



Iran most vibrant economy in MENA during 2017-21: EIU

ECONOMY TEHRAN — In its recent global forecast the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said Iran will be the most vibrant economy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) during 2017-2021.

Iran will experience a post-sanctions economic revival, enabling it to contribute more to regional growth than Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, according to the forecast.

The EIU also explained that despite the likelihood of an OPEC supply deal, oil prices will remain too low to enable a significant revival in the oil-dependent economies of MENA.

Iran's economy shrank in 2012 and 2013 after the West tightened sanctions because of its nuclear enrichment program.

But, the country's nuclear agreement opens the door for reintegration of the country into the global economy and the reinvigoration of its oil, natural gas, and automotive sectors. In this regard, renewed optimism about the potential of the Iranian economy has already generated a flurry of investment interest by foreign companies, the World Bank said in June.

Rouhani: Stability in Syria, Iraq shapes quality of ties with Turkey

POLITICS TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani of Iran said on Saturday that security and stability in regional countries, especially in Iraq and Syria, should form the basis of interaction and cooperation be-

tween Iran and Turkey.

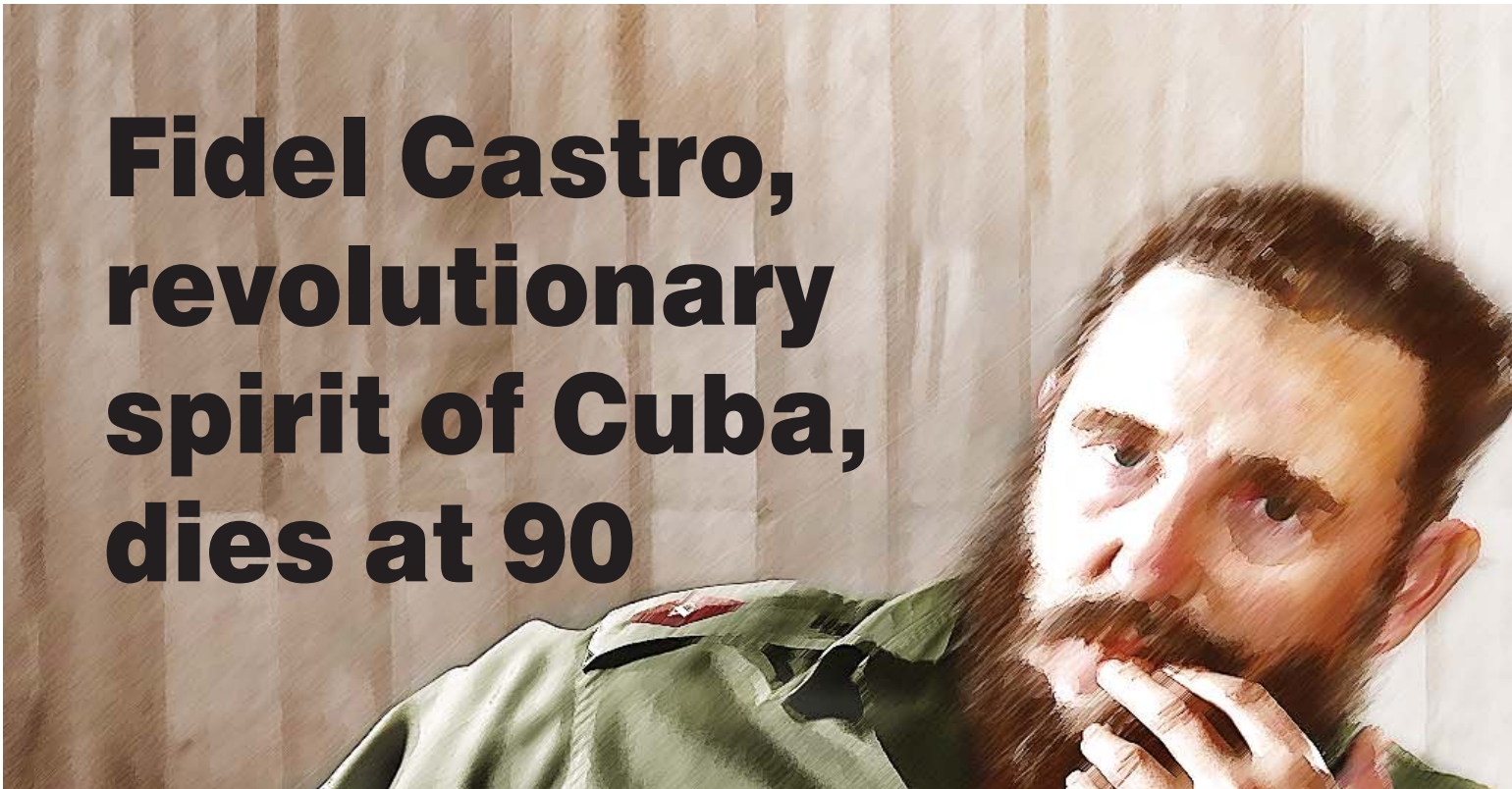
Rouhani made the remarks during a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Tehran.

"Today, the regional situation is volatile and expansion of

Tehran-Ankara cooperation and consultation can be effective in solving the problems," Rouhani noted.

He added, "Iran-Turkey cooperation is beneficial to the regional peace and stability." ➔2

Fidel Castro, revolutionary spirit of Cuba, dies at 90



Fidel Castro, the Cuban revolutionary leader who built a communist state on the doorstep of the United States and for five decades defied the U.S. efforts to topple him, died on Friday. He was 90.

A towering figure of the second half of the 20th Century, Castro stuck to his ideology beyond the collapse of Soviet communism and remained widely respected in parts of the world that had struggled against colonial rule.

He had been in poor health since an intestinal ailment nearly killed him in 2006. He formally ceded power to his younger brother Raul Castro two years later. Wearing a green military uniform, a somber Raul Castro, 85, appeared on state television on Friday night to announce his brother's death.

"At 10.29 at night, the chief commander of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, died," he said, without giving a cause of death.

"Ever onward, to victory," he said, using the slogan of the Cuban revolution.

Tributes came in from allies, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Venezuela's socialist President Nicolas Maduro, who said "revolutionaries of the world must follow his legacy." ➔13

Commander touts IRGC economic agenda

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps commander Mohamad Ali Jafari on Saturday defended IRGC's economic activities, saying that the military's economic muscle is intrinsic to its commitment to the Islamic revolution and promotion of its goals.

"The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has embarked on new areas of activity in line with its immense responsibilities toward the country and due to the Supreme Leader's wish," he said.

Major General Jafari made the remarks in Mazandaran Province in a ceremony commemorating those who lost their lives in the thick of the Islamic Revolution.

The commander also looked at the IRGC's economic mission from a different perspective, noting that the economy, along with other areas, can be one target for enemies to damage the revolution.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the commander referred to what he called the "soft threat" as the most dangerous type of threat Iran is facing, adding that military threats have turned into opportunities for the country, especially during an 8-year war imposed by Iraq in the 1980s.

"The soft cultural, political, economic, and social threats are the most dangerous threats to the Islamic Revolution," said the IRGC commander.

Jafari also pointed to Basij's role in safeguarding the revolution, saying that people should be aware of the threats mounted against the country so as to be able to fight them.

Iran optimistic about OPEC deal

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said on Saturday that it is possible for OPEC members to reach an agreement to stabilize the oil market.

"If OPEC reaches an agreement I am quite optimistic that oil prices will rise and this is what global economy demands," Zanganeh was quoted by Shana as saying after meeting Algerian Energy Minister Nouredine Bouterfa in Tehran.

"Algerian energy minister's proposal on each country's production was presented in this meeting and it was carefully reviewed and analyzed," Zanganeh added.

"We are going to announce our decisions regarding this proposal at the upcoming OPEC meeting," he noted.

Asked about the exemption given to Iran, Nigeria and Iraq in the OPEC talks, the Iranian



Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh (R) met Algerian Energy Minister Nouredine Bouterfa in Tehran on Saturday.

minister said "One of the main areas we discussed in this meeting was our position in the next OPEC meeting... I am optimistic about an agreement."

'In case of agreement, oil prices could exceed \$55'

Bouterfa for his part said if the OPEC and non-OPEC members reach an agreement on Wednesday oil prices will rise to \$50-\$55 by the yearend and even \$60 in the upcoming year.

He noted that in the meeting the proposal for cutting output by 1.1 million barrels a day has been presented. "We have proposed a 600,000-barrel reduction to non-OPEC members," he added.

The 171st meeting of OPEC is due to be held on Wednesday November 30 in Vienna. In September, OPEC agreed to reduce production to between 32.5 million and 33.0 million barrels per day - an effort to prop up prices - from the organization's latest production estimates of 33.64 million bpd.

Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors claim AFC Champions League 2016 title

Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors won the title of the 2016 AFC Champions League on Saturday night.

The Korean team was held to a 1-1 draw with inaugural champion Al Ain, winning the title with a 3-2 aggregate victory.

Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors

booked a place at December's finals of the FIFA Club World Cup.

Han Kyo-won put the South Korean in front on the half-hour mark at Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Lee Myung-joo levelling for the home team just minutes later.

Douglas then missed a pen-

alty that would have levelled the aggregate scores and, during a tense second half, Al Ain proved unable to force the goal it needed to take the game to extra-time, leaving Jeonbuk to lift the continental crown again, 10 years on from its first success in this format of the competi-

tion.

Captain Kwoun Sun-Tae was a significant presence, though, producing important saves to deny Douglas and Ibrahim Diaky late on, as Jeonbuk finally made up for the disappointment of its defeat in the 2011 decider.

(Source: the-AFC)

Daesh attack reveals its decline: ex-ambassador

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's former ambassador to Baghdad has censured Daesh's deadly attack on Arbaeen pilgrims south of Baghdad, saying the move indicates the terrorist group is on decline.

In an article published in the Iran newspaper on Saturday, Hassan Kazemi Qomi said Daesh wanted to "draw attention" by the latest terrorist attack, but if we look at the realities of region, we realize that the terrorist group is losing its power."

In the Thursday terrorist attack, which happened while pilgrims were returning home, about 100 people, including 71 Iranians, were killed. The attack happened when a booby-trapped truck went off at a petrol station in the city of Hilla 100 km (62 miles) south of Baghdad.

"Iraqi forces continue to retake occupied territories and Daesh have to choose between fleeing and fighting," Kazemi Qomi said.

"Despite its obvious retreat, the [terrorist] group attempts to cover its flaws and lack of power."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Kazemi Qomi lauded the great march of Arbaeen, emphasizing that the movement demonstrates the thriving unity among Islamic Ummah.

Pilgrims from around the world gathered last week in Iraq to observe Arbaeen, the 40th day of mourning for Imam Hussein (AS), grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, and the third Shia Imam.

"Among the aims of this [terrorist] operation were destabilizing the region and destroying unity between Iraq and Iran," he noted.

He continued, "This is while Iran has been on the frontline of fighting extremist movements in the region, especially in Iraq and Syria."

Kazemi Qomi further praised Iran's role in fighting terrorism, saying the terrorist attack implies that the Islamic Republic should continue supporting countries who are in fight with extremist groups.



© ISNA/Pouria Pakizadeh

Extreme cold freezes Ganjnameh waterfall

Ganjnameh waterfall in the north-central city of Hamedan has frozen over in the incredibly cold weather. People know Hamedan because of Ganjnameh and also they know Ganjnameh for its waterfall and historical inscriptions. The waterfall is 12 meters high.



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Interior Ministry to brief Leader on social pathology

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Interior Ministry will brief the Supreme Leader on social pathology in April-May, the interior minister said on Saturday.

Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, speaking on the sidelines of a Social Council's meeting, said in a recent meeting with the Leader on the same issue, various organizations presented their reports, ISNA reported.

The minister also ordered related organizations to each introduce a six-month plan for their approach to social pathology.



Iranian delegation to attend Castro funeral

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — A high-ranking Islamic political delegation from Iran will visit Cuba to say farewell to the deceased leader of the Cuban revolution Fidel Castro.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said the level of the delegation has not been decided yet, ILNA reported.

Castro, who defied the United States for nearly half a century as Cuba's leader, died on Friday. He was 90.



'Syrian, Afghan wars are result of religious, racial provocations'

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran seek to make ethnic groups in the country stand against each other, said presidential aide for religious minorities' affairs.

Ali Younesi made the comments on Friday evening in a meeting with political and social activists of the Bakhtiari ethnic group in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, IRNA reported.

"We should never replace national feelings with ethnic feelings," Younesi said.

Current conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan are the result of provoking ethnic and religious differences, he said.



Iran warns of humanitarian disaster in Yemen

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The deputy Islamic head of Iran's human rights office for international affairs has warned about the dire and difficult condition of the Yemeni people, saying a humanitarian disaster is impending.

"In Yemen, people are under aggressive attacks and are deprived of access to food, resources, shelter, water and emergency medical aid," Kazzem Qaribabadi told the 9th forum of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on minority issues in Geneva on Friday, Fars reported.



'Europeans remain loyal to JCPOA'

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The chairman of the German-Iranian Chamber of Commerce has stressed that Europeans will stick to the JCPOA, should the new U.S. president violate the agreement.

"We have a good increase in trade relations between European countries with Iran," he told Press TV in an interview published on Saturday.

"It will take a little bit of time until agreements show in trade statistics; but generally I am very positive about the situations," he said.



Supreme Court cancels billionaire's death sentence: source

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Supreme Court has overturned death sentence against billionaire businessman Babak Zanjani, Mehr news agency reported on Sunday, citing an informed source.

Zanjani was sentenced to death last April for corruption, but he appealed the ruling.

He was arrested in December 2013 after accusations that he withheld billions in oil revenue channeled through his companies.

Leader: Authorities should not appear lax on painful incidents

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution has urged authorities to pay more heed to the people's concerns after more than a hundred Iranians were killed and more dozens injured in two separate tragic incidents in Iraq and Iran.

"The authorities should not appear lax on such painful incidents, and put solving the miseries and the like at the top of their priorities," Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said in a message released on Saturday.

In making the comments the Supreme Leader was referring to two incidents inside and outside Iran which cost the lives of at least 116 Iranians.

In two incidents inside and outside Iran at least 116 Iranians were killed.

The first one happened on Thursday in the city of Hilla, 100 km (62 miles) south of Baghdad, where a booby-trapped truck went off at a petrol station, killing about 100 people, including 71 Iranian pilgrims.

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

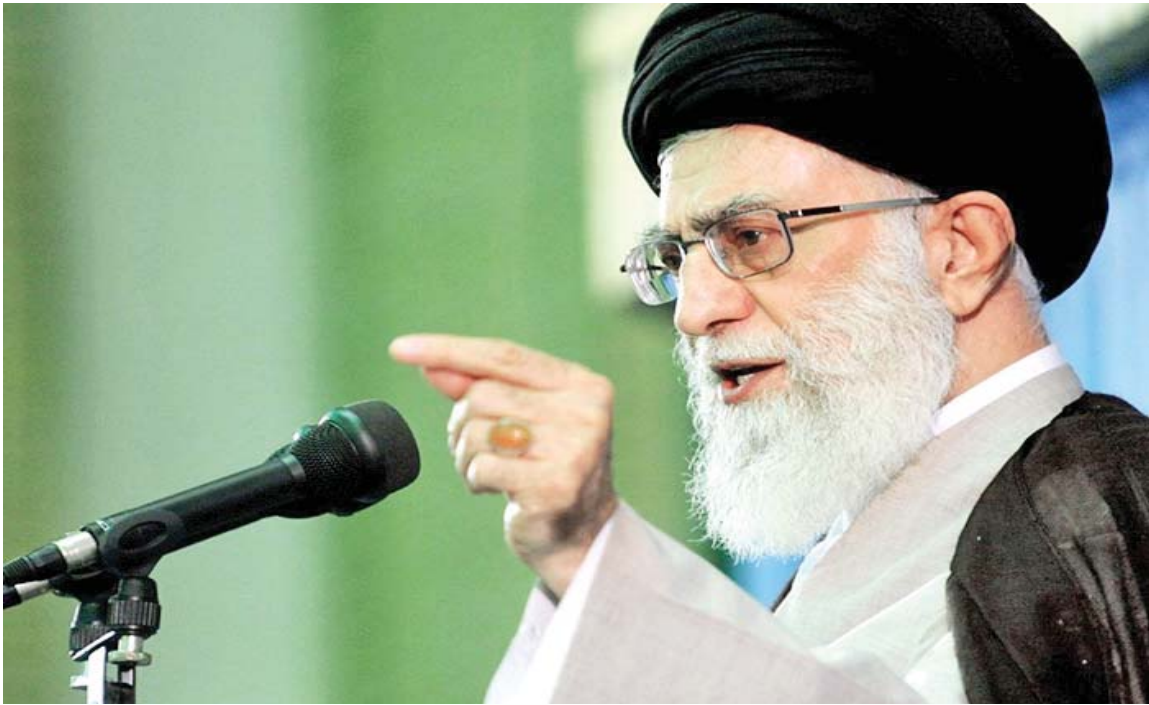
Also, on Friday at least 45 Iranians were killed and 100 wounded after two passenger trains collided in Iran's north-central province of Semnan.

The Leader took to task railroad officials for the accident, saying, the bereaved families lost their beloved ones to "imprudence."

Officials have already launched a probe into the train collision.

President Rouhani has commissioned his right hand man Es'haq Jahangiri to follow up on what caused the disaster.

Also, Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi personally arrived at the collision site hours later. He announced on



Leader takes to task railroad officials for the accident, saying, the bereaved families lost their beloved ones to "imprudence."

Saturday that the crash had been the result of an error by a signal controller.

Interior Minister Abdolreza Fazli has said he will be

appearing before the Leader for a briefing on the crash.

Three have been arrested for further investigation, according to the latest reports.

Rouhani: Stability in Syria, Iraq shapes quality of ties with Turkey

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Rouhani said Tehran attaches great importance to consultations between Iranian and Turkish officials.

"If the major powers in the region stand beside each other, crises in Iraq and Syria will be settled without foreign powers. However, the important point is that the neighboring countries be able to play their constructive role in solving problems in the region," the president pointed out.

Rouhani added that Iran and Turkey have common views on the important regional issues.

He also said, "Maintaining territorial integrity and national unity of Iraq and Syria, forming governments in these countries based on democracy and people's votes, stopping the murder of people and destruction of infrastructures and also helping the displaced ones are among the actions that should be done to settle crises in the region."

For his part, Cavusoglu said maintaining territorial integrity and national unity in Iraq and Syria will benefit Iran and Turkey as well as regional peace and stability.

It is essential to make efforts to establish ceasefire in Syria and intensify fight against the terrorist groups, he said.

He also highlighted the importance of expanding relations between Iran and Turkey.

Iranian officials offer condolences over death of Fidel Castro

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — On Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani offered the Cuban nation condolences over the death of Fidel Castro.

Fidel Castro, the revolutionary spirit of the contemporary Cuban history, died Friday at the age of 90.

In a message to Cuban President Raul Castro, Rouhani hailed Fidel Castro as the "unflinching warrior and leader of the Cuban revolution."

During his September Latin tour, Rouhani met Fidel Castro in Havana, where he called Iran and Cuba symbols of resistance against the "strictest sanctions."

In a separate Saturday message, the Iranian foreign minister also offered condolences, remembering the Cuban leader

as a unique figure in the campaign against colonialism.

"I offer the resilient and revolutionary Cuban government and nation condolences over the death of Mr. Fidel Castro, the leader of the Cuban revolution, who was a unique figure in the struggle against colonialism," Mohammad Javad Zarif stated in his message.

Zarif further said Castro served as an "example" for the "oppressed nations" in their struggle for independence.

Castro visited Iran in 2001 and held talks with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Fidel Castro temporarily handed over power to his brother in 2006 as he was recovering from an acute intestinal ailment. Raul Castro officially became presi-

dent two years later.

One of the world's most iconic leaders, he defied the U.S. for decades and survived many assassination plots by the CIA.

Throughout the Cold War, Fidel Castro was a thorn in Washington's side.

An accomplished tactician on the battlefield, he and his small army of guerrillas overthrew the military leader Fulgencio Batista in 1959 to widespread popular support.

The Soviet Union's last leader Mikhail Gorbachev said, "Fidel stood up and strengthened his country during the harshest American blockade, when there was colossal pressure on him".

Vladimir Putin described him as a "reliable and sincere friend" of Russia, BBC said on its website.

Iran to buy SU-30 fighter jets from Russia

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran has announced it plans to purchase a batch of Sukhoi SU-30 jet fighters from Russia to boost its mainly American, aging air force fleet, its defense minister said on Saturday.

"The purchasing of the fighter jets is on the Defense Ministry's agenda," Brigadier General Hussein Dehqan told reporters in Tehran, according to ISNA.

Manufactured by the Sukhoi Company (JSC), the Su-30 is a two-seat highly-maneuverable fighter designed for air-superiority and strikes at ground and

naval surface targets.

Currently, different variants of SU-30 fighter jets are operated by air forces in Russia, India and Vietnam.

Iran had already shown interest in a deal with Russia.

In February RIA news agency quoted a senior official at Russia's

arms export agency as having said that Moscow would sign this year a contract with Iran to supply a batch

of Sukhoi Su-30SM multi-role fighter jets.

Apparently, Tehran does not want to be a sheer operator of the advanced fighters and plans to engage in some

"Any sort of cooperation with the selling side should be conditioned upon technological partnership and joint investment."

'Daesh takes brutal acts out of frustration'

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi said on Saturday that Daesh takes "brutal" acts out of frustration.

The remarks by Alavi came two days after around 100 Arbæen pilgrims, including 71 Iranians, were killed in a terrorist attack south of Baghdad on

Thursday.

Daesh claimed responsibility for the blast.

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

Iran's President Rouhani condemned the attack

on Friday. "The Islamic Republic is still determined to stage all-out fight against terrorists and extremists," he said.

The terrorist blast came as Iraqi army forces and popular mobilization forces are fighting Daesh in Iraqi city of Mosul.

Violating JCPOA harder than it seems: New York Post

TT**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — An article published by the New York Post on Friday says that dismantling the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which Trump has previously called his "No. 1 priority", may be harder than it seems.

Naeem Aslam, chief market analyst at ThinkForex, told The Post that Russia, an Iranian ally, would be against re-imposing

any sanctions on Iran.

"[Trump] will side with Iran," Aslam predicted. If he doesn't, "he will have a problem with Russia [and] the Eurozone."

Iran and the six major powers finalized the text of the nuclear deal in July 2015 which took effect in January.

In a speech in March to a conference of the American Israel Public Af-

fairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington 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.

Iraq's Parliament adopts law legalizing Shia volunteers

Iraq's parliament on Saturday voted to accord full legal status to Shia volunteers as a "back-up and reserve" force for the military and police and empower them to "deter" security and terror threats facing the country.

The law placed the volunteers under the command of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and gave volunteers militiamen salaries and pensions that mirror those of the military and the police.

In a statement, al-Abadi welcomed the legislation and said the "Popular Mobilization Units" (al-Hashd al-Sha'abi), the formal name of the volunteers, would cover all Iraqi sects.

"The Popular Mobilization will represent and defend all Iraqis wherever they are," Abadi said.

The vote comes at a time when the government is waging a major campaign to dislodge the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group from Mosul, Iraq's second largest city and the last major urban center still controlled by the extremist group.

The volunteers, have been bankrolled and equipped by the government since shortly after ISIL swept across much of northern and western Iraq in 2014. Many of these groups existed long before ISIL emerged.



They have played a key role in checking the advance of ISIL on Baghdad and

the Shrine cities of Samarra and Karbala in the summer of 2014 and later helped

liberate ISIL-held areas to the south, northeast and north of Baghdad, standing in for the security forces which largely collapsed in the face of the ISIL blitz in 2014. However, their role has somewhat diminished as more and more of Iraq's security forces have regained their strength.

Currently, the volunteers are tasked with driving ISIL from the town of Tal Afar west of Mosul. They seized the town's airstrip earlier this week. Abadi met the militia commanders at the strip on Thursday.

Meanwhile in Mosul, Iraqi military and hospital officials said mortar rounds fired by ISIL terrorists overnight and early on Saturday have killed 16 civilians in neighborhoods already retaken by troops.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

An Associated Press team in eastern Mosul on Saturday said scores of civilians were continuing to stream out of the city's inner neighborhoods to escape the fighting, making their way to camps for the displaced.

The United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, says at least 73,000 Iraqis have fled Mosul since the government's campaign to retake the city began on Oct. 17.

(Source: AP)

Syrian army declares liberation of Hanano in eastern Aleppo



Syrian armed forces and allies have managed to seize control of a key district in the northwestern city of Aleppo, which has been a flash point over the past few months.

The Syrian army declared the full liberation of Hanano in eastern Aleppo on Saturday, hours after the forces launched a major offensive in the area.

A monitoring group based in Britain confirmed that the neighborhood was mostly under the control of the Syrian forces. The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), which advocates militants operating in Syria, said Hanano was the first Aleppo neighborhood to fall into the hands of militants in 2012.

The recapture of the neighborhood comes 10 days after pro-government forces resumed an offensive on the city's eastern part, which is under the control of militants.

Syrian forces have repeatedly halted the push to retake militant-held areas in order to allow civilians out of the neighborhoods and let in humanitarian access.

Russia, which supports the Syrian ground forces through air cover, resumed airstrikes on militant positions on November 15.

Syria's official news agency, SANA, said on Saturday that a fresh batch of civilians, most of them women and children, had left the militant-held parts of Aleppo.

SANA said nearly two dozen locals "from the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo that had been held hostage by the terrorist organizations exited the neighborhoods on Friday evening." Syrian army units evacuated the civilians to safety, it added.

Nearly 300,000 people have been killed in the turmoil that has gripped Syria since March 2011, according to unofficial figures. The Syrian government blames the West and regional allies for the spread of militancy in the country, saying the terrorists could not have survived without support from certain countries such as Turkey, Qatar and the House of Saud regime.

(Source: Press TV)

S. Korea sees largest protests against president



Hundreds of thousands have rallied in South Korea for what is thought to be the largest protests so far demanding President Park Geun-hye steps down.

Park is accused of allowing her friend, Choi Soon-sil, to manipulate power from behind the scenes.

The president has apologized twice on national television, but has so far resisted calls to resign.

Organizers said 1.3 million had gathered in capital Seoul on Saturday night, despite cold weather and snow.

They expect another half a million protesters to turn out in other regions. However police put the turnout at about 260,000. About 25,000 officers were being deployed in the capital, local media said. The protests, which began five weeks ago, are the largest in South Korea since pro-democracy demonstrations of the 1980s.

Those attending on Saturday came from a cross-section of South Korean society, with farmers, Buddhist monks and university students all involved.

Convoys of farmers have been

prevented from taking their tractors into Seoul - but the streets have been packed with people, chanting that President Park Geun-hye should step down.

Apart from the corruption allegations, she has become the focus of discontent over the economy. Farmers, for example, spilled sacks of rice on the road in protest at low rice prices.

Courts have permitted demonstrations up to 200 meters from the presidential palace but only before nightfall.

Tens of thousands of police are deployed, with the full panoply of anti-riot gear. Park, whose approval rating has dropped to 5%, apologized earlier this month for putting "too much faith in a personal relationship", and has pledged to co-operate in an official investigation into the scandal.

South Korea's constitution does not allow a sitting president to be prosecuted, and Park has 15 months left in her term.

But now that prosecutors have directly linked her to the scandal, it is possible she could be impeached for breaking the law.

(Source: BBC)

British workers face worst decade for pay in 70 years

Britons face more than a decade of lost wage growth and will earn no more by 2021 than they did in 2008 as the workforce endures the worst period for pay in at least 70 years, a think-tank has warned.

"One cannot stress enough how dreadful that is — more than a decade without real earnings growth," said Paul Johnson, head of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, in his analysis of the latest official economic forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility.

Real wages in Britain were hit badly after the financial crisis and the OBR's (Office for Budget Responsibility) forecasts suggest the outlook has darkened again since the Brexit vote.

Average earnings fell 9 per cent between 2008 and 2013 as wages failed to keep pace with inflation. Before the Brexit vote the OBR had been expecting slow earnings growth over the next few years, with average wages finally returning to their 2008 level by 2020.

But the forecaster predicts the vote for Brexit will hurt productivity and wage growth, while the drop in sterling that followed the vote will push up inflation. As a result, it forecasts that real wage growth will stall next year and even by 2021 average earnings will be below their 2008 level.

■ British citizens can stop Britain's departure from EU: Tony Blair

Meantime, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair says British citizens can stop the country's departure



from the European Union (EU) if they want to since Brexit is not etched in stone.

In an interview with the New Statesman on Thursday, Blair said Brexit "can be stopped if the British people decide that, having seen what it means, the pain-gain cost-benefit analysis doesn't stack up."

The former Labour Party premier, who was in office

from 1997 until 2007, said it should be possible for the British people or parliament to switch their verdict if it becomes clear the alternative negotiated by Prime Minister Theresa May is going to be worse.

On June 23, nearly 52 percent of British voters opted to leave the EU, in hopes of taking back control over their borders and having more economic freedom.

Blair had previously described the EU referendum as "a catastrophe" and argued that British voters should be given the option of a second EU referendum.

Blair's argument contrasts sharply with that of May, who has repeatedly said that "Brexit means Brexit" and that she'll respect the referendum result.

Economic growth in Britain is expected to slow significantly next year, due to uncertainty over the Brexit vote.

Experts have warned that leaving the EU will severely hurt London's position as a financial hub, unless it decides to keep its access to the single EU market by loosening its stance on immigration.

If Britain loses its access to the EU's single market, the resulting increase in the costs of doing business and exporting to the EU would hurt Britain's competitive position in Europe.

Blair said on Thursday Britain should keep its "options open" on whether or not to leave the EU until after Brexit talks with the bloc are completed.

(Source: agencies)

War on Yemen waged by U.S., Saudi Arabia: Ansarullah

Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement has accused the United States, which has recently put forward a peace plan for the war-torn country, of leading the ongoing aggression against Yemen along with the House of Saud regime.

Speaking late on Friday, Ansarullah spokesman Mohammad Abdulsalam highlighted the negative role of Washington in the war on Yemen, saying the U.S. is among the states that are involved in the aggression against the impoverished country rather than a mediator between the Yemeni forces and the Riyadh regime. He further pointed to Washington-Riyadh relations and warned that the U.S. is blackmailing Saudi Arabia and this practice will intensify in the future.

The war on Yemen is a U.S.-Saudi one, with Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi having no role in the offensive, Abdulsalam said, stressing that history will prove this assertion. The aggression was started in a bid to overcome the will of the Yemeni people, he added.

Earlier this month, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said during a regional visit that he had presented Ansarullah delegates with a document outlining a ceasefire and peace deal.

The Ansarullah movement agreed to observe the truce provided that the other side implemented it, Abdulsalam said. Riyadh also announced a 48-hour ceasefire in Yemen, but did not halt their airstrikes.

The Ansarullah spokesman said the House of Saud regime is opposed to the peace plan, but Ansarullah is committed to the deal so long as the opposite side honors it.

Abdulsalam said the agreement will be presented to Hadi for signing.

■ Hadi in Aden

Meantime, the former president flew into Aden from his base in Saudi Arabia on Saturday on a surprise visit to the headquarters of his beleaguered militant group, an aide said.

Hadi is expected to stay for a few days in the southern port city, which is rife with frequent unrest 18 months after his loyalists stormed the city with the Saudi support.

It is Hadi's first visit to Aden in a year and comes two months after self-styled Prime Minister Ahmed bin Dagher and seven ministers set up base in the city.

Hadi's loyalists have faced repeated attack by Takfiri militants of both al-Qaeda and its rival, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group and his security chiefs in Aden have been a particular target.

Abdulsalam said the Ansarullah movement has lost nothing by agreeing to the peace deal and will not negotiate with anybody before the first phase of the accord takes effect.

Washington used to rely on Riyadh on issues related to Yemen, but it was forced to put aside the kingdom and directly engage with the Yemeni side, he added.

The official said Ansarullah reserves the right to defend itself with all means against any act of aggression and hostility by Saudi Arabia and its allies.

The House of Saud regime has been conducting airstrikes against Yemen since March 2015 in an attempt to reinstate the former Yemeni administration. The war has left at least 11,400 civilians dead, according to a latest tally by a Yemeni monitoring group.

The U.S. has also been providing logistic and surveillance support to the kingdom in the bloody military campaign.

(Source: Press TV)

Bahraini protesters support senior Shia cleric Sheikh Qassim

Hundreds of people have taken to the streets in Bahrain to vent their anger at the ongoing crackdown by the ruling House of Khalifah family on dissent, demanding the immediate lifting of a regime ban on Friday prayers.



The protesters staged a rally in the northwestern village of Diraz, situated about 12 kilometers west of the capital Manama, on Friday, expressing their solidarity with senior Shia cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim.

On June 20, Bahraini authorities stripped the 79-year-old cleric of his citizenship, less than a week after suspending the al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, the country's main opposition bloc, and dissolving the Islamic Enlightenment Institution, founded by Qassim, and the opposition al-Risala Islamic Association.

Protesters planned to convene in front of Sheikh Qassim's residence, but security forces prevented them from approaching his house.

Similar anti-regime demonstrations were held in a number of other villages, where the protesters condemned the House of Khalifah regime for its persecution of the Shia community.

The rally in the village of Sitra, south of Manama, turned violent when security forces fired teargas at protesters, who were demanding the release of Sayed Alawi Hussain Alawi, a Bahraini citizen from Diraz whose fate remains unknown ever since regime forces arrested him at his office on October 24.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held numerous demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country on February 14, 2011. The protesters demand that House of Khalifah dynasty relinquish power. Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the regime's crackdown.

(Source: Press TV)

Mercantile exchange picks up 15% in a month

THE ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — More than two million tons of commodities, at the value of 33 trillion rials (about \$914.3 million) were traded on the physical market at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) during the eight month of the Iranian calendar year, Aban (October 22- November 20), showing a 15 percent growth compared to the previous month, reported IRIB news on Saturday.

According to a report released by IME, 962,000 tons of various commodities worth 16 trillion rials (about \$433.3 million) exchanged hands on the industrial and mineral products trading floor during the said period, registering 22 percent increase in terms of volume and 36 percent rise in terms of value.

Iran eyes Indonesia's 35,000MW project

Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Darmin Nasution said that Iran has expressed its interest to invest in the 35,000 megawatts electricity project run by Indonesian State Electricity Company (PLN). In a meeting on Friday, November 25, 2016, Iranian Minister of Communication and Information Technology Mahmoud Vaezi inquired about the opportunity to invest in the project.

"[The Iranian] asked if there is [a chance to invest] in the 35,000 megawatt project. People only know that it's already been given to [a number] of investors but many keep on asking 'can we invest? We'd like to invest [in the project],'" Darmin said in his office on Friday, November 25, 2016.

Darmin added that he had invited to make the investment. "We answered it explicitly. We said, 'If you're interested, then be my guest,'" Darmin said.

In addition to investing in the electricity sector, Darmin said that Iran has already stated their interest to invest in the oil and gas sector. Vaezi, who was accompanied by Iranian Ambassador to Indonesia, stated that the Iranian government would like to build an oil refinery in Indonesia. (Source: en.tempo.co)

China launches commodity trading center in Shanghai, eyes Asia gas hub status

China on Saturday formally launched a state-backed commodity trading center in Shanghai, as the world's top energy consumer looks to race ahead of other countries such as Tokyo and Singapore to become Asia's main gas pricing hub.

The center expects to trade more than 15 billion cubic meters of natural gas by the end of this year, or about eight percent of China's total consumption, Xu Shaoshi, director of the National Development and Reform Commission, said at a launch ceremony on Saturday.

"This will help accelerate the market-based reform in the energy markets, further improve pricing mechanism of oil and gas, promote China's inclusion in international markets and deepen international energy cooperation," he said.

The center, which aims to become Asia's main trading and pricing hub within the next five years, was founded by the Xinhua News Agency and the NDRC with a registered capital of 1 billion Yuan (\$144.56 million).

Its shareholders include the country's oil and gas giants, CNPC and Sinopec.

It is a platform for spot trading of natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, petroleum, unconventional gas and other energy products. It began trial operations in July last year and has 269 members. (Source: Reuters)

Brazil currency, stocks fall on potential president probe

Brazil's currency and stocks fell on Friday on concerns that fiscal reforms could be derailed by a potential investigation into whether President Michel Temer pressured an ex-minister to allegedly favor a cabinet colleague's property investment.

iShares MSCI Brazil Capped ETF shares fell 2 percent Friday, while shares of Brazil's largest non-government owned bank, Banco Santander, fell nearly 2 percent, closing at \$8.20 per share. The real slipped as much as 2.2 percent to 3.4679 reais but later pared back losses to 0.47 percent. Brazil's main stock market index, the Bovespa, fell 1.3 percent before cutting losses to trade 0.2 percent lower.

Geddel Vieira Lima, the Cabinet minister in charge of congressional relations, resigned after Temer was pressured to remove Lima for allegedly using his public office to obtain a permit for the luxury oceanfront building in the city of Salvador. Lima's resignation, along with accusations by another minister that Temer also discussed the investment with him, rattled investors on Friday, pushing Brazil's currency and stock prices lower.

Traders fear the investigations could make it harder for Temer's administration to gather support for tough austerity measures including a congressional amendment curbing growth of public spending.

Vieira Lima is the fourth Cabinet minister to quit over corruption allegations since Temer replaced impeached leftist Dilma Rousseff earlier this year and vowed to clean up government. Temer lost three Cabinet ministers to graft allegations related to the sprawling bribery and kickback scandal surrounding state-controlled oil company Petrobras.

Brazilian stock market losses were limited by a rise in shares of miner Vale SA as prices of China-listed iron ore futures extended their recent rally.

Other Latin American markets were little changed in thin trading the day after the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday. Many global investors were away from their desks as North American markets were scheduled to close early on Friday.

The Brazilian real slumped as much as 2.2 percent to 3.4679 reais to the dollar, the biggest intraday drop since a day after U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's unexpected victory. It later pared losses to trade 0.92 percent lower on the day. (Source: CNBC)

Iran joins International Energy Charter

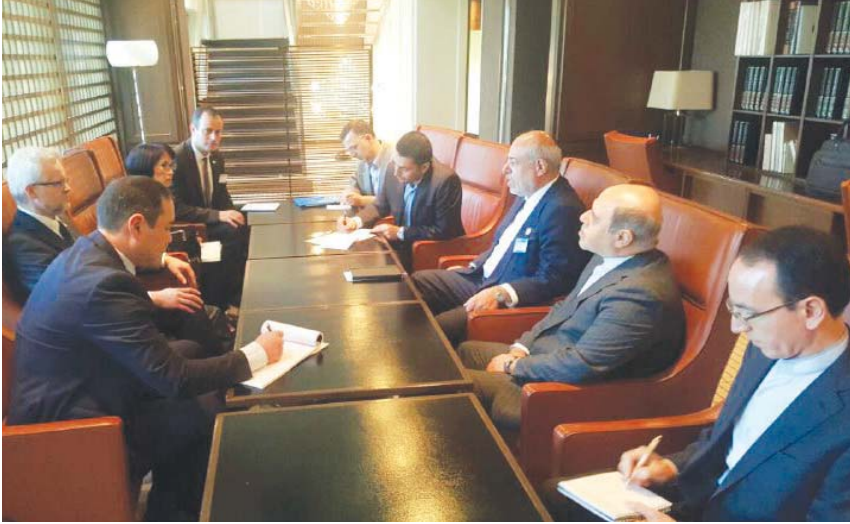
THE ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran has officially become a member of the International Energy Charter with signing the charter's declaration on Friday, the portal of Energy Ministry reported.

Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian signed the document on the sidelines of the 27th meeting of the Energy Charter Conference in Tokyo.

Secretary General of Energy Charter Secretariat Urban Rusnak, Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Fumio Kishida, and representatives from the member states were also present in the event.

Held annually, the International Energy Charter conference aims to reflect on issues in world's energy sector; to review the implementation of the provisions of the Energy Charter Treaty and the Protocol on Energy Efficiency and Related Environmental Aspects, and to consider possible new instruments and joint activities within the Energy Charter framework.

Beside Iran, Iraq, Guatemala, and



Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian (3rd R) held talks with Secretary General of Energy Charter Secretariat Urban Rusnak (2nd L) on Saturday on the sidelines of the 27th meeting of the Energy Charter Conference in Tokyo.

three international organizations namely G5 Sahel, the East African Community, and the Economic Com-

munity of Central African States signed the declaration document and therefore became observers to the Energy

Iran's TPO inks MOU with ITC

THE ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) signed an MOU with International Trade Center (ITC) on the sidelines of the 11th Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) Network World Conference, in Marrakech, Morocco, the portal of TPO reported on Saturday.

The MOU was penned by Executive Director of the ITC Arancha González Laya and Iran's TPO Head Mojtaba Khosrotaj to expand mutual cooperation.

ITC is the only development agency that is fully dedicated to supporting the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Estab-

lished in 1964, the center is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

The biennial TPOs Network World Conference has grown steadily in popularity. It is recognized by the senior representatives of TPOs as the global networking event on their agendas to foster new ideas, future collaborations and positive outcomes of their efforts.

During the 11th meeting of TPOs, held on November 24-25, leaders at the global event underlined the need to manage the rise of digitalization to connect more businesses to markets, foster inclusive trade.



Philip Hammond's infrastructure spending to fall short by £15bn

The Treasury's own fiscal watchdog expects the Government to underspend its new ambitious capital infrastructure budget by almost £15 billion over the five years to 2021-22.

The forecast is likely to be an embarrassment for the Chancellor, Philip Hammond, since it is equivalent to almost two-thirds of the additional £23 billion infrastructure spending he announced to great fanfare in the Autumn Statement.

In his speech to Parliament, Hammond unveiled a £23 billion National Productivity Investment Fund "to be spent on innovation and infrastructure over the next five years".

"We choose to invest in our economic infrastructure because it can transform the growth potential of our economy, as well as improving the quality of people's lives," he told MPs.

This spending increase included an additional £3.5 billion for affordable housing, £2.9 billion on roads and £750 million on broadband infrastructure over the five years to 2021-22.

There was also a pledge for £7 billion in the final year of the forecast which the Treasury said would be allocated "in due course".

The additional infrastructure spending, to be funded by additional borrowing, was a major departure from the fiscal approach of Hammond's predecessor, George Osborne.

Yet the small print of the Office for Budget Responsibility's document shows an assumption that the central government's planned outlay on "public sector gross investment" (PSGI) will be underspent by a cumulative total of £14.8 billion over that same five year period.

Coming up short

Sources at the OBR explained that this was a "judgment" by the watchdog based on the fact that, historically, Whitehall departments have tended to spend less than their permitted capital budgets.

The overall spending undershoot projected for



the five years to 2019-20 was actually slightly lower than the OBR forecast in March.

And the OBR also says that "past experience suggests that planned increases in capital spending will not translate fully into actual spending in the year planned", prompting it to assume that 20 percent of each year's capital budget will be spent in the following year.

This implies that part of the sizeable £4 billion underspend in 2021-22 will be spent in 2022-23, although this is beyond the OBR's current forecasting period.

Nevertheless, the underspend forecast echoes skepticism in some quarters over whether the Chancellor will actually be able to fulfil his bold infrastructure investment ambitions.

"Successive governments have found it enormously difficult to deliver projects – especially roads," the former Labor Chancellor Alistair Darling told The Independent.

"I remember Osborne announcing road schemes that I'd announced myself. And with housing it's as much planning as it is money. The Government really needs to ask itself what it needs to do to get these

projects done and a lot of it is planning [reform]."

The Government's plans imply a cumulative total £305 billion of central government infrastructure spending in the five years to 2021-22, but the OBR is assuming only £289 billion actually goes out the door.

Treasury sources said they were confident that the full spending committed by the Chancellor would be delivered and that the OBR would revise away its underspend projections over time.

They pointed out that the Whitehall spending limits had actually risen by less than the OBR's projected final increase in spending in the three years to 2019-20.

A spokesperson said: "The Chancellor has set out his commitment to prioritize high-value investment in infrastructure and innovation that will contribute to raising Britain's productivity. The OBR forecast shows that we will spend all of the additional capital allocated at Autumn Statement, as well as spending more of the existing allocation."

Despite the projected shortfall, Hammond's changes still represent a sizeable increase on the capital investment plans laid out by Osborne in the March Budget.

The OBR says PSGI will rise to 2.9 percent of GDP in 2020-21, versus 2.6 percent previously.

Allowing for the depreciation of infrastructure and including capital spending by other quasi public bodies such as housing associations, total public sector net investment is now projected to rise to 2.3 percent of GDP by the end of the decade, whereas under Osborne it had been due to dip as low as 1.5 percent.

Hammond's change

The director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, Paul Johnson, this week described Hammond's capital spending plans as "significant" and "well above the average over the last 30 years".

(Source: Independent)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ford to be first automaker to import cars made in India to U.S.

American automobile manufacturer Ford Motors has announced that it will begin manufacturing its EcoSport compact crossover in India in 2018, to export to U.S. markets.

Ford will be the first U.S. automaker to import cars from India into the U.S. market. As president-elect Donald Trump earlier said he would impose a 35-percent tax on cars built in Mexico, Ford has pivoted to India, where the automaker has two plants, in Chennai and Sanand.

State takes €30m stake in Finance Ireland

The Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) has invested €30m in one of the country's largest non-bank lender, Finance Ireland.

ISIF will take a 32pc stake in the SME-focused firm that was founded by former Permanent TSB chief executive Billy Kane.

Following the deal, Pimco and ISIF will each have a third of the business, with the balance held by management and other early backers.

ISIF will appoint two directors to the company's board, including ISIF head of private equity Fergal McLeavey. Pimco paid €25m last December for its stake.

Argentina unemployment drops in breath of fresh air for Govt.

Argentina's unemployment rate dropped to 8.5 percent in the third quarter of the year, the government's Indec statistics agency said in a report on Friday, a bright spot in a slew of poor economic data for the recession-stricken country.

That was down from 9.3 percent unemployment in the second quarter, as the total number of unemployed Argentines fell by nearly 100,000 to 1.1 million.

The drop in unemployment came a day after government figures showed economic activity shrank 3.7 percent in September compared with a year earlier. Industrial output fell in September for the eighth straight month.

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Fidel Castro: The life of a revolutionary

Fidel Castro, the iconic cigar-chomping communist who seized power in Cuba in 1959, survived a CIA-sponsored invasion and ruled with a repressive hand for five decades until poor health forced him out in 2008, died on Friday, November 25. He was 90.

A bitter enemy of Washington, Castro remained silent after his successor, brother Raul, and President Barack Obama agreed in December 2014 to restore diplomatic and economic ties that had been severed for half a century. Finally, six weeks after the announcement, Fidel gave a lukewarm endorsement of the rapprochement.

"I don't trust the policy of the United States nor have I had an exchange with them, but this does not mean ... a rejection of a peaceful solution to conflicts or the dangers of war," he said in a statement published on the website of Cuba's Communist Party newspaper Granma.

■ Diplomatic relations

Castro lived long enough to see a historic thaw in relations between Cuba and the United States. Full diplomatic relations were restored on July 20, 2015, the U.S. Embassy in Havana reopened a month later and in March 2016, Obama became the first U.S. president to visit to Cuba since Calvin Coolidge made the trip 88 years earlier.

Castro's stage was a small island nation 90 miles from the underbelly of the United States, but he commanded world-wide attention. "Cuba hadn't counted for much in the scale of politics and history until Castro," said Wayne Smith, the top U.S. diplomat in Cuba from 1979 to 1982.

Born out of wedlock, Castro was the son of Angel Castro, a wealthy sugar plantation owner. Fidel was born five years before Raul. Their mother, Lina Ruz Gonzalez, was the maid to Angel's first wife. Angel and Lina eventually married. ➔13

Castro also survived numerous assassination attempts by the Central Intelligence Agency and anti-Castro exiles in the early 1960s.

Saudi Arabia contemplates Trump

By Bruce Riedel

The Saudis were surprised by Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. presidential election, and their numerous America watchers are trying to assess what Trump's foreign policy will mean for the kingdom.

The Saudi partnership with America dates to 1943 when two future kings, Faisal and Khaled, were sent by their father, King Ibn Saud, to Washington to confer with President Franklin Roosevelt. Roosevelt treated the two princes as the royalty they were. They stayed in Blair House, met Roosevelt in the Oval Office and traveled around the country to see how America was mobilized for war.

Ever since, the kingdom has sought to understand American politics and influence U.S. policy. But Trump was a surprise. The royals' longtime connections to America's two family dynasties, the Bushes and the Clintons, were on the wrong side of history. Some Saudi America watchers have argued that Trump's rhetoric on Muslims was crucial to his victory, a source of deep concern for a country that prides itself as the Custodian of the two Holy Cities. The Saudis are nervous about what they see as rising Islamophobia in America.

The Saudis also welcome Trump's support for Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Riyadh was a major backer of the coup that brought Sisi to power. While relations have been bumpier recently with Cairo, the Saudis want an American administration that focuses on stability and not reform. King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud believes the Arab Spring was a disaster for the region that should never have been welcomed by Washington. He will want strong American support for the Saudi military role in keeping the Sunni minority in charge in Bahrain.

Riyadh is worried about Trump's views on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Salman will press the incoming administration to get more deeply involved in getting rid of Assad. Assad,



King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud believes the Arab Spring was a disaster for the region that should never have been welcomed by Washington.

not the Islamic State (ISIL), is the top priority for the kingdom.

The Saudis do agree that ISIL is a threat. Mohammad bin Nayef is actively seeking to destroy the nascent ISIL underground in the kingdom.

■ Salman's immediate problem

Salman's immediate problem is his war in Yemen. The king and his son Prince Mohammed bin Salman recognize the war is increasingly costly. The kingdom is spending billions on a war when it needs to reduce military expenditures if Mohammed bin Salman's Saudi Vision 2030 has any chance of transforming the economy.

The Yemen war is becoming more

dangerous. An American destroyer was fired on twice last month. Another attempt at a cease-fire collapsed last week. A sudden crisis in the war could be an early test for the new U.S. administration in February 2017.

Saudi commentary on Yemen increasingly seems desperate to find an honorable way out of the Yemeni adventure. Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman has the most to lose if the war is an endless quagmire.

A recent study of the cost of the war by a British think tank concluded that the defense minister is likely to be blamed for the conflict. Of course, the only opinion that matters is the king's, and Salman is

still his son's booster.

■ The Arab-Israeli conflict

The Arab-Israeli conflict has receded on Saudi priorities for the last two years, but if Trump follows through on promises to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem, the kingdom will react harshly. Salman is a strong defender of the Islamic identity of Jerusalem. He has been involved in fundraising for supporting the Palestinian cause in Jerusalem since 1967, when then-King Faisal made him responsible for the effort.

The Saudis and their lobbyists in Washington will press Trump on one immediate challenge to the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia. The congressional override of President Barack Obama's veto of the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA) means our oldest and strongest ally in the Arab world is going to be the target of what Saudis believe to be unnecessary and dangerous lawsuits. This is likely to damage counterterrorism cooperation with the kingdom and its Persian Gulf allies, making us less safe. The bill also sets a dangerous precedent that could be used in the future against American soldiers and diplomats.

In the interim between his election and the inauguration Jan. 20, Trump and his team should quietly encourage the lame-duck Congress to amend JASTA to give the new president a waiver to exclude from such lawsuits countries deemed by the president to be major partners in fighting terrorism. Obama could take the political heat and sign an amendment with waiver authority. This will not be an easy sell, but it is far better to change JASTA now than to have to live with it come January 2017. Failure to act responsibly on JASTA, and acknowledging that the issue of a Saudi role in 9/11 has been thoroughly investigated and debunked by two congressionally mandated commissions, will set back the next president's efforts to stabilize a very dangerous region before he even gets started.

(Source: Al Monitor)

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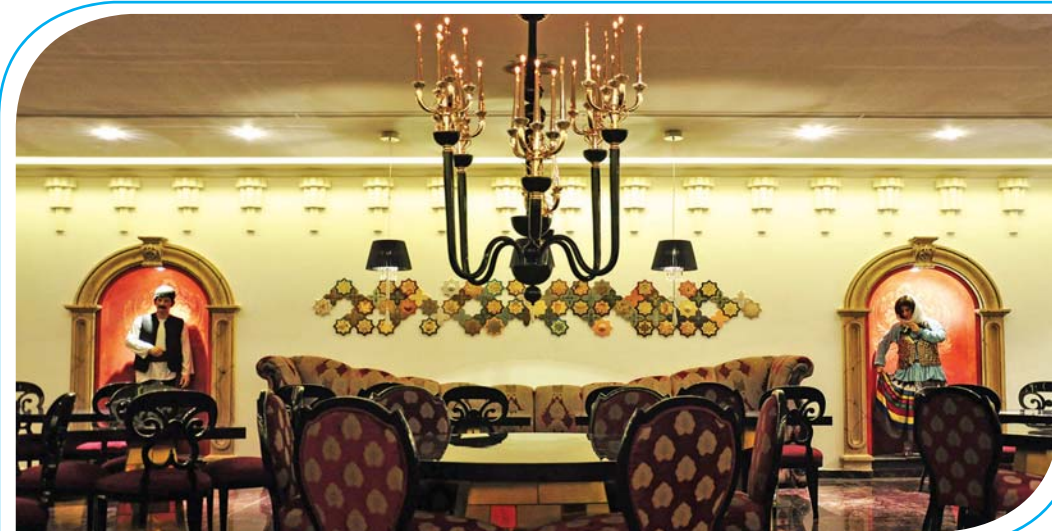
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By Abbas Torabi

Nepotism Trump-style: Family connections hikes within president-elect transition team

The United States modern political history, cannot recall such an explicit nepotism as much as the President-elect Donald Trump does. He is accused of turning the U.S. politics as his familial assets in forming a transition team, in which four of his five adult children are involved. Rebecca Ballhaus, in her article in The Wall Street Journal "Donald Trump's Children Won't Have White House Roles," says those potential overlaps have drawn criticism from ethics experts in both parties. Then, the turning point here is, whether the Executive Office of the President has turned into a startling family business in the hands of Trump's extended family? Does it signal a large-scale nepotism and cronyism is forming in the White House? What does nepotism have to do with ethics? Whether federal anti-nepotism law is applicable to Trump's transition team? And how deep is this country's

favoritism conundrum?

But, first of all, we should clarify what nepotism means and what consequences it has? Nepotism is the worst form of favoritism and corruption granted to relatives and in particular to the members of the elite family. The origins of this family involvement in the key positions, can trace its history back to assignment of nephews to dominant positions by Catholic Popes and Bishops in the Mediaeval ages. The term originally stems from Italian word Nepotismo, which according to Latin root Nepos means nephew.

According to New Catholic Dictionary, "since the Mediaeval times up until the late 17th century, some

Catholic Popes and Bishops, who had taken vows of chastity, and therefore usually had no legitimate offspring of their own, gave their nephews such positions of preference as were often accorded by fathers to son." It is almost superfluous to say that, both nepotism and cronyism are two branches of favoritism, and generally it has been around since the beginning of life but specifically it can be traced back to the early city-states of ancient Greece.

Aristotle, a towering figure in ancient Greek philosophy, the one who made contributions to logics, metaphysics, mathematics, physics, biology, botany, ethics, politics, agriculture, medicine, dance and theatre believes that "Equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally." Likewise, as far as one of the most basic themes in ethics is fairness and equal treatment of people, then, favoritism and its forbidden fruits - cronyism and nepotism - all of these things are in flat contradiction to such ethics. Because it provides with undue privileges and advantages to those who do not necessarily deserve the high positions.

In an interesting article, "Get Elected, Get Your Kids Rich: Washington is Spoiled Rotten" on The Daily Beast, author Clare Malone clearly states that the steeply rising nepotism in the U.S. political sphere and especially among those affluent families, is designing a ruling class that won't be easily reversed. Frankly speaking, Robert Reich, former secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton and a professor

of public policy at University of California, Berkeley, believes that in Washington it's glaringly obvious that the ruling class would prefer to keep power in the blood line, owing to the fact that, "leisure class" reluctance to give power to an unknown outsider, has led to a "vicious cycle of wealth and power" within their families.

Therefore, being in a leisure class or having family member in government and higher posts, would help young men and women of ruling class become powerful in Washington. "Even in the midst of an era of heightened awareness about inequality - both financial and social - we might well be experiencing the beginning of another historic cyclical upswing of powerful family bias. In other words, those go-getter couples meeting over drinks at Café Dupont in their baggy suits and department store pencil skirts might just be the matriarchs and patriarchs of the next legendary American families" Clare Malone writes.

At loggerheads with Clare Malone, Adam Bellow, the author of "In Praise of Nepotism: A Natural History," argues that family connections vouchsafe voters a sense of assurance, and that nepotism is a delightful and prevalent trend in all industry-wide practice from business (e.g., Wal-Mart Stores) to the movies (e.g., the Cop-polas), politics, entertainment, sports, and religion. Affirming the positive role nepotism plays in the American dream, he said "the spirit of family enterprise gives dignity and mean-

Clare Malone in The Daily Beast clearly states that the steeply rising nepotism in the U.S. political sphere and especially among those affluent families, is designing a ruling class that won't be easily reversed.



Law professor at George Washington University, Jonathan Turley, has the idea that nepotism is one of the most bipartisan issues in American political system, for the reason that "it combines the two most powerful motivations in Washington: procreation and power."



ing to our lives, and is not only a spur to achievement but also a check on excessive ambition." He continued "it links the generations in a chain of generosity and gratitude. We would all be better off if we reflected more consistently and deeply not only on our debt to our ancestors but also on what we owe our descendants." Ivanka Trump, daughter of newly President-elect and multi-millionaire real estate mogul Donald Trump, is the one who is totally agree with Adam Bellow and she has been candid and straight to the point about her privileged upbringing. "Of course, nepotism got me in the door. It would be silly to say otherwise, but if I was not performing in a way that was satisfactory, I could not stay within the organization." In a 2009 interview with ABC News she said.

But, Law professor at George Washington University, Jonathan Turley, has the idea that nepotism is one

of the most bipartisan issues in American political system, for the reason that "it combines the two most powerful motivations in Washington: procreation and power." He adds that "the benefit are the sons and daughters of the powerful elite." Consequently, the United States, is a country that apparently, on the stage founded in opposition to hereditary rule, but at the behind the scenes we can name numerous nepotistic appointments. To put it simple, Brian D. Feinstein, law school professor at Chicago University, in his invaluable work "The Destiny Advantage: Family Ties in Congressional Elections," releases the statistics that shows about 8.7 percent of Congress members had a relative in office before them, and also, the same study suggests that in the vicinity of 8.6 percent had a relative followed them in Congress.

(End of Part One)

Brian D. Feinstein, in "The Destiny Advantage: Family Ties in Congressional Elections," releases statistics that show about 8.7 percent of Congress members had a relative in office before them, and that in the vicinity of 8.6 percent had a relative followed them in Congress.

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What you need to know about Ibuprofen

By Kristina Duda

Ibuprofen is a popular over the counter pain reliever and fever reducer. It is available for children and adults and can be used for a wide variety of illnesses and conditions. If you have never taken ibuprofen before or you aren't sure if it's right for your problem right now, you'll get the basics on this common drug here.

Active ingredient

Ibuprofen 200mg per caplet, regular strength non-steroidal anti inflammatory drug (NSAID)

In the United States, ibuprofen is sold as brand name medications Advil and Motrin, as well as multiple generic and store brands.

Dosing

Adults – 1 to 2 caplets every 4 to 6 hours as needed for fever or pain. Do not exceed 6 caplets in 24 hours, unless directed by a doctor.

Children (under 12 years old) – Ibuprofen can be used in children 6 months old and up. Follow dosing directions on the label based on your child's age and weight or ask his health care provider for specific dosing instructions for your child.

Uses

Ibuprofen is an anti-inflammatory medicine, meaning it reduces swelling and pain caused by irritation in your body. It is also useful for bringing down fevers.

It's actually quite a useful medicine if you have an illness like the common cold or the flu. These viruses can cause aches and pains, fevers, sore throat, headache and other discomfort. Taking ibuprofen even if you don't have a fever may bring you some relief from the pain caused by your illness.

Myth or fact: Can Ibuprofen



cause weight gain?

Misconceptions abound about nearly every medicine available. One question about ibuprofen that comes up from time to time is whether or not it can cause weight gain.

Taking ibuprofen doesn't increase body fat and it won't make you eat more. However, it can affect your kidneys if you already have kidney problems or if you take it frequently for long periods of time.

When your kidneys don't function properly, you can retain water, which may appear to be weight gain. Although this is possible, remember that this is rare with ibuprofen use. If you're experiencing this, talk to your doctor to get to the bottom of what is causing it.

Adverse effects

Ibuprofen is a Non-Steroidal Anti Inflammatory Drug (NSAID) which could cause stomach bleeding. This risk is higher if you:

- Are over age 60
- Have a history of stomach ulcers or

bleeding problems

- Take blood thinners or steroids
- Take other NSAIDs (aspirin, naproxen, ibuprofen or others)
- Drink 3 or more alcoholic beverages every day while taking this medication
- Take the medication for longer than directed or take more than the recommended dose

It is also possible to have a severe allergic reaction to ibuprofen. Although rare, these signs may include: hives, swelling, difficulty breathing, shock, rash, blisters or wheezing. If these symptoms occur, discontinue use and seek medical attention right away.

Cautions and warnings

Do not use Ibuprofen if you have ever had an allergic reaction to a pain reliever or fever reducer.

Do not use right before or after heart surgery.

Talk to your health care provider before using Ibuprofen if you are having any

type of surgical procedure.

Ask a doctor before use

- If you have had problems when taking other pain relievers or fever reducers
- If you have serious stomach problems or a history of ulcers
- If you have high blood pressure
- If you have heart or kidney disease
- If you are over 60 years old
- If you have bleeding problems
- If you are taking diuretics (such as Lasix), blood thinners (such as Coumadin), steroids or other NSAIDs
- If you have any other chronic or serious medical problems
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding – may cause serious complications during the last three months of pregnancy

Stop use and ask a doctor if you have any of the following

- Black or bloody stools, vomiting blood or feeling faint – these may be signs of stomach bleeding
- Pain gets worse or lasts for more than 10 days
- Fever lasts more than three days
- Stomach pain gets worse
- You have redness or swelling in the area that is causing pain
- Any new symptoms appear

Other information about Ibuprofen

Some people experience stomach discomfort or irritation when taking ibuprofen. Taking it with food or milk may help. In some cases, taking ibuprofen continuously for long periods of time may increase the risk of heart attack or stroke.

Ibuprofen is a great medication when it's taken properly. It is generally very effective at bringing down fevers and relieving minor aches and pains.

(Source: verywell.com)

Higher BMI linked to early death

A large international study that included Harvard researchers links a high body mass index (BMI)—a calculation used to determine if a person is overweight—to a risk of early death, and contradicts the idea that it's possible to be fat and fit.

Researchers pooled the data from 239 studies of more than 10 million people in 32 countries.

They excluded people who had smoked, had a chronic condition, or died within five years of follow-up, leaving about four million people.

Of those, researchers analyzed people's BMIs. A healthy BMI is considered to be in the range from 18.5 to 24.9.

Researchers observed that study participants with a BMI of 20 to 24.9 were the least likely to die during the study period; people with a BMI above or below that were significantly more likely to die during the study period, especially men with high BMIs.

The findings, published Aug. 20, 2016, in The Lancet, don't prove that high or low BMIs cause early death, but they do suggest being overweight matters.

The bottom line: Extra fat puts you at risk for developing diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, so make weight control a priority.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

Dementia rate declines but aging America may halt the trend

New research documents another decline in dementia rates, but experts say the rising numbers of older Americans may halt that trend unless better ways are found to keep brains healthy.

The study shows the rate of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias in people 65 and older dropped to about 9 percent in 2012 from nearly 12 percent in 2000, continuing a decline noted in earlier research.

Older adults with the most schooling had the lowest dementia rates, and the average education level increased during the study years.

Led by University of Michigan researchers, the study was published in JAMA Internal Medicine. The National Institute on Aging paid for the research.

Researchers analyzed nationally representative government surveys of about 10,500 older adults in both years, including some living in nursing homes. They were interviewed and given mental tests by phone or in person; spouses or relatives responded for those impaired by dementia or other illness.

The dementia rate declined amid a rise in diabetes and heart disease. Both of these ailments increase risks for Alzheimer's and other dementias, but the researchers say better treatment for the diseases may explain the improved results.

Obesity rates also increased, while dementia was most common among underweight adults. Previous research has shown weight loss may precede dementia by several years and that late-life obesity may be healthier than being underweight. But a journal editorial says more research is needed to determine whether excess pounds in older age somehow protect the brain.

Dementia was most common in the oldest adults: In 2012, almost 30 percent of people 85 and older were afflicted, vs. just 3 percent of those 65 to 74.

The number of adults 85 and older is rapidly rising and is expected to triple by midcentury. John Haaga, director of the National Institute on Aging's behavior and social research division, said dementia rates would have to decline much more sharply than they have to counteract that trend.

The Alzheimer's Association estimates that about 5 million people 65 and older have Alzheimer's, and that is expected to rise to almost 14 million by 2050.

The average education level climbed during the study. About 45 percent of older adults had at least 13 years of education in 2012, vs. about 33 percent in 2000.

Previous studies have found less dementia in highly educated people, but it isn't known whether education is somehow protective or whether it helps people compensate for brain changes linked with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Studies on brain-training exercises have had conflicting results. Haaga said more research is needed to explain the education-dementia link and to explore potential treatments that mimic the effects of education to stave off dementia.

(Source: AP)

16 ways to sleep absolutely anywhere

By Kelly Fitzpatrick

There are times in life when we must find a way to sleep somewhere...unusual. Whether it's the middle seat on a transcontinental flight, a friend's lumpy couch, or even your office parking lot, sometimes we need to drift off in some pretty bizarre places. Read on for 16 totally doable (and actually effective) tips to help you get quality shut-eye absolutely anywhere.

Traveling

- Try a layover lie-down

Even if only for a few minutes, lying down at the airport can help trick the mind into understanding it's sleepy time. Once on the plane, get that nap on.

- Stay hydrated

Chug plenty of H₂O to avoid waking up parched at 3 a.m., especially after flying or drinking alcohol (two major causes of dehydration).

- Breathe easy

High altitudes and allergies are a one-two punch when it comes to travel congestion. Take preventative measures, such as over-the-counter decongestants or using nasal saline, to open up your nasal breathing passageways. This will help alleviate sinus problems which can keep you up at night.

- Don't dress to impress

There's no need to look fly when flying. An overnight flight (or bus ride, or train ride) is no time for sitting pretty. Dress for bed, since the idea is to actually go to bed, right?

On vacation

- Keep up a routine

Hooray for circadian rhythms! Even when you hit

the road (Jack), stick to a standard bedtime routine and the cues will tell your body when it's time to chill out. To show jet lag who's boss, stay awake until a normal bedtime (i.e. 11 p.m.) and get up at a reasonable hour. And avoid wacky napping: If your usual routine doesn't involve lounging on the beach and taking a two-hour siesta, don't be surprised if it's harder to snooze at night.

- Exercise as usual

Increasing or decreasing activity levels can throw off the body's usual energy levels—and the same goes for the time of day when you work out. Try to stick to the normal workout schedule too.

- Stick with familiar foods

Avoid unusual (i.e. spicy or just plain unrecognizable) foods on vacation. Heartburn is the mildest of the potential gastrointestinal repercussions—we won't go into any further detail. Be especially wary of tap water in other countries. The bathroom floor is not the most ideal resting place.

- Don't overeat

A very full stomach plus a horizontal position is a recipe for acid reflux. Which, unsurprisingly, can prevent restful slumber.

- Ease up on the booze

On vacation, an extra drink or two is a natural part of unwinding, but don't let an umbrella-clad beverage prevent good sleep. Alcohol can interrupt natural sleep patterns, so quit boozing several hours before bedtime.

- Avoid unfamiliar drugs

Don't try a new sleep aid (or any med for that matter) on day one of the trip of a lifetime. Unexpected side effects could affect sleep for the entirety of that grand European tour.

At a friend's house or a hotel

- Couch crash like a pro

If it's a pre-planned slumber party, BYOPJ (bring your own pajamas). If you forget, ask your host for a blanket, appropriate sleep attire, a pillow, or anything else necessary to get snoozing. Being just a smidge uncomfortable can make sleep pretty hard to come by.

- Cool it

Research suggests 60 to 68 degrees is optimal for sleep, since it lowers the core body temperature and lulls us to slumber. No A/C? Crack a window to catch a breeze.

- Tune out the noise

Strange sounds—even "soothing" white noise, if it's not the norm—can seriously hamper your ability to sleep. Use earplugs or headphones to mimic your ideal sleep situation at home or away. Or check out some apps that offer background noise to induce sleep.

At the office

- Block out the light

Why won't that jerk of a cube mate turn off his desk lamp? Make like a Boy Scout and be prepared with an eye mask to cut the brightness, even when those overhead fluorescents are attempting to disturb sleep.

- Get cozy

If an intense deadline means sleep loss, head to the parking lot and the comfort of the backseat for a quick nap. Bring a grown-up security blanket (sweater/pillow/blanket) to tell the body it's naptime.

- Try paradoxical relaxation

Like savasana in yoga, paradoxical relaxation focuses on relaxing one body part at a time and could help the body slow down and relax—especially if you're trying to sneak in a quick nap between other tasks.

(Source: greatist.com)

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Iranian handicrafts on display at Malaysian exhibit

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A wide range of Iranian handicrafts such as woodworks, illuminated manuscripts, as well as hand-woven carpets and rugs are on show at the 2nd Kuala Lumpur International Craft Festival (KLICF).

Of Iran's three stalls, one is run by the cultural attaché office in Kuala Lumpur and two by the private sector, IRNA reported on Thursday.

In a speech during the opening ceremony of the exhibition, KLICF Director Zuraida Othman expressed hope that the exhibit would attract some 30,000 local and international visitors.

A total of 450 artisans and entrepreneurs from about 30 countries have come together in the four-day event, which started on November 24.

Amongst the participating countries are Argentina, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Egypt, Ghana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan.

Organized by Malaysian Ministry of Tourism and Culture, the exhibit also includes food sales, local-band performances and other interactive sections.

With "Crafts Unite People" as its theme, the exhibit conveys the message that handicrafts can lay the groundwork for further understanding and tolerance in the global community.

Over the past couple of years, dozens of Iranian handicrafts have gained the UNESCO Seal of Excellence. For instance, in 2010, a total of 65 handicrafts on various themes including enamel, tile, metalwork, leatherwork, wood carving received the privilege.

Uganda aims to triple tourists with help of better transport

KAMPALA (Reuters) — Uganda aims to boost annual tourist numbers to 4 million over the next five years, helped by improvements in road networks around game parks and other attractions, an official said on Thursday.

Tourism, such as treks to see gorillas, is a major foreign exchange earner for Uganda, which also exports coffee and tea but has only a small manufacturing base. It discovered commercial quantities oil in 2006 but has not started producing.

Stephen Asimwe, chief executive officer of state-run Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), told Reuters that Uganda attracted 1.3 million tourists last year and expected the number to rise to 1.5 million this year.

"Our target is that by 2021 we want to have 4 million visitors," he said in an interview.

"The government has prioritized tourism roads," he said, adding Uganda had also contracted three international marketing firms to promote the country in North America and Europe.

NOTABLES

Ibn Qurra: Muslim astronomer of the 9th century

A 9th-century Muslim scholar, Thābit ibn Qurra contributed significantly to the development of astronomy and other sciences through his translations and commentaries of Greek and Hellenistic works and through his original treatises. Notable astronomical contributions include a translation of Ptolemy's *Almagest* and treatises on the motion of the Sun and the Moon. More generally, Thābit's significance lies in the influence of his work on the development of the exact sciences in Islam.

His knowledge of Greek and Arabic, made him an attractive prospect for inclusion in one particular community of scholars – the Banū Mūsā and their circle in Baghdad. Thābit seems to have been asked to join this circle by a family member, the mathematician Muḥammad ibn Mūsā ibn Shākir, who recognized his talents and potential.

Thabit was trilingual, a skill that enabled him to play a key role in the translation movement of 9th-century Baghdad.

Thābit remained mainly in Baghdad, becoming a noted translator, physician, and renowned scholar in a variety of disciplines.

Thābit is credited with dozens of treatises, covering a wide range of fields and topics. While some were written in his native Syriac, most were composed in Arabic. Thābit was trilingual, a skill that enabled him to play a key role in the translation movement of 9th-century Baghdad. He translated works from both

Syriac and Greek into Arabic, creating Arabic versions of important Hellenistic and Greek writings. Several of Thābit's Arabic translations are the only extant versions of important ancient works.

Thābit's efforts provided a foundation for continuing work in the investigation and reformation of Ptolemaic astronomy. His life is illustrative of the fact that individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and religions contributed to the flourishing of sciences like astronomy in Islamic culture.

(Source: *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers, Springer Reference*)



An undated photo shows Yazd skyline in detail. The city located in central Iran boasts a very rich cultural heritage and traditional architecture.

HERITAGE TEHRAN — The non-profit Germany-based Gerda Henkel Foundation has allocated €650,000 to support research projects by the National Museum of Iran and a museum which is planned to be built in the city of Yazd by 2019.

It is part of the €5m fund which Gerda Henkel aims to channel into historical and

archaeological missions in several countries, including Russia and Uganda, the Mehr news agency reported on Saturday.

The foundation has described Yazd as a city of rich history whose water supply system [qanat] is on the UNESCO World Heritage site, meanwhile it accentuates the city's material and immaterial heritage is hardly explored.

"Historically significant buildings of the 15th century characterize the cityscape of Yazd," it highlighted.

The foundation also plans to support the National Museum of Iran, whose collections are the most valuable cultural heritage of the Islamic Republic.

The Gerda Henkel in close collaboration with Iran's Culture Heritage, Tourism

and Handicrafts Organization will study part of the 15,000 objects of the museum treasure trove and its database as a pilot project.

Founded in 1976, the Gerda Henkel Foundation concentrates its support on the historical humanities, mainly on history, archaeology, the history of art and other disciplines with a historical component.

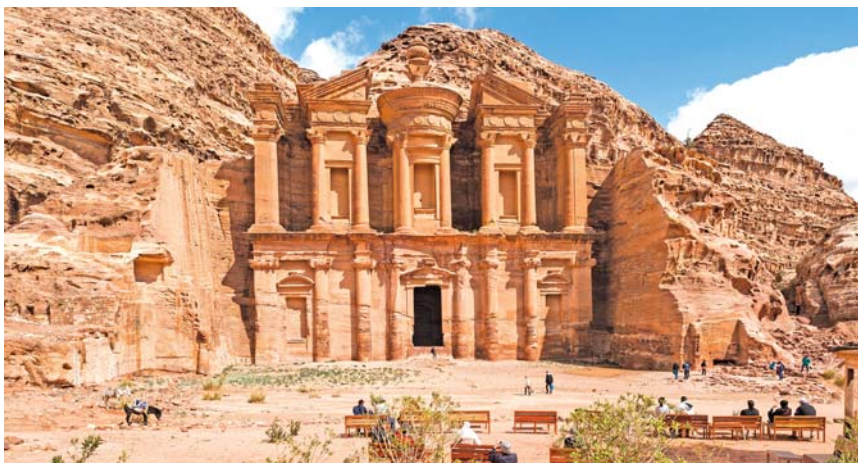
Jordan is spectacular, safe and friendly – so where are the tourists?

With tourism to the Middle East in decline, visiting Jordan's mesmerizing sights is now a solitary experience. But the silence and emptiness only add to their allure.

"You are safe and sound here," the gift shop owner said, as he handed over some change. At breakfast, the waiter had been similarly reassuring. "I always tell my guests they are in a very safe place. There might be issues around the corner," he said, pouring out tea. "But here you are perfectly safe."

After a while these repeated soothing asides became rather disconcerting. I hadn't expected to find Jordan anything other than peaceful, but since the bottom has fallen out of the tourism industry because of the conflict in neighboring Syria, most people you meet have an urge to emphasize how risk-free a trip here is.

It's easy to see why. Thanks to the widespread sense of unease about travelling to the region, Jordan, as well as be-



A view of Petra, a historical and archaeological sight in southern Jordan

ing safe, is now extremely empty. Some of the country's most extraordinary sites are virtually deserted; tourism has fallen 66% since 2011.

As a tourist, you can't help feeling

worried for the people who work in the travel industry (which has historically contributed about 20% of GDP), but at the same time there is an uneasy pleasure in visiting places like Petra, one of the new

seven wonders of the world, in near silence.

Nothing had prepared me for how spectacular Jordan is, and perhaps part of the intense experience of visiting now is tied up with the unusually solitary feeling you have as you walk through its ancient sites.

Jordan clearly needs tourists to return. The big chain hotels are managing to weather the storm by shifting marketing to locals, but the smaller business are suffering. "Before 2011, 70% of our business came from Russia, Scandinavia, Germany and the UK.

Now that has shifted to 70% of our business coming from Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and expat Iraqis," the manager of Dead Sea Kempinski told. "The bigger hotels can shift to weddings and the local market, but those who are most affected are the people selling trinkets."

(Source: *The Guardian*)

New Zealand quake upended geology, harming tourism, farmers

KAIKOURA, New Zealand (AP) — In terms of human life, the magnitude 7.8 earthquake that hit New Zealand this month was relatively merciful: two fatalities. But geologically, it moved roads and mountains and even displaced the sea, leaving a formidable mark from which tourism, farming and life in general may need years to recover.

From the air, the power of the Nov. 14 quake becomes clear. It was strong enough to raise entire sections of the seabed and send hillsides tumbling across State Highway One, which winds along the coastline into Kaikoura. Until last week it was the main route for tourists heading south from the town of Picton for whale-watching boat trips; now it's deserted.

"If you go from Kaikoura north, that road is a complete and utter mess," Prime Minister John Key told several dozen locals during a trip to the area Thurs-

day. "Like, it is way worse than anything I've seen. So just to get a bit of perspective, the whole mountain has moved in a number of places. And so the road, which used to go round the coast, looks like it's going into a mountain."

The geological changes on the northeastern coast of South Island will affect locals and the tourist season, which reaches its peak from December

The geological changes on the northeastern coast of South Island will affect locals and the tourist season, which reaches its peak from December through February.

through February. This South Pacific nation of fewer than 5 million welcomes more than 3 million tourists each year.

The country was spared a larger catastrophe because the epicenter was far from any cities, and officials stress that most of New Zealand remains safe and unaffected.

But thousands who once used the South Island coastal road will need instead to drive a circuitous inland route. Transport authorities say that since the quake, traffic on that route has increased fourfold.

Even if the roads are restored, the future for the popular whale-watching trips in Kaikoura remains in doubt. That's because the sea bed has risen so much that operators can only get their boats out to sea for a few hours each day during high tide. What once was ocean is now exposed rock.

IN FOCUS



Grand Bazaar of Kerman

HERITAGE As one of the oldest trading centers in Iran, the grand Bazaar of Kerman embraces a variety of mazes, intersections, entrances, and passageways.

The main thoroughfare of the bazaar is made up of some smaller marketplaces. Most of its covered structures are associated with the Safavid era (1501–1736), though the history of trade in there is rooted much deeper in time.

The city of Kerman has long been a melting pot for people passing between Persia and the Indian subcontinent.

UNESCO describes Kerman as "one of the important locations that connect West to East, and North to South."

Cruise the airport on top of a piece of motorized luggage

The Modobag measures 22 x 14 x 9 inches -- just the right size to fit into the overhead bins on most aircraft. That's key, since it won't do you much good if you can't keep it with you past check-in. The bag can officially accommodate a rider up to 260 pounds, though the company says if you can fit on it comfortably you should be good to ride. To use it, you just need to open the front panel, pull the handle up and switch the bag's motor on. Push a small lever on the right to accelerate, and grip the brake with your left to stop.

The polyurethane wheels are similar to skateboard wheels, so they can handle a few bumps in the road. But the Modobag is definitely not an all-terrain vehicle. During my test run I rolled onto a few subway grates and ended up having to pick up the suitcase and reposition it on a smoother surface. That's not an ideal solution, but it's also easily avoidable if you stick to smooth hallways and paths -- the same places you'd pull a rollerboard bag anyway.

Large interior compartment

For those situations where you can't ride the Modobag, it can be easily turned around and pulled by its handle. In fact, it's a normal piece of luggage in a lot of ways.



There's a large interior compartment that can accommodate a few nights' worth of clothing, and side pockets to slip your laptop and phone into while

you ride. It's pretty durable thanks to ABS plastic; it can even survive being hit by bowling balls.

Indeed, that's expected of any piece

There's a large interior compartment that can accommodate a few nights' worth of clothing, and side pockets to slip your laptop and phone into while you ride.

of baggage, and the Modobag hits all the points necessary to be approved by the TSA, FAA and IATA. That endorsement also includes its battery: Unlike a "hoverboard," the Modobag is fully cleared for flight. It takes about an hour to charge and can last about 8 miles -- assuming mostly smooth terrain and an average 180-pound passenger.

Motor's battery

The suitcase also includes two USB ports so you can use the motor's battery to top off your phone or tablet between flights, avoiding the need to search for a free outlet at the gate.

Though the Modobag can fit in the cabins on most planes, there still might come a time when you must check your luggage; always a risky proposition, especially when the Modobag costs so much. For that reason you can order one with GPRS-GSM tracking, allowing you to peep your bag's location on a map.

Are you on a plane but the bag is still somewhere in the terminal? Did the baggage handlers decide to take the Modobag for a spin? You'll know if your luggage has gone on a trip without you just by checking the app -- and even have it send you a proximity alert when it travels too far.

(Source: Engadget)

Is there life on Mars? Evidence of aliens may have been found on the Red Planet

Evidence of alien life on Mars may have already been found by NASA's rover but scientists failed to notice, a new study suggests.

In 2007, the Spirit rover photographed intriguing finger-like rock formations at the Home Plate plateau, a 300 square foot area in the Gusev crater near the Martian equator.

Scientists from the University of Arizona decided to look for similar features on Earth to determine how they were formed, and found nearly identical structures at El Tatio, Chile, which were created by a combination of hot springs and crucially, micro-organisms.

Ultraviolet light

The team chose to study El Tatio because it has conditions which are very like Mars. Situated at 14,000 feet above sea level even in summer temperatures often drop below freezing at night, and by day huge amounts of ultraviolet light from the Sun comes through the thin, dry air.

The formations on Mars appear to be similar to structures on Earth known as stromatolites, which are formed when microbes form colonies in wet environments and trap sediment on their sticky surface coatings.

That sediment eventually reacts to calcium carbonate in the water and forms a buildup of nobbly limestone

layers.

"We went to El Tatio looking for comparisons with the feature found by Spirit at Home Plate," said Dr. Steve Ruff, of the school of Earth and Space Exploration at Arizona.

"Our results show the conditions at El Tatio produce silica deposits with characteristics that are most Mars-like of any silica deposits on Earth.

The "fact that microbes play a role in producing the distinctive silica structures at El Tatio raises the possibility that the Martian silica structures formed in a comparable manner -- in other words with the help of organisms that were alive at the time."

Extra-terrestrial life

Mars is thought to be the best chance of finding evidence of extra-terrestrial life because it once had running water and an atmosphere. The hope of discovering life was also raised in December 2014 when intriguing burps of methane were recorded by NASA's curiosity rover.

On Earth, around 90 percent of methane is produced by organisms, so the expectation is that some kind of life is also emitting the gas on Mars.

However the Spirit rover mission has since been de-commissioned after the robot became stuck in soft soil in 2011 so it cannot go back to check for signs of life or



take new pictures.

The current active rovers, Curiosity and Opportunity, are also too far away to take a detour, and NASA's next rover is not due to launch until 2020, so it could be a while before the suspicions are confirmed.

Fortunately, the Home Plate is one of eight suggested sites for the next rover mission, and the new findings could help persuade controllers to land near to where the original images were taken.

(Source: The Telegraph)

Ants were growing food long before humans

It is generally understood that human society turned to agriculture about 10,500 years ago in the region that is the Middle East today, and that turn in the human way of life set us down the path to modern civilization. Now, researchers have found another species that is not nearly as technologically advanced as we are but has been practicing agriculture for millions of years longer.

Philidris nagasau, an ant species in Fiji has been cultivating at least six species of a plant genus Squamellaria, for over 3 million

years, a recent study by researchers from Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU) of Munich, Germany, found. While another ant species has been known to farm fungus for much longer -- about 8 million years -- this is the first time an insect species have been found to be growing plants.

Published under the title "Obligate plant farming by a specialized ant" in the journal Nature Plants, the study reports a "novel type of ant-plant symbiosis in Fiji where one ant species actively and exclusively plants

the seeds and fertilizes the seedlings of six species of Squamellaria." So how exactly do these tiny insects carry out their farming? For that, we first need to know that the Squamellaria plant grows in the nooks and crannies of branches of other trees.

Readily accessible nectar

The "plants colonize three or four tree species, which are also attractive for the ants, either because they produce readily accessible nectar, or because their bark is particularly soft, so that the ants can easily widen the cracks that form,"

Susanne Renner, LMU botany professor and study co-author, explains in a statement.

P. nagasau carry seeds to these cracks and deposit them there for growth, and to provide nourishment to the seedlings, they add their own excreta as manure to fertilize the plant. The plant itself grows like a colony of hollow tubes, ideal for the ants to live in and form large colonies. These colonies are home to several protected nests for the ants and form something akin to a village.

(Source: ibtimes.com)

A glance at unifying exchange rate and its impact on banks

While approaching the ending months of current Iranian calendar year (to end March 19, 2017), it is expected that the final stage of unification of exchange rate will be finalized in a way that government officials and authorities at Central Bank of Iran (CBI) have much spoken on the issue more than before."

There is no doubt that removal of different exchange rates is one of the priorities of every economy including Iranian economy.

The disadvantages of multi-currency rate are so high that there is no doubt in the necessity and priority of implementation of the method that are led to the unification of exchange rate.

The way of implementation of this policy should be taken into consideration, the report added.

The scope of effectiveness of exchange rate and consequently, its relevant exchange policies are so vast that any change in these policies and adoption of any decision in this regard will affect livelihood of society to



a great extent in various economic aspects significantly.

In the current situation, it seems that two basic steps should be defined for the estimation of different consequences behind implementation of exchange rate unification policy as follows: qualitative and quantitative calculation of impacts of exchange unification and compilation of isolated packages for managing these impacts.

Egfi chief reveals allocation of \$850m to exporters in current year

\$850 million worth of facilities was allocated to exporters in the current Iranian calendar year in 1395 (started March 20, 2016).

Chief Executive of Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) Seyyed Kamal Seyyed Ali announced the above statement and said: "Considerable growth was observed in the field of coverage of insurance and guarantee letter."

The Fund has taken giant step in line

with supporting exporters, he said, adding: "With the coordination made in this regard, \$850 million worth of facilities was provided to applicants."

EGFI has thus far inked four Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with four countries including Germany, Switzerland, Hungary and Sri Lanka, he maintained.

Turning to the dissatisfaction of some exporters on the services of the Fund,



he said: "Effective steps have been taken in this regard in order to offer high-quality

services to exporters."

EGFI is a governmental organization which is tasked with supporting exporters in the country, he stated.

In the end, Chief Executive of Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) Seyyed Kamal Seyyed Ali put the capital increase of the Fund in this period at \$200 million and has thus far taken drastic measures in supporting exporters of the country considerably.

Uber sees future of flying cars zooming over traffic

Uber has a new futuristic vision, one that finally aligns with what "The Jetsons" promised us: flying cars.

Robot taxis? That's practically passe already.

Uber has a new futuristic vision, one that finally aligns with what "The Jetsons" promised us: flying cars.

A "Network of small, electric aircraft that take off and land vertically (called VTOL aircraft for Vertical Take-off and Landing, and pronounced vee-tol), will enable rapid, reliable transportation between suburbs and cities and, ultimately, within cities," wrote Jeff Holden, Uber chief product officer, in a Medium post backed up by a 99-page white paper.

Uber would run the flying cars in an on-demand service called Uber Elevate that could take to the skies at 100 to 150 mph within a decade and, long term, could become "an affordable form of daily transportation for the masses," cheaper than owning a car.

Holden laid out tantalizing advantages: jetting (or, rather, VTOLing) from San Francisco's Marina to San Jose in 15 minutes instead of slogging through traffic for almost two hours, for instance.

"On-demand aviation has the potential to radically improve urban mobility, giving people back time lost in their daily commutes," he wrote.

While helicopters are the closest current analogy, the all-electric, vertical-takeoff-and-landing planes would be quieter, more energy-efficient, lower-emission and cheaper, Holden wrote.

It's not as sci-fi as it sounds: From NASA to China, plenty of players are looking into flying drones that can carry passengers. Google co-founder Larry Page has poured a reported \$100 million into startups working on flying cars.

(Source: sfgate.com)

What messages do female birds' markings send?

Both male and female birds use traits like plumage brightness to size each other up, but a new study on Northern Cardinals in The Auk: Ornithological Advances shows that the meanings of female birds' markings may vary from one place to another, even within the same species.

Though they're often not as showy as the males, female birds have plumage ornaments that can convey information to other members of their species.

A previous study found that among Northern Cardinals in Ohio, the brightness of females' facial markings indicated how aggressive they would be in defending their nests. However, when Caitlin Winters and Jodie Jawor of the University of Southern Mississippi repeated the study in Mississippi's longleaf pine forest to determine if the same held true there, they were surprised to learn that the variation among females' facial masks in their southern study population had no relationship to their aggressive behavior.

One of the key differences between the northern and southern cardinal populations studied is that unlike in Ohio, the researchers did not observe any evidence of brood parasitism, where one female cardinal sneaks an egg into another's nest, among cardinals in Mississippi. The Mississippi birds also had more habitat available to them and defended larger territories, leaving female cardinals there with less need to defend their nests.

"This is an indication that selection pressures vary between northern and southern populations and that the information a female in the north needs to convey to other cardinals differs from what a female in the south has to say," explains Jawor, who has since moved on to New Mexico State University. The "ornament and behavior are both malleable."

(Source: EurekAlert)

Could this crab have the most crushing claws?

The enormous claws of a coconut crab may be more powerful than they look -- and they look pretty scary.

The crab native to islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans can grow up to a leg-span of 3 feet and a weight of nearly 9 pounds, making it the largest terrestrial crab. Being such massive animals, coconut crabs (Birgus latro) try to eat whatever they can get their burly claws on. While that mostly means vegetation like the hard-shelled coconut for which they are named, they are also known to prey on other small animals like kittens.

Anyone who has ever tried to crack open a coconut without tools knows this is quite the feat, even for a 9-pound crab. So a team of scientists decided to measure exactly how much force these hefty crustaceans can exert when they pinch their prey.

As it turns out, the coconut crab's claw can pinch with a force greater than that of any other crustacean that has been measured, according to a paper published Wednesday in the journal PLOS ONE.

The 9-pound crustacean could exert a force of up to 3,300 newtons, according to the new research. That's more than 4.5 times as forceful as the grip strength of most humans.

As for the top land-dwelling predators, crocodiles top the crabs with bite forces of about 16,460 newtons. But the crabs come closer to hyenas, lions, and tigers, which snap their jaws shut with a force of about 4,450 newtons. (It is important to note that the coconut crabs do not snap their pinchers shut like the big cats' jaws. It's more of a crushing force than a sudden snap.)

(Source: CSM)

Tehran to host intl. exhibition on rehabilitation equipment

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The 2nd International Specialized Exhibition of Disabled Rehabilitation Industries, Equipment and Services will be held in Tehran on December 6 to 9.

The event will be held on the occasion of the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities, December 3, in association with Iran's Welfare Organization and Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation, Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday.

The exhibition which centers around rehabilitation equipment and services offered to the people with disabilities can open up a favorable opportunity for interacting with other countries, setting the scene for future success and being able to move towards domestically produced equipment.

The event also aims at raising awareness among people with disabilities and their families about services they can get and the available rehabilitation equipment, both home-grown and imported.

Moreover, the event creates an opportunity for more direct and better interaction between people suffering from disabilities, manufacturers, doctors, experts and others active in the field of rehabilitation and ultimately promoting healthcare services and improving persons with disabilities social and private quality of life.

Visitors can benefit from free of charge workshops, seminars, classes, counselling sessions and services which will be held on the sidelines of the exhibition.

LEARN ENGLISH

Taking Prescription Drugs

Paula: Okay, I'm off to bed.
Marcus: Wait a second. Where are you going with all of those **pill bottles**?
Paula: My doctor **prescribed** a couple of **medications** to help me sleep.
Marcus: Let me see those. You have four different medications here. This is a **painkiller**, this is a **sedative**, this is a **tranquilizer**, and this is a **stimulant**.
Paula: I don't take that last one when I go to bed.
Marcus: You mean you take the first three every night?
Paula: Not every night.
Marcus: I can't believe that your doctor would prescribe all three of these medications just to help you sleep. This seems like **overkill**.
Paula: I saw more than one doctor. They each gave me a different prescription.
Marcus: How do you know they won't **interact** and produce **side effects**?
Paula: A doctor prescribed each one. I'm sure they're safe.
Marcus: Yes, but **does the left hand know what the right hand is doing**? I'm **confiscating** these until you can talk to a doctor or **pharmacist** to make sure you won't **over-dose** by taking all three of these at one time.
Paula: But how will I fall asleep until then?
Marcus: You're always telling me how boring I am. I'll just **regale** you with stories of my youth. Let's start at the beginning. My earliest memory is...

(Source: *eslpod.com*)

- Words & phrases

pill: a small solid piece of medicine that you swallow whole

bottle: a glass or plastic vessel used for storing drinks or other liquids over pills; typically cylindrical without handles and with a narrow neck that can be plugged or capped

prescribe: to say what medicine or treatment a sick person should have

medication: medicine or drugs given to people who are ill

painkiller: a medicine which reduces or removes pain

sedative: a drug used to make someone calm or go to sleep

tranquilizer: a drug used for making someone feel less anxious

stimulant: a drug or substance that makes you feel more active and full of energy

overkill: more of something than is necessary or desirable

interact: if one thing interacts with another, or if they interact, they affect each other

side effect: an effect that a drug has on your body in addition to curing pain or illness

does the left hand know what the right hand is doing: used to say that one part of a group or organization does not know what the other parts are doing

confiscate: to officially take private property away from someone, usually as a punishment

pharmacist: someone whose job is to prepare medicines in a shop or hospital

overdose: OD; to take too much of a drug at one time, so that it harms you or kills you

regale: to entertain someone by telling them about something

3 arrested over deadly train crash

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Three railway staff have been detained after a deadly train collision took place in Iran's north-central province of Semnan on Friday.

The accident happened when a passenger train in motion crashed to another one that had stopped at the station. 45 died and over 100 got wounded. It is believed that sub-zero temperature contributed to the first train technical failure and consequently to the crash.

The persons who were in charge at north-east railway control center at the time of the collision are now under arrest, Semnan prosecutor general Heidar Asiabi said on Saturday.

The orders for identifying any other probable guilty persons are issued and a committee to look into the causes of the accident will be formed in no time, Tasnim news agency quoted Asiabi as saying.

Meanwhile, Hossein Ashouri, an Iranian Railways Company official, said one of the trains had stopped between the towns of Semnan and Damghan after an apparent mechanical failure, forcing officials to halt others on the line.

But when a new shift started at the control center in Shahroud, the second train was allowed to resume its journey, AFP reported.



UK has second-highest number of deaths from NO2 pollution in Europe

The UK is second only to Italy in Europe for the highest number of annual deaths from a major air pollutant, a report has found just days after a court gave UK ministers a deadline for drawing up a stronger air quality plan.

The European Environment Agency said the UK had 11,940 premature deaths in 2013 from nitrogen dioxide (NO2), a toxic gas mostly caused by diesel vehicles and linked to lung problems. The number is down from 14,100 in 2012, but still the second worst in Europe.

The agency also revealed that the UK is home to the worst NO2 hotspot in Europe. Marylebone Road in London recorded the highest annual mean levels of the pollutant, more than double than double the legal EU limit.

Campaigners said the data was a reminder that the UK, which has been in breach of EU limits on NO2 since 2010, needed to take tougher action.

James Thornton, the CEO of law firm ClientEarth, which brought the court case, said: "Today's EEA report puts the UK in an unwanted position near the top of the table when it comes to premature deaths from exposure



to NO2 pollution. The UK government should be ashamed of these figures and must act now to protect the health of people in this country."

Italy and UK both a similar proportion of diesel cars, but the NO2 problem in Italy is also compounded by industrial sources of the pollutant in urban and suburban areas, experts at the EEA said.

Across Europe, the EEA estimated that 71,000 people died prematurely in 2013 because of NO2 pollution. While the pollutant has been on a downward trend since

the turn of the century because of stricter diesel car standards, more than one in 10 monitoring stations in Europe still breach NO2 limits, the agency found.

Hans Bruyninckx, the EEA's executive director, said: "Emission reductions have led to improvements in air quality in Europe, but not enough to avoid unacceptable damage to human health and the environment."

The report comes as MEPs in the European parliament on Wednesday approved caps for five air pollutants, including NO2, to come into force in 2030. The new national emissions ceilings rules are expected to halve the number of deaths from air pollution.

Catherine Bearder, a Liberal Democrat MEP, said: "If I had become a doctor instead of a politician I would be prescribing a serious health warning to the UK government today. The UK government have approved a third runway at Heathrow airport even though they know that air pollution around the airport is already dangerously above legal levels of nitrogen dioxide."

The Guardian reported earlier this year that the plan had been diluted after lobbying by the UK government.

(Source: *The Guardian*)

Woman shares Thanksgiving with teen she accidentally invited

MESA, Ariz. (AP) — An Arizona woman who accidentally texted a stranger an invitation to Thanksgiving dinner made good on her offer, greeting the teen visitor with a hug and an oven full of food after their story swept through social media.

Wanda Dench prepped two turkeys and set up a long table in the backyard of her suburban Phoenix home Thursday before she and her family headed outside to wait for Jamal Hinton, 17, The Arizona Republic reported.

"I'm so happy you came," Dench said as they embraced.

"I am too," Hinton said. The mix-up happened after Dench included what she thought was her



grandson's number on a group text last week inviting some relatives to dinner. But he had changed his number and forgot to tell her.

Instead, the text went to Hinton.

They realized the mistake after the two exchanged pictures, but Hinton asked if he could "still get a plate." Dench responded, "Of course you can. That's what grandmas do."

The exchange gained attention after Hinton posted it on Twitter. Dench's phone number was not hidden in the photos, so she learned how many people wanted a place at her table.

She said about 600 people texted her asking if they, too, could grab a plate this Thanksgiving.

"At first it was a slow trickle," Dench's daughter, Lisa Dench said. "But then they came rushing in. I scrolled and scrolled and said to my mom, 'You've got a lot of love. We've got to make this into

something."

Dench and her family said they think people were moved by the feel-good story amid the tension following the presidential election.

"We feel like it was fate that this occurred during such a rough time and right before Thanksgiving," Lisa Dench said.

Hinton told the newspaper that Wanda Dench was "very open and welcoming."

"I'm thankful for all the nice people in the world," he said. "I never met her ... and she welcomed me into her house, so that shows me how great of a person she is."

They even took selfies together and posted them on social media.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Over 1,800 manufacturing, service units in Iran become ozone-friendly

Some 1,858 Iranian manufacturing and service units which were emitting ozone-depleting substances have been turned into clean industries, said the director for ozone layer national protection plan, without mentioning a specific date or timespan.

Iran is responsible for the consumption of 2 percent of the ozone-depleting contributory substances mainly used in cooling units which totals some 5,000 tons per annum, Ebrahim Hajizadeh said, IRIB reported on Thursday.

"We are working out a plan to minimize the ozone-depleting substances to some 1,600 tons annually in the years to come," Hajizadeh suggested.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Road to hell is paved with good intentions

- Explanation:

people often mean well but do bad things
- For example:

Jane: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings; I only wanted to help you. Jane: Oh, yeah? The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

PHRASAL VERB

Break something down

- Meaning:

to separate something into smaller parts so that it is easier to do or understand
- For example:

The question can be broken down into two parts.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Bad hair day

- Explanation:

originating as a humorous comment about one's hair being unmanageable, this term had broadened to mean 'a day when everything seems to go wrong'
- For example:

What's wrong with Jenny? Is she having a bad hair day?

Fidel Castro, revolutionary spirit of Cuba, dies at 90

➡ Although Raul Castro always glorified his older brother, he has changed Cuba since taking over by introducing market-style economic reforms and agreeing with the United States in December 2014 to re-establish diplomatic ties and end decades of hostility.

Fidel Castro offered only lukewarm support for the deal, raising questions about whether he approved of ending hostilities with his longtime enemy. Some analysts believed his mere presence kept Raul from moving further and faster, while others saw him as either quietly supportive or increasingly irrelevant.

He did not meet the U.S. President Barack Obama when he visited Havana earlier this year, the first time a U.S. president had stepped foot on Cuban soil since 1928.

Days later, Castro wrote a scathing newspaper column condemning Obama's "honey-coated" words and reminding Cubans of the many U.S. efforts to overthrow and weaken the Communist government.

The news of Castro's death spread slowly among Friday night revelers on the streets of Havana. One famous club that was still open when word came in quickly closed.

Some residents reacted with sadness to the news.

But in Miami, where many exiles from Castro's Communist government live, a large crowd waving Cuban flags cheered, danced and banged on pots and pans.

Castro's body will be cremated, according to his wishes. Cuba declared nine days of mourning, during which time the ashes will be taken to different parts of the country. A burial ceremony will be held on Dec. 4.

The bearded Fidel Castro took power in a 1959 revolution and ruled Cuba for 49 years with a mix of charisma and iron will, creating a one-party state and becoming a central figure in the Cold War.

He was demonized by the United States and its allies but admired by many leftists around the world, especially socialist revolutionaries in Latin America and Africa.

Nelson Mandela, once freed from prison in 1990, repeatedly thanked Castro for his firm efforts in helping to weaken apartheid.

In April, in a rare public appearance at the Communist Party conference, Fidel Castro shocked party apparatchiks by referring to his own imminent mortality.

"Soon I will be like all the rest. Our turn comes to all of us, but the ideas of the Cuban communists will remain," he said.

Castro was last seen by ordinary Cubans in photos showing him engaged in conversation with Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang earlier this month.

Transforming Cuba from a playground for rich Americans into a symbol of resistance to Washington, Castro crossed swords with 10 U.S. presidents while in power, and outlasted nine of them.

He fended off a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)-backed invasion at the



Bay of Pigs in 1961 as well as countless assassination attempts.

His alliance with Moscow helped trigger the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, a 13-day showdown with the United States that brought the world the closest it has been to nuclear war.

Wearing green military fatigues and chomping on cigars for many of his years in power, Castro was famous for long, fist-pounding speeches filled with blistering rhetoric, often aimed at the United States.

At home, he swept away capitalism and won support for bringing schools and hospitals to the poor. But he also created legions of enemies and critics, concentrated among the exiles in Miami who fled his rule and saw him as a ruthless tyrant.

However, it is not clear if U.S. President-Elect Donald Trump will continue to normalize relations with Cuba or revive tensions and fulfill a campaign promise to close the U.S. embassy in Havana once again.

Castro's death - which would once have thrown a question mark over Cuba's future - seems unlikely to trigger a crisis as Raul Castro is firmly ensconced in power.

In his final years, Fidel Castro no longer held leadership posts. He wrote newspaper commentaries on world affairs and occasionally met with foreign leaders but he lived in semi-seclusion.

Still, the passing of the man known to most Cubans as "El Comandante" - the commander - or simply "Fidel" leaves a huge void in the country he dominated for so long. It also underlines the generational change in Cuba's communist leadership.

Raul Castro vows to step down when his term ends in 2018 and the Communist Party has elevated younger leaders to its Politburo, including 56-year-old Miguel Diaz-Canel, who is first vice-president and the heir apparent.

Others in their 50s include Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez and economic reform czar Marino Murillo.

The reforms have led to more private enterprise and the lifting of some restrictions on personal freedoms but they aim

to strengthen Communist Party rule, not weaken it.

A Jesuit-educated lawyer, Fidel Castro led the revolution that ousted U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista on Jan 1, 1959. Aged 32, he quickly took control of Cuba and sought to transform it into an egalitarian society.

His government improved the living conditions of the very poor, achieved health and literacy levels on a par with rich countries and rid Cuba of a powerful Mafia presence.

But he also tolerated little dissent, jailed opponents, seized private businesses and monopolized the media.

Castro's opponents labeled him a dictator and hundreds of thousands fled the island.

"The dictator Fidel Castro has died, the cause of many deaths in Cuba, Latin American and Africa," Jose Daniel Ferrer, leader of the island's largest dissident group, the Patriotic Union of Cuba, said on Twitter.

Many dissidents settled in Florida, influencing U.S. policy toward Cuba and plotting Castro's demise. Some even trained in the Florida swamps for the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion.

But they could never dislodge him.

Castro claimed he survived or evaded hundreds of assassination attempts, including some conjured up by the CIA.

In 1962, the United States imposed a damaging trade embargo that Castro blamed for most of Cuba's ills, using it to his advantage to rally patriotic fury.

Over the years, he expanded his influence by sending Cuban troops into far-away wars, including 350,000 to fight in Africa. They provided critical support to a left-wing government in Angola and contributed to the independence of Namibia in a war that helped end apartheid in South Africa.

He also won friends by sending tens of thousands of Cuban doctors abroad to treat the poor and bringing young people from developing countries to train them as physicians.

■ 'History will absolve me'

Born on August 13, 1926, in Biran in eastern Cuba, Castro was the son of

a Spanish immigrant who became a wealthy landowner.

Angry at social conditions and Batista's dictatorship, Castro launched his revolution on July 26, 1953, with a failed assault on the Moncada barracks in the eastern city of Santiago.

"History will absolve me," he declared during his trial for the attack.

He was sentenced to 15 years in prison but was released in 1955 after a pardon that would come back to haunt Batista.

Castro went into exile in Mexico and prepared a small rebel army to fight Batista. It included Argentine revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who became his comrade-in-arms.

In December 1956, Castro and a rag-tag band of 81 followers sailed to Cuba aboard a badly overloaded yacht called "Granma."

Only 12, including him, his brother and Guevara, escaped a government ambush when they landed in eastern Cuba.

Taking refuge in the rugged Sierra Maestra Mountains, they built a guerrilla force of several thousand fighters who, along with urban rebel groups, defeated Batista's military in just over two years.

Early in his rule, at the height of the Cold War, Castro allied Cuba to the Soviet Union, which protected the Caribbean island and was its principal benefactor for three decades.

The alliance brought in \$4 billion worth of aid annually, including everything from oil to guns, but also provoked the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis when the United States discovered Soviet missiles on the island.

Convinced that the United States was about to invade Cuba, Castro urged the Soviets to launch a nuclear attack.

Cooler heads prevailed. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and U.S. President John F. Kennedy agreed the Soviets would withdraw the missiles in return for a U.S. promise never to invade Cuba. The United States also secretly agreed to remove its nuclear missiles from Turkey.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, an isolated Cuba fell into an economic crisis that lasted for years and was known as the "special period." Food, transport and basics such as soap were scarce and energy shortages led to frequent and long blackouts.

Castro undertook a series of tentative economic reforms to get through the crisis, including opening up to foreign tourism.

The economy improved when Venezuela's late socialist leader Hugo Chavez, who looked up to Castro as a hero, came to the rescue with cheap oil. Aid from communist-run China also helped, but Venezuelan support for Cuba has been scaled down since Chavez's death in 2013.

For most Cubans, Castro has been the ubiquitous figure of their entire life.

Many still love him and share his faith in a communist future, and even some who abandoned their political belief still view him with respect.

(Source: Reuters)

Pakistan PM names General Bajwa as new army chief

Pakistan's prime minister on Saturday picked Lieutenant General Qamar Javed Bajwa to replace outgoing Army Chief Raheel Sharif, a popular military leader credited for improving security and driving back extremist militant groups, his spokesman said.

The army chief is arguably the most powerful person in Pakistan, with the military having ruled the country for more than half its 69-year history since independence from Britain.

General Bajwa will likely take charge of the world's sixth-largest army by troop numbers in a formal handover on Tuesday, when General Sharif, who is no relation to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, formally retires.

The appointment of Bajwa is expected to help reset fraught relations between the military and the civilian government in a nuclear-armed nation of 190 million people.

Lieutenant General Zubair Hayat has been appointed chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff committee.

"On the advice of Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, President Mamnoon Hussain has approved the promotion of Lieutenant General Zubair Mehmood Hayat and Lieutenant General Qamar Javed Bajwa," the prime minister's office said.

As well as controlling security, the army operates a vast business empire in the country and often dictates key areas of Pakistan's foreign policy, including relations with historic foe India and its western neighbor Afghanistan.

General Sharif, 60, becomes the first army chief in more than 20 years to step down on time. Several previous military leaders had obtained extensions to their three-year terms.

(Source: Reuters)

Terrorists to pay for carnage: Ayatollah Sistani

Iraq's top cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has condemned a recent deadly attack targeting pilgrims near Hillah, saying the perpetrators of the carnage will pay for their crimes on the battleground.

Ayatollah Ahmad al-Safi, the religious leader's representative, cited him as making the remarks on a day after the attack.

The terrorist assault involved a truck bomb that exploded at a gas station in the Shomali Village in the suburbs of al-Hillah, killing at least 73 people, including many Iranians.

The incident occurred as pilgrims were returning from Karbala, where they marked Arba'een, the 40th day since the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, a grandson of Prophet Muhammad.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group claimed responsibility for the attack. The terrorist group has been wreaking havoc in Iraq, with Iraqi government troops and volunteer forces currently fighting Takfiri terrorists in their last major bastion in Mosul.

Ayatollah Sistani said the terrorists, who had failed to target the pilgrims during the Arba'een rituals in Karbala, sought to attack them at a gas station outside the holy city.

"This act of terror will increase the number of those loving Imam Hussein, and those who committed it will meet their comeuppance on battlegrounds," he said.

Iraqi security forces had established tight security on the main paths to Karbala and in the city itself during the rituals.

(Source: Press TV)

Turkey could extend state of emergency, Erdogan warns EU

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday warned the European Union that Turkey could extend by at least another three months a state of emergency that has been in place since the failed July coup.

In a speech in Istanbul, Erdogan launched another stinging attack on the EU after the European Parliament voted on Thursday to back a freeze in accession talks with Ankara.

He again threatened to bring back the death penalty - a decision that would effectively end Ankara's longstanding bid - and said that on this he would listen to the Turkish people and not "Hans" and "George", picking out two common European names.

The state of emergency imposed after the July 15 failed coup bid has seen at least 37,000 people arrested, causing alarm in Brussels over the scale of the crackdown.

"Maybe the state of emergency will be extended by three months and then maybe another three months," he said. "This is a decision for the government and the parliament."

"What's it to you?" he told the European Parliament.

"Is the European Parliament in charge of this country or is the government in charge of this country?"

"Know your place!" he added, in an angry tirade.

He noted that France had also put in place a state of emergency after it was hit by a string of extremist attacks in 2015 and accused the European Parliament of hypocrisy.

(Source: AFP)

Israel wildfires spread in West Bank, more settlers flee

Hundreds of more Israeli settlers have fled as wildfires spread through areas near settlements in the occupied West Bank.

A police spokeswoman said on Saturday that nearly 1,000 settlers were forced to leave the Halamish settlement near the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah as 45 settler units were damaged or destroyed by the fires.

Fires were also reported approaching the settlements of Dolev, Alfei Menashe, and Karnei Shomron in the occupied West Bank. No evacuations were reported there, however.

A lack of downpours together with very dry air and

strong easterly winds contributed to the spread of the fires this week across the Israeli-occupied lands.

Israeli officials have suggested, however, that Arabs or Palestinians may be to blame for some of the blazes.

The Israeli police spokeswoman further said that they had arrested 14 people on suspicion of sparking the fires either deliberately or by negligence, without giving details on their identities.

Firefighting planes have arrived from Russia, Turkey, Greece, France, Spain, and Canada and continue to battle the fires at affected locations, including the village of Nataf near al-Quds (Jerusalem).

People in Haifa, the hardest-hit city, have begun to return to assess the damage. The fire forced tens of thousands of them to flee on Thursday.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said there was "no doubt" some of the fires reported had been set deliberately.

Earlier, the Fatah movement of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said the regime in Tel Aviv is "exploiting the fire" to level new allegations against Palestinians.

"What is burning are our trees and our land of historical Palestine," said the West Bank-based movement in a statement.

(Source: Press TV)

Fidel Castro: The life of a revolutionary

➡ In 1945, Fidel entered the University of Havana law school and became involved in nationalistic and anti-imperialist politics.

On July 26, 1953, he tried to overthrow the government of President Fulgencio Batista by leading an attack on the Moncada military barracks. The plot failed, and he was captured and eventually sentenced to 15 years in prison.

At his sentencing, Castro told the court, "Condemn me, it doesn't matter. History will absolve me."

■ Guerrilla campaign

Castro was released in 1955 as part of an amnesty deal with the government. He went to Mexico, where he met Argentine revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara, plotting to wage a guerrilla campaign against the dictatorial Batista.

On Dec. 2, 1956, Castro led another attack, near the eastern city of Manzanillo. It also failed, but the Castro brothers escaped and fled to the mountains.

They were able to build support and eventually capture important parts of the country. Batista's government collapsed on Jan. 1, 1959, and the dictator sought exile in the Dominican Republic.

Less than four months later, a group of CIA-trained Cuban exiles, armed with U.S. weapons, landed at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba in an attempt to overthrow Castro. The invasion failed miserably, with many of the exile fighters killed or captured.

One Castro or another has ruled Cuba over a period that spans seven decades and 11 U.S. presidents. Fidel Castro out-

lived six of those presidents including Cold War warriors John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

At the height of the Cold War, Castro used a blend of charisma and repression to install the first and only Communist government in the Western Hemisphere, less than 100 miles from the United States.

Cuba and the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations on May 8, 1960, further eroding the relationship with the United States. Castro, who had long blamed many of Cuba's ills on American influence and resented the U.S. role in hemispheric politics, quickly intensified cooperation with the Soviet Union, which began sending large subsidies.

In doing so, Castro defied a hostile U.S. policy that sought to topple him with a punishing trade embargo that start-

ed in 1962 and continued for the rest of his life. He took delight in pointing out how none of them succeeded, not even the plot that called for explosives to be placed in the ubiquitous cigars he later would quit smoking for health reasons.

Castro also survived numerous assassination attempts by the Central Intelligence Agency and anti-Castro exiles in the early 1960s. Castro became prime minister a month later, initiating economic reforms including factory nationalizations and land reform that targeted wealthy property owners.

"I have never been afraid of death," Castro said in 2002. "I have never been concerned about death." Most of the rest of his life was synonymous with his country's history.

(Source: CNBC/CNN)

Ex-Chelsea doctor Eva Carneiro received death threats after club exit

Former Chelsea doctor Eva Carneiro revealed she received death threats following her exit from the club and insisted not enough is being done to tackle sexism in football.

The 43-year-old left Chelsea in 2015 after public criticism from former manager Jose Mourinho before settling her case against the club in the summer.

Carneiro was publicly criticised by former Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho after going on to the pitch to treat Eden Hazard against Swansea at Stamford Bridge in August 2015.



Carneiro, who claimed constructive dismissal against Chelsea, also reached a discrimination settlement with Mourinho and the club apologised “unreservedly” to the former first-team doctor for the distress caused.

She left Stamford Bridge in September 2015, but admitted online abuse continued after her exit.

“Even though I don’t have a presence on social media

-- I think I have made one post ever in my life -- some of the threats of sexual violence and death threats make it through,” she told the Telegraph.

“They [the abusers] just seem to be faceless cowards and they should be answerable to legislation.”

And Carneiro, who now works at her own clinic on Harley Street in London, also believes the issue of sexism in football is going unchecked, unlike racism, and needs to be taken more seriously.

“It is one thing to say, ‘We will end discrimination’ and I think it is widely accepted that discrimination exists in the sport,” she said.

“I think sexism is the least challenged form of discrimination. Anti-Semitic and other racist comments are widely condemned and I don’t think that is the case [with sexism] and it begs the question what that leaves room for behind the scenes.

“It is widely accepted that football has a discrimination problem. I really do feel that way, but I think it is the least challenged form of discrimination.

“Growing up I didn’t think it [gender inequality] was going to be a problem. It never even occurred to me there would be differences in what we could achieve, or what we were told we could achieve, by being girls or boys.

“At university more than 50 percent of the intake in medical school is female, so a female doctor wanting to do anything from trauma surgery to working in the military is not surprising. Seeking specialist training in certain sports, male colleagues found that quite surprising.

“There was very much a dialogue of bringing attention to my gender or objectifying me in some way. They described that as a limit to my career progression in that direction, which I was stunned by. It was a dialogue more appropriate for the 1950s.”

(Source: ESPN)

Kagawa snubs transfer rumours and hopes to regain Dortmund spot

Shinji Kagawa says he has no intention of leaving Borussia Dortmund, insisting he will “give everything” to show he can be an important player for the club.

Despite being a first-team regular for two seasons following his return to Dortmund from Manchester United in 2014, the Japan international has lost his place in Thomas Tuchel’s starting XI this campaign.

Kagawa has started just three Bundesliga games for the Signal Iduna Park side, while his display in Dortmund’s 8-4 Champions League win over Legia Warsaw was just his second appearance in the competition.

The 27-year-old played the full game against the Polish side and showed what he was capable of, scoring twice and setting up another as the two sides set a record for the highest scoring game in the competition.

Still, the lack of regular football has prompted reports that Kagawa could return to Japan, with Yokohama F. Marinos being named as a potential destination.

However, Kagawa feels he still has a lot to offer at Dortmund and hopes his impressive showing in midweek is enough to show he deserves a more significant role.

“I want to show I can play in matches here and I will give everything for it,” he told Goal. “I needed these goals and that assist for my confidence. That match has been very important for me.”

The former Cerezo Osaka star admits he has had a tough time in Germany over the last few months, but hopes to earn Tuchel’s trust in training.

“I got several chances already this season, but I never really took them. It is a difficult phase for me.

“I know I have to improve and give everything in training to be a part of the next games, too.”

Kagawa enjoyed two incredible seasons at Dortmund before he left to join United. A lack of first-team opportunities saw him return to Germany three seasons later and he is currently contracted to the Bundesliga side until June 2018.

(Source: Goal)

RB Leipzig spread their wings to become Bundesliga force for the long haul



This being their maiden season in the German top flight, it is nigh on impossible to profile RB Leipzig without focusing on their controversial journey to the Bundesliga summit. Previously a fifth-tier team from the east German region of Saxony called SSV Markranstädt, the club’s licence was bought in 2009 by the Austrian energy drink manufacturer Red Bull, who promptly rebranded their acquisition by changing their name, crest and kit before beginning their quick ascent through the divisions.

Despite being unable to call themselves Red Bull Leipzig due to DFB regulations (the RB “officially” stands for “RasenBallSport”, which means “lawn sports”), they are unequivocally part of a stable of sports franchises that includes their Austrian feeder club FC Red Bull Salzburg, Red Bull Brasil, Red Bull Ghana, New York Red Bulls and Formula One’s Red Bull Racing. Constructs do not get more artificial, so it is little surprise they have become the most hated football club in Germany.

In 2011, Red Bull’s owner, Dietrich Mateschitz, spoke of his intention to get RB Leipzig into the Bundesliga within three to five years and an investment of €100m in their transfer kitty helped grease the wheels. “We also want to get into the Champions League and be successful there, which is something you can only achieve with a club that plays in one of the top leagues,” said Mateschitz, whose team are firmly on course to meet that particular target sooner rather than later. Fans of rival sides have made no secret of their contempt for a team who, while technically not breaking “50+1” rule in the statutes of the German league that gives members of football clubs a say in the running of their club, certainly flies in the face of the rule’s spirit.

There have been numerous protests against them. In their first Bundesliga

home game, a 1-0 victory over Borussia Dortmund, their opponents’ hardcore fans passed up the opportunity to visit Die Roten Bullen’s 43,000-capacity Red Bull Arena and instead stayed at home to support their club’s under-23s in a fourth division match. Before a recent match at Bayer Leverkusen’s BayArena home fans threw paint at the Leipzig team bus, while the second division side Dynamo Dresden were fined £54,000 after one of their fans launched a bull’s head towards the pitch during a cup match in August.

For all their detractors, this garish and rather tacky vehicle for the Red Bull group give every indication they are in the Bundesliga for the long haul and look set to become a European footballing force. They are not without their supporters, not least those east German locals who have been starved of any kind of success since VfB Leipzig were relegated in 1994 and have warmly embraced their new club in its infancy. Indeed, a look beyond the club’s lack of soul, complete absence of tradition and hideous bovine branding suggests there is much to admire.

For all their wealth, RB Leipzig’s policy is one of focusing on youth, nurturing young players by giving them valuable game time that might not be available elsewhere before selling them on for a profit when they hit their prime. Their current squad has an average age of just 23 and includes their joint record signing, the Scottish winger Oliver Burke who they snapped up from Nottingham Forest for £13m during the summer. Burke’s decision to eschew a move to one of several Premier League also-rans in favour of relocating to Saxony raised eyebrows in England, but in a recent interview with football website thesetpieces.com the 19-year-old declared himself delighted with his move.

“I’ve really shown that I’ve come to

a fantastic club,” he said after the 2-1 win over Bayer Leverkusen that sent his team to the top of the league, a position they reinforced with Friday’s 4-1 win at Freiburg. “I don’t really need to say much – look at where we are. It’s been very positive. Every day I’m learning something new and I can only get better at this club. I have the right people around me and I am still at a young age.”

It’s difficult to disagree that RB Leipzig’s sporting director Ralf Rangnick and manager Ralph Hasenhüttl are the right people. A former manager of Stuttgart, Hannover 96, Hoffenheim and Schalke, Rangnick is an innovative tactician renowned as the brains behind the frenetic pressing game that has since become the hallmark of German coaches such as Liverpool’s Jürgen Klopp and his successor at Borussia Dortmund, Thomas Tuchel.

Rangnick steered RB Leipzig into the Bundesliga last season before moving upstairs and handing the reins to Hasenhüttl. Nicknamed the “Alpine Klopp”, the Austrian Hasenhüttl is quite the showman but his touchline histrionics belie a shrewd football brain and reputation as a master motivator of hungry young players. Big names are conspicuous by their absence from his squad: despite their enviable wealth, Leipzig’s biggest signings before their first Bundesliga season were the callow Burke, the 21-year-old midfielder Naby Keita from Red Bull Salzburg and the 20-year-old striker Timo Werner from Stuttgart. Raw talents with plenty to prove and, perhaps more importantly, malleable and open minds.

Aged 49, Hasenhüttl has a history of over-achievement at small teams such as Unterhaching and Aalen in Germany’s lower leagues, but it was at Ingolstadt where he rose to national prominence. In his first season he saved the Bavarian club from relegation to Germany’s third division

before securing their first ever promotion to the Bundesliga in 2015. Having steered his energetic, swashbuckling RB Leipzig side to the top of Bundesliga within five months of taking charge, he claims they will be difficult to dislodge. “If we keep playing this way and continue to do what we work on and if we can maintain this hunger, then we are going to be hard to beat,” he said last week. “Our only objective is to find solutions to get us through the challenges we face each day. Nobody has gifted us our league position. Everybody here believes in what we are doing.”

On and off the pitch, Leipzig are well equipped to deal with any of the aforementioned challenges. Defensively stout, they have conceded 10 goals in 12 matches so far this season, while their energetic pressing and lightning fast counterattacking play is grist to the mill of ambitious young players and enthusiastic supporters who appear to adore their inspirational manager. Their bespoke training facilities are state of the art and they have invested €35m (£30m) in an academy which their head of youth development, Frieder Schrof, last year claimed would “be setting the standards when it comes to training facilities, education levels and accommodation”.

RB Leipzig are by no means the first nouveau riche arrivistes to ostentatiously buy their way to the top and are far from unique even in Germany, where Wolfsburg, Bayer Leverkusen and Hoffenheim enjoy similar corporate backing.

Located in an otherwise barren football hinterland that was in dire need of a top-flight football team, they have been welcomed by the locals in their catchment area. For all the envious, bitter and often justified carping of their many detractors, it is probably only a matter of time before they are grudgingly accepted on a more widespread scale.

(Source: Guardian)

Montreal Impact’s Didier Drogba ‘a legend of the game’ - Jozy Altidore

Toronto FC strikers Jozy Altidore and Tosaint Ricketts paid tribute to Didier Drogba after the former Chelsea star made his final home appearance for Montreal Impact on Tuesday.

Drogba came on as a substitute in the 3-2 Eastern Conference Championship first leg win at a sold-out Olympic Stadium, and revealed he would be not returning to the club in 2017.

Altidore told MLSsoccer.com that 38-year-old Drogba was “a legend of the game” and added: “For me, growing up watching him, he was a terrific striker. You try to mould your game around your heroes.

“The game will miss him if this is his last stop. And if not, I’m sure he’ll contribute somewhere else.”

Ricketts also described Drogba as “a legend,” saying: “He’s done it all. It’s an honour to share the field with a player like that. He’s a great player.”

Drogba scored 11 goals in as many appearances immediately after joining the club, but has been used more as a substitute this year after suffering injuries.

He came close to adding a late fourth goal for his side on Tuesday, shooting just wide from the edge of



the area.

Speaking to reporters after the game, Drogba said: “My contract ends at the end of the season and I won’t be returning. I want to end things well, out of respect for everything the people here, the city, have given me.”

The club released a video following the match thanking Drogba for his time and service to the club, with the clip concluding by saying: “Merci, Didier.”

Drogba did not specify whether he planned to retire or hoped to return elsewhere next season.

(Source: Soccernet)

Hoeness returns as Bayern president

Uli Hoeness has been re-elected as Bayern Munich president at Friday’s annual general meeting.

The 64-year-old was forced to step down from the role in 2014 when he served jail time for tax evasion but he remains a popular figure at the club and an overwhelming majority of the members who voted were in favour of Hoeness’ return.

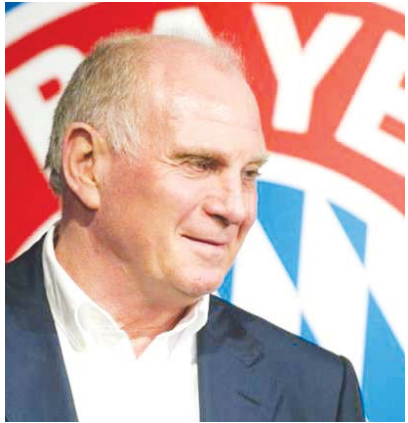
“I would like to thank you and I promise that I will not disappoint you,” Hoeness after getting the backing from Bayern’s fans.

“I want to be a link between the members and the club, between the supervisory board and the general board. And I want to be there for all our employees, for the players and for the coach.

“I am looking forward to working with [outgoing president] Karl-Heinz Hopfner. If we stick together, it is up to our rivals to attack us.

“RB Leipzig are now another rival that can challenge us after Borussia Dortmund. To be honest, over the past few years there has not really been a team that angered and challenged us. We had to stay motivated ourselves. So it was about time. “That is all I want to say”

Hoeness replaces Hopfner as the man in charge at Allianz Arena, with the departing president bowing out on a



high as Bayern’s membership roll grew to 284,041.

“Many thanks. That is it,” Hopfner said on his farewell.

“We still are and we will continue to be the world’s biggest club.

“Thank you for your trust in me as president. Now it is time. My active time at Bayern in several positions has come to an end after more than 33 years.

“It goes without saying that I will continue to watch our teams in all competitions and keep my fingers crossed at the Allianz Arena.”

(Source: Goal)

Saeid Ezzatollahi thanks Carlos Queiroz for support

SPORTS Iran midfielder Saeid Ezzatollahi thanked Team Melli coach Carlos Queiroz for supporting him despite being a substitute player in FC Rostov.

Ezzatollahi played 78 minutes against Syria in the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualifier in Malaysia.

The 20-year-old defensive midfielder came on the bench in injury time in 3-2 win over Bayern Munich in UEFA Champions League.

"Queiroz trusted me and gave the chance to play in the national team. He is like father to me," Ezzatollahi told Tasnim news agency.

"If he had not given me a chance to play in Team Melli, I would have lost my confidence in Rostov," he added.

Asked him if he is interested in transferring to Eredivisie (the Dutch football league), Ezzatollahi said, "Eredivisie has a high level of technical quality such as Russia. At the moment, I've not received offer from any other clubs but my priority is to stay in Russia."



Netherlands likely to play friendly with Iran: Michael van Praag



President of Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) Michael van Praag says that they are interested in arranging a football friendly with the Iranian national team (Team Melli) but there are no more free dates on their calendar.

Iran Football Federation signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with KNVB on Thursday in Tehran to strengthen the mutual relationship and to cooperate for further development of the sport in the two countries.

"We want to play friendly matches with Iranian football teams in all levels. However, there are no more free dates on our calendar until next two years to arrange a friendly between our senior football team and the Ira-

nian national team. The Netherlands will play Iran in the first opportunity," van Praag told Tasnim news agency in an exclusive interview.

"I am proud of signing the MoU with Iran Football Federation and I can definitely say there are no regrets at all. To sign the memorandum with Iranian federation is a very good thing that happened," he added.

According to the MoU, Iran will help the Netherlands' grassroots youth, futsal, beach soccer and women's football.

KNVB will also help the Iranian federation to arrange the international friendlies. The Iranian federation has also signed MoUs with Italy, Belarus, Japan, the UAE and Norway federations.

(Source: Tasnim)

Diego Maradona hails Fidel Castro as 'second father'



Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona on Saturday lamented the death of former Cuban leader Fidel Castro as the loss of a "great" man who was "like a second father" to him.

"They called me from Buenos Aires and it was a shock" to learn the 90-year-old historic revolutionary leader had died, Maradona said.

"I'm terribly sad as he was like a second father," Maradona told reporters in Zagreb, where he is watching the Davis Cup final between Argentina and Croatia.

Maradona spent time in Cuba on several occasions and underwent rehabilitation treatment for drug

abuse.

He met Castro on several occasions and expressed warm admiration for the leader of the 1959 Cuban revolution.

Maradona first visited Cuba after the 1986 World Cup which Argentina won after the stocky striker had scored a handballed goal during the quarter-final against England.

Castro referred to the star as a "great friend" while Maradona had a leg tattooed with the likeness of the then Cuban president, of whom he once said: "Along with God, he is the reason I am alive."

(Source: AFP)

Iran collects nearly dozen medals in Asian junior championships

Young Iranian male and female karate practitioners have got off to a promising start at the 15th edition of Asian Karate Federation (AKF) Cadet, Junior & U-21 Championship in Indonesia, and got a total of eleven medals.

On Friday, Iranian karateka Mobina Heidari received a bye in her opening round fight of the female cadet over 54-kilogram kumite contests at the Celebes Convention Center in the southern Indonesian city of Makassar, before overcoming opponents from China, Taiwan and the host nation to deservedly clinch the gold medal.

Navid Mohammadi also emerged victorious against representatives from India, Indonesia and Japan in the male cadet over 70-kilogram division, and collected another gold medal for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In the junior individual kata division, Iran's Fatemeh Sadeghi prevailed over Malaysian and Kazakh rivals in her first two competitions, before conceding defeat against the Japanese counterpart in the final and winning the silver medal.

Additionally, Leila Borjali failed to surmount a



Japanese karate practitioner in the final challenge of female cadet minus 47-kilogram kumite division, and finished in the second place. She had earlier trounced rivals from Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan in the battle for the title challenge.

Atousa Rezaei pocketed the third silver medal for Iran in the female junior kumite over 59-kilogram section. Rezaei routed her Chinese

and Japanese rivals as she progressed to the final competition, where she lost to a representative from Kazakhstan.

Moreover, Yeganeh Shahpari in the female junior individual kata, Shaghayegh Vahedi in the female junior minus 53-kilogram kumite, Hossein Saleipour in the male cadet minus-63 kilogram kumite, Morteza Ne'mati in the male cadet minus-52 kilogram kumite, Mehrdad Mostahsan in the male cadet minus-57 kilogram kumite, and Sara Bahmanyar in the female junior minus 48-kilogram kumite contests managed to earn six bronze medals for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The 15th edition of AKF Cadet, Junior & U-21 Championship started in Makassar, Indonesia, on November 21, and will conclude on November 27, 2016.

The continental tournament has attracted some 400 male and female karate practitioners from 24 Asian countries, including China, Chinese Taipei, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan.

(Source: PressTV)

Iranian chess player clinches draws in FIDE Women's Grand Prix

Iranian International Master and Woman Grandmaster Sarasadat Khademalsharieh has added two more draws to her record at the Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE) Women's Grand Prix in Russia.

On Friday, Khademalsharieh gained the initiative as she played White against 29-year-old Georgian chess player Nino Batsiashvili at the sixth round

of the tournament's fifth and final leg at Ugra Chess Academy in the town of Khanty Mansiysk.

Both sportswomen showed steely determination and skill in the middle game, and the match equalized.

Earlier, the 19-year-old Iranian sports-woman had played against Georgian International Master and Woman Grand-master Lela Javakhishvili in the fifth round,

and the players agreed to a draw on the 40th move.

Khademalsharieh is scheduled to face Ukrainian chess Grandmaster Natalia Oleksandrivna Zhukova in round 7.

The FIDE Women's Grand Prix in Khanty Mansiysk, Russia, started on November 18 and will conclude on December 2, 2016.

(Source: Press)



Why Real Sociedad will provide another tough test for Barcelona and Neymar

Real Sociedad will provide a huge test in Barcelona's title tilt and could derail their bid even further, writes Pete Jenson.

There is a luxury apartment overlooking the Concha Bay in San Sebastian where David Moyes almost lived. He was sacked by Real Sociedad before he could settle into the permanent accommodation and his replacement Eusebio Sacristan now lives there instead.

The new man is doing well one year on from that change. Real Sociedad have had their best start to a season since Raynald Denoueix was in charge 14 years ago. They are up to fifth and on Sunday they face Barcelona who have lost five of their last six visits to the stadium.

It might not look much like a fortress with its running track, set-back stands and backdrop of rolling hills but Anoeta is every bit as intimidating for Barcelona as Celtic Park.

Barça players came away from Parkhead on Wednesday with 'you'll never walk alone' still ringing in their ears, wowed by the atmosphere, and commenting on the tribute to the Lisbon Lions on minute 67.

On Sunday there will be no Lions Den but Luis Enrique would almost prefer to be back in Glasgow because he has never won at the home of Real Sociedad in three attempts as a coach.

With his first La Liga club, Celta Vigo, he lost 4-3 with Carlos Vela scoring all four. He might have imagined things would be easier with Barcelona but he made them difficult by leaving Leo Messi and Neymar on the bench two years ago and, courtesy of a Jordi Alba own goal, La Real won 1-0.

That was Moyes' finest hour at the club and it was a massive crossroads in Barça's season. Upset at being 'rested' having come back late from the winter break with the specific permission of Luis Enrique (it was the boss's idea), Messi called in sick for the next training session and his manager – having alienated the most important player in the club's history – looked on borrowed time.

Xavi intervened by talking to Messi and things were smoothed over. Barça won the treble at the end of the season and the January 1-0 defeat is now almost celebrated as a 'where it all began' moment. But all the same Barça went back to Anoeta last season – this time missing the suspended Suarez – and lost 1-0. They weren't quite as bad as 12 months earlier but Geronimo Rulli was brilliant in goal for them and after Mikel Oyarzabal's fifth-minute goal they could find no way back.

■ So will the curse of Anoeta strike again?

If former Barça European Cup winner and B team coach Eusebio were to guide his side to three points and Real Madrid were to beat Sporting Gijon 24 hours earlier on Saturday then Barça could go into the Clasico six days later knowing defeat would leave them 10 points adrift of Real Madrid. Unthinkable in December.

With David Zurutuza and Asier Illarramendi playing well in midfield, centre-back Iñigo Martínez back in the Spain squad, Vela claiming recent fatherhood has matured him enough that he is now going to finally make the most of his huge talent, and Willian José alongside him in attack looking like one of the signings of the season, things are looking positive.

The 25-year-old Brazilian has scored six goals in 10 starts since arriving from Las Palmas in the summer and both he and Vela netted in La Real's last home game – a 2-0 win over Diego Simeone's Atletico Madrid.

A lot will depend on how Neymar handles the evening. He is a booking away from missing the Clasico and is bound to be wound up by the home team who saw his petulance against Celtic when he picked a fight with Mikael Lustig just to earn the booking that clears him of suspensions for the knockout stages of the Champions League.

He has his off-the-field problems with the Spanish Prosecutor asking for a two-year prison spell for alleged fraud. He has never once let the controversy over his move from Santos to Barcelona affect his form. And concerns of next year's case and accusations he mislead the third party sports investment company due a cut of his transfer, don't seem to be getting to him either. But he has scored just six this season and that's seven fewer than at this stage of last year's campaign.

Neymar was pelted with missiles as he took a corner at Celtic Park on Tuesday, someone even managed to throw their drink at him. You would need some arm to hit the target across that running track from the set-back stands at Anoeta, but couldron or no couldron Real Sociedad know they have the beating of Barcelona and they will provide a huge test.

(Source: Eurosport)

Rezende candidate to replace Lozano as Iran volleyball coach

Head of Iran Volleyball Federation Mohammadreza Davarzani says that Bernardo Rezende is a candidate to take charge of the Iranian national team.

It seems Raul Lozano is no longer Iran coach. Under guidance of the Argentine coach, Iran finished in fifth place in the 2016 Olympic Games but the federation is reluctant to renew the contract with him.

Rezende inspired Brazil to win a gold medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

"Bernardo Rezende is one of our candidates to replace Lozano," Davarzani said. "We want to sign a four-year contract with the new head coach."

Japan Volleyball Federation had already shown interest in signing the 57-year-old Brazilian coach.

(Source: Tasnim)

Germany, France, Switzerland, Slovakia, the Netherlands and Lithuania in addition to 11 artists from Iran will be taking part in the project, which will end on December 18 at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.