descalzi said in a meeting with students.

Iran for years has been using oil to pay back Eni for decade-old deals.

"We're not in a hurry to go back but ... we will restart work in Iran," Descalzi added. *(Source: Reuters)*

Oil companies shoulder pain of downturn with lower output

The world's listed oil companies have slashed oil output by 2.4 percent so far this year during one of the industry's worst downturns as OPEC battles to agree on its first production cut since 2008.

The aggregated production of 109 listed companies that produce more than a third of the world's oil fell in the third quarter of 2016 by 838,000 barrels per day from a year earlier to 33.88 million bpd, data provided by Morgan Stanley showed.

By comparison, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries produced 33.64 million bpd in October. OPEC has struggled to agree on a joint production freeze or cut to support oil prices before its Nov. 30 meeting in Vienna.

In the second quarter of 2016, the companies reduced production by nearly 930,000 bpd, according to Morgan Stanley.

The firms include national oil champions of China, Russia and Brazil, international producers such as Exxon Mobil and Royal Dutch Shell, as well as U.S. shale oil producers like EOG Resources and Occidental Petroleum.

The drop in oil companies' output is particularly compelling given the increase in 2015, when third-quarter production rose by some 1.9 million bpd.

"Clearly, we have seen a large swing in the year-on-year trend in production, from strong growth as recent as a year ago, now to steep decline. This is the outcome of the strong cutbacks in investment," Morgan Stanley equity analyst Martijn Rats said.

Capital expenditure for the companies combined more than halved from $136 billion in the third quarter of 2014 to $58 billion in the same period this year, according to Rats.

Oil executives and the International Energy Agency have warned that a sharp drop in global investment in oil and gas would result in a supply shortage by the end of the decade.

Large oilfields, such as deepwater developments off the coasts of the United States, Brazil, Africa and Southeast Asia, typically take three to five years and billions in investment to develop. *(Source: Reuters)*

France needs someone to stop Le Pen

On Sunday, France's Republican Party will choose its candidate for the presidential election next spring. Opinion polls say that the Republicans are so far ahead that the party, in effect, is about to name the next president -- either Alain Juppe or Francois Fillon, former prime ministers offering not-too-dissimilar conservative programs.

The polls, for once, had better be right. The likely alternative to either of those men would be disastrous -- and not just for France. Support for the Socialist party has collapsed: President Francois Hollande's approval rating stands (if that's the right word) at 4 percent. So the Republican nominee is likely to face Marine Le Pen, leader of the populist National Front. She's France's answer to Donald Trump, except with more self-discipline, added xenophobia and a clearer sense of purpose. If she wins, the European Union would be badly and perhaps fatally wounded. By comparison, Brexit would be a minor nuisance.

Le Pen celebrated Britain's vote to quit last June as the beginning of the end for the EU -- a project she's called "objectively a total failure." An EU without France, which designed and built the EU alongside Germany, is objectively a hard thing to imagine. A National Front victory would shake Europe more violently than Trump's win has rocked the U.S.

The polls suggest that either Fillon or Juppe ought to beat her easily -- but there are many unknowns. It's unclear who will stand for the Socialists, for example, or whether Emmanuel Macron (who quit the government earlier this year and leads a new party) will gather strong support. Right now, though, the threat from Le Pen looks real.

Fillon did surprisingly well in the first round of the primary, and seems well-placed to beat Juppe for the nomination -- which is good, because he'd be the stronger rival to Le Pen. Compared with Juppe, he's no friend of multiculturalism or the European Commission. He takes a hard line on "Islamic totalitarianism." He says immigrants should assimilate, wants to curb immigration from outside the union, and proposes to reform (though not dismantle) the EU's system for borderless intra-EU travel. This puts him in a better position to stop conservative support from leaching to Le Pen.

Fillon's proposed tough-love economic reforms -- including labor-market deregulation -- also have the advantage of being just what France needs. The country may even be ready for them.Le Pen isn't Europe's only populist insurgent, and dealing with this dangerous swelling of discontent isn't a job for French politicians alone. The EU's other member governments and institutions need to recognize the doubts that many citizens have about the project. Without pandering or surrendering, they need to show they're listening. Ignoring these worries failed with Brexit. The union cannot afford to make the same mistake with France.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Colombia and the FARC have another peace deal, and this one's not being left up to a referendum

By Ana Campoy

Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos and representatives from FARC have hammered out another peace deal to replace one that was rejected through a plebiscite Oct. 2. This time, they're not asking the Colombian people to weigh in directly.

The negotiating parties are set to sign the new agreement to end the country's 52-year civil war on Nov. 24. It will then go straight to congress for approval.

"Lives have been lost and many more are in danger," said Santos in a video address (link in Spanish) on Nov. 22. "We have to act. There's no time to lose."

It took the negotiating parties four years of talks in Havana, Cuba to come up with the original deal (Spanish), a 297-page document that addressed how guerrilla members would be brought to justice and victims restituted. It was also an ambitious plan to redefine power structures in Colombia, giving civil groups lots of room to weigh in on policy making. It contained an agrarian reform plan. It sought gender equality.

And it proved to be too revolutionary for the slight majority of Colombian voters: 50.2% voted "no" vs. 49.8 for "yes." But a whopping 62% of eligible voters didn't show up at the polls.

The plebiscite results were a shock to president Santos, who just a few days before had signed the agreement with the FARC with great fanfare. Still, almost immediately after the results came in, he was meeting with "no" supporters to hear their concerns. Five days later, he won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Last week, his government and FARC unveiled their new deal. It contains 273 changes (Spanish) from the initial version, per political analysis site La Silla Vacía.

They include ratcheting back opportunities for citizen participation to address fears that too much of that could paralyze decision-making. It also makes it more difficult to prosecute people who funded the paramilitary groups, including businessmen who paid them for protection.

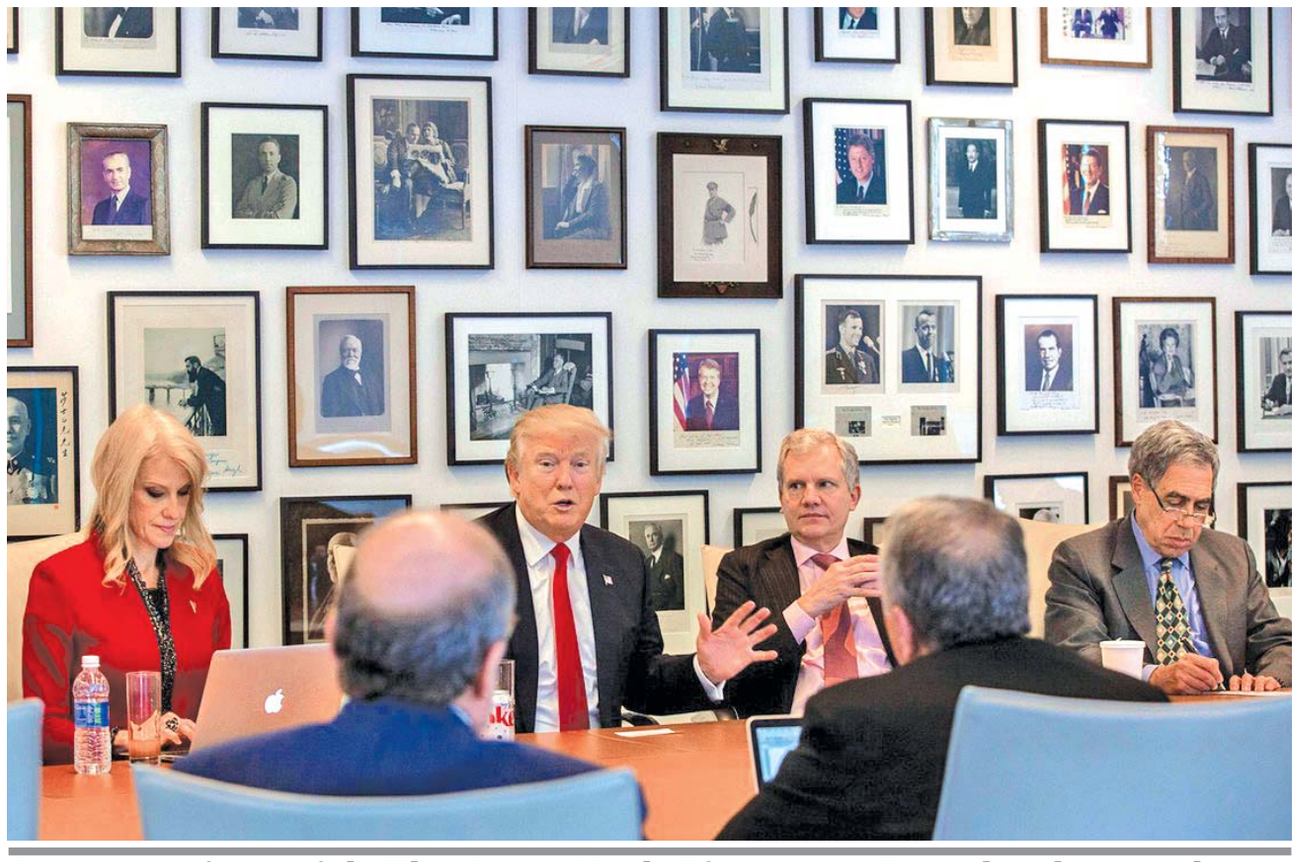
Under the original deal, anyone who had a "habitual or determinant participation" in crimes committed by paramilitaries was subject to prosecution. The original agreement heavily emphasized gender to address crimes perpetrated against women during the conflict, and also acknowledged the rights of the LGBT community.

In the new version, phrases that included the term "gender," which had agitated the religious far right, were modified so as not to offend their sensibilities. In one section, for example, "gender equality" was substituted with "equal opportunity for men and women." Despite all this, some, including former president Alvaro Uribe, a prominent leader of the "No" campaign, say the revised text still doesn't assuage all their concerns. His party, the Democratic Center, has called the decision to send what it perceives to be an imperfect deal to congress "an outrage" (Spanish) and is vowing to fight it.

(Source: Quartz)

Five dark clouds hanging over Trump presidency

By Frida Ghitis



In a meeting with The New York Times on Tuesday he made an attempt to distance his campaign from extremists. But there is no question the election awakened waves of bigotry around the country.

People everywhere have been wondering what kind of president Donald Trump will make. Will his shocking statements during the campaign turn out to have been political theater, or a sign of what's to come?

Well, a couple of weeks into the transition, there's much to suggest that what we saw was no act, and that President Trump will implement policies that embody many of the most disturbing traits and statements displayed by candidate Trump.

The list is long, but here are five of the most troubling things we are already seeing:

A welcome mat for extremism

Last week, America's reinvigorated neo-Nazis held a jubilant gathering to celebrate the rise of their beloved Trump. Snapping arms in the Nazi salute, some declared "Hail Trump, hail our people, hail victory!"

By victory, of course, they mean the incoming Trump presidency. The group's leader, Richard Spencer, head of the National Policy Institute, has reportedly called for "peaceful ethnic cleansing," with a view to bringing America back to its white, European roots.

Spencer and his ilk describe themselves as the "alt-right," a deceptively anodyne term that masks an ugly white supremacism. Indeed, Spencer has quoted Nazi propaganda about Jews, the media, and others, and when he called on the crowd to use "the original German," he wasn't talking about the language of Goethe. They shouted "Lugenpresse," the Nazi term for critics in the media, meaning "lying press."

We don't know how Trump feels about his most distasteful backers. In a meeting with The New York Times on Tuesday he made an attempt to distance his campaign from extremists. But there is no question the election awakened waves of bigotry around the country. Yes, his spokesman issued a statement saying Trump condemns racism. But why is it the President-elect can find the time to personally criticize "Saturday Night Live" and "Hamilton" via Twitter, yet struggles to squeeze in condemnation of some of the ugliest talk imaginable about minorities and women in America?

A hotbed for conflicts of interest

Trump's failure to release his tax returns and the countless lawsuits against him cast a shadow over his campaign. But the Trump presidency risks bringing unprecedented levels of corruption to the U.S. government.

It is troubling enough to know that Trump is likely to allow his children to run the business rather than setting up a blind trust. But he is already including these same children in top-level meetings and calls with world leaders. In addition, he has taken time off from building a government to meet his partners from India, and suggested Tuesday that he may have lobbied Scotland against a wind farm near his golf course. And then there is Trump's hotel in Washington, which has reportedly hired a new "director of diplomatic sales." Already, foreign dignitaries appear to see stays as a way of currying favor with the President-elect.

The conflicts of interest are rolling along like an unstoppable freight train headed for a collision with the Constitution's Emoluments Clause.

But the issue goes beyond any actual efforts by Trump to enrich himself. A sense of corruption at the highest levels would be disastrous for America. And the truth is that Trump apparently doesn't understand the problem. He tweeted that we all knew about his businesses around the world, and that only the "crooked media" minds. On Tuesday, he allegedly told The New York Times: "The law's totally on my side, the president can't have a conflict of interest."

Free press, free speech under attack Attacking the media was a crowd pleaser at campaign rallies, and the undermining of professional journalists looks set to become a primary strategy under chief strategist Steve Bannon.

Trump, clearly, has little respect for the First Amendment. When asked about his commitment to it on Tuesday by The New York Times, he claimed, "I think you'll be happy." But the day before, in a most inappropriate use of his position, he was relentlessly attacking the media, including individual outlets, in what seemed to be an effort to intimidate potential critics and undercut their credibility.

Donald Trump is about to become the world's most powerful man, yet he has busied himself attacking television comics, award-winning professional journalists and Broadway actors. If he didn't want to be criticized then he ran for the wrong job. A man with such a low tolerance for criticism is a threat to everyone's freedom of speech.

A hazy view of the world

It was easy to overlook candidate Trump's simplistic and contradictory foreign policy pronouncements. But now that he has been elected, the world is on edge, especially as Trump's objectives for America are astonishingly hazy.

With Trump seemingly prepared to throw in America's lot with Russia, it seems possible the biggest winners will be the most dangerous regimes. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said Trump may be a "natural ally." Trump, who says he wants to focus only on destroying ISIL, may end up throwing America's weight behind the axis of destruction in Syria.

Meantime, in Europe, America's allies are wondering how much he respects NATO, the alliance that has underpinned global security since World War II.

Turning back the clock on the environment

Trump's pre-election statements on the environment could not have been more alarming. Trump has dismissed climate change as a Chinese invention aimed at hurting America. True, during his New York Times interview he allowed that there is "some connectivity," between human activity and the climate. But the man overseeing the transition for the Environmental Protection Agency, Myron Ebell, heads an organization The New York Times notes is funded "in part by the coal industry," reminiscent of the tobacco-funded think tanks that used to challenge the idea that cigarettes are harmful. Ebell, who like Trump vows to dismantle environmental protections, is a climate denier. But if temperatures rise, he wrote, fewer people will die from the cold, and people will rather enjoy the balmy weather.

Of course, it is early yet. Trump has consistently shown a willingness to abandon past pledges, and the weight of the job could change the man. But so far, the signs are not good. Trump has already given America -- and the world -- plenty to worry about before he even takes office.

(Source: CNN)

When will Myanmar stop persecuting the Rohingya?

The Myanmar government has every right to respond to an attack on its police force. But what human rights groups and UN officials have decried is Myanmar's scorched-earth tactics.

A little more than a year ago, Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy party were swept to a landmark election victory in Myanmar. As the country has progressed down the path toward full-fledged democracy, however, it has not made equal strides on human rights.

Witness how Suu Kyi's government has completely locked down an impoverished and strife-ridden portion of the country — home to many of the country's Rohingya Muslim population, one of the world's most persecuted groups — in the name of national security.

The lockdown occurred after attacks on three border posts in the Maungdaw township of Myanmar's Rakhine state left nine police officers dead early last month. According to a statement from the Ministry of Information, interrogations of two attackers led officials to conclude that the attacks were part of an elaborate terrorist plot to take over that part of Rakhine state. Human rights groups and news media have not been able to verify any part of that account.

The Myanmar government has every right to respond to an attack on its police force. But what human rights groups and U.N. officials have decried is Myanmar's scorched-earth tactics.

Since the lockdown, according to Human Rights Watch, at least 100 people have been killed and 1,250 homes and other structures have been burned. Some groups say the military burned the houses. The military says Rohingya militants have burned their own villages. Hundreds have been arrested, humanitarian assistance in Maungdaw township has been curtailed, and thousands have fled their destroyed villages, many crossing the northern border into Bangladesh. Officials of the U.N.'s World Food Program say they were allowed to distribute food for two days earlier this month, but officials still worry about future access. The recipients of aid in this rural area are impoverished Rohingya Muslims who, by virtue of Myanmar's longstanding refusal to allow them citizenship, are restricted in their travel and largely rely on food aid to survive.

The United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar and Samantha Power, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, have called for international observers to be allowed to investigate the allegations of abuse and violence and for humanitarian aid to resume.

Even as Myanmar has transitioned over the years from a military government to a democratic one, it has yet to transition out of its state-sanctioned discrimination against the Rohingya Muslim minority. This period of violence is another indication of the government's disgraceful treatment of the Rohingya and a disappointing sign that Suu Kyi cares little about changing that situation.

Former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, whom Suu Kyi asked last summer to head a commission on the problems in Rakhine state, issued a statement noting that "recent events have reinforced the urgency of tackling these challenges." He's got that right. Perhaps he can convince Suu Kyi to allow relief agencies and journalists back into the township, and to stop ignoring allegations of abuse by the military.

(Source: LAT)

Germany's Hermes returns to Iran

By Maryam Azish

The Islamic Republic of Iran always has been considered as an eye-catching and money-spinning market for several European countries like Germany offering not only 80 million people it has but also a 400-million-people marketplace it can provide access to.

Thanks to being the safest and the most secure country in the region, Iran enjoys significantly high number of young population and educated people which make it a promising trading partner and market for foreign investments.

Following the termination of the nuclear deal between Iran and great powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the European Union countries, Germany in particular, are trying to foster their economic cooperation with the Islamic Republic.

For decades before sanctions were imposed, Germany, which enjoys the largest economy in Europe with a nominal gross domestic product in 2016 of $3.5 trillion, was Iran's major trading partner.

This is while the gap in Iranian imports from Germany and other Western countries was subsequently filled by Chinese, Korean and Middle Eastern competitors, and now thanks to the removal of nuclear-related sanctions against Iran, economic ties between Tehran and Berlin have been flourished.

Germany's Hermes returns to Iran

On Nov. 15, Director for Investment of National Petrochemical Company (NPC) Hossein Alimorad reported on an agreement with Germany's Hermes Insurance Company to provide insurance coverage for investment projects in Iranian petrochemical industries.

Hermes cover is a common way of referring to an export credit guarantee (ECG) by the German government. These guarantees are an important part of German foreign trade policy and protect German companies in the event of non-payment by foreign debtors. The export credit guarantees of the Federal Republic of Germany offer an array of insurance options which are mainly targeted at exports to developing countries and emerging markets.

Alimorad described the most major plans for attraction of investment to the country's petrochemical industry saying "a contract has been recently inked with Japan's Marubeni Corporation to reopen a 320-million-euro Line of Credit (LOC)," adding new negotiations with yet another Japanese firm to reopen an LOC worth 640 million euros asserting "talks with the Japanese side are in final stages of drafting the contract which is estimated to be sealed within weeks."

He also pointed to the visit of an Iranian delegation to Berlin at the invitation of Iran's Embassy in Germany; "the trip aims to launch a fresh round of negotiations with banks, insurance firms as well as companies willing to make direct investment in the Iranian petchem industry."

"Final agreement has been reached with Germany's Hermes Insurance firm in the course of recent talks," stressed Alimorad noting that the German side has agreed to take out insurance against new investments in petrochemical industries of Iran.

The NPC official also touched upon the held talks with German banks on attracting investment to the industry stating "a short-term scenario has been finalized based on which investment attraction will be performed under the guarantee of NPC as the government's representative."

In response to a question on the amount of investment by German companies, NPC's director for investment said in the first step, agreement has been reached on re-opening three billion euros of LOC while three to six more billion euros are expected to be opened in the second phase.

The situation created after the JCPOA is a good chance for the country's exporters and producers to collaborate with foreign companies and the reputable brands.

For decades before sanctions were imposed, Germany, which enjoys the largest economy in Europe with a nominal gross domestic product in 2016 of $3.5 trillion, was Iran's major trading partner.

"Negotiations have also been conducted with German firms on making 12 billion euros of new investment in Iran's petrochemical industry in addition to the three-billion-euro Line of Credit," reiterated Alimorad adding "two senior officials of a giant German petchem company will soon travel to Tehran in order to finalize earlier talks as well as to evaluate NPC's proposed economic projects."

Iran's debt to Hermes cleared

June 20, 2016, Islamic Republic's ambassador to Berlin Ali Majedi said Iran has paid its debt to the German Euler Hermes credit institution, adding there are no more barriers on the way of German banks and companies' cooperation with Iranians.

According to media reports, Iran owed Germany about €500 million ($578.90 million) under so-called Hermes covers.

Iranian banks and companies faced difficulties for transferring money during the sanctions' era and foreign credit insurance agencies had to cover Iranian banks' and companies' due payments and now the government has to settle all the outstanding debts to foreign firms.

Debts to foreign insurers like Sace and Coface and Hermes had stopped them from opening new credit lines for Iran.

Germans eye economic boost with Iran

On Nov 8, Visiting Minister of Economy in German state of Lower Saxony, Olaf Lies said the bilateral ties between Iran and German nations are beyond economic relations and the JCPOA has paved the way for broadening and deepening the relations between the two countries and these opportunities for cooperation should be seized.

Lies maintained that the Islamic Republic of Iran was one of the economic powers of the Middle East which had expansive trade ties with Germany and Lower Saxony before the imposition of anti-Iran sanctions.

"We are eager to continue and develop the trend of relations with Iranian companies and this feeling is reciprocal as the Iranian partners are also willing to cooperate with German companies," he added.

Lies articulated that the victory of the JCPOA has created high expectations and the consequential merits of the deal should be taken advantage of.

"One of the big and important issues after the JCPOA is restoration of financial routines and banking transactions which need joint cooperation and endeavor to be resolved," said Lies, adding the German and the Iranian sides are after proving the benefits of the way undertaken for brokering the JCPOA and the valuable results of it.

Without doubt, the implementation of the historic nuclear has paved the ground for attracting more foreign investment and a large number of foreign companies from different countries, European in particular, have voiced the willingness to made investment in Iran.

Iranian officials are facilitating the investment process in Iran aimed at attracting more investors because they believe that luring the domestic and foreign investments is considered as key for settling the country's economic problems.

The situation created after the JCPOA is a good chance for the country's exporters and producers to collaborate with foreign companies and the reputable brands.

Nobody can deny the positive effects created by the nuclear deal because it has provided safer and more secure ground for foreign countries to engage with in Iran, the Germany in particular.

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How to stop chasing rainbows

By Robin Hallet

Whenever I hear the Adele song Chasing Pavements I usually goof and sing, "should I give up or should I just keep chasing rainbows..."

That's probably because chasing rainbows is something I know a lot about, as I'm sure most of us do. There's an inner story about ourselves or our lives we carry which prods us to search outside ourselves for an answer. Or a fix. Or a complete overhaul. A cure. Maybe it's a training, an exercise program, a Roto-Rooter. It's some kind of powerful 'Promise of Maybe' we see out there and it's calling to us and it carries a mysterious shiny sparkly aura which seems to promise the cure for our problems.

Almost always, I vote we give up chasing rainbows.

While it's true that we may be chasing different rainbows, what we all have in common is the pain the chase is causing.

The very search outside ourselves for answers can be painful and all the loudness that's out there doesn't help either–all the shouting of the miracle cures. There are so many "promises of maybe" in the offerings you can partake in that it's hard to trust your own heart on what the right direction is for you. There are e-courses on earning six figures (learn the secret to earning six figures! I'll show you how!!!!), books on the perfect body (lose 7 pounds in the first week, guaranteed!), advice on how to make everything shiny and contained (kiss your cluttered mess goodbye!). Don't even get me started on the dating scene.

Lots of promises of maybe. Which means, maybe it will work for you. Maybe.

But earning six figures or losing 7lbs or curing your clutter can't really save you. If the rainbow you're chasing is about anything other than you coming into wholeness, it cannot save you.

When people ask me how they can heal or how their situation can get better, I see the place on their insides which feels tired and needy and even a little bit desperate. How much in that moment I'd love to give a quick fix because I don't like to see the suffering. I often will say, if I knew of the button I could press to make this go away, I would press it for us both. And right after that I suggest we give up asking HOW because how isn't really any of our business and asking it makes us all crazy.

When we're centered and grounded, we make good choices. We can receive help and support from a grounded place and then the help is never wrong because our own heart told us what to do.

I want to give you a powerful answer today. It's a deep truth which can cure everything which ails you.

It's the answer for every question and every problem. And before I tell it to you, I will say this: it's gonna feel small and simple and so it will feel tempting to chuck or skip this advice.

Here it is: If the problem is under your own skin, the answer resides within you.

There is not one single rainbow outside yourself you can chase which has the power to heal you the way searching your heart for the answer does. You need to do the work from the inside out. Whatever is bothering you exists on your insides. The problem dwells inside. And unless you address the upset on your insides, you will cancel out the efforts you're making in the world. If you show up to learn 'how to earn six figures' but secretly on your insides the prevailing story is that you're a hot financial mess and you're totally undeserving of abundance, you will not succeed.

When you seek solutions outside yourself because you believe you are wrong or bad or broken, you are starting out on a faulty premise.

And that faulty premise will lead you to chase rainbows which cannot deliver what it is you truly seek. Of course, I am not talking about going it alone and not receiving help here, I am talking about throwing yourself into thing after thing in order to fix what you perceive is broken when you were never broken to begin with and you don't even understand what it is you are really needing because you haven't taken the time to sit inside the rainbow of your own heart. Does this make sense?

By the way, we should never ever feel ashamed about the products, cures, programs and courses we purchased. Don't get tripped up there, it's much more powerful to realize you made a choice in that moment to not give up on yourself and maybe you could have been more discerning, sure. But at that time, you didn't realize that the true cure was always inside your heart. All we ever really need to do is show up and face what is here. It's under our own skin and it resides with us. The answer is in there too.

What if we could trust in our own hearts and our ability to love ourselves? When we're centered and grounded, we make good choices. We can receive help and support from a grounded place and then the help is never wrong because our own heart told us what to do.

There is no need to chase a rainbow outside yourself because the one in your heart is technicolored and totally you and it has so many answers for you. Learn to go there first and find out what it has to say about the situation.

(Source: robinhallett.com)

Natural and herbal cold and flu treatments

By Kristina Duda

Looking for relief from your cold and flu symptoms? Would you prefer an herbal or natural remedy? Here you will find some of the most common and popular natural and herbal cold and flu treatments. You should know that natural and herbal remedies are not regulated by the FDA and their efficacy and safety are not guaranteed.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C has gone through periods of popularity for treating the common cold but it is now beginning to fall out of favor. Once thought to be a very reliable immunity booster and cold treatment, recent research has shown that its efficacy is doubtful. While it is still a very important part of your daily diet, it apparently has no significant bearing on the treatment or prevention of a cold. However, many people still swear by this supplement and take increased dosages, up to 2000 mg a day, at the first sign of a cold.

Echinacea

Like Vitamin C, at one time Echinacea was once considered a cure-all for colds and the flu. More recent research, however, has shown that there is no benefit to taking Echinacea, either in treating the cold or flu or preventing them. But, many people believe Echinacea works for them. It is generally considered safe, though some

people have had serious allergic reactions to it and others have experienced mild gastrointestinal symptoms. If you have any concerns, are taking other medications or have medical problems, consult your doctor before taking any herbal supplements.

Elderberry

Elderberry has been used for many years to treat colds, the flu and other upper respiratory illnesses. Studies have shown conflicting results about whether or not it actually works.

Can cinnamon and honey cure the flu?

Some stories seen on various social media sites have claimed that a combination of cinnamon and honey could cure colds and the flu.

Airborne tablets

Airborne is promoted as an immunity booster. According to the manufacturer, you should take Airborne a day or two before being exposed to crowded places (such as airplanes, movie theaters, etc.). You may take one tablet every 3- 4 hours, not to exceed three doses in a day. It consists of 17 natural ingredients, including Vitamin C and Echinacea. Because of the high levels of vitamins in these tablets, you should not take other vitamins when you take Airborne. The makers of Airborne claim that it can boost your immune system and reduce your risk of getting sick.

Zicam cold remedy (gel and nasal swabs)

Zicam is a very popular natural cold remedy that, according to the manufacturer, is "clinically proven to help you get over your cold three times faster". Zicam's main ingredient is zinc gluconate which is a natural mineral that has had various results in regards to the efficacy in reducing the severity of cold symptoms.

There have been reports in the last few years about Zicam possibly causing people to lose their sense of smell and in June 2009 the nasal version was pulled from the market due to these complaints.

Traditional cold and flu medications

Looking for more cold and flu medication options? See what your options are and which ones are best for you when you are looking at traditional cold and flu meds.

(Source: verywell.com)

Eat your fruit

Pomegranate

Pomegranates are among the healthiest fruits on earth. They contain a range of beneficial plant compounds, unrivaled by other foods. Many studies have shown that they have incredible benefits for your body.

Here are the health benefits of the fruit.

- Loaded with important nutrients
- Impressive anti-inflammatory effects
- May help fight prostate cancer
- Contain two plant compounds with powerful medicinal properties
- May be useful against breast cancer
- May lower blood pressure
- May help fight arthritis and joint pain
- Pomegranate juice may lower your risk of heart disease
- Can help fight bacterial and fungal infections
- May help improve memory

Why you're so tired after eating a big meal

Somewhere between giving thanks and reaching for that second slice of grandma's pumpkin pie, it hits—the "food coma." While it's common to feel tired after a big meal (especially a holiday feast), research shows it's more than the tryptophan-filled Thanksgiving turkeys that can lead to a post-dinner snoozefest.

Don't blame the bird—why it matters

The truth is, turkey doesn't even contain that high a concentration of tryptophan, the sleep-inducing amino acid, compared to other types of poultry, pork, and even cheese. So what's the science behind postprandial somnolence, the fancy name for the sleepy, sluggish feeling that strikes after eating a big meal?

For starters, holiday menus don't tend to shy away from high-calorie and high-fat dishes. And when second (or third) helpings of those heavy-hitters go down, blood flows to the digestive system to ramp up its efforts. As a result, the rest of the body's systems (including the brain) can start to feel a slowdown. Think of this as "rest and digest"— the opposite of the "fight or flight" response.

Another reason we feel the sudden need for zzz's is thanks to high glucose levels in the blood stream. This triggers the release of insulin, which absorbs all amino acids—except for tryptophan. Hello, heavy eyelids! Research also shows spikes in glucose can effectively switch off the neurons in the brain responsible for keeping us up and at 'em. Glucose overload can also switch on the neurons that promote sleep (and turn us into those lazy couch potatoes).

Think before you eat (a lot)—the answer/debate

A post-meal nap might feel as much a tradition as watching the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, but here are some tips to avoid sleeping the whole day away:

- Start smart. To avoid overeating later on, try starting the day with a protein-rich breakfast, and consider breaking up that one massive meal into two smaller meals spaced a few hours apart.
- Lighten the carb load. It's recommended to eat between 225 and 325 grams of carbohydrates daily, but take it easy on the starchy side dishes. Sorry, mashed potatoes and cornbread, that means you.
- Lay off the booze. Alcohol can slow down digestion, so consider raising a glass of water for that holiday toast instead.
- Get moving! Play a backyard flag football game, go for a walk around the neighborhood, or (at the very least) offer to do the dishes to get that digestion, well, moving along too!

(Source: greatist.com)

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10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

Here are high rated IT titles in the world that reviewed by savvy tech users:

1 Five members of Twitter's Cortex artificial intelligence group have left the company this month,at a time when companies are rushing to accumulate AI talent.

On last Monday, Google announced that a key member of the Twitter Cortex team, Hugo Larochelle, had been selected to head up the company's new artificial intelligence and deep learning division in Montreal.

2 Bletchley Park will once again serve as a cryptographic hub in the UK. Plans are afoot to create a new "National College of Cyber Security" in G-Block, a building which is currently in a state of disrepair. It's scheduled to open in 2018 and will serve as a specialised six-form college, teaching teenagers the fundamentals of encryption and computer science. As the Guardian reports, the center will take up to 500 students at any one time and offer free tuition, funding its efforts through venture capital, corporate sponsorship and possibly state funding instead.

Bletchley Park is best known as the home of Britain's code-breaking team during World War II. The group helped the UK and its allies to understand scrambled messages sent by the German army.

3 Toronto blockchain security startup hires antivirus pioneer John McAfee as chief security officer.

Chris Horlacher, CEO of Equibit Development Corporation said in a press that McAfee has been hired as the company's chief security officer. In a somewhat unusual arrangement, however, McAfee will be reporting to the board and not the CEO.

4 The U.S. and Russia request Czechs extradite arrested Russian hacker.

A spokeswoman of Czech justice ministry said that they will review the requests for the extradition of Yevgeniy Nikulin, who a U.S. federal grand jury said had hacked into the U.S.-based social media companies LinkedIn, Dropbox and Formspring and the requests will be referred to a Prague court.

Russia's foreign ministry has criticized the arrest, saying it showed Washington was mounting a global manhunt against Russian citizens.

5 According to Reuters, Samsung SDI – the Note 7 battery supplier managed to convince current partners, including Apple, its batteries are safe, but struggles to find new customers for their products. Immediately after taking the fall for Samsung's mishap, SDI's market value dropped by 20% and hasn't regained its previous levels since.

A lot of analysts believe that by taking one for the Samsung team, SDI has created a long-term problem for itself.

Samsung SDI holds a 25% market share in small device batteries, but it's also trying to expand to the automotive industry and other sectors.

6 Some of those who purchase games from the Google Play Store are now being asked to rate a game based on different aspects of the title. Instead of leaving just one rating that covers every part of a game from soup to nuts, certain users are now asked to rate a game's controls, graphics and gameplay separately. This should eventually be a permanent change rolled out to all Android users.

The advantage to this is that it allows game players to leave more realistic ratings. Under the old system, you might have decided to buy a game that had a high ratings score only to find out that the graphics were poorly done. With the new ratings, the same game might score highly for gameplay and controls, but you would be warned to stay away from the game by a low score for graphics.

7 Back in September Samsung sold its printer business to HP, and a shocking revelation from South Korea claims it might do the same with its PC division. According to a report from a local news source in Samsung's home country, the company has been in secret talks with Lenovo for the past few months, with the aim of selling its PC business to the Chinese company.

Some Korean analysts peg the sales value at 1 trillion won (around $850 million), but the final number can obviously be wildly different.

8 A 10.5-inch iPad was first said to arrive in 2017 as part of a rumor back in August, and now the existence of this device is 'confirmed' by "Taiwan-based supply chain makers", according to a new report. Production for the new tablet is set to start in December, which means its unveiling is likely to happen in the first quarter of next year.

The 10.5" iPad and the new 12.9-inch iPad Pro that should become official at the same time will both be powered by the new Apple A10X chipset, again something we've heard before. The 10.5-inch model is expected to sell 2 million units in Q1 2017, and may reach 5-6 million sales for the whole year.

9 Ctrip.com International Ltd, China's biggest online travel company, said agreed to buy travel search website Skyscanner Holdings Ltd in a deal valuing the Scotland-based company at about 1.4 billion pounds. ($1.74 billion).

Scottish flight site Skyscanner, a result of CEO and co-founder Gareth Williams' frustration with finding cheap flights, enables users to compare prices from different travel sites when searching for flights, hotels, and rental cars.

10 Amazon.com is reportedly in talks to acquire the Arab world's version of itself, Souq.com, for about $1 billion.

The deal, which Bloomberg reported on Thursday citing people familiar with matter, would help the retail giant gain traction in the fast-growing Middle East market.

Amazon is considering a bid for the entire Souq.com site, according to Bloomberg, but Souq.com had initially planned to sell just a stake of the company. No final agreements have been made, and negotiations could still fall through, the report said.

Visas for tech workers could be limited under Trump administration

The main US visa program for technology workers could face renewed scrutiny under President-elect Donald Trump and his proposed attorney general, Senator Jeff Sessions, a longtime critic of the skilled-worker program.

Under the H-1B visa scheme, 65,000 workers and another 20,000 graduate student workers are admitted to the US each year. The tech industry, which has lobbied to expand the program, may now have to fight a rear-guard action to protect it, immigration attorneys and lobbyists said.

Trump sent mixed signals on the campaign trail, sometimes criticizing the visas but other times calling them an important way to retain foreign talent.

Sessions, however, has long sought to curtail the program and introduced legislation last year aiming to make the visas less available to large outsourcing companies such as Infosys. Such firms, by far the largest users of H-1B visas, provide foreign contractors to US companies looking to slash information technology costs.

"Thousands of US workers are being replaced by foreign labor," Sessions said at a February hearing.

A spokesperson for Sessions did not immediately respond to a request for comment and a Trump transition team spokesperson declined to comment.

The H-1B visa is intended for specialty occupations that typically require a college education. Companies use them in two main ways to hire technology workers.

Tech firms such as Microsoft and Google typically hire highly skilled, well-paid foreign workers that are in short supply. They help many of them secure so-called green cards that allow them to work in the US permanently.

By contrast, firms such as Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services, both based in India, use the visas to deploy lower-paid contractors that critics say rarely end up with green cards.

Infosys did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A Tata spokesman declined to comment.

H-1B visas are assigned through a lottery once a year by US Citizenship and Immigration Services. This year, companies filed 236,000 petitions for the 85,000 available visas, a cap set in US law. They are awarded to employers – not employees – and tied to specific positions.

Both Democratic and Republican critics have argued that companies such as Walt Disney and Southern California Edison, a utility, have used the program to terminate in-house IT employees and replace them with cheaper contractors.

Sessions last year urged the then attorney general, Eric Holder, to investigate Southern California Edison's use of H-1B visas, in a letter that was also signed by Democratic senators Bernie Sanders, Richard Durbin and Sherrod Brown. Disney and Edison did not immediately respond to requests for comment but have said previously that they paid foreign contractors comparably with local staffers.

The justice department in 2013 settled a visa fraud case with Infosys for $34m. Federal investigators accused Infosys of using easier-to-obtain business travel visas to import foreign workers who were required to have H-1B visas. Investigators also alleged that Infosys told foreign workers to lie to US officials about the cities where they would work.

In the settlement, Infosys denied the allegations but agreed to retain a third-party auditor for two years and to provide the government with detailed descriptions of what its visa holders were supposed to be doing in the US.

Several constituencies have called for program reforms, including the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, that industry's largest professional association. It wants the lottery ditched in favor of a system that would award visas to companies offering the highest-paying jobs, said Russ Harrison, director of government relations.

That could potentially shut out employers looking to mine the program for cheap foreign labor. Sessions included a similar measure in his 2015 bill.

Tech industry groups also want changes. FWD.us – the immigration lobbying group backed by Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg – supports setting higher minimum wages and giving priority to companies that sponsor H-1B workers for green cards.

"We're going to advocate for expanding the program, but we're also going to advocate for reforming the program," FWD.us president Todd Shulte said in an interview.

The current program mainly benefits big companies at the expense of both US and immigrant workers, said Gaurav Mehta, a 32-year-old H-1B holder from New Delhi who works for a cybersecurity firm in San Francisco. H-1B workers struggle to switch jobs without risking deportation, he said, which allows employers to pay them less.

"The current system is not working for Americans, and it's not working for immigrants," he said.

Some Trump allies expect him to keep the program mostly intact, including Shalabh "Shalli" Kumar – an Indian-born Chicago businessman who donated $900,000 to his campaign.

"He has said to us that these are amazing people and it would be crazy to let them go," Kumar said in an interview. But Kumar has urged Trump to eliminate country-by-country quotas that create long waits for Indian and Chinese nationals to get green cards.

John Miano, an attorney with the Immigration Reform Law Institute – a conservative group that has been aligned with Trump – also supports prioritizing H-1B applications from companies offering higher pay.

Such a change would hit the outsourcing firms hard. The top 10 recipients of H-1B visas in 2015 were all outsourcing firms, according to government data compiled by the IEEE. Tata Consultancy Services topped the list by securing 8,333 H-1B visas.

Amazon, by contrast, ranked 12th and was awarded just 826 H-1B visas. Google and Microsoft ranked 14th and 15th, with Facebook at 24th and Apple at 34th.

Some H-1B visa holders aren't waiting. Sofie Graham – a marketer at the San Francisco startup BuildZoom.com and a dual Irish and British citizen – secured her H-1B visa last year. Although she could have worked for six years on the visa, she and the company decided to apply for a green card.

"Everywhere I looked, people were saying we should have fewer H-1Bs," she said. "I just wanted to get a green card as soon as possible."

(Source: Guardian)

Facebook developed secret software to censor user posts in China

Facebook has developed censorship software in an effort to get China to lift its seven-year ban on the world's largest social network, according to reports.

The social network developed the software to suppress posts from appearing in users' news feeds in specific geographies with the support of the chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, according to the New York Times. The posts themselves will not be suppressed, only their visibility.

A Facebook spokesperson said: "We have long said that we are interested in China, and are spending time understanding and learning more about the country.

"However, we have not made any decision on our approach to China."

The Cybersecurity Administration of China, the country's internet regulator, did not immediately respond to request for comment. China's foreign ministry declined to comment.

China banned Facebook after the Urumqi riots in July 2009 in an effort to stem the flow of information about the unrest which left 140 people dead. The ban denied the social network access to the world's largest population of internet users, which will be key to Facebook's continued growth.

Facebook would offer the software to enable third parties to monitor popular stories and topics that gain visibility as users share them across the network. The third-party partners would have full control to decide whether those posts should show up in users' feeds, but there is no indication that Facebook has offered the software to China yet.

US internet companies have a practice of complying with legitimate government requests to block posted information in keeping with local laws, subject to evaluation.

Facebook restricted content in a score of countries in the second half of last year, according to the company's most recent transparency report.

In Russia it restricted content that authorities there said violated "the integrity of the Russian Federation and local law which forbids activities such as mass public riots and the promotion and sale of drugs."

Access to items in Pakistan was restricted owing to allegations that local blasphemy laws were violated.

In France, Facebook restricted content reported under laws prohibiting denying of the Holocaust or condoning terrorism. It also removed posts of an image relating to the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris on the grounds they violated French laws related to the protection of human dignity.

Meanwhile, Facebook has come under fire in the past few months from those who accuse the social network of not having done enough to filter out fake news stores that may have swayed the outcome of the US presidential election.

(Source: nytimes)

US regulators seek to reduce road deaths with smartphone 'driving mode'

US regulators are seeking to reduce smartphone-related vehicle deaths with a new driving-safe mode that would block or modify apps to prevent them being a distraction while on the road.

The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) are to issue voluntary guidelines for smartphone makers, which will seek to restrict the apps and services accessible on a smartphone being used by a driver.

US transport secretary Anthony Foxx told the New York Times: "Your smartphone becomes so many different things that it's not just a communication device. Distraction is still a problem. Too many people are dying and being injured on our roadways."

The NHTSA is hoping that Apple, Samsung and other popular smartphone manufacturers will adopt the guidelines in future smartphone and software releases. The so-called driving mode will block distractions such as social media, messages or email, stop the use of the keyboard for communication activities and also restrict access to websites, video and distracting graphics.

The intention is that the driving mode will be adopted in a similar manner to the airplane mode common to most smartphones and connected devices, which restricts radio communications while airborne. Airplane mode has been a feature of smartphones since 2007.

While the NHTSA cannot force manufacturers to follow the guidelines, previous guidelines concerning the design and use of navigation and entertainment systems built into cars have seen wide adoption and implementation.

Such driving modes are already implemented within certain Android smartphones, including Samsung models, but they are not compulsory and are up to the users to activate.

The guidelines for smartphones call for features able to differentiate between drivers and passengers within cars, so that only the driver is shown a simplified and restricted view. They also request a connection between smartphones and in-car controls such as steering wheel buttons, to remove the need to interact with the screen.

Such driving modes are already implemented within certain Android smartphones, including Samsung models, but they are not compulsory and are up to the users to activate.

(Source: nhtsa.gov)

Mars lander slammed into Red Planet after data glitch

The Schiaparelli probe's crash landing on Mars last month was caused by a sensor malfunction, the European Space Agency (ESA) has found.

A preliminary investigation discovered that the onboard computer tasked with measuring rotation of the lander mistakenly thought it was much closer to the planet's surface -- when in fact it was still approximately 3.7 km (2.29 miles) above Mars.

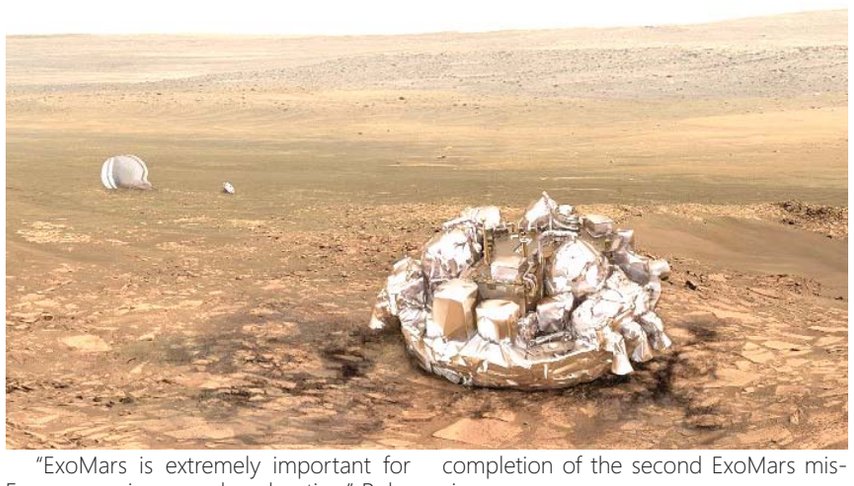
The ESA said in an update Wednesday that the glitch triggered a knock-on effect, resulting in the lander plummeting into the planet at 335 mph (540 kph).

"This in turn successively triggered a premature release of the parachute and the backshell, a brief firing of the braking thrusters and finally activation of the on-ground systems as if Schiaparelli had already landed," the ESA said in a statement.

Replicating simulations

European space officials have been able to replicate simulations of the event from recovered data and believe that up until that point, most of Schiaparelli's mission had transpired as expected.

Named for Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli, the probe had been part of a larger mission, ExoMars with its companion craft -- the Trace Gas Orbiter, which successfully reached Mars' orbit in October.



"ExoMars is extremely important for European science and exploration," Roberto Battiston, president of Italy's ASI space agency said Wednesday. "Together with all the participating states in the program, we will work towards the successful completion of the second ExoMars mission.

The next phase of the mission will commence in 2018 when the Trace Gas Orbiter will start to sniff out the source of methane on Mars - which could point to signs of life on the planet. The presence of methane is a signature of life on Earth, so the orbiting spacecraft will try to detect it and determine where it is coming from.

The next phase of the mission will commence in 2018 when the Trace Gas Orbiter will start to sniff out the source of methane on Mars - which could point to signs of life on the planet.

Adam Stevens, a researcher at the University of Edinburgh and the UK Center for Astrobiology, told CNN in October that methane may be produced by other processes but the mission will help "rule out some possibilities ... to tease out what is going on."

The disappointing loss

Schiaprelli was the second ESA attempt to touchdown on the Martian surface. But like the disappointing loss of British-made Beagle 2 back in 2003, it was not to be.

Despite the setback, ESA officials believe the problems witnessed in this latest incident will help future rover designs.

"This is still a very preliminary conclusion of our technical investigations," said David Parker, ESA's director of human spaceflight and robotic exploration. The "full picture will be provided in early 2017 by the future report of an external independent inquiry board.

"But we will have learned much from Schiaparelli that will directly contribute to the second ExoMars mission being developed with our international partners for launch in 2020."

(Source: CNN)

Dutch scientists use color-changing graphene bubbles to create 'mechanical pixels'

Researchers from Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands have discovered what could one day be a new type of display technology: bubbles of graphene that change color as they expand and contract.

Scientists say that these 'mechanical pixels' could eventually make screens that are more flexible, durable, and energy efficient than current LED technology. They caution, though, that the work is very much in its infancy; whether these graphene bubbles can make displays of equivalent quality, or be scaled up for mass production, remains to be seen.

The discovery was made by researchers working with panels of silicon oxide covered with graphene — sheets of pure carbon just a single atom thick. (Graphene is that wonder material you probably heard of years ago, but scientists are still working on commercial applications for it.) The silicon is pockmarked with holes about ten times the width of a human hair, leaving the graphene stretched across these tiny cavities like a drum.

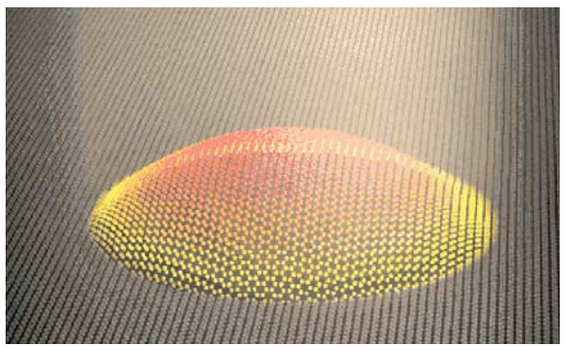
Graphene bubbles

When working with these samples, scientists noticed that the bubbles of graphene changed color depending on the pressure inside the cavities. When the pressure shifts, the bubbles became concave or convex, changing how light refracted through them and creating different colors.

"Graphene in principle is transparent; it's so thin that light doesn't get reflected," researcher Santiago Cartamil-Bueno told The Verge. "But we were using a double layer of graphene, and that reflects more." As the bubbles of graphene inflate or deflate, light has to travel different amounts before it hits the back of the silicon cavity. This changes which part of the light spectrum is absorbed, and which part is reflected back, altering the colors of the bubbles. "Depending on the depth of the cavity you have different interference, and from this you get different colors of light," says Cartamil-Bueno.

This is the same principle used in Qualcomm's Mirasol technology, which uses reflective membranes controlled using electrostatic. As with E Ink screens, these sorts of display are very energy-efficient, as once an image has been 'set' it takes no additional power to maintain it. But, the way they're made makes backlighting impossible. You can't read these screens in a dark room, and they look their best in bright sunlight.

The challenges facing the graphene technology are



manifold. For a start, the color changes have only been observed under a microscope so far, because it is difficult and expensive to manufacture these graphene samples at a greater size. The resulting 'pixels' are so small, that hundreds of thousands would be needed to create even a tiny image, and the bubbles can't be made bigger for fear they would burst. Secondly, the Delft researchers have yet to work out how to create pure colors from the graphene bubbles.

(Source: The Verge)

New grasses neutralize toxic pollution from bombs, explosives, and munitions

On military live fire training ranges, troops practice firing artillery shells, drop bombs on old tanks or derelict buildings and test the capacity of new weapons.

But those explosives and munitions leave behind toxic compounds that have contaminated millions of acres of U.S. military bases -- with an estimated clean-up bill ranging between $16 billion and $165 billion.

In a paper published online Nov. 16 in Plant Biotechnology Journal, University of Washington and University of York researchers describe new transgenic grass species that can neutralize and eradicate RDX -- a toxic compound that has been widely used in explosives since World War II.

UW engineers introduced two genes from bacteria that learned to eat RDX and break it down into harmless components in two perennial grass species: switchgrass (Panicum virgatum) and creeping bentgrass (Agrostis stolonifera). The best-performing strains removed all the RDX from a simulated soil in which they were grown within less than two weeks, and they retained none of the toxic chemical in their leaves or stems.

It is the first reported demonstration of genetically transforming grasses to supercharge their ability to remove contamination from the environment. Grasses are hearty, fast-growing, low-maintenance plants that offer practical advantages over other species in real-world cleanup situations.

Destroying pollutants

"This is a sustainable and affordable way to remove and destroy pollutants on these training ranges," said senior author and UW professor of civil and environmental engineering Stuart Strand, whose lab focuses on taking genes from micro-

organisms and animals that are able to degrade toxic compounds and engineering them into useful plants.

The "grasses could be planted on the training ranges, grow on their own and require little to no maintenance. When a toxic particle from the munitions lands in a target area, their roots would take up the RDX and degrade it before it can reach groundwater," Strand said.

RDX is an organic compound that forms the base for many common military explosives, which can linger in the environment in unexploded or partially exploded munitions. In large enough doses, it has been shown to cause seizures and organ damage, and it's currently listed by the Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry as a potential human carcinogen.

Unlike other toxic explosives constituents such as TNT -- which binds to soils and tends to stay put -- RDX dissolves easily in water and is more prone to spread contamination beyond the limits of a military range, manufacturing facility or battleground.

"Particles get scattered around and then it rains," Strand said. "Then RDX dissolves in the rainwater as it moves down through the soil and winds up in groundwater. And, in some cases, it flows off base and winds up in drinking water wells."

(Source: EurekAlert)

UK scientists develop technique to greatly simplify trapped ions

Physicists from the University of Sussex have developed a groundbreaking new technique that makes it much simpler to build large-scale trapped ion quantum computers, bringing us one big step closer to making quantum computers a reality in the near future.

Although currently, quantum computers are merely a concept, numerous computer science researchers around the world and billions of dollars have been invested to create them.

Currently researchers around the world are building quantum computer systems either using trapped ions and atoms; particles of light; or superconducting circuits that act as qubits (a technique being researched by IBM).

Using laser beams

To develop a quantum computer that makes use of trapped ions, the current method involves using laser beams to build quantum gates.

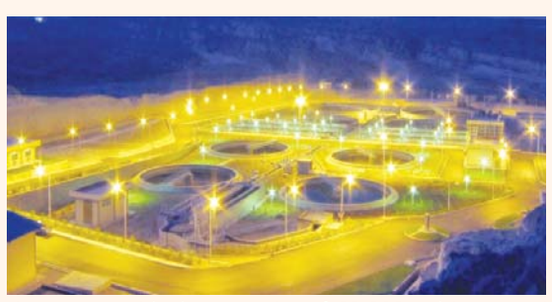
This is fine if you're building a small quantum computer that consists of only a few qubits. But, if you want to create a true quantum computer capable of computing a huge equation, then you will require a quantum computer consisting of billions of qubits, which would require a system whereby billions of laser beams are all accurately aligned to 5mm in order to build all the requisite quantum gates. *(Source: IBT)*

MGCECO Shines in Intl. Arenas

Once again, Mahab Ghodss Consulting Engineering Company (MGCECO) showed excellent performance in international levels relying upon its expert and skilled engineers.

With overcoming its foreign rivals in ancient African continent, the company managed to win a bid of lucrative development project in the field of supplying water in Nigeria, financed by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

The main scope of project is as follows: revising the design and monitoring water supply project in Nigeria including construction operation of wastewater treatment house, pumping station for transfer-



ring water with the capacity of 60,000 cubic meter/day, three 10,000-cubic meter tanks, water transmission line as long as 32 km in diameters between 400 to 800 mm, Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

Hereunder are the main credits of the company:

1- Spectrum Engineering Consultants
2- Aims Consultants Limited – IBG Group
3- Dolsar Engineering Inc. Co – Birlik Kalkinma Grubu (Birlik Development Group)
4- Umar Munshi Associates – Allot (Nigeria) Limited
5- ECG Engineering Consultants Group S.A – PROFEN Consultants Unlimited
6- Study International – Enplan Group
7- Enviplan International Limited – Faithline Limited

Japanese unveil electric car that doesn't need battery

Japan has made another technological leap - Toyohashi University of Technology and Taisei Corp has unveiled the first electrical car in the world that will run without a battery, receiving its charge from an electrified road.

The unveiling on Friday was in the form of a test drive in Toyohashi, in the Aichi Prefecture. The small vehicle moved over the electrified surface, which had two rail-like steel paths spaced to match the car's special tires. The charge is derived from steel wires embedded in them, which serve as a conduit.

The drive lasted for 30 meters at a speed of 10km/h, and, according to Professor Takashi Ohira, as cited by Kyodo: "Acceleration was smooth, and the ride was comfortable."

Electric cars

Electric cars are beginning to experience a rise in popularity, so it'll be a while until fair comparisons to their traditional counterparts can truly be made.

However, where others currently fail, the Toyohashi/Taisei Corp. vehicle excels: it can drive long distances without the battery expiring, so running out of juice is never an issue.

The downside is, of course, that the new vehicle can only run on special roads – and who knows when that technology will truly takes off worldwide.

However, Ohira says it's not a matter of changing entire roads, rather fitting existing ones with the new technology. Apparently, the new EV will have a battery for those situations where an electrified road isn't around. In future Ohira hopes to "reduce the size of batteries for non-expressway driving."

(Source: RT)

Scientists develop skin patch with on-the-spot sweat monitor app

Scientists in the United States have developed a flexible microfluidic device that easily sticks to the skin and measures sweat levels to show how the wearer's body is responding to exercise.

The low-cost device, which can quickly analyze key elements such as lactate, Ph or glucose levels and let the user know if they should stop or change their activity, could also in future help diagnose and monitor disease, the researchers said.

"Sweat is a rich, chemical broth containing a number of important chemical compounds with physiological health information," said John Rogers, a professor Northwestern University in the United States who led the development of what he called a "lab on the skin".

Reporting results of the trial of the device in the journal Science Translational Medicine, the researchers said one of its attractions is that it allows people to monitor their health on the spot without the need for blood sampling.

The device, a slim, flexible patch measuring less than a couple of centimeters across, has integrated electronics that do not need batteries and can connect wirelessly to a smartphone.

Rogers explained that during exercise, sweat winds through the tiny microscopic channels of the device and into four compartments. Here, it reacts with chemical reagents to produce color-based readings relating to pH and to concentrations of glucose, chloride and lactate.

The wireless electronics trigger a smartphone app that captures and analyses the image to give the results.

Rogers' team tested the device on two groups of athletes - one cycling indoors under controlled conditions and the other taking part in a long-distance ride in tough and dry conditions.

The sweat monitoring patch was placed on the athletes' arms and backs to test its accuracy and durability.

(Source: Reuters)

Newly discovered salamanders may be doomed

Three new species of tiny salamanders — the smallest animals of their kind in the world — have been discovered in Mexico, and scientists fear they're already doomed to extinction.

The lizard-like creatures were found by a team of former UC Berkeley graduate students and famed biologist David B. Wake, their former professor and an expert on all things amphibian, who warns that the salamanders and their relatives could be the last ones on Earth.

A "Biological disaster is facing us," said Wake, a co-author of the new scientific report on their discovery.

The former Berkeley scientists have been exploring salamander habitats for many years in the mountains around the Mexican city of Oaxaca, and found that the animals, which once numbered in the hundreds, have almost disappeared.

In their report of one hunt, for example, where loggers had already churned up the salamander habitat, the researchers wrote:

"We searched for more than two hours, turning abundant cover of wood chips, chip piles, logs and bark on logs, as well as leaf litter and rocks. Conditions seemed good with adequate moisture but only a single individual was found, under a small pine log lying beside the road.

(Source: San Francisco Chronicle)

Census reveals oldest Iranian aging 135

SOCIETY desk **TEHRAN** — A 135-year-old man living in Saqqez, western province of Kordestan, is the oldest person living in Iran, the recent census has indicated.

Born on February 28, 1882, Ahmad Sufi is healthy and only suffers from hearing impairment which is pretty normal at this age, ISNA news agency reported.

Sufi has no children of his own but is a step father to his wife's five children, the report added.

The census is being conducted every five years in Iran. The first nationwide census was held in 1956. The latest census began on September 24 and was carried out in two phases of web-based and door-to-door.

LEARN ENGLISH

Buying and Selling Family Heirlooms

Anne: Where are you going with that?

Ivan: I'm taking this clock to an **antique dealer**. Rather than having it **gather dust** on the **mantelpiece**, I thought I'd get it **appraised** and maybe sell it.

Anne: You can't sell that! It belonged to our grandfather. It's a **family heirloom**.

Ivan: It's not a family heirloom. It's just a clock that Grandpa had in his house. He didn't mean for it to be **passed down** from one **generation** to another. I don't even know if it's valuable or **collectable**. These clocks could be **a dime a dozen**.

Anne: But it's valuable to me. It has **sentimental value**. As a little girl, I remember visiting Grandpa and seeing that clock on his shelf. If I had **inherited** it, I know I wouldn't be looking to sell it to **make a quick buck**.

Ivan: I'm not looking to make a quick buck, but what if Grandpa left it to me because he knew I would be able to put the money that it would **fetch to good use**?

Anne: Well, are you? Are you going to put the **proceeds** to good use?

Ivan: Sure, of course I am.

Anne: Are you going to tell me what you're spending it on?

Ivan: **Not on your life**!

(Source: eslpod.com)

Words & phrases

antique dealer: someone who buys and sells antiques such as a piece of furniture, jewelry etc. that was made a very long time ago and is therefore valuable

gather dust: become covered with dust because it is not being used

mantelpiece: a wooden or stone shelf which is the top part of a frame surrounding a fireplace

appraise: to officially judge how successful, effective, or valuable something is; evaluate

family heirloom: a valuable object that has been owned by a family for many years and that is passed from the older members to the younger members

pass down: to give something to people who are younger than you or live after you

generation: all the members of a family of about the same age

collectable: something that is collectable is likely to be bought and kept as part of a group of similar things, especially because it might increase in value

a dime a dozen: very common and not valuable

sentimental value: important because of your feelings or memories relating to them or it was a gift and it reminds you of someone etc.

inherit: to receive money, property etc. from someone after they have died

make a quick buck: make some money quickly, often dishonestly

fetch: bring

to good use: spending a sum of money on something useful

proceeds: the money that is obtained from doing something or selling something

not on your life: used as a reply to a question or suggestion to say that you definitely will not do something

Without water, everything withers

Heavy snowfall in northern Iran causes crop loss, disrupts public utility

SOCIETY desk **TEHRAN** — Heavy snowfall in the northern province of Mazandaran incurred substantial loss on citrus production and resulted in water and gas supply failure and prolonged power cut, ISNA news agency reported.

According to Iran Meteorological Organization it snowed for some one and a half meters in some regions of Amol and Noor and is believed to destroy great citrus corps in the area.

The deputy agriculture minister, Mohammad-Ali Tahmasbi, told Mehr news agency that as Mazandaran produces a large volume of citrus production of the country the crop loss is predicted to be major but not calculated yet.

The Agriculture Ministry has predicted that some 4.7 million tons of citrus crops will be produced in the country, a great deal of which will be harvested in Mazandaran. So, the loss seems to be pretty huge.

Meanwhile, the director of Tehran province famers' union, Mojtaba Shamlou, has pointed out that as orange harvest season is yet to be started and some 50 percent of the tangerines are not collected the amount of loss appears to be dramatic.

Moreover, Masoud Haqiqat, an official with the agro-meteorological office of the Meteorological Organization, has explained that the organization has issued warning last week to inform farmers about the imminent snowfall but unfortunately the farmers didn't take them seriously.

Additionally, the director general of Mazandaran province's power supply department, Qasem Shahabi, said that some 33 villages in the province are suffering from power outage, IRIB reported.

Also, the director general of the province's gas company, Mohammad-Ismail Ebrahimzadeh, has explained that some 32,000 citizens are experiencing gas supply failure.

Saeed Momeni, an official with the National Iranian Gas Company, has claimed that such temperature drop in Mazandaran province is unprecedented and that they were trying to troubleshoot gas failure by Friday evening.

©Tehran Times/ Faezeh Salimi, Amir Ali Razzaghi

UNIDO signs Country Program Framework with Iran

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Islamic Republic of Iran signed a Country Program (CP) Framework in Vienna on Tuesday.

The signed country program is expected to contribute to the on-going government efforts towards Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) of Iran. The CP is aligned with national priorities outlined in the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan for 2016-2021 and the UNDAF 2017-2021.

Developed together with the Government of Iran, the country program will be implemented from 2017-2021 and it has a number of key areas of focus, such as : support to the Government of Iran to elaborate sector-specific industrial policies, job creation; strengthened enterprise competitiveness, market access and export; establishment of networks for knowledge sharing and building partnerships at the regional and international level; and promotion of an environmentally sustainable industrial development.

Addressing journalists at the signing ceremony, Mr. Ramezan Ali Sadeghzadeh, Deputy for Training, Research and Technology at the Ministry of Industry, Mine & Trade welcomed the cooperation and said that the implementation of the Country Program will be crucial to achieving national priorities outlined in the Iran's 5-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021).

He further highlighted the Government's resolve and commitment to ensure that the CP makes meaningful contribution and impact towards industrial development.

Mr. LI Yong, Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) stated that signing of the new CP for Iran is timely given that the international community has recently adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, one of which (SDG 9) is focused on building resilient infrastructure, promotion of inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering of innovation. He further highlighted his confidence that the country program will be able to contribute to the country's ongoing efforts focused on environmental protection, resource efficiency, green industry and employment.

The official signing ceremony was also the occasion for the Ministry of Industry Mine and Trade of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Austrian Institute of Technology GmbH (AIT) to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on systemic intervention towards a low-carbon transformation in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

(Source: UNIC)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iran's 4th grape festival opens

The fourth grape festival of Iran kicked off in the city of Urmia, northwestern province of West Azarbaijan, on Tuesday evening, Nasimonline news agency reported.

The event which is being held in a coastal village adjacent to Lake Urmia is coordinated in association with Urmia municipality in an attempt to support the framers, gardeners, Lake Urmia's restoration program, and register Urmia as a national city of grape.

"We want to support farmers by encouraging grape export," Urmia mayor Mohammad Hazratpour said, mentioning the 286,000 tons of grape production in the region.

چهارمین جشنواره انگور ایران افتتاح شد

به گزارش خبرگزاری نسیم آنلاین چهارمین جشنواره انگور ایران در شهر ارومیه عصر روز سه شنبه دز این شهر افتتاح شد.

جشنواره انگور به همت شهرداری ارومیه و با هدف حمایت از کشاورزی، باغداری، احیای دریاچه ارومیه و ثبت ملی این شهرستان به عنوان شهر انگور در دهکده ای ساحلی در جوار دریاچه ارومیه برگزار شد.

محمد حضرت‌پور شهردار ارومیه با شاره به ۲۸۶ هزار تن انگور تولیدی استان گفت: هدف ما حمایت از باغداران استان است تا انگور تولیدی استان را به سمت صادرات سوق دهیم.

ENGLISH PROVERB

A rising tide lifts all boats

Explanation: a strong economy benefits businesses and individuals at all levels; the phrase was popularized by US President John F. Kennedy

For example: Thanks to the economy doing so well lately, our business has been booming. I guess it's really true what they say, that a rising tide lifts all boats.

PHRASAL VERB

Break away from

Meaning: to leave your home, family, or job and become independent

For example: I felt the need to break away from home.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Bad egg

Explanation: someone who is a bad egg is an untrustworthy person often involved in trouble whose company should be avoided

For example: I don't want my son to be friends with Bobby Smith. Bobby's a bad egg.

Colombia signs revised peace deal with FARC rebels

Colombia's government has signed a revised peace agreement with the armed group FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia/Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) aiming to end half a century of hostilities, nearly two months after the rejection of the original deal in a referendum.

President Juan Manuel Santos and FARC leader Rodrigo "Timochenko" Londono signed the 310-page accord on Thursday at the Colon Theatre in the capital Bogota.

"We can turn the page on violence," Santos said after the signing, while praising the "persistence" of the negotiators to reach a "better" agreement.

For his part, rebel leader Londono said: "The word should be the only weapon in Colombia," adding that the new deal took into account "the concerns made by many sectors" of society.

The two men shook hands amid loud cheers from the audience.

The hastily organized ceremony was a far more modest and sombre event than the one in September in the city of Cartagena, where the two leaders had signed an accord in front of an audience of foreign leaders and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

The new agreement introduces some 50 changes intended to assuage critics led by still-powerful former president Alvaro Uribe.

They range from a prohibition on foreign magistrates judging crimes by the FARC or government, to a commitment from the armed fighters to forfeit assets, some of them amassed through drug trafficking, to help compensate their victims.

But the FARC would not go along with the opposition's strongest demands: jail sentences for rebel leaders who committed atrocities and stricter limits on their future participation in politics.

Public opinion has been divided on the signing of the deal, as some overwhelmingly loathe the FARC, for crimes such as kidnappings and drug-trafficking, while others want peace to prevail.

However, a recent wave of alleged assassinations in conflict areas has raised pressure on the government to seal a peace deal fast.

"There is no time to waste," Santos said in a televised statement on Monday.

"Lives have been lost and many more are in danger."

The revised deal aims to end 52 years of conflict that has killed more than 220,000 people and displaced millions.

However, a period of discord and uncertainty looks certain from now on, as opponents threatened to resist the revised deal.

"We invite citizens to persist in the struggle for the future of democracy," said Uribe's Democratic Center party.

Government and FARC negotiators presented the redrafted version earlier this month.

Uribe, however, complained that it still did not satisfy his key demands, notably punishing FARC leaders for their crimes.

(Source: agencies)

Myanmar pursues ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims: UN official

Myanmar is carrying out "ethnic cleansing" of Rohingya Muslims, a United Nations official has said, as stories of gang rape, torture and murder emerge from among the thousands who have fled to Bangladesh.

The high-ranking United Nations official added Myanmar authorities have stepped up persecution of Rohingya Muslims in the Southeast Asian country, and are actually conducting a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" against members of the community.

John McKissick, head of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees office in the southern Bangladeshi coastal resort town of Cox's Bazar, said on Thursday that the Myanmar military and Border Guard Police have "engaged in collective punishment of the Rohingyas" since October 9, when gunmen attacked three police outposts in Maungdaw town in the western Rakhine State, and killed nine police officers.

He added that Myanmar security forces have been "killing men, shooting them, slaughtering children, raping women, burning and looting houses, forcing these people to cross the river" into neighboring Bangladesh.

The senior UN official further noted that keeping the border open "would further encourage the government of Myanmar to continue the atrocities and push them out until they have achieved their ultimate goal of ethnic cleansing of the Muslim minority in Myanmar."

Meanwhile, the Bangladeshi Foreign Ministry said "thousands of distressed Myanmar citizens including women, children and elderly people continue to cross the border" even though Bangladeshi border guards have tried to prevent the influx.

As many as 30,000 people are estimated to have been displaced and thousands more have fled to Bangladesh in the wake of the recent wave of unrest in Myanmar's Rakhine, the UN says.

Tens of thousands of Rohingyas have not received essential foodstuff and basic commodities after Myanmar's army declared Maungdaw an "operation zone" early last month. Foreign journalists and human rights monitors have also been denied entry into the area.

Earlier this week, Human Rights Watch released satellite images, showing more than 1,200 homes had been razed in Rohingya villages over the past six weeks.

The UN says Rohingyas are one of the most persecuted minorities in the world. The government denies full citizenship to the members of the community, and regards them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh irrespective of the fact that they have lived in Myanmar for generations.

Hundreds of the Muslims have been killed, and tens of thousands others forced to flee their homes as a result of attacks by Buddhist extremists.

(Source: agencies)

Bulgaria: Refugee protests over treatment turn violent

Police in Bulgaria have fired tear gas and water cannon at refugees protesting about restrictions on their movement after authorities barred them from leaving the area where they stay pending medical checks.

Between four and six police officers were injured on Thursday after some 1,500 refugees clashed against their treatment at the Harmanli reception center near the Turkish border.

The center, which houses just over 3,000 refugees, imposed a ban on the refugees' movement earlier this week after local media alleged that the camp, the largest in Bulgaria, was home to communicable skin diseases.

According to the Reuters news agency, the refugees began throwing stones at police, who then deployed water cannon to disperse them.

The protesting refugees were accused of damaging several buildings, including the camp's canteen, and setting fires to tires, mattresses and broken furniture.

"The riot had started at noon but the situation has already been brought under control," an interior ministry spokeswoman told Reuters.

Petya Parvanova, the head of the Bulgarian Refugee Agency, which runs the camp, blamed media reports for the clashes.

"An artificially created tension led to this, following misleading reports of infections at the center," she said.

Bulgaria has built a fence on its border with Turkey and has bolstered its border controls to prevent inflows of refugees.

Some 17,000 were detained in the first 10 months of the year, over a third less than a year ago.

Despite the decreasing numbers, Bulgarian nationalists have staged several protests in recent months calling for the immediate closure of all refugee centers in the country.

At present, some 13,000 refugees, mostly from Afghanistan, are currently trapped in the European Union's poorest country.

(Source: agencies)

China: Xinjiang residents told to turn in passports

All residents in China's largely Muslim region of Xinjiang must hand in their passports to local police stations for "examination and management", according to Global Times, a state-funded newspaper.

"Anyone who needs the passport must apply to the police station," an anonymous police officer in Aksu prefecture told the paper on Thursday, adding that the policy had been implemented throughout Xinjiang.

The Global Times article followed numerous reports of tightened passport controls in cities across the region.

While the order covers everyone living in the area, many members of Xinjiang's more than 10 million-strong Muslim Uighur minority complain of discrimination - including denials of passport applications - as well as controls on their culture and religion.

In mid-October, the public security bureau of Shihezi city posted a directive on a verified social media account asking residents to hand in their passports to police.

The order stated: "Those who refuse to hand them in will bear the responsibility themselves should there be consequences such as being forbidden to go abroad."

The post was later deleted.

Photos of other notices posted on social media showed police stations in various counties and in the regional capital Urumqi requesting citizens hand in passports or stating that new documents would no longer be issued.

Angry questions about the new restrictions abounded on Chinese social media.

In June, local state-run media reported that the mostly Kazakh residents of a Xinjiang border district had to give police DNA samples, fingerprints, voiceprints and a "three-dimensional image" in order to apply for certain travel documents, including passports.

A Xinjiang official told the Global Times that the new tightening of policy was intended to maintain social order in the region.

Beijing regularly accuses what it says are exiled separatist groups, such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, of being behind attacks in Xinjiang, which has seen a wave of violent unrest.

But many independent experts doubt the strength of overseas Uighur groups and their links to violent attacks, with some saying China exaggerates the threat to justify tough security measures in the resource-rich region.

(Source: agencies)

Russia tells U.S. to get out of the way in Syria

If the United States won't fight terrorists in Syria, it should stop getting in the way, said Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, a spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry.

Konashenkov was responding to the U.S. State Department's calls to other countries to deny port access to Russian oil tankers heading to Syria.

"If Washington cannot or does not want to fight terrorists, it should not get in the way," Konashenkov said, according to sputniknews.com.

Konashenkov said the position of the U.S. represents an attempt to hamper Russia's effort to "fight international terrorism in Syria" and to "conceal the failures of the U.S. policy" in the war-torn country.

U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner said on Wednesday to the New York Times that countries in the region should not help Russian tanker ships carrying fuel to be used in airstrikes on civilians.

(Source: The Hill)

1000s of Belgians rally against looming austerity measures

Thousands of people have staged a massive demonstration in Belgium to express their vehement opposition to planned austerity measures, and demand improved payment and working conditions.

On Thursday, around 20,000 workers of public health, social and cultural sectors came out to demonstrate in central Brussels to voice their resentment over plans to reduce time off for veteran workers in the future.

The protesters made their way from central Brussels to the Flemish Parliament building, before moving to the Parliament of the French Community.

The protest rally comes as the high debt-ridden government is aiming to slash costs in cultural and medical services.

Unions argue that the reduction of off-hours would lead to further pressure at working environments, and keep youngsters from reinforcing the health sector.

There are reports that trade union representatives would meet government authorities again in coming days to start negotiations on the points of contention. The two sides had met ahead of the march.

(Source: Press TV)

44 dead, 100 injured as trains collide in Semnan

1 → On the cause of the accident, the Semnan governor general, Mohammad-Reza Khabbaz, explained that one of the trains was forced to stop four and a half kilometers to the station due to technical failures most probably caused by cold weather when the other train crashed into it.

Rouhani urges investigation by responsible bodies

President Hassan Rouhani has urged all the responsible bodies, especially the transport ministry, to investigate the incident, announce reasons behind it, and name the probable guilty persons, IRNA reported.

He also called for taking all the necessary measures to prevent from such heartbreaking incidents happening.

'Don't go any further': Erdogan accuses EU of betrayal, threatens to open borders for migrants

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned that his government will open its border gates to allow migrants to flow into Europe if it is pushed any further by the European Union. It comes after lawmakers in the bloc voted to halt membership talks with Ankara.

"We are the ones who feed 3-3.5 million refugees in this country. You have betrayed your promises," Erdogan told the EU, as quoted by AP. "If you go any further those border gates will be opened."

He also accused the EU of not treating people fairly, claiming it "never treated humanity honestly" and "did not pick up babies when they washed ashore on the Mediterranean...," Hurriyet reported.

Erdogan's warning to open the border gates refers to a deal struck between the EU and Ankara in March, in which Turkey agreed to help stop the flow of refugees across its border and take back migrants rejected for asylum in Europe.

In response to Ankara's threat, the German Foreign ministry said it is in the interests of both the EU and Turkey to stick to the agreement on migrants, Reuters reported.

Turkey agreed to the deal in exchange for billions in refugee assistance from the EU and accelerated talks on becoming a member of the bloc. It also rallied for visa-free travel to Europe's Schengen zone as part of the deal, but was told by the EU that a list of 72 conditions must first be met – a key sticking point of which is Turkey's strict anti-terrorism laws, which Europe has said must be loosened for the agreement to go ahead.

The deal has been tumultuous from the start, and tensions worsened on Thursday when EU Parliament members voted for a temporary halt to membership talks with Turkey, citing Ankara's "disproportionate" reaction to July's failed coup.

Turkey slams EU for 'insignificant' vote on accession talks

Meantime, Turkish officials have strongly condemned a recent decision by the European Parliament to shelve accession negotiations with the Ankara government over the large-scale crackdown in the aftermath of the failed mid-July coup.

"The decision means nothing to us. Our relationship with the EU is not tight anyway. We have a pushy relationship with the EU... It is a great discrepancy that Europe says Turkey is irreplaceable on security issues on one hand, while taking these kinds of decisions with flimsy reasons.

We expect the leaders of the European Union countries to raise their voices against this lack of vision," Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said at a press conference in the capital Ankara on Thursday.

He warned that Europe could be inundated with refugees and asylum seekers in case Turkey does not offer assistance under an agreement signed in March.

Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has downplayed the European Parliament motion as invalid, stating that it has disgraced the EU parliamentary institution.

Cavusoglu went on to say that Britain voted to leave the European Union due to the politico-economic bloc's lack of vision and esteem.

Additionally, Turkey's Minister of EU Affairs Omer Celik described the motion as "null and void."

The Turkish minister also called on "prudent" figures in the West to save the EU from the "vicious cycle it has been in."

Earlier on Thursday, the European Parliament adopted a non-binding motion by 479 votes to 37, with 107 abstentions, calling for "a temporary freeze of the ongoing accession negotiations with Turkey."

Turkey has been trying to join the EU since the 1960s, but the formal negotiations started in 2005. However, the process has been mired in problems, and only 16 chapters of the 35-chapter accession procedure have been opened for Ankara so far.

Relations between Ankara and the EU have further soured following the July 15 botched putsch, which Ankara claims to have been organized by the United States-based opposition cleric Fethullah Gulen.

International rights groups argue that Ankara's crackdown has gone far beyond the so-called Gulenists and targeted Kurds as well as government critics.

(Source: agencies)

8 Egyptian soldiers dead as car bomb hits restive Sinai Peninsula

At least eight Egyptian soldiers have lost their lives when a group of unidentified armed men launched an attack against a military checkpoint in the country's restive Sinai Peninsula.

Egyptian army spokesman Brigadier General Mohamed Samir said in a statement that the assailants onboard sport utility vehicles "laden with large amounts of explosives" attacked the checkpoint late on Thursday.

He added that a car bomb attack in addition to a fierce exchange of gunfire and a separate bombing claimed the lives of eight members of army forces. At least 12 troops were also reportedly injured.

Samir noted that three militants were killed and several others wounded in the fighting, without providing any information about the exact location of the attack.

Security sources said earlier that attackers fired two rocket-propelled grenades at the checkpoint south of the city of el-Arish, situated 344 kilometers northeast of the capital Cairo, and three pick-up trucks carrying masked men then drove by and opened fire.

(Source: Press TV)

Liverpool's Philippe Coutinho: Premier League title 'obviously the dream'

Philippe Coutinho says Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp has given the players belief this season and told Sky Sports that the Premier League title is "obviously the dream."

Coutinho, who moved to Anfield from Inter Milan in 2013, has played a starring role in Liverpool's excellent start to the season, with the club currently second in the Premier League, a point behind leaders Chelsea.

The Brazilian came close to winning the league in 2013-14, when Brendan Rodgers' side fell just short of a first title since 1991, and he is upbeat over their prospects of success.

"That's obviously the dream, and that's what we've got to do," he said. "We have to dream it."

Klopp has played down the benefits of Liverpool's absence from European competition this season, but Coutinho said it has allowed the former Borussia Dortmund coach to implement his ideas.

"There's definitely more time now to work on our tactics in training and for the coach to get to know us," he said. "I like the tactical training we are doing. But yes, there is a lot of it.

"He is teaching us to press when we don't have the ball and keeping that pressure up. Then we have to keep possession when we do have the ball. It's about putting that mentality into us.

"It's all about the confidence and the mentality that the coach has given us. This used to be a team that didn't really believe in itself. Now the players feel more comfortable and this comes from the coach. That's something that's reflected on the pitch and in the results."

Coutinho admits it was "very tough" for him when he moved from Vasco da Gama in his homeland to Inter in 2008 but he showed his potential during a loan spell with Mauricio Pochettino's Espanyol in 2012 and said he and Klopp had been hugely influential.

"My confidence has been really building since my time at Espanyol," he said. "The two coaches are actually very similar on the pressing side of the game. They spend a lot of time on that side of it and it's a lot of hard work."

(Source: Soccernet)

Kazan ready for a magnificent FIFA Confederations Cup Official Draw

The beautiful Kazan is dressed in a colourful FIFA Confederations Cup look: everything in this 1,000-year-old ancient Russian city is ready for the biggest milestone so far ahead of the Tournament of Champions.

On Saturday 26 November, the Official Draw for the FIFA Confederations Cup 2017 will take place in Russia's unofficial third capital. One day before the high-profile cast take the stage, set-up at the Kazan Tennis Academy, media had a chance to have a first glimpse of what to expect from the show.

"During the Preliminary Draw, we tried to explain that the dream of victory at the FIFA World Cup and the Confederations Cup 2017 starts here – in Russia," Channel One's director Felix Mikhailov said, who has worked on the show's concept with FIFA and the Local Organising Committee (LOC) for almost a year. "We'll continue the same topic in Kazan. The ceremony will be hosted by Andrey Malakhov and Yana Churikova, two fantastic presenters. Also, you'll be able to see how our World Cup mascot, Zabivaka, can dance," the director of last year's 2018 FIFA World Cup Preliminary Draw in Saint Petersburg added.

Performing at the Draw Show will be also very special for Dina Garipova, a Russian singer born in Tatarstan. "It is especially exciting that such a high-level event will be staged in my native land," Garipova said. "Tatarstan is known for its hospitality and I am sure that guests from all over the world will feel this here. I expect something really extraordinary."

One particularly special element at the 3,300 square metre Draw Hall was the FIFA Confederations Cup Winners Trophy. Two-time winner Julio Baptista will be the trophy bearer.

"This tournament is very special for me", said the 35-year-old Brazilian. "I had some of the best moments of my career in the Confederations Cup, including my first game with Brazil, in Japan, in 2001. It's amazing to somehow be a part of this edition in Russia."

The draw procedures were explained by FIFA Competitions and Events Chief Officer Colin Smith, who will conduct the Draw together with FIFA Deputy Secretary General for Football Zvonimir Boban.

"All the teams that Russia will host here next year have qualified for the FIFA Confederations Cup because they won a top-level international competition. When you bring together that much winning mentality into the same tournament, you can't expect anything other than some great matches."

Assisting the draw conductors will be two of Russia's biggest sports icons. "It's a great honor, responsibility and pleasure for me," said two-time Olympic gold medallist Yelena Isinbaeva. "I love football and I believe these two upcoming major tournaments will help Russia to develop the sport."

Former Russian football team captain Sergey Semak expressed his hopes that the host country will perform well at the tournament. "I want Russia to win, so I won't be particularly happy if the draw is too hard for them. Still, it is important to show some decent play and to show that we are a successful host nation."

(Source: FIFA)

The Russia 2017 Official Draw in numbers

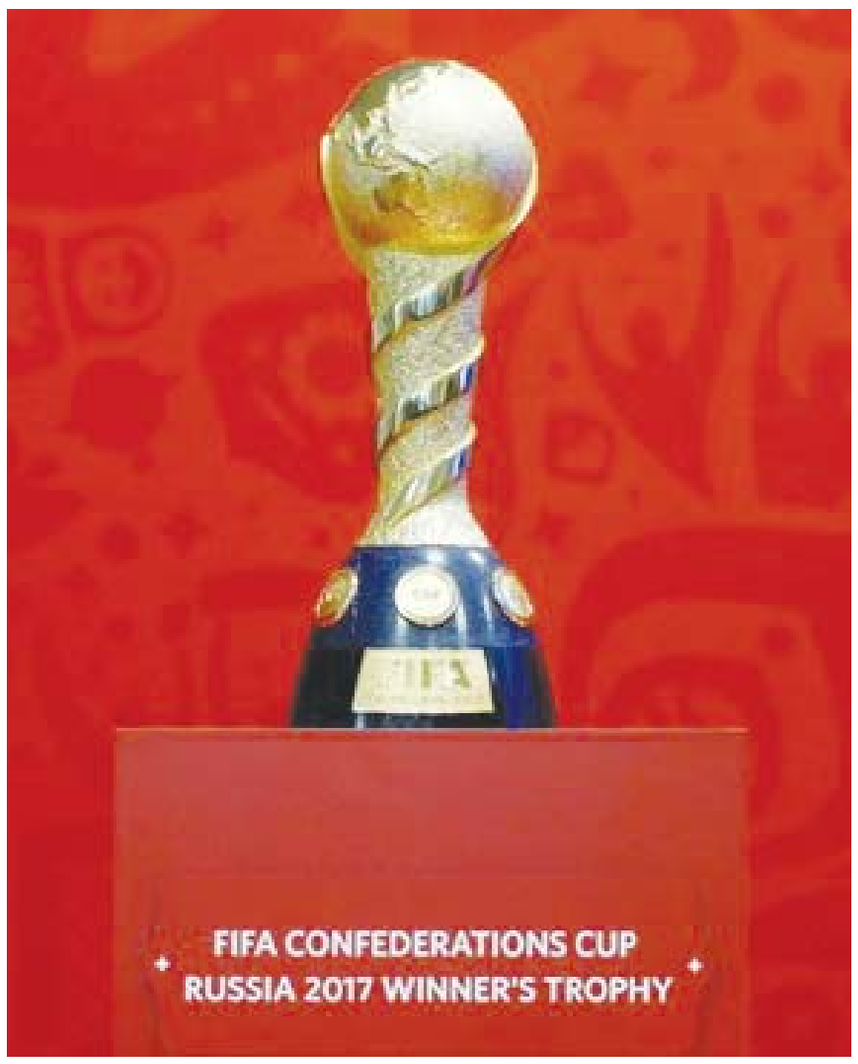
Eight teams, 16 matches and one champion: those are three well-known facts about the upcoming FIFA Confederations Cup Russia 2017. When it comes to the Official Draw, however, there are a few statistics that you might not be so familiar with, such as how many volunteers will be on duty in Kazan, how many coaches will be in attendance and how many performers will be treading the stage. As the countdown to the draw continues, FIFA.com reveals the answers to those questions and more.

2 groups will be drawn, with the top two teams in each section advancing to the semi-finals. The tournament will take place over 16 days (from 17 June to 2 July) and will feature 16 matches in total.

3 sporting celebrities will be taking part in the Official Draw, each performing different roles: Julio Baptista, a FIFA Confederations Cup winner with Brazil in 2005 and 2009, will carry the trophy on to the stage, while two-time Olympic gold medallist Yelena Isinbayeva and five-time Russian Premier League winner Sergey Semak will assist with the draw.

7 national team coaches will present at the draw, to be held at the Kazan Tennis Academy: Ange Postecoglou (Australia), Juan Antonio Pizzi (Chile), Joachim Low (Germany), Juan Carlos Osorio (Mexico), Anthony Hudson (New Zealand), Fernando Santos (Portugal) and Stanislav Cherchesov (Russia).

8 teams will feature in the draw, though we only know the names of seven of them: Australia, Chile, Germany, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal and Russia. Africa's representative will be decided on 5 February 2017.



11 countries are represented in the team of 270 volunteers that will be on duty at the event in Kazan.

40 minutes: the duration of the draw show, which is scheduled to start at 18:00 local time (16:00 CET). Hosting the event will be Yana Churikova and Andrey Malakhov, while FIFA Deputy Secretary General for Football Zvonimir Boban and FIFA's Chief Competitions & Events Officer Colin Smith will conduct the Draw itself.

87 performers will bring colour, music and dance to the stage. Joining them will be Victoria Lopyreva, an official ambassador for 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ Host City Rostov-on-Don.

150 people will be providing transport and interpreting services at the event. Translations will be provided in FIFA's four official languages (English, Spanish, German and French) and in Russian.

249 members of the press will be covering the Official Draw, 154 of them representing international organisations. The event will be broadcast to more than 150 countries and will be streamed live on FIFA.com and FIFA on YouTube (with the exception of Russia).

540 guests will attend the draw, 40 of them delegates representing the teams who have qualified for the Tournament of Champions.

3,300 square metres: the size of the area where the draw will be held, the same size as the media centre. Situated nine kilometres from the centre of the city, the Kazan Tennis Academy is equipped with 280 waste baskets, the contents of which will be recycled afterwards.

(Source: FIFA)

Bale faces lengthy spell on sidelines, says Zidane

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane expects to be without the services of Welsh forward Gareth Bale for a long period of time.

Bale damaged tendons in his right ankle during Tuesday's 2-1 win at Sporting Lisbon in the Champions League and he will undergo surgery next week in London. "It's tough to see a player out injured," Zidane told a news conference ahead of Saturday's home game against Sporting Gijon. "Bale is going to be out for a very long time."

Bale has been key all season for Real, who lead the La Liga standings and have qualified for the Champions League round of 16. The 27-year-old has scored seven goals and set up three more in 16 starts in all competitions.

Real are also without German midfielder Toni Kroos, who is out until next year due to a broken foot, and Spanish forward Alvaro Morata who is sidelined with a torn hamstring.

French defender Raphael Varane, who scored Real's opener in Tuesday's victory in Lisbon, will rest this weekend as a precaution ahead of next week's Clasico in Barcelona.

"Varane had a knee problem and we don't want to risk him," Zidane said.

"We just need to hold out and wait until they recover. The important thing is that we focus on the things that we are doing well." Real are unbeaten after 30 games in all competitions and are four points clear of Barcelona at the top of La Liga.

Zidane's side has scored a league-high 34 goals and are the only team to have hit the back of the net in every league game this season.

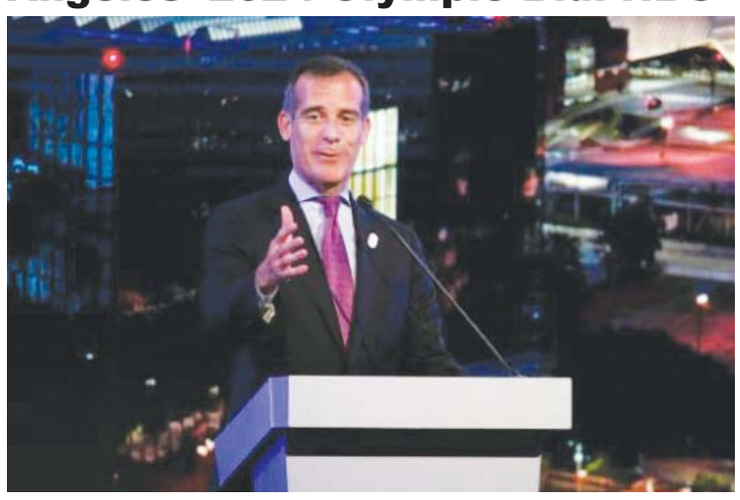
They will be boosted by the return of defender Pepe and midfielder Casemiro from injury. "The two of them are with us and are available for selection," Zidane said.

Sporting Gijon are without an away win this season and travel to Madrid languishing in 18th place.

"It's going to be a complicated game because of the players that we have injured," Zidane said.

(Source: Reuters)

Mayor says Trump backs Los Angeles' 2024 Olympic Bid: NBC



U.S. Republican President-elect Donald Trump told the Los Angeles' mayor he would support the city's 2024 Olympics bid when the two spoke this week, NBC reported on Thursday, citing the mayor's spokeswoman.

Trump and Mayor Eric Garcetti, a Democrat, spoke by phone on Wednesday and "had a productive conversation about ways to expand infrastructure investments and opportunities in communities across America," spokeswoman Connie Llanos said, according to NBC.

Reuters could not immediately confirm the report, and representatives for Trump did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

The California city is seeking to host the summer Games for a third time in a bid that centered on celebrating diversity.

It had been seen as the front-runner in the race with Paris and Budapest until Trump's election this month after a highly divisive contest against Democrat Hillary Clinton that left the nation deeply divided and stoked fears about the future among some immigrants and minorities.

Last week, Los Angeles bid leaders urged officials at an Olympic meeting not to doubt the United States or its commitment to its founding principles and strength.

Garcetti, who supported Clinton, had previously said Trump's win after a campaign filled with harsh rhetoric toward immigrants, Hispanics, Muslims and women could be detrimental given the international makeup of the 98 voting members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The IOC is set to make its selection in September 2017. Los Angeles, the nation's second-most populous city with nearly 4 million people, hosted the Olympic Games in 1932 and 1984.

Llanos, in a statement, said Trump's conversation with the mayor was short, and that Garcetti also "stressed the important role that immigrants and immigration reform will play in L.A.'s - and the nation's - long-term success," NBC said.

(Source: Reuters)

'Perfect' Rooney deserves more respect, says Ibrahimovic

Striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic has leapt to the defence of club mate Wayne Rooney, saying the Manchester United captain is a "perfect" player who does not get enough respect in England.

Rooney has been under the spotlight since apologising after being pictured last week socialising late at night while he was on international duty as England captain.

"I think when you're a person like that, when you're famous like that, people are interested, they want to know everything. I don't know what has happened," Ibrahimovic told British media.

"I didn't even ask him because it's not important for me and I'm 100 per cent sure the media doesn't know what really happened. I think we should appreciate him for the player he is, what he did.

"I don't see many players from England who have had the same career as him. I feel a little bit sorry of the situation because we should show more respect for him."

Rooney put in an inspired performance in Thursday's 4-0 Europa League victory over Feyenoord, scoring United's first-half opener from an Ibrahimovic through ball to become the club's all-time leading scorer in Europe with 39.

The goal also put him just one behind Bobby Charlton's overall club record of 249.

"As a person he's fantastic, I have the luck to get to know the person. As a player, there are no words to not say about him -- he's the perfect player," Ibrahimovic added.

"Everybody knows what he can do, what he did, what he has done. I'm happy for him to break the record and I will help him to go one more -- then I see it as the real record."

United, who are sixth in the Premier League with 19 points from their opening 12 games, host 17th-placed West Ham United on Sunday.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran's Nasiri Seresht donates his silver medal to Olympic Museum

TT SPORTS desk **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Nasiri Seresht has donated his silver medal to the Olympic Museum on Thursday.

the Iranian veteran lifter, who won a silver in the 56kg weight category in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, presented his silver medal to the Olympic Museum.

Nasiri Seresh was accompanied by Iran Weightlifting Federation president Ali Moradi.

"Now, Nasiri Seresht is immortalized forever for donating his silver medal to the Olympic Museum," Moradi said.

The president of the International Olympic Committee Thomas Bach also thanked Mohammad Nasiri Seresht for his gesture in support of IOC's heritage and expressed his sincere gratitude.

As the world's largest Olympic Museum, the Lausanne-based institution boasts more than 10,000 exhibits, including valuable cultural relics dating back to the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. The facility welcomes nearly 300,000 visitors each year.

In 1995 Mohammad Nasiri Seresht was elected member of the International Weightlifting Federation Hall of Fame.

Nasiri Seresht won a gold medal in the 1968 Mexico City and a bronze medal in the 1976 Montreal.

Iran Football Federation and Dutch Football Association sign MoU

TT SPORTS desk **TEHRAN** — A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) and the Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) in Tehran, aimed at strengthening the mutual relationship and to cooperate together for the further development of the sport in the two countries.

"Iran now is the best Asian football team and has achieved a very good position in the world football. We seek to cooperate with the Iranian federation in youth football, futsal, beach soccer and women's football since they are better than us in the areas," Michael van Praag said.

"KNVB can also help the Iranian federation in stadium safety and security as well as playing warm up matches with the Iranian teams," he added.

Iran Football Federation has also previously signed MoUs with football associations and federations such as Norway, Japan, Italy, Belarus and the UAE.

Iran drops three places to 30th in FIFA rankings

TT SPORTS desk Team Melli has dropped three places in the latest FIFA rankings released on Thursday, November 24.

Iran is now placed at position 30 in the rankings after the last week's goalless draw against Syria in the 2018 World Cup qualifier.

Iran still leads Asian teams, followed by South Korea (37), Japan (45) and Australia (48).

Argentina remains top of the FIFA rankings despite its struggle for consistency in CONMEBOL World Cup qualifying, with Brazil replacing reigning world champion Germany in second place.

The December rankings will be the final ranking for 2016 and will reveal the winner for the Team of the Year (awarded to the team in first place by year's end) and Mover of the Year (awarded to the team that has won the most points over the course of the year).

The next FIFA World Ranking will be published on 22 December 2016.

Liverpool fans react to Azmoun's Champions League performance

Iranian national football team striker Sardar Azmoun's brilliant performance against Bayern Munich on Wednesday put him into the Champions League Team of The Week issued by ESPN.

He has been called the "Iranian Messi" and perhaps the reasons are a little bit clearer now. The stage for Rostov's victory was set by Azmoun's superb first half equaliser.

He twisted inside Jerome Boateng, leaving arguably the world's best central defender floundering on the turf, and slotted coolly past Sven Ulreich.

Azmoun, 21, has starred for Rostov since arriving from Rubin Kazan in February 2015, and The Guardian recently reported that Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp wanted to lure Azmoun to Anfield in January to boost his attacking options.

After Azmoun's superb strike against Bayern, Liverpool fans took to Twitter to react to the Iranian international's performance, with many calling on the Reds to snap him up in January.

Some suggested that Azmoun looks like the ideal signing for Klopp, and want to see Liverpool sign the striker before it's too late.

Others think that Azmoun's price will have shot up following his goal, but with a feeling that Azmoun would be perfect for Liverpool's style of play, fans want to see him snapped up in 2017.

China plans skiing, skating drive for 2022 Winter Games

China wants to get 300 million citizens involved in winter sports by the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and plans to encourage them by building more than 500 ice skating rinks and 240 ski slopes over the next six years, the government said.

The country's top economic planner said on Friday that the number and scale of China's current facilities did not match its winter sports development targets.

"At the moment... there is a large gap with other developed countries with winter sports," the National Development and Reform Commission said in a document signed by other government bodies including the finance and sports ministries.

Beijing hosted the 2008 Summer Olympics to widespread acclaim, but its bid for the Winter Games was dogged by concerns over issues ranging from the city's notorious smog problem to a lack of snow - and the country's poor record on human rights.

The government has since vowed to use the staging of the 2022 event to drive pollution clean-up efforts to keep a close eye on large-scale construction projects.

The NDRC did not disclose how much it planned to spend on the drive, but said it would use a mix of government and private funding and was open to support from financial institutions.

It said the effort would be led by the integrated mega city of Beijing, along with Tianjin and Hebei provinces. Beijing and the city of Zhangjiakou won the right last year to host the Winter Games.

Cities with a population of more than 500,000 people will be encouraged to build public ice skating rinks and the government is also looking to construct rinks on suitable rivers and lakes.

(Source: Reuters)

Barca's Iniesta nears return from injury ahead of Clasico

Barcelona captain Andres Iniesta returned to training on Friday ahead of schedule after almost a month out of action with a knee injury, the club said.

The Spain international sustained knee ligament damage during Barca's 3-2 league win over Valencia on Oct. 22.

Iniesta was expected to be out for up to eight weeks but the 32-year-old midfielder joined his team mates in practice ahead of Sunday's La Liga game at Real Sociedad.

Turkish midfielder Arda Turan missed Friday's session with a fever while right back Aleix Vidal was absent due to personal reasons.

Barca are second in La Liga and four points adrift of Real Madrid, whom they face in the first Clasico of the season on Dec. 3 at the Nou Camp.

(Source: Reuters)

Bayern Munich's Jerome Boateng: Poor form not due to lifestyle

Bayern Munich defender Jerome Boateng has responded to CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge's criticism of his off-field activities, telling Bild that his dip in form is not down to "any PR or lifestyle obligations."

Boateng, 28, was at fault for Rostov's first two goals in the German champions' surprise 3-2 defeat in Russia on Wednesday.

Sardar Azmoun got the better of him to equalise after Douglas Costa had given Bayern the lead after 35 minutes, and he also conceded a penalty following a ungainly tackle on Christian Noboa as Rostov came from behind to win their first ever Champions League game with a superb Noboa free kick on 67 minutes.

"I didn't play well," Boateng admitted. "Criticism of both the team's performance and mine is justified, but I'm not yet at 100 percent because of my injury at Euro 2016 which meant an interrupted preseason training."

Boateng, Germany's Footballer of the Year, has won awards for his charity work and social engagement. Rapper Jay Z currently advises the Berlin-born defender on his U.S. marketing efforts, which include a designer glasses label.

Rummenigge told Sky that "it's all got a bit much" for Boateng and that he needs to come "back to earth a little," but the defender said his off-field activities have not affected his game.

"It's not due to any PR or lifestyle obligations, he said. "Anyone who knows me will know that I always do everything to reach top form."

Boateng's disappointing night at Rostov worsened when he hobbled off with injury just before the hour mark.

However, Bayern said on their official website that the injury was "nothing worse than a tight muscle" and that Boateng will be fit for Bayern's Bundesliga game against Leverkusen on Saturday.

(Source: ESPN)

Bilic not worried about losing West Ham job

Manager Slaven Bilic is not sweating over his future at West Ham United following the Premier League club's poor start to the campaign and is confident he has the full support of the owners.

After finishing seventh last season, West Ham have struggled to recapture that form and are 17th in the table, a point above the relegation zone having won only three times in 12 games.

"There is no question - I am happy in my job. I speak to the owners, mostly to Mr Sullivan, after every game and sometimes in between games if there is something that needs to be talked about," Bilic told reporters on Friday.

West Ham's problems have extended off the field as well as they struggle to adjust to their new home ground, London Stadium.

"I feel the support. As I've told you many times I'm concentrating on the next game and that's basically it. I'm not fearful. There is pressure, of course, because at the moment we are not delivering." Bilic added.

"We don't have enough points to feel happy but I'm seeing the improvement. It's still very tight. It's still early days, but we are in that position and the table does not lie."

West Ham travel to sixth-placed Manchester United on Sunday.

(Source: Reuters)

Man United, Arsenal and Atletico track Celtic's Moussa Dembele - sources

Manchester United, Arsenal, Southampton and Atletico Madrid watched Celtic forward Moussa Dembele during Wednesday's Champions League clash with Barcelona, sources close to the Scottish club have told ESPN FC.

Dembele has been a revelation for Celtic this season, scoring 16 goals in 26 games in all competitions, including a hat trick in the 5-1 win over Rangers in September.

The 20-year-old has also netted an impressive three goals in five Champions League games, while on the international scene he has broken into the France under-21 side, scoring four goals in four games, including a double against England U21s earlier this month.

Celtic beat off interest from a number of Premier League clubs to sign Dembele from Fulham in the summer, but the player's suitors have continued to keep tabs on his progress in Scotland.

Sources have told ESPN FC that United and Arsenal have been long-term admirers of Dembele and have watched him on several occasions this season, while Southampton have now joined the list of clubs -- who signed Victor Wanyama and Virgil van Dijk away from Celtic in recent seasons -- are also tracking him.

Atletico sent scouts to watch Dembele in Celtic's 2-0 home loss to Barca this week after being alerted to his impressive form.

Celtic, though, are desperate to keep hold of him and are unlikely to consider a sale in the January transfer window.

(Source: Soccernet)

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INTERNATIONAL DAILY
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Poem of the day

To-day is thine to spend, but not to-morrow,
Counting on morrows breedeth naught but sorrow;
Oh! squander not this breath that heaven hath lent thee,
Nor make too sure another breath to borrow!

Khayyam

Prayer Times

Noon:11:52 Evening: 17:12 Dawn: 5:24 tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:52 (tomorrow)

NOVEMBER 26, 2016

Gianfranco Rosi might cancel his trip to Iran

TT ART desk **TEHRAN** — World-renowned Italian documentarian Gianfranco Rosi, who has been invited to attend the Iranian international festival for documentary films Cinema Verite, will probably cancel his trip to Iran, Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) Director Mohammad–Mehdi Tabatabainejad said on Thursday.

"Rosi's documentary 'Fuocoammare' is Italy's contender for the best foreign-language film at the 2017 Oscars and Rosi is busy screening his doc in several other cities," Tabatabainejad, who is also the secretary of the festival, told the Persian service of MNA.

"In his message submitted to the secretariat of the festival, Rosi has declared that if he can convince his film distributor, he will attend the festival, however his distributor has also announced that Rosi will probably not adjust his time to travel to Iran due to numerous other trips to screen his doc," he explained.

Rosi is the only documentary filmmaker who has won top prizes at major European film festivals, including Cannes, Berlin and Venice.

The festival will be held in Tehran from December 4 to 11.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Italian, Iranian cultural officials meet in Rome

TT ART desk **TEHRAN** – The director of Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organizations (ICRO), Abbuzar Ebrahimi-Torkaman, met with Italy's former minister of culture and tourism, Massimo Bray, in Rome on Tuesday.

Ways to expand cultural relations were discussed during the meeting.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

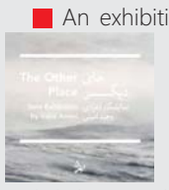
Sculpture

■ Seyhun Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of sculptures by Ziba Pashang.

Entitled "Ruined Existence", the exhibit will run until December 14 at the gallery located at 24 Sinai Alley, off Keyhan St. and Moqaddas-e Ardabili Ave.

Painting

■ An exhibition of paintings by Vajid Amini is currently underway at E1 Gallery.



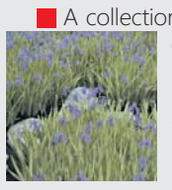
The exhibit titled "The Other Place" will be running until December 21 at the gallery located at 1 Hamid Dead End, off Lesani Alley, Jebheh St., off Mahdieh St., in the Elahieh neighborhood.

■ An exhibition underway at Negar Gallery is displaying paintings by Alireza Chamak.

The exhibit entitled "The Dreams of a Fish" runs until November 30 at the gallery that can be found at 33 Delaram Alley, Roshanai St. in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.

Photo

■ A collection of photos by Mehrdad Naraqi is on display in an exhibition at AG Gallery.



The exhibit titled "Japanese Gardens" runs until December 21 at the gallery located at 3 Pesyan St., off Moqaddas Ardebili St., in the Zafaranieh neighborhood.

■ An exhibition of photos by Maryam Khonsari is underway at Haft-Samar Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "I... Therefore I Am, I don't... Therefore I Am" runs until December 7 at the gallery located at No. 8 Fifth Alley, Kuh-e Nur St., Motahari Ave.

Installation

■ Sets of installation art by Saba Imani are being shown at Homa Gallery.

The showcase named "My Dinner Is Still in the Woods" runs until December 6 at the gallery located at No. 8 Forth Alley, Sanai St., Karimkhan Ave.

"Starless Dreams" wins APSA best doc award

TT ART desk **TEHRAN** — "Starless Dreams" by Iranian filmmaker Mehrdad Oskui won best feature documentary at the 10th Asia Pacific Screen Awards, the organizers announced on Thursday.

Oskui, who is also the producer of the documentary, received the award during a lavish ceremony at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre (BCEC) in Australia.

The documentary, which has been awarded at many international events, shows the lives of seven young teenage girls sharing temporary quarters at a rehabilitation and detention center on the outskirts of Tehran.

"City of Jade" by Midi Z from Taiwan, "Exile" by Rithy Panh from Cambodia, "Snow Monkey" by George Gittoes from Australia and "Under the Sun" by Vitaly Mansky from Russia were also nominated for the award.

Iranian producer Manuchehr Mohammadi also honored with the 10th APSA FIAPF Award for Outstanding Achievement in Film in the Asia Pacific region.

The award for best feature film was presented to the Turkish film "Cold of Kalandar" directed by Nermin Aytekin. "Daughter" by Reza Mirkarimi and "Muhammad, the Messenger of God" by Majid Majidi, both from Iran, were also competing for the award.

Chinese cinematographer Mark Lee Ping-Bing was honored with the jury grand prize for his collaboration in "Crosscurrent".

Best director award went to Feng Xiaogang from China for his "I Am Not Madame Bovary".

Manoj Bajpayee from India won the award for best actor for his role in "Aligarh" while the award for best actress was presented to Hasmine Killip from the Philippines for her extraordinary performance in "Ordinary People".

Farhad Aslani from Iran was also among nominees for best actor award for his role in "Daughter" while the writer of movie Mehran Kashani was nominated for the best screenwriter award, which was presented to co-writers Ryusuke Hamaguchi, Tadashi Nohara and Tomoyuki Takahashi for "Happy Hour" from Japan.

"The World of Us" by Yoon Ga-eun from South Korea received the Best Youth Feature Film Award while the Iranian film "Breath" by Narges Abyar was nominated for the award.

Director/producer Mehrdad Oskui celebrates after accepting the award for best documentary for "Starless Dreams" during the 10th Asia Pacific Screen Awards at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in Australia on November 24, 2016. (APSA)

Tehran gallery displays works by Jazeh Tabatabai

TT ART desk **TEHRAN** — An exhibition of works by Jazeh Tabatabai (1931-2008), the founder and director of Iran's first gallery known as Iran's Modern Art Gallery, has opened in Tehran's Shahrivar Gallery.

"A selection of 25 sculptures and 10 paintings have been put on display in the exhibit, while a collection of manuscripts, his books, and posters published on his exhibits are also displayed," the director of the gallery, Amir-Hossein Zandi, said in a press release published on Friday.

Part of the items belong to the documentary filmmaker Khosrow Sinaii and his art-loving family who were close friends of Tabatabai, Zandi added.

Two films directed by Sinai on the life and artistic career of Jazeh will also go on screen during the showcase, he said, adding, "'Autumn Lane' and 'Biography' about Jazeh and his position in the art of Iran will be screened and discussed during the show."

A meeting to review the artworks of the artist has also been arranged on the margins of the exhibit with Javad Mojabi, Mohammad-Hassan Hamedi and Behruz Darash to be attending.

The exhibit, which has been organized by close friends of Jazeh and private collectors, will be running until December 23 at the gallery located at 7 Hormoz Dead End, North Khazar St., in the Elahieh neighborhood.

PICTURE OF THE DAY Andrew Kelly/*Reuters*

Ice Age's Scrat balloon is carried by crowds gathered on terraces along West 59th Street in New York City on November 24, 2016 to watch the 90th annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Adaptation of "Playing for the Time" on stage at Tehran theater

TT ART desk **TEHRAN** — An Iranian troupe led by director Kamal Zarei is performing a play based on American playwright Arthur Miller's screenplay "Playing for the Time", at Tehran's Mashayekhi Hall.

Atila Pesyani is the writer of the play titled "Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz".

The play tells the real story of Fania Fenelon, an acclaimed Jewish musician, who is sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II. As a singer and pianist she finds that she will be able to avoid hard manual labor and survive longer by becoming a member of the prison's female orchestra, Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz.

Sajieh Ashuri, Sepideh Jafari and Mohsen Ranjbar are the main members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until December 13.

Illustrations by Farshid Mesqali moves to new exhibit in Taiwan

TT ART desk **TEHRAN** — Illustrations by Farshid Mesqali, which are among the works by winners of the Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration within the past 50 years, have been moved to an exhibition in Kaohsiung in southern Taiwan.

The works were previously displayed in Taipei from July 19 to September 20 and were warmly welcomed, however the organizers decided to hold a new exhibit in Kaohsiung, the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) announced in a press release published on Friday.

The works will be exhibited for one month, and the organizers are planning to display the works in the Chinese cities of Shanghai and Beijing.

Mesqali received the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 1974; he is the only Iranian winner of the award in the illustration category.

His illustrations have been chosen from the books "The Little Black Fish", "The City of the Snakes", "Arash, the Archer", "I, the Hedgehog and My Doll" and several others.

Michelle Yeoh coy about "Star Trek" as Singapore festival opens

SINGAPORE (Reuters) — Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh, one of Asia's biggest film stars, played coy about her reported casting in the upcoming television show "Star Trek: Discovery" during a red carpet appearance at Singapore's film festival on Wednesday.

CBS will launch the "Star Trek: Discovery" television series in May.

"Well, I think CBS will make their own announcement. ... But we all grew up with the 'Star Trek' generation, so of course I'm a big fan," said Yeoh, best known to Western audiences for her roles in "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" and "Tomorrow Never Dies."

The show's consulting producer, Nicholas Meyer, in an interview with entertainment website ComingSoon.net, said Yeoh would be in the show but did not say what role she would take.

The Singapore International Film Festival opened with Malaysian film "Interchange", a fantasy thriller about a forensics photographer in the world of tribal myths, and Singaporean short film "The Pursuit of a Happy Human Life."