



25 oilfield development proposals received post sanction: NIOC official **4**



Simple life, skillful hands, silk weaving **12**



Iranian volleyball teams learn fate in continental competitions **15**



Iranian movie theaters to refresh schedules for Noruz **16**

Setboun: Islamic revolution made me professional photojournalist

By Zahra Sadat Khezry

TEHRAN — Michel Setboun is one of the most renowned photojournalists of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, shooting over 45,000 photos.

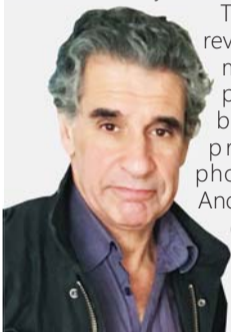
In collaboration with the Iranian Association of Revolution and Sacred Defense Photographers, Setboun's book entitled "The Days of the Revolution" has recently been published.

The Tehran Times conducted an interview with Setboun as he visited Iran last month to capture the scenes marking the 38th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ Can you tell us briefly about yourself and your background?

A: I got a diploma in architecture in 1977, but since I was more interested in travelling and photojournalism I decided to try to change my future.



The Iranian revolution gave me the opportunity to become a real professional photojournalist. And that was one of my best memories.

See page 13

Iran eyeing industrial economy target



See page 4

The file photo shows a steel plant in Iran. The pace of industrial development in the country has provided the capacity for it to join newly industrialized countries.

Russia says ties with Iran based on national interests

POLITICS TEHRAN — Russia builds relations with Tehran on the basis of national interests, the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova told reporters on Thursday.

"We have repeatedly talked about the fact that the relationships with our partners on the international arena are of self-sufficient value to us. We develop relations with countries not because someone likes or dislikes it. We proceed from our national interests, from the history of our mutual relationships with other nations."

She replied to a question regarding the relations between Moscow and Tehran in the light of the recent statements made by U.S. President Donald Trump about Iran, RIA Novosti reported.

Earlier Trump had called Iran the "number one terrorist" state. He had also said he intended to set in motion new measures against Iran to prevent Tehran from acquiring what he called "nuclear weapons."

"And of course, first and foremost, starting from the interests of our people, so I think that we need to consider our bilateral relations with Iran not in the context of statements made by representatives of other countries, but in the context of those intrinsic values of the historical, cultural and humanitarian ties, which we have accumulated to date with Iran," Zakharova added. **→2**



ARTICLE

By Mehdi Hasan
British political journalist

Trump's 'moderate' defense secretary has already brought U.S. to the brink of war

DID YOU KNOW that the Trump administration almost went to war with Iran at the start of February?

Perhaps you were distracted by Gen. Michael Flynn's resignation as national security adviser or by President Trump's online jihad against Nordstrom. Or maybe you missed the story because the New York Times bizarrely buried it in the midst of a long piece on the turmoil and chaos inside the National Security Council. Defense Secretary James Mattis, according to the paper, had wanted the U.S. Navy to "intercept and board an Iranian ship to look for contraband weapons possibly headed to Houthi fighters in Yemen. ... But the ship was in international waters in the Arabian Sea, according to two officials. Mr. Mattis ultimately decided to set the operation aside, at least for now. White House officials said that was because news of the impending operation leaked."

Get that? It was only thanks to what Mattis's commander in chief has called "illegal leaks" that the operation was (at least temporarily) set aside and military action between the United States and Iran was averted.

Am I exaggerating? Ask the Iranians. "Boarding an Iranian ship is a shortcut to confrontation," says Seyyed Hossein Mousavian, former member of Iran's National Security Council and a close ally of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. Even if a firefight in international waters were avoided, the Islamic Republic, Mousavian tells me, "would retaliate" and has "many other options for retaliation."

Trita Parsi, head of the National Iranian American Council and author of the forthcoming book "Losing an Enemy — Obama, Iran and the Triumph of Diplomacy," agrees. Such acts of "escalation" by the Trump administration, he tells me, "significantly increases the risk of war." **→13**

'Our power is in our links,' Rouhani tells ECO summit

President Rouhani addressed the ECO Summit on Wednesday and stressed cooperation between the countries, adding: "Let us believe that our power is in our links and the future of the region shall be formed with the decisions we make today and the prosperity of tomorrow depends on our bonds today."

He made the remarks while addressing the opening session of the 13th Summit of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) which began in Islamabad today.

"Our continent Asia is going to pump the heart of the world's economy in the second half of the present century," said the President stressing

that promotion of connectivity will help development and prosperity in Asia.

He further noted, "The unique status of

our countries in transit and transport as well as energy and commerce has put the ECO in an ideal position. The ECO can and should play a prominent role in building the future economy of our region."

"Situated on the shores of several strategic waterways of the world and being neighbor to five important bodies of water, our countries have provided unique geopolitical and territorial conditions for our organization."

"There is no other trade and transit route linking Europe to Asia more cost-effective and shorter than the ECO pathway."

President Rouhani strongly believed that the economic strengthening of the ECO is tied to the closer link among the member states.

"Mobilizing our facilities, we are able

to encourage and accelerate more growth for our countries. The economic strengthening of the ECO is tied to the close link among our people. We should remove impediments over connections among our people so that they enjoy facilitated visits and cooperation. Our cultural commonalities are precious assets for our economic integration."

"The message of this summit to the entrepreneurs of the ECO Member States should be higher horizons, more integrity and closer bonds," stressed President Rouhani.

He referred to "Terrorism and Takfiri thoughts" as "a common threat to all of us; and it is necessary to establish more coordination and cooperation in confrontation with this vicious phenomenon." **→2**

A fit U.S. shale industry challenges OPEC once again

By Javier Blas

When the whos who of the oil industry met a year ago in Houston, Saudi Arabia's energy minister had harsh words for U.S. shale drillers struggling with the worst price crash in a generation.

"Lower costs, borrow cash or liquidate," said Ali Naimi, who managed the world's largest oil-exporting business for more than two decades.

In the year since, the drillers have largely taken Naimi's advice. While more than 100 have gone bankrupt since the start of 2015, the companies that survived have reshaped themselves into fitter, leaner and faster versions that can

thrive with oil at \$50 a barrel. Now, it's OPEC that's seeking solutions, desperate to drive prices up even further in a push to repair the economies of the countries it serves.

"The shale business is rejuvenated because of the difficulties it has been through," Ben van Beurden, the chief executive officer of Royal Dutch Shell Plc, said in comments last month.

After a two-year downturn spurred by oil's plunge to \$26 from \$100, U.S. production is on the rise once again, opening the door for another showdown with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. The number of U.S. drilling rigs has grown 91 percent to 602 in

just over nine months. Meanwhile, production has gained more than 550,000 barrels a day since the summer, rising above 9 million barrels a day for the first time since April.

And as shale returns with a vengeance, it's not just the pioneer cowboys that dominated the first phase of the revolution in the Bakken of North Dakota. This time, Exxon Mobil Corp. and other major oil groups are joining the rush. It's a new reality that OPEC and Russia -- the main forces behind the production cuts approved last year as a solution to re-balance the global market -- are starting to acknowledge. **→4**



© Mizany/Mohammad Khademolshayekh

Ice climbing school in Meygoon

Ice climbing school has been opened in Meygoon in north of Tehran, Iran.

Ice climbing is the activity of ascending inclined ice formations. Usually, ice climbing refers to roped and protected climbing of features such as icefalls, frozen waterfalls, and cliffs and rock slabs covered with ice refrozen from flows of water.

For the purposes of climbing, ice can be broadly divided into two spheres, alpine ice and water ice.

ARTICLE

By Seyed Hossein Mousavian,
Yassin El-Ayouty

Egyptian-Iranian détente a boon for the region and beyond

In the Middle East, the two most contiguous cultures are the Egyptian and Persian civilizations. For ages, they stood as beacons of durable learning and contributed immeasurably to human progress.

With the resurgence of "firstness" (i.e. America First), with all its ominous implications of narrow nationalism, there is a profound global need for a "dialogue of civilizations." This call is not new, having originally been proposed by former reformist Iranian president Mohammad Khatami and most recently echoed by the Grand Imam of Cairo's Al-Azhar in a speech before the German Bundestag in 2016.

However, while a broader conversation between the Islamic and Western civilizations is still of the utmost importance, so too is intra-Islamic dialogue. Egypt, with a third of the Sunni Arab world's population, and Iran, the biggest Shia country, can be the prime movers for reconciliation in the Muslim world and for regional stability. Relations between the two regional powers originally soured in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, when then-Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat gave refuge to the ousted Shah and signed the Egypt/Israel peace treaty in 1979.

Efforts to reconcile the two countries have been made in the past. In 2004, one of the authors, Mousavian, then head of the foreign relations committee of Iran's National Security Council, was invited for a confidential meeting with Osama El-Baz, the then senior political advisor to then-Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.

After a day of negotiations in Alexandria, a package was agreed for the normalization of Iranian-Egyptian ties. Ultimately, however, the agreement was met with rejection by top decision makers in both Cairo and Tehran. **→2**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Hezbollah hails Leader's support for Palestinian intifada

POLITICS TEHRAN — Hezbollah's political wing **d e s k** in the Lebanese parliament has hailed the Islamic Republic for supporting the Palestinian intifada, IRNA reported.

In a statement issued on Thursday evening, the Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc said it is grateful to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for his firm stance in supporting the Palestinian cause.

Iran held the 6th International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada in February, when hundreds from across the globe gathered to censure the Israeli regime's atrocities against the Palestinians.



Iran election should be un-American: cleric

POLITICS TEHRAN — The interim Friday prayer **d e s k** leader urged the potential presidential candidates in the May election to create an atmosphere opposite to that of the recent U.S. election.

"You witnessed what happened during the election in America, and what a disgrace it was," ISNA quoted Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami as telling worshippers.

Ayatollah Khatami further said that everyone should take part in the election to hamper the enemy's plot which is aimed at disrupting the election.

He also said that all candidates should respect the outcome of the election.



Official urges Iran-Iraq co-op against political abuse of human rights

POLITICS TEHRAN — Deputy Foreign Minister **d e s k** Abbas Araçchi has underlined the importance of Iranian-Iraqi cooperation to oppose a political abuse of human rights against the two countries.

Araçchi made the remarks on Wednesday in a meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari.

Denouncing the political abuse of human rights by certain countries, Araçchi called on Iraq and other countries affected by the issue to get united to fight it.

He also thanked Iraq for its stance on anti-Iran UN resolutions.



'Partial progress' made in Hajj talks with Saudis: official

POLITICS TEHRAN — "Partial progress" has **d e s k** been made in the recent round of Hajj negotiations with the Saudi side, the temporary head of the Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization of Iran said on Thursday.

"There has been partial progress in negotiations with the Saudi side on dispatching pilgrims to Hajj this year," Hamid Mohammadi was quoted as saying.

Since a 2015 Hajj crush in Mina, Mecca, which resulted in the death of 464 Iranian nationals, Iran has stopped dispatching pilgrims to Saudi Arabia over security concerns.



Turkish officer fired over maltreating of Iranian nationals: report

POLITICS TEHRAN — A Turkish police officer **d e s k** who had allegedly maltreated Iranian nationals entering the country has been fired, ISNA news agency quoted an unnamed Turkish diplomat as saying.

The development comes after Iran's Foreign Ministry formally protested against what it called "disrespect" to Iranian tourists by some Turkish police forces.

The objection was motivated by a footage showing an Iranian being beaten by Turkish security guards in Gurbulak, a village in province Agri in eastern Turkey, which is a border checkpoint into Iran.



Iran submarines capable of carrying heavyweight torpedoes: U.S. intelligence

POLITICS TEHRAN — The U.S. Office of Naval **d e s k** Intelligence has produced a report on Iranian navy, saying it possesses submarines "produced in Iran that are each capable of carrying two heavyweight torpedoes."

According to the U.S. naval intelligence assessment, Iran puts emphasis on operating with small boats, as the IRGC "has continued to pursue smaller, faster platforms equipped with sophisticated weaponry, ideally suited for its asymmetric doctrine."

The report also described the main components of Iran's defense strategy as "ballistic missiles, and naval forces."

Iran calls Saudi accusations 'delusional'

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry **d e s k** condemned on Thursday article 15 of a joint statement by Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, rejecting it as "delusional".

According to Middle East Monitor, Iran is accused of "influencing and destabilizing" the Islamic world in the statement.

The statement was issued at the conclusion of Saudi King Salman Bin Abdulaziz's official visit to Kuala Lumpur.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said Iran is an "effective" and "peace-seeking" country whose principled policy is based on "mutual respect" and "non-interference" in the other countries' affairs.

Iran will follow the policy of "good neighborliness," "cooperation" with the other countries and fight against terrorism, he noted.

He also said, "Undoubtedly, the Malaysian government's unacceptable action and behavior in being involved in false issues, which are fabricated by the Zionists' circles to target unity in the world of Islam, will not help the growing bilateral relations."

Qassemi called on the Islamic countries to analyze the international situation more precisely and not to get involved in issues which run contrary to the principle of friendly relations.

He urged the Malaysian government to be aware of Iran's foreign policy and avoid being involved in acts which are in line with undermining the world of Islam.

Malaysia can play an "effective" part in promoting relations among the Islamic countries, he added.



Rouhani meets Turkey's Erdogan, Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian **d e s k** President Hassan Rouhani met on Wednesday with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the sidelines of the Economic Cooperation Organization session in Pakistan's capital Islamabad.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran stresses respect for the territorial integrity of regional countries and is against any violation of territorial integrity in the region, especially in Syria and Iraq," Press TV quoted Rouhani as saying

during the meeting with Erdogan.

The Iranian president reaffirmed Tehran's support for dialogue and mutual respect to settle differences, adding, "We should make efforts to immediately put an end to war, bloodshed and foreign interference in the region."

Elswhere, Rouhani described Iran and Turkey as two influential countries of the region and called for further Tehran-Ankara cooperation in all sectors, which he said would benefit the two states as well as regional peace and stability.

He said that the two countries could expand ties in the sectors of energy, transportation and banking, and welcomed setting up joint ventures by investors from the two states.

Erdogan, for his part, said that Tehran-Ankara cooperation was essential to the settlement of regional woes and anti-terror fight.

He also said that Turkey embraced the promotion of ties with Iran.

During a separate meeting with Sharif, Rouhani said that Iran was ready to fulfill the energy needs of Pakistan,

including Islamabad's growing demand for electricity.

He also called for more cooperation between the private sectors of the two countries with a view to boosting bilateral trade to \$5 billion.

The Iranian president said that Tehran and Islamabad needed to work together to ensure security for the two countries' border regions against any potential terror acts.

Sharif, for his part, called for all-out cooperation with Iran, which he said would benefit the two countries.

Tehran summons Danish envoy over embassy attack

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Ministry **d e s k** summoned Denmark's Ambassador Danny Annan on Thursday to lodge protests over a second attack on Tehran's diplomatic mission in Copenhagen since January.

"Denmark's ambassador to Tehran was summoned to the Foreign Ministry and Iran's strong objection was conveyed to him over the action," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi.

Any future attacks without serious measures to punish attackers will question the Danish government's intentions and damage bilateral ties, Qassemi added.

Tehran also called on the Danish government to act "decisively, responsibly, and seriously," voicing regret over the attack and calling it unacceptable, Ambassador Annan said he would echo the concerns to the Danish government.

It was the second time this year that Iran's diplomatic mission in Copenhagen has been targeted.

On January 19, Danish police arrested six people who had earlier scaled the walls of the Iranian embassy in Copenhagen, drawing a strong condemnation from Tehran.

The six, described as four Iranian expatriates seeking asylum in Sweden and two others holding Swedish

residency, violated the Iranian diplomatic premises in the Danish capital.

The incident saw the invaders enter the mission's courtyard earlier in the day, putting up profane placards and forcing down the Iranian national flag from the flagstaff.

Following the incident, the ambassador was summoned to the Foreign Ministry, being notified of the Islamic Republic's protest over the attack.

Also in April 2016, Iran summoned Denmark's temporary chargé d'affaires over acts of vandalism and destruction carried out by four anti-Iran protesters.

Russia says ties with Iran based on national interests

1 -> Recently, Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Mehdi Sanai called the Iranian-Russian relations strategic, saying that the "continuous and wide development of Iranian-Russian relations has reached a qualitative and strategic stage."

"The current state of the relations between the two countries and the successes achieved at all levels were unprecedented in the history of our mutual relations," Sanai said.

He further stated that bilateral ties are not limited to political and security considerations, but extend to include economy, culture, education and tourism.

In 2015, the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was struck between Iran and six world powers that allowed Iran to pursue its nuclear program for domestic purposes.

During the nuclear negotiation process, Russia had identified the right of Iran to pursue peaceful use of nuclear program and sought to advance its nuclear cooperation as well as its defense cooperation with Iran.

In April 2016 Russia provided parts of the S-300 missile system to Tehran.

Relations have strengthened also due to a growing mutual interest over the crisis in Syria, most importantly in the fight against ISIS.

Ali Larjani, the Iranian Parliament speaker, said in an interview with TASS last year that "Iran's orientation to the East, first of all Russia, is our strategic choice. So we will open a special "file" for Russia, for Russia's role in the economy and infrastructure of Iran". Larjani has long been an advocate of better relations with Russia.

Talking about economic cooperation with Russia, he added, "I would like to stress that in any industry Russia wants to invest in — oil, gas and so on — we will give it the priority. We consider Russia a reliable neighbor, and we can develop steady relations with it."

Last August, Moscow also supported Iran's desire to become a full-fledged member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

A Russian-Iranian bond for military cooperation is also rapidly forming, based on a meeting of interests between Russians competing with the West for strategic influence throughout the Middle East. During Syria's civil war, they have shared intelligence and coordinated military planning and Russia has supplied advanced surface-to-air missiles to Iran.

In the Syrian crisis, both Russia and Iran back the government of Bashar al-Assad, while the U.S. with Turkey and Saudi-Arabia support the opposition.

Egyptian-Iranian détente a boon for the region and beyond

1 -> Nevertheless, one of this article's authors, Yassin El-Ayouty, assesses that if diplomacy were tried again, it would likely succeed. In a trip to Cairo in December last year, he found a groundswell within authoritative non-governmental organizations for Iranian-Egyptian rapprochement. The reasons for the warming up to Tehran are diverse and include cooperation on terrorism. Mousavian has also found readiness for such rapprochement in Tehran.

Despite fear-mongering by some in Egypt about a so-called "Shia menace," El-Ayouty, through his present work on a book on the "Sunni-Shia split," has found no religious foundation whatsoever for such a division.

Egyptian and Iranian Islamic scholars have in the past reached historic accords on bridging Shi'ism and Sunnism. In the late 19th century, Egyptian Sheikh Muhammad Abduh and Iranian cleric Jamal al-Din Asadabadi cooperated on creating a pan-Islamic movement. In the 20th century, Iranian Grand Ayatollah Seyed Hossein Borujerdi and Al-Azhar Grand Imam Mahmud Shaltut established cordial relations. Shaltut even issued a famous fatwa recognizing Shi'ism as a recognized Islamic sect. Al-Azhar had, for many years prior to that fatwa, taught

Shi'ism as a part of its curriculum.

Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been an uptick in sectarian rhetoric from prominent Egyptian figures. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a prominent former Muslim Brotherhood acolyte, regularly engages in divisive bombast about Shi'ism and is a leading encourager of the some of the most reactionary elements in the Muslim world.

The late Iranian scholar, Hashemi Rafsanjani, once debated with Qaradawi after he had made controversial anti-Shia remarks. Qaradawi, however, is currently out of favor with Al-Azhar and living in Qatar as a Qatari citizen, a leading proselytizer of the puritanical and exclusivist Wahhabi sect.

In addition to the religious and political tensions between Cairo and Tehran, Egypt's increased reliance on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries — namely Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE — has also served to lower the chances for Egyptian-Iranian rapprochement. The Egyptian economy has for years been sliding downward, a decline in fortunes due largely to a booming population (nearing 100 million). Interestingly, a top lifeline for Egypt has been loans from the UAE, which has covertly cooperated with Al-Azhar sheikhs against the Saudi Wahhabi sect. **->13**

'Our power is in our links,' Rouhani tells ECO summit

1 -> "To overcome such problems, we should stop seeking hegemony, and cooperate instead in building a stronger region. I firmly believe that we can weather this crisis unharmed, provided that we stop unnecessary and destructive rivalry and believe in our ability to resolve our own problems and mobilize our desires to return to our historical status, meaning the highway of civilization, culture and commerce."

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, having long joint borders with the six ECO Member States, deeply honours joint interests and bonds with its neighbours. Not only

do we see no obstacle in deepening our relations and cooperate with the ECO Member States, but also we are prepared to enter into a more extensive scope of cooperation with the other players.

"The successful experience of nuclear negotiations which were concluded within a win-win framework, has paved the way for taking a huge leap in regional cooperation with the ECO Member States with such a fruitful and hopeful approach. The end of the fabricated crisis over the peaceful nuclear activities of Iran and the accomplishment of such a significant international deal

which has been ratified by the Security Council of the United Nations are an impressive achievement not only for Iran and the ECO, but also for the world over."

President Rouhani concluded his statement with urging the participants to "focus our attention on our commonalities and turn differences to strengths with dialogue and cooperation."

"Let's believe that our power resides with our connectivity. Let's make our connectivity more sustainable."

(Source: president.ir)

Russia-backed Syrian army retakes ancient city of Palmyra

The Syrian army said it has recaptured the ancient city of Palmyra (Tadmor) from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group for the second time in a year with help from allied forces and Russian warplanes.

The ISIL terrorist group seized Palmyra in a surprise advance in December after having been driven out eight months before.

"With backing from the Syrian and Russian air forces, units of our armed forces recaptured the city of Palmyra, in cooperation with the allies," the military said in a statement.

The Syrian army advanced inside Palmyra on Thursday as ISIL withdrew completely, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said.

ISIL retreated to areas in the east, the Syrian Observatory reported. Government forces took control of swathes of Palmyra and conducted combing operations to clear land mines, it said.

During ISIL's first occupation, which ended in March last year, the armed group destroyed some of Palmyra's priceless archaeological heritage. It is believed to have razed other parts of the historical ruins after regaining control in December.

■ Syria reserves right to use force against Turkey: Envoy

Meantime, Syria's ambassador to the United Nations says Damascus reserves the right to use force against Turkey's military invasion of the country.

Bashar al-Ja'afari, who also serves as the head of the Syrian delegation to current peace talks, made the remarks after meeting with UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura in the Swiss city of



Geneva on Thursday.

In August 2016, Turkey launched a major military incursion into Syria with the express aim of pushing back ISIL terrorists from the joint border with Syria and stopping Kurdish advances, which Damascus denounced as a breach of its sovereignty.

Turkey recently said its armed forces and allied militants were almost in full control of the Syrian city of al-Bab and planned to advance further to the nearby city of Manbij.

Ja'afari further accused the Riyadh-based High Negotiations Committee (HNC), Syria's main opposition group, of taking peace talks "hostage" by refusing to include terrorism on the agenda of Geneva talks.

HNC's refusal to discuss the issue of terrorism in the peace talks "did not come as a surprise" as some of the group's members are terrorist armed outfits, the Syrian official noted.

The latest round of intra-Syrian negotiations began in Geneva on February 23

aimed at finding a solution to the foreign-sponsored crisis gripping the Middle Eastern country since 2011.

Commenting on Syria's fight against foreign-backed terrorists, Ja'afari said the battle would go on until the whole country was purged of militants.

"Counter-terrorism operations will continue until the last inch of territory from our country is retaken from these foreign terrorists who are wreaking havoc," he said.

(Source: agencies)

Turkey-backed Kurds clash with PKK branch in North Iraq

Turkey-backed Kurdish fighters engage in deadly clashes with militants affiliated with the anti-Ankara Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) in the northern Iraqi town of Sinjar.

The clashes broke out on Friday between the fighters of the Peshmerga Rojava paramilitary force and the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS/Yekineyên Berxwedana ?engalê?), a PKK offshoot set up in the northern Iraqi town, Reuters reported, citing Kurdish security sources.

Friday morning's clashes came after President of Iraq's Kurdistan Masoud Barzani's official visit to Turkey. YBS forces suggested that by deploying troops to the Sinjar area, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was trying to force out the group affiliated with the PKK to please Ankara.

There have been reports of deaths on both sides during the fighting, which involved heavy machinegun.

Peshmerga Rojava serves the Kurdish National Council, which is jointly funded by Turkey and Barzani. The PKK has been waging a deadly war to carve out an autonomous region in southeastern Turkey.

In a statement on Friday, the YBS said the fighting began when the Peshmerga Rojava tried to seize its positions, and accused Turkey of instigating the violence. "It is a totally provocative initia-

tive," the YBS said.

Also on Friday, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said the PKK posed "a threat against the legitimate regional government in Northern Iraq (the Barzani-led Kurdistan Regional Government)."

"It's our duty to destroy these terrorist organizations wherever they are," the minister told reporters in Ankara, he added.

Turkey has for long been waging bombing campaigns against PKK strongholds in northern Iraq. It has also deployed troops to Iraq in a move roundly spurned by Baghdad, which says the military presence complicates its counter-terrorism operations.

While siding with the Kurdish paramilitary against the PKK, Ankara stiffly opposes the Kurds based in neighboring Syria, accusing them of having links with the PKK.

Turkey has likewise placed itself in direct confrontation with the Syria-based Kurds, known as the People's Protection Units (YPG/Yekineyên Parastina Gel), by deploying its troops to the areas taken by the Kurdish forces from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh).

Damascus, too, has called on Turkey to pull out its forces, calling Ankara's intervention a violation of Syria's sovereignty. (Source: agencies)

Jeff Sessions recuses himself from Russia probe

The United States Attorney General Jeff Sessions has agreed to recuse himself from an investigation into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election.

His comments came a day after the Washington Post reported that Sessions, a former senator who advised U.S. President Donald Trump's campaign on foreign policy and other issues, met the Russian ambassador in July and September, just as accusations of Russian interference in the election were building.

At a news conference on Thursday, Sessions drew a distinction between his conversations with Sergey Kislyak in his role as a senator and his role in the Trump campaign.

He said the decision to recuse himself from a federal investigation came at the urging of senior career officials in the justice department.

"I feel I should not be involved in investigating a campaign I had a role in," Sessions said.

His critics say his two conversations with Kislyak contradict Sessions' statements during his confirmation hearing, when he told Congress he had not had communications with Russians during the campaign.

Calling for Sessions to resign, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi accused him of "lying under oath".

The White House stood behind Sessions, with Trump saying he had "total" confidence in his attorney general.

He said Sessions could have been more accurate in what he said about his contacts with Russian officials but blamed Democrats for blowing up the controversy for political reasons.

"Jeff Sessions is an honest man. He did not say anything wrong. He could have stated his response more accurately, but it was clearly not intentional," Trump said in a statement.

"The Democrats are overplaying their hand," Trump continued. "It is a total witch-hunt!"

The Justice Department has maintained that there was nothing improper about Sessions' contacts or his answers to Congress.

Trump has been trailed for months by questions about potential ties to Russia. He has vigorously denied being aware of any contacts his associates had with Russia during the campaign and has also insisted he has no financial ties to Russia.

His national security adviser Michael Flynn resigned last month following reports he misled Vice President Mike Pence and other officials about his contacts with Russia. (Source: agencies)

New DHS report finds most U.S.-based extremists radicalized years after entry

A new United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) report obtained by MSNBC's "The Rachel Maddow Show" on Thursday finds that most foreign-born U.S. violent extremists are radicalized "several years after" they enter the country.

"We assess that most foreign-born, U.S.-based violent extremists likely radicalized several years after their entry to the United States ... limiting the ability of screening and vetting officials to prevent their entry because of National Security concerns," read the document, which DHS verified to MSNBC.

The intelligence assessment is titled "Most foreign-born U.S.-based violent extremists radicalized after entering Homeland; opportunities for tailored CVE programs exist," and is dated March 1, 2017.

The report could have bearing on President Trump's stalled executive order on travel from several predominantly Muslim countries and refugees. The order, which was blocked by the courts and is expected to be replaced by another version, put a temporary halt on citizens of Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Libya, Yemen and Syria from entering the U.S., a pause on all refugees and an indefinite ban on Syrian refugees. Trump has said the orders are aimed at keeping potential terrorists out of the country.

According to MSNBC the report was prepared



by the Homeland Security Office of Intelligence and Analysis in coordination with Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the State Department, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

A report from Associated Press earlier this week said that a draft intelligence assessment from Homeland Security was shot down by the Trump administration.

That assessment found that citizenship is an "un-

likely indicator" of terrorism threats to the U.S. but was labeled as "incomplete" by the Homeland Security spokeswoman Gillian Christensen.

"While DHS was asked to draft a comprehensive report on this issue, the document you're referencing was commentary from a single intelligence source versus an official, robust document with thorough interagency sourcing," Christensen told AP. "The ... report does not include data from other intelligence community sources. It is incomplete."

That report was seen as a blow to the Trump administration, which is hoping to put his travel ban on more solid footing with proof of risk from citizens of the seven countries.

The Homeland Security report challenges Trump's core claims about terrorist threats. It said that of 82 people the government determined were inspired by a foreign terrorist group to carry out or try to carry out an attack in the United States, just over half were American citizens born in the United States.

The others were from 26 countries, led by Pakistan, Somalia, Bangladesh, Cuba, Ethiopia, Iraq and Uzbekistan. Of these nations, only Iraq and Somalia were among the seven Muslim-majority countries included in the travel ban. (Source: agencies)

Report: Pence used a private email account as governor

Vice President Mike Pence used a private email account to conduct public business as Indiana's governor, according to public records obtained by the Indianapolis Star.

The newspaper reported on Thursday that emails provided through a public records request show that Pence communicated with advisers through his personal AOL account on homeland security matters and security at his residence during his four years as governor.

The governor also faced email security issues. Pence's AOL account was subjected to a phishing scheme last spring, before he was chosen by the United States President Donald Trump to join the Republican presidential ticket. Pence's contacts were sent an email falsely claiming that the governor and his wife were stranded in the Philippines and needed money.

The governor moved to a different AOL account with additional security measures, Pence spokesman Marc Lotter said, but has since stopped using the new personal account since he was sworn-in as vice president.

Lotter said Pence "maintained a state email account and a personal email account" like previous governors in the state.

At the end of his term, Pence directed outside counsel to review all of his communications to ensure that state-related emails were transferred and properly archived by the state, the spokesman said.

■ Trump urges Russia to find Clinton's 'missing emails'

As Trump's running mate, Pence frequently criticized rival Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server as President Barack Obama's secretary of state, accusing her of purposely keeping her emails out of public reach and shielding her from scrutiny.

Lotter said "the comparison is absurd" because Clinton had set up a private server in her home at the start of her tenure at the State Department and, unlike Clinton, Pence did not handle any classified material as Indiana's governor.

Indianapolis Star reported that the office of Pence's successor, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb, released more than 30 pages from Pence's AOL account, but declined to release an unspecified number of emails because they were considered confidential.

Public officials are not barred from using personal email accounts under Indiana law, but the law is interpreted to mean that any official business conducted on private email must be retained to comply with public record laws.

The state requires all records pertaining to state business to be retained and available for public information requests. Emails involving state email accounts are captured on the state's servers, but any emails that Pence may have sent from his AOL account to another private account would need to be retained.

At the end of his term, Pence hired the Indianapolis law firm of Barnes & Thornburg to conduct a review of all of his communications and that review is still ongoing, Lotter said.

Any correspondence between Pence's AOL account and any aides using a state email account would have been automatically archived, he said.

(Source: agencies)

Trump: 'Total witch hunt' over attorney general

The United States President Donald Trump has lashed out at Democrats over their demands for U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions to resign, calling their actions a "total witch hunt".

Sessions on Thursday announced he would recuse himself from any probe into the presidential election campaign as the White House moved to forestall a snowballing controversy over its ties to Russia.

Following newly revealed meetings he held with Russia's ambassador before the election, Sessions denied any impropriety or that he lied about those encounters in his Senate confirmation hearing.

The Republican U.S. president declared his "total" confidence in Sessions - while adding he "wasn't aware" of contacts between Ambassador Sergey Kislyak and Sessions, who was a senator actively supporting Trump's campaign at the time.

■ Lavrov slams U.S. scandal on Russia contacts 'a witch hunt'

Meantime, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has described the scandal over contacts between Russia and members of Trump's administration as "a witch hunt".

Lavrov's Friday remarks come as a bipartisan group of U.S. senators agreed earlier this week to carry out an investigation into the Trump administration's alleged dealings with Moscow amid an outcry from members of Congress.

Former MI6 spy Christopher Steele who compiled the dossier on Trump's alleged links with Russia has been reportedly approached to testify before the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee.

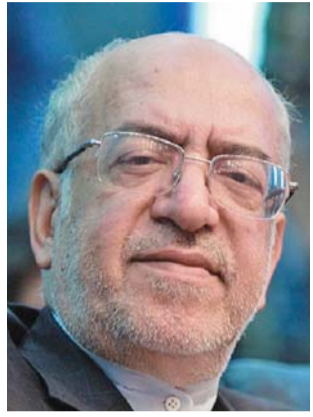
The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), at one stage, offered to pay Steele to expand his investigation of Trump and his associates. However, the former British spy continued his probe without getting paid because he was concerned about what he was discovering.

The White House has strongly rejected the report, which includes allegations that Russian intelligence services are in possession of compromising information on Trump and could potentially blackmail the new president.

Trump has blasted the dossier as "fake news" put together by a "failed spy." (Source: agencies)

Iranian minister eyeing industrial economy target

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran has the capacity to become a newly industrialized country (NIC) in the next calendar year, starting March 21, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh said on Wednesday.



"Currently, Iran's per capita income stands at \$5,900," he said, adding that the figure should rise to a minimum of \$10,000 as per capita income is \$10,000-\$20,000 in NICs.

To this end, "Iran needs to attract three billion dollars of foreign investments, improve its competitiveness index to 55, increase non-oil exports to \$103 billion, and boost exports of industrial and mining products to \$61 billion, while the ratio

of exports to imports should reach 98 percent," IRIB quoted Nematzadeh as saying.

According to the minister, Iran can experience an eight-percent economic growth thanks to its young and educated workforce, huge hydrocarbon reserves and rich mineral deposits, unparalleled geopolitical situation as well as access to high seas and emerging markets in the region.

NIC is a socioeconomic classification applied to several countries around the world by political scientists and economists. NICs are countries whose economies have not yet reached a developed country's status but have, in a macroeconomic sense, outpaced their developing counterparts.

Siemens to co-manufacture electrical equipment with Iran



ECONOMY TEHRAN — Germany's Siemens is in talks with Iran for cooperation in manufacturing power transformers in the country, Tasnim quoted an Iranian official as saying on Friday.

"A final contract will be signed within two months based on which a power transformer manufacturing plant will be constructed jointly by the two sides," Arsalan Fathipour, a member of the Electrical Industry Syndicate of Iran, announced.

According to Fathipour, the primary agreement was signed in Germany and Siemens agreed to cooperate on the manufacturing of the electrical equipment in Iran under the company's license.

Dubai chamber eyes opening offices in Iran: chairman

Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry is considering opening an office in Iran, Chairman Majid Saif Al Ghurair told Zawya in an interview on Tuesday.

Dubai Chamber, which was established in 1965 as a non-profit public organization to support and represent the emirate's business community, currently has seven international representative offices in Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Kurdistan, Ghana, Mozambique, Kenya and China.

"We hope of course to open markets soon, if we could in Iran," Al Ghurair said.

"Iran would depend on circumstances," he said, adding that there was no set timeframe.

The bulk of Iran's imports from the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC), which amounted to \$37 billion in 2015, were exports from the UAE that were imported via the ports of Dubai, according to local media reports. Iran accounted for around 16 percent of the UAE's re-export market in 2014.

(Source: zawya.com)

Demand for Iran's crude doubled: VesselsValue

Following the lifting of sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran in early 2016, seaborne demand for Iranian crude has more than doubled, according to a report released by VesselsValue.

In the past five years, the greatest demand for Iranian crude came from China, Japan and South Korea, respectively.

Excluding the Iranian domestic trade the most journeys of crude were made to China with 105 journeys recorded in 2016. Next was India at 85 journeys and this was followed by the UAE at 58 journeys.

Shipments last year were made using VLCC, Suezmax and some Aframax tonnage. China, India and UAE have always been stalwart importers of Iranian crude, VesselsValue informed.

New players in the mix following the removal of sanctions include France with 21 journeys in 2016, while Italy took 15 shipments, Greece fourteen and Spain thirteen shipments.

"It is no surprise that historically Iran's national tanker line NITC is the largest provider of tonnage. In 2015 companies operating on the trades out of Iran came from a very different demographic to after the sanctions," VesselsValue said.

(Source: worldmaritimeweek.com)

Iran's oil output exceeds 3.8m bpd in February

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's oil output increased to 3.83 million barrels per day (bpd) in February, according to a Bloomberg News survey of analysts, oil companies and ship-tracking data.

As part of the OPEC and non-OPEC deal, Iran was allowed to increase supply after years of sanctions that hurt its oil industry.

According to Bloomberg, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' production fell to 32.17 million barrels a day in February, a 65,000 barrel-a-day drop from January,

the first month of the accord.

A monitoring committee last week found the non-OPEC countries also achieved 66 percent of their pledged cuts for January.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said on Monday that the country's oil production will reach over 3.9 million bpd in February.

Iran's crude oil output was 3.9 million bpd in January, Zanganeh had previously announced.

According to a survey by Reuters published on January 31, Iran increased its oil output by 20,000 bpd in January



after the country was exempted from the OPEC cuts.

Also, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Managing Director Ali

Kardor said on February 4 that Iran plans to boost its output to 4 million bpd by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

Iran-France Economic Meeting held in Paris

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The first round of Iran-France Economic Meeting (Rencontres Economiques Franco-Iraniennes) was held in Paris with participation of Iranian Ambassador to France Ali Ahani, ISNA reported on Thursday.

The Thursday meeting was also attended by the Mayor of Issy-les-Moulineaux (the southwestern suburban area of Paris) Andre Santini, Mayor of the Boulogne-Billancourt Commune of Paris Pierre-Christophe Baguet, economic attaches of the Iranian embassy in Paris, economic experts from Paris district and some representatives from the French private sector.

The event was a part of Iran-France economic forum and meetings



between Iranian and French companies organized by Issy-les-Moulineaux Municipality, economic hub of west Paris and Iran-France Technical Cooperation Agency (ACTIF).

The second session of this meeting will be consequently held in France with participation of Iranian and French companies.

25 oilfield development proposals received post-sanctions: NIOC official

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran has received 25 Management Development Programs (MDP) for the development of its oilfields from foreign companies since the sanctions were lifted in January 2016, IRNA reported, quoting an oil official.

"Post-sanctions era has provided foreign companies a great opportunity for entering Iran's oil industry so that we have received this MDPs from the companies with which we signed oilfield study agreements," Gholamreza Manouchehri, the deputy managing director of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for development and engineering affairs, said.

The official has also noted that



NIOC has started the assessing process of the submitted proposals, Shana reported.

According to Manouchehri, it is expected that the first oil deal based on the new contract format known as IPC will be signed early in the upcoming Iranian calendar year (Which starts on March 21).

Armenia desires to contribute to EAEU-EU-Iran rapprochement: president

YEREVAN (Armen Press) — Armenia is ready to promote the mutually beneficial EU-EAEU relations to make them closer, President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan announced in a meeting with the experts of Carnegie Foundation's Brussels Office.

"It is true that Armenia's accession to the EAEU at the initial stage was received as a thorny issue by some of our western partners. I am glad that time made things fall into place and sorted them out. We are ready to promote the mutually beneficial EU-EAEU relations to make them closer. Armenia is interested in the Pan-European cooperation. We are fully aware that cooperation is the best way to solve the existing issues, while confrontation and a policy of creating new dividing lines has no future", Armen Press quoted Sargsyan as saying.

He added that Armenia has historically accumulated a rich experience with Iran, and our current close economic, political and cultural contacts make Armenia a good platform for those European companies that might wish to enter Iran.

In the words of the Armenian President, developing

an exemplary regional cooperation with Iran, Armenia has good prerequisites of becoming the safest and the shortest transit route connecting the seaports of the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea.

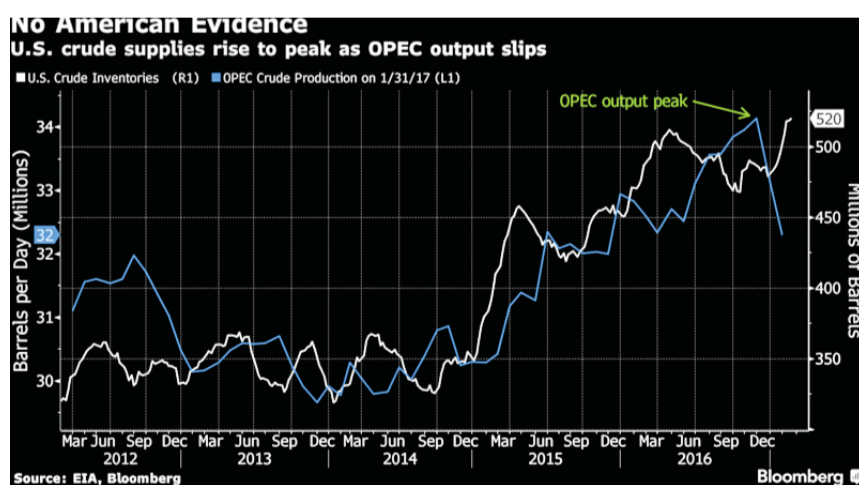
"That was the reason behind the inclusion of the North-South highway, which runs from the seaports of Georgia to Yerevan and further to the border checkpoint with Iran, among the main routes of the European Union", Sargsyan said.

Friendly relations between Armenia and Georgia are an important element of the security in the South Caucasus. With Georgia, we have always able to address every issue in the atmosphere of good-neighborly relations and mutual understanding. We have never conditioned our relations with the relations with third countries. Current cooperation between Armenia, as a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, and Georgia, as an EU associated partner, proves that there are new opportunities for the mutually beneficial cooperation", Sargsyan said, stressing that Armenia is ready to become a stable partner in the region which will encourage the process of ironing out differences existing



between the major actors, developing the avenues for the economic progress and forming efficient investment policy.

A fit U.S. shale industry challenges OPEC once again



"With \$55 a barrel, we see everyone very happy in the U.S.," said Didier Casimiro, a senior executive at Moscow-based Rosneft PJSC.

Long a world leader in multi-billion dollar oil developments that take years to build and even longer to profit, Exxon is diverting about one-third of its drilling budget this year to shale fields that will deliver cash flow in as little as three years, Chief Executive Officer Darren Woods said this week. In January, Exxon agreed to pay as much as \$6.6 billion in an acquisition designed to more than double the company's footprint in the Permian basin of west Texas and New Mexico, the most fertile U.S. shale field.

Add to the mix the election of President Donald Trump, carrying the promise of fewer regulations, added pipelines and energy independence, and you see why the mood at CERAWEEK, the conference that every year gathers oil executives, bankers and investors in Houston, will be far brighter next week than in 2016.

"North American oil companies are going to increase their spending by 25 percent in 2017 compared to last year," said Daniel Yergin, the oil historian-cum-consultant who hosts the CERAWEEK. "The increase reflects the magnetism of U.S. shale."

U.S. benchmark West Texas Intermediate traded at \$52.65 a barrel on Friday. Futures bounced between \$51.22 and \$54.94 in February.

So far this year, U.S. energy companies have raised \$10.5 billion in fresh equity, with shale and oil service groups drawing the most investment, the best

start of the year since at least 1999 and equal to a third of what the sector raised in the whole of 2015.

In Midland, the Texas city at the center of the Permian basin, the activity rush is palpable, as is the threat of higher costs for shale companies. The county's active-rig total ranks second in the U.S., behind only Reeves County further to the west.

"You could see the town's energy is back," said Alan Means, founder of Cambrian Management Ltd., a Midland-based firm that operates more than 200 oil wells in the Permian across Texas and New Mexico. "The rigs are up again, the fracking crews are busier and the highway traffic is increasing."

As activity rises, the man-camps in the town outskirts are flush again, with workers arriving from the Bakken in Montana and North Dakota, and from as far away as Canada. The 1,000-bed Permian Lodging camp is now 100 per-

cent full, up from 65 percent in July, according to camp owner Ralph McIngvale.

It's not just more activity. The growth is also the result of far more efficient ways to drill than existed only two years earlier. With oil companies benefiting from lower service costs, Shell reckons it can drill a well today for about \$5.5 million, down a whopping 56 percent from 2013. And the new wells, thanks to more powerful fracking techniques, are yielding more barrels than ever.

The average Permian well now gushes 668 barrels per day, compared to just 98 barrels four years ago, according to government data.

Shale companies such as EOG Resources Inc. and RSP Permian Inc. are telling investors they will expand oil output by as much as 30 percent in the next two or three years, more than they did in the heydays of the shale boom between 2010 and 2014.

"The bottom line is we think they can produce as much oil out of the Permian as they want to," Greg Armstrong, the boss of Plains All American Pipeline LP, told investors in February. "It's a matter of rigs, just a manufacturing operation."

And the revival isn't confined to the Permian, which stretches from Texas into New Mexico. Drilling is also increasing in other shale basins, such as the Scoop and Stack in Oklahoma, and in the Gulf of Mexico's deep-water oilfields.

At the same time, some of the industry's most influential voices say they are keeping a tight hold on production budgets, vowing not to repeat the mistakes of the first phase of the shale revolution from 2010 to 2015, when companies spent well above the cash they generated.

Marathon Oil Corp., for example, told investors last month it expects to boost output by about 20 percent a year from 2017 to 2021 even if oil prices stay at around \$55. "We plan to achieve these impressive growth rates within cash flow, inclusive of the dividend," Marathon CEO Lee Tillman said in February.

For a U.S. industry that once seemed ever-dependent on \$100 oil, the return to profit with lower prices was a big surprise. And producers returned to profit using the very playbook offered by one-time market rival Naimi, who was replaced as Saudi Arabia's energy minister in May.

"Today, almost every single shale basin is economic in the \$35-\$50 a barrel price range," said Regina Mayor, head of energy at KPMG LLP in Houston.

(Source: Bloomberg)

IWC PORTUGIESE. THE LEGEND AMONG ICONS.



Portugieser Perpetual Calendar.
Ref. 5034: The moon has always exercised an inexplicable power of attraction over human beings. In the case of the Portugieser Perpetual Calendar, this is more than understandable. Its fascination lies in the moon phase display, which shows the two faces of the moon in the northern and southern hemispheres simultaneously. Combined with the watch's timelessly elegant design, its

powers of attraction are almost self-explanatory. After all, legends are simply irresistible. **IWC. ENGINEERED FOR MEN.**

Mechanical movement, Pellaton automatic winding, IWC-manufactured 52615 calibre, 7-day power reserve, Power reserve display, Perpetual calendar with displays for the date, day, month, year in four digits and perpetual moon phase for the northern and southern hemispheres, Sapphire glass, See-through sapphire-glass back, Water-resistant 3 bar, Diameter 44.2 mm, Alligator leather strap by Santoni

SARMAN Co.

OMEGA BUILDING, 1832 DR. SHARIATI STREET, NEXT TO POL-E-ROOMI, TEHRAN, IRAN
+98 21 2261 3752

IWC
SCHAFFHAUSEN

By Cengiz Çandar

Will Erdogan postpone upcoming referendum?

The image of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Chief of Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar sitting next to him is more expressive than anything else of the tremors involving the government and the military in Turkey. Dressed not in military fatigues but in an elegantly tailored civilian suit, Akar is a subservient-looking general — which has to be the case in any democratic regime, indeed — with a troubled look and a nervous expression on his face, reflecting the increasing unease in the higher echelons of power.

While the fateful date of April 16 — the day the constitutional amendments that could give Erdogan extraordinary executive powers and transform him into the “sultan president,” as many observers and his critics allege — approaches, the possibility of rejection by popular vote surprisingly increases.

This by itself is a real matter of concern for Erdogan. He has proved to be a master of winning elections over two decades, and nobody could imagine that he would gamble the biggest prize of his long and successful political career. Every precautionary measure to secure a “yes” vote on April 16 has been taken.

Turkey is moving to the polls under unprecedented waves of crackdown that saw more than 110,000 people purged, sacked or detained, with around 44,000 put behind bars, including co-chairs of the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), and many prominent journalists and opinion makers in the country. Any semblance of dissent against Erdogan is under threat of being severely punished. He characterizes anybody who announces or may think of casting a “no” vote as a villain, traitor and terrorist. A state of emergency is in force and will remain in place on election day.

Despite all the prerequisites for “yes” that are in place, the air in Turkey indicates that “no” has a real chance to prevail. The reason is presumably because the “yes” camp seems to have formidable cracks.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) under Erdogan’s leadership formed an ad-hoc coalition in parliament with the far right Nationalist Action Party (MHP) of Devlet Bahçeli and managed to pass the constitutional amendments to be put to popular vote. But the MHP’s grassroots do not see eye to eye with their chairman.

■ Erdogan and the “yes” camp

The MHP opposition led by Meral Aksener — a former interior minister and a very popular figure among MHP voters — to both Bahçeli and Erdogan’s monopoly of political power has been rapidly growing. Aksener and other loosely allied leading figures in the party are carrying out an effective campaign against Erdogan and the “yes” camp. The cracks within ultranationalist circles reflect to a certain extent the cracks seen within Erdogan’s own camp in his AKP power base.

There are widely circulated rumors that if Erdogan feels that a “yes” vote won’t be secured April 16, he might invent a reason to call off the vote. And what could be that reason? Nobody is certain. But with a reputation of making quick decisions and an ability to move swiftly, Erdogan could take steps that could postpone the date of the vote. Situations in Syria or Iraq may present some pretexts for dramatic military adventures Erdogan and his loyalists in the high echelons of the Turkish state might initiate.

For that, Erdogan needs a docile and loyal army chief: Akar. However, Akar has become a magnet for attracting mounting criticism from within and outside of the military. The lifting of the headscarf ban for female personnel of the armed forces two weeks ago seemed to serve as the last straw for many in the military



President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Chief of Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar

ranks already heavily burdened since the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016. The headscarf move drew harsh criticism from staunchly secularist military circles who have been allied with Erdogan against the Gulenists for some time.

The disquiet that had been already gathered around Akar was laid out under the headline “Military Headquarters Unease” in the daily Hurriyet, the one-time flagship of the Turkish media. The report listed seven matters of concern of the top military

brass. The decision to lift the headscarf ban was at the top.

Hurriyet emphasized the anger of military officials about criticism directed at them from opposition circles. At the same time, the Hurriyet headline triggered the worries of Erdogan

loyalists as if it reflected unrest within the military and signaled an ongoing danger of a new coup attempt.

Speaking at a press conference before his departure to Pakistan, Erdogan accused Hurriyet of being “very ugly, shameless, rude,” and he added that the story not only bothered him but also deeply bothered the Turkish Armed Forces. With his grim, unhappy face, a worn-out Akar was living proof of what the president meant.

After his statement, the shares of Dogan Holding, the conglomerate Hurriyet belongs to, dropped drastically on the Istanbul Stock Exchange. The daily issued a statement of apology and its editor-in-chief was fired. It bowed immediately to a nervous Erdogan.

Notwithstanding a mainstream media that is acquiescent to the president and a chief of staff who has seemingly affixed his fate to that of Erdogan, the uneasiness within the military is hard to conceal. It is so traumatized, particularly in the wake of last year’s failed coup, that its uneasiness does not suggest the potential for a new coup attempt. That, however, does not prevent Erdogan and the people around him from getting nervous as they feel as if they are challenged everywhere — from the traditional nationalist power base to the military, which does not seem totally subdued.

Erdogan is the incontestable strongman of Turkey. But he gives an image of an uneasy strongman — an oxymoron. His uneasiness is fed on one hand by a potentially noncompliant military and on the other by a populace that may reject his bid.

Thus, if the vote on April 16 is postponed or never takes place, that would not be a surprising outcome. On the contrary, it would reflect how acute the power struggle is behind the curtains in Turkey. Turkey vacillates even more as Erdogan strives to be even stronger. It has become chronic for Turkey to be on the verge of further instability.

(Source: Al Monitor)

While the fateful date of April 16 — the day the constitutional amendments that could give Erdogan extraordinary executive powers and transform him into the “sultan president,” as many observers and his critics allege — approaches, the possibility of rejection by popular vote surprisingly increases.

TAJ MAHAL HOTEL

Proudly introduces the First class luxurious hotel apartment located in the heart of the city Tehran. The newly constructed section has an enormous segments of rooms with all the amenities, Experience the TAJ MAHAL advantage & Hospitality 24/7

TAJ MAHAL INDIAN RESTAURANT



Enjoy the original taste of India !! The professional chef prepares the amazing varieties of kebabs, Tandoori nans, Biryani, veg or non-veg curries and the famous Indian desserts.

TAJ MAHAL HOTEL



Enjoy the authentic North Iranian unique culinary, Experience the home made country style recipes!!



TAJ MAHAL ANNOUNCES ITS SECOND RESTAURANT MAHI – MAHI

Address: No.29 South Sheikhabahaei Ave. Mollasadra Ave., Vanak Sq. Tehran – Iran

Http: //www.tajmahalhotel.ir

E-mail: info@tajmahalhotel.ir

Tel: (+9821) 88035444(20) Fax: (+9821) 88057399 Cellphone: (+98910) 789 52 83

By Mina Ahmadi

Muslim unity key to Palestine issue solution

The annual event, dubbed the 6th International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada (Uprising) held in solidarity with the people of Palestine wrapped up in the Iranian capital, Tehran, on Feb 22.

Hundreds of foreign guests, including senior Palestinian leaders and officials of Muslim nations, took part in the two-day event.

The Palestine Intifada conference conveyed an important message to the world; the manifestation of which was echoed in the remarks made by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Ayatollah Khamenei once again threw his weight behind the resistance axis. His support for the Palestinian cause as well as the backing of participating countries conveyed the message to Israel's allies that they need to come to sense and take wise decisions. This is because unity in the Islamic world will not allow Israel and its allies to press ahead with their anti-Palestine plans and they would be an ultimate loser if they adopt unwise measures.

It should also be taken into consideration that amending cooperation between Islamic countries over the Palestinian issue plays a leading role at the present time.

Currently some Arab nations have changed their stances in recent years and showed a tendency to normalize ties with the Zionist regime.

Source of unity

Addressing the gathering, Supreme Leader said the sorrowful story of Palestine and the excruciating sadness felt because of the oppression against this patient, enduring and resistant nation, truly distresses any individual who seeks freedom, truth and justice and it thrusts an agonizing pain and suffering upon one's heart.

Supreme Leader said the history of Palestine is full of ups and downs, marked by the cruel occupation of that region, the rendering of millions of individuals homeless, and the courageous resistance of those heroic people. An intelligent quest in history shows that no people in any era of history have ever



been subject to such pain, suffering and cruelty.

"It has never been witnessed that a country is completely occupied in a supra-regional plot, that a people are driven away from their home and their country and that another group of people from remote areas in the world are brought there in order to replace that nation. It has never been witnessed that a real entity is ignored and that a fake entity takes its place," he added.

Supreme Leader underscored that all Muslim countries have a responsibility to support Palestinian resistance, which should be a source of unity in the Islamic world.

"Despite the differences that exist among Islamic countries -- some of these differences are natural, some originate from the enemy's plot and the rest are because of negligence -- the issue of Palestine can and should be the pivot of unity for all Islamic countries," he said.

The creation of Israel "is another dirty page in history which will be closed with the permission and assistance of Allah the Exalted, just like other dirty pages in history," Ayatollah Khamenei said in his

speech.

Painful scar

In an address to the concluding session of the conference, President Hassan Rouhani said that Palestine issue has annoyed the world community's conscience for more than 70 years.

The president said that once again the Palestine issue "brought us together" to speak of a deep and painful scar



that has annoyed the global community conscience and the Muslim world body.

He noted that Palestine is not the issue of an ethnic group or nation, rather it is the injustice and denial of international rights and inefficiency of international organizations.

"On the other hand, the symbol of struggling and constant efforts of a nation to meet their rights on the sidelines of mishap of global community and shamefulness of certain Muslim countries," President Rouhani said.

He went on to say that since 1948, generations have lived in the region with bewilderment and war; the generations who are homeless in every corner of the world and the legacy they have left is nothing but suffering, homelessness, torture and martyrdom.

Rouhani said leaders of the western domineering states have since the past seven decades been trying to decide fate of the Middle East, which is full of blessing, wealth, diversified culture and divine religions, to attain their domineering and colonial objectives.

"They did so through changing the religious and cultural structures and



by violence, occupation and crimes in the noble Quds and dear Palestine," he added.

Key to salvation

At the closing ceremony of conference, Majlis (Parliament) Speaker Ali Larijani said unity of the Muslim Ummah (Nation) is the key to salvation of the Palestinian people.

"The Zionist regime should not find the chance to enjoy an artificial respiration," Larijani said while referring to the existing regional tensions as a chance for the Zionist Israel to lead the regional states towards forgetting about the issue of Palestine.

"We have to be united as the Islamic unity is the key to salvation of the Palestinian nation," said the speaker noting that the security chaos in the region has only benefited the Zionist regime.

Making hypothetical enmity, dispersing the minds from fighting against the Zionist regime as well as creation of infelicitous links between the Zionist regime and certain regional states have worried those who are concerned about Muslims destiny, the speaker stressed.

Larijani said that the US and Zionist Israel should know that the Palestinian issue is the major issue of the entire Islamic World and despite security problems in the region, the issue of Palestine will not get forgotten.

The official urged Palestinian groups to give up differences. He said all Palestinians believe in resistance.

Despite pressures exerted by the US and Zionist regime to disappear Palestine, the path of resistance is becoming more brilliant than ever, Larijani stressed.

He said that four committees were established during the Palestinian Intifada conference in Tehran for "Resistance, Youth, Parliamentary issues and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)" to help set aside previous disagreements and continue the path of resistance.

Without doubt, conferences like the 6th International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada (Uprising) should be held on a regular basis because they psychologically help cement the resistance front and recall its principles.

Trump's 'New Adventurism' in ME: Iran's Ballistic Missile Program Not against International Law

By Dr. Amir A. Amirshakari

President Trump has embarked upon a "new adventurism" in the Middle East region. Israel and several Arab countries, backed by the US, are trying to create a new intergovernmental military alliance, such as NATO, against Iran.

The Economist weekly, in its issue dated 25 February, casually expresses its support of Trump's illegal sanctions directed against the people of Iran, accusing Iran of recreating the Sassanian Empire by its intervention in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, and Lebanon.

This accusation is reminiscent of Henry Kissinger's statements in 2015: in his interview with John Hamre at the Centre for Strategic & International Studies, he accused Iran of reviving Shia Safavid Empire in the region. On the other hand, Ayelet Shaked, the minister of justice of Israel, interfering in Iran's internal affairs, called for an independent Kurdistan.

What is the future of Middle East?

On 3 February 2017, President Donald Trump accused Iran of "playing with fire" in relation to Iran's ballistic missile test.

Shortly thereafter, Iran's foreign minister tweeted that Iran had been "unmoved" by the threats of the U.S. and had the right to defend itself.

US-NATO contend that Iran's missile program is in violation of its international commitments and in contravention of UN Security Council resolution 2231 (hereafter referred to as UNSC resolution 2231).

There is no basis to these allegations.

None of the articles of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), concluded between Iran and P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US; plus Germany) on 14 July 2015, prescribes a limitation on Iran's ballistic missile program.

According to Annex B paragraph 3 of UNSC resolution 2231:

"Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons including launches using such ballistic missile technology, until the date eight years after the JCPOA Adoption Day or until the date on which the IAEA submits a report



confirming the Broader Conclusion, whichever is earlier."

Also, according to paragraphs 7(a) and 8 of the resolution, all the provisions of resolutions 1696 (2006), 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), 1929 (2010) and 2224 (2015), which had previously been laid down by the UN Security Council against Iran shall be terminated.

Therefore, although in the aforementioned resolutions, specifically resolution 1929, Iran had been prohibited from accomplishing every ballistic missile program, in UNSC resolution 2231 Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

Thus, the tone of UNSC resolution 2231 has changed in comparison to that of previous resolutions issued against Iran. According to Annex B paragraph 4 of the resolution, if the Security Council decides, all states may participate in the supply, sale or transfer all items and technology set out in S/2015/546 which also includes ballistic missile technology.

Therefore, it can be inferred from UNSC resolution 2231 that the legitimate national defence military activities of Iran have not been prohibited. Iran has never sought and will not seek the development of nuclear weapons. Respecting all its international commitments, including NPT and JCPOA, Iran has proved recurrently its bona fide intent which is one of the constituent elements of international law of treaties according to article 26 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties Concluded at Vienna on 23 May 1969.

Also, according to the reports of

IAEA, Iran has respected all its international commitments with regard to its nuclear activities, including the reduction of its nuclear fuel as well as its centrifuges. It follows that the ballistic missile program of Iran is neither for launching non-conventional weapons nor can be planned for that purpose. In addition, just testing ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons is forbidden; hence, testing other ballistic missiles by Iran does not contravene UNSC resolution 2231, and is not a problem which can be considered under chapter VII of the UN Charter. It cannot be considered as threat to the peace and/or breach of the peace to be faced with international sanctions or military intervention. Therefore, not only the US, but also the Security Council and P5+1 cannot impose sanctions on Iran under any circumstances.

According to a report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 2015, Iran's

military expenditure, which was ranked 22 Worldwide (all countries) in 2015, was \$10.3 billion (%2.5 of its GDP), decreased by 30 per cent between 2006 and 2015.

It should be noted that there are many countries in the Middle East region whose military expenditures are higher than Iran. According to the same statistics (2015), Saudi Arabia, which allocates 13.7% of its GDP to the military expenditure of, overtook Russia to become the third-largest military spender Worldwide: \$87.2 billion which was more than 8 times of Iran. United Arab Emirates, the second highest military expenditure rank in the Middle East, was ranked 14 Worldwide with spending of \$22.8 billion.

Israel, whose global rank is 15, is ranked 3 in the region with spending of \$16.1 billion; and Iran is ranked 4 in the Middle East after Iraq whose military expenditure was \$13.1 billion, with a global rank of 19. The U.S. occupied the first rank with \$596 billion which is more than 57 times Iran's military expenditure.

These US-NATO "partners" including Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE constitute a formidable force with a combined military budget of the order of \$120 billion.

Both the U.S. and Israel, which maintain that they have the right to conduct pre-emptive or preventive attacks on Iran, have both nuclear-armed missiles and nuclear-armed aircraft. Israel is not a member of NPT. The US, although is a member of NPT, disregards its commitments on nuclear disarmament according to article VI of NPT.

Saudi Arabia, the traditional adver-

sary of Iran in the region, has become a member of NPT despite the fact that it does not (officially) possess nuclear technology. Saudi Arabia has ballistic missiles with a range significantly greater than Iran. If some day Saudi Arabia were to develop nuclear warheads, its ballistic missiles would be capable of delivering them.

Therefore, Iran's ballistic missile program is neither in violation of its international commitments, nor does it threaten international peace and security.

While Iran has accepted voluntarily to limit its nuclear programs, every attempt to constrain its ballistic missile program has been set in motion. This is not a "reasonable behaviour" on behalf of the U.S. and its allies. Although the aspiration of humankind is a world free of weapons, until that day, every double-standard, based on discrimination, on behalf of international community is against justice and fairness.

Amir Abbas Amirshakari has a PhD in International Law from University of Tehran



Aria Banader Iranian Chabahar Port and Marine Services Company



International Public Retender

Tender No. AE/1001/95



Aria Banader Iranian Chabahar Marine & Port Services Company

Tender subject: Manufacturing, Shipment, Training and delivery of three Marine Search and Rescue (SAR) Helicopter units for Shahid Beheshti port of Chabahar.

It is hereby to announce that Aria Banader Iranian Chabahar Port and Marine Services Co. as the equipment supplier of Shahid Beheshti Port(Chabahar) Development Plan First Phase proceeds to retender the international public tender of Manufacturing, Shipment, Training and delivery of the above Helicopters in a two-stage way after quality assessment.

All domestic and foreign manufacturer companies with the experience in the field of manufacturing the similar Helicopters are invited to receive the relevant CD containing the quality assessment forms and Tender Documents, presenting a written introduction letter (National ID is mandatory), Valid ID card and the original bank receipt of **2,000,000 Rials** deposited to account No. 0203568843007 of Aria Banader Iranian Chabahar Port and Marine Services Company, by Bank Day **maximum till Monday March 13, 2017 at 16:00** refer to the following address.

The deadline for submitting the documents and completed quality assessment forms will be up to **Saturday April 15, 2017 at 16:00**.

Purchasing and delivery of tender documents address:

No. 40, Kish St., Jahankoodak Crossroads, Nelson Mandela Blvd., Tehran, IRAN, Postal Code : 1518814111, Phone: +982188190677-9, FAX: +982188190679 or Email: m.niapak@abiports.com.

- **Tender deposit:** unconditional and multiple extendable bank guarantee to the amount of **25,500,000,000 Rials** and its equivalent sum of **600,000 Euro**. (the aforesaid guarantee will be received after participants qualification in tender in quality assessment stage at the same time with price and technical proposal offer)

- To keep the date of documents delivery, any question is allowed only 72 hours before deadline of documents delivery.

- All manufacturers obliged to consider the Law Of Max Local Capabilities.

- The cost of advertising is undertaken by the winner.

- After quality assessment, to provide technical and commercial documents the competent companies will be invited.

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

Apartment

New Apt in Farmanieh
100 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., wonderful, fabulous furn, Pkg, lobby
new brand, **Suitable for Diplomats, \$ 2500**

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Amazing Apt in Zafaraniyeh
400 sq.m, 4Bdrs., 8th floor, big balcony, nice lobby, luxury furn,
\$10.0000 Negotiable

Ms.Sara 09128103207

Amazing Apt in Fereshteh
185 sq.m, 9th floor, furn, bright living room, balcony, pool & gym,
car wash, 2 Pkg Shooting, **\$ 4500**

Mr.Nader 09128440157

Apt in Nice Tower in Shahrak-Gharb
110 sq.m, 1 Bdr., top floors, luxury furn, excellent view, lobby, Pkg,
good access **\$ 2000**

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Aqdasiyeh
120 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., nice view Pkg, good access
Suitable for Residency of Ambassadors

Ms.Sara 09128103207

Villa

Duplex Villa in Niavaran
450 sq.m Built up in 650 sq.m Land, One Extra Apt, Jacuzzi, Pkg, indoor pool, Spj, **Suitable for Residency of Ambassadors \$ 7000**

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Amazing Villa in Darous
Triplex, 410 Sq.m, built up in 1250 Sq.m land, 4 Bdrs., green garden, 3 pkg lot, **\$7000**

Mr.Nader: 09128440157

Super Luxury Villa in Farmanieh
800 Built up in 1200 Land, Duplex, completely renovated, 7 Bdrs., 2 level, green garden, outdoor pool, high security, equipment kitchen, **Suitable for Residency of Ambassadors**

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Amazing Villa in Kamranieh duplex, 750 sq.m, 8 Bdrs., renovated, full furn, ceramic floor, driver room, balcony, 4Pkg, \$15.000, **Suitable for foreign Embassies**

Mr.Nader: 09128440157



Holder of
ISO 9001:2008
ISO 10004:2012
ISO 10002:2014
From Oxford Cert Universal

Ask Us Your Required Short Term / Long Term Furnished & Unfurnished Apartments.

آپارتمان های کوتاه مدت و بلند مدت مبلیه و غیر مبلیه مورد نیاز خود را از ما بخواهید.

Building

whole building in Zafar-Jordan
4 floors, 30 rooms, security, furnished, meeting room
Lobby, Pkg, **Suitable for Residency for Big Companies**
Negotiable Price

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

whole building in Jordan
9-Storey, each unit 127 Sq.m, fully furn, 30 Bdrs., 15 Pkg lot, renovated, stone floor, **Suitable for foreign Companies, \$35000**

Mr.Nader: 09128440157

Whole building in Jordan
each floor 126 sq.m, duplex store, open space, full glass, smart AC, furn/unfurn, storage, 900 sq.m Pkg
each floor available for Sale & Rent

Ms.Sara 09128103207

Whole Building in Farmanieh
60 Apts., Size of each apt between 190-230 sq.m, 3 room, Lobby, conference room, Spj, 37 Pkg, **Suitable for Residency of Ambassadors, Reasonable Price**

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Ideal Offers

Affordable Apt. in Elahieh
250 Sq.m, 3 Bdrs, balcony, backyard, fully furn, ceramic floor, only **\$2500**

Mr.Nader: 09128440157

Luxury Apt. in Jordan
150 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., 3rd floor, Full furn, nice & cozy, Pkg **\$ 1800**

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Elahieh
180 sq.m, 3 Bdrs flat, full furn, Spj & Pkg, good access, only **\$3000**

Ms.Sara 09128103207

Apt in Jordan
120 Sq.m, 2 Bdrs., renovated Pkg, full furn, wood floor, pool only **\$ 1200**

Mr.Nader: 09128440157

Luxury Apt in Zafaraniyeh
250 sq.m, 4 Bdrs., luxury furn, Nice & cozy, Pkg
Suitable for Diplomat, \$ 3300

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Modern Apt. in Jordan
5th floor, 2 Bdrs., 120 Sq.m, fully furn, lobby, **\$1800**

Mr.Nader: 09128440157

Nice Attention To Embassies, International & Local Companies & Shopping Centers

The professional section of administrative license offices, Commercial Properties and Shopping Centers. From 100 Sq.m to 20,000 Sq.m (For Sale & Rent)

قابل توجه سفارتخانه ها، کمپانی های خارجی، داخلی و مراکز خرید
اجاره و فروش تخصصی ملک های سند اداری و تجاری، از ۱۰۰ مترمربع تا ۲۰۰۰۰ مترمربع

For Sale

فرشته
۲۸۵ متر، ۴ خوابه، تکواحدی
کف سنگ، فول فرنیس، لوکیشن عالی
فول امکانات، متربال درجه ۱
نادرنیا: ۰۹۱۲۸۴۴۰۱۵۲

زعفرانیه
۳۲۰ متر، ۴ خوابه، تکواحدی
۲ مستر روم، نقشه و دید عالی
۳ سال ساخت
فربد: ۰۹۱۲۸۴۴۰۱۵۲

محمودیه
۵۵۰ متر، ۱۰۰۰ متر لابی
خوش نقشه، ط ۱۱
دید شمالی و جنوبی
نادرنیا: ۰۹۱۲۸۴۴۰۱۵۲

زعفرانیه
۴۳۰ متر، ۴ خوابه، تکواحدی
لابی، استخر، ۳ پارکینگ،
دسترسی عالی
فربد: ۰۹۱۲۸۴۴۰۱۵۲

باغ فردوس
۱۴۵ متر، ۳ خوابه
لابی شیک، دید و نقشه عالی
۲ پارکینگ، ۳ سال ساخت
فربد: ۰۹۱۲۸۴۴۰۱۵۲

Office

Luxury Office in Vanak
Duplex, 1200 sq.m built up, lobby, Pkg,
Suitable for Foreign Companies

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Modern Office in Argentine
2nd floor, 3rd floor each floor 500 Sq.m
with 3 offices, open office, nice balcony,
lobby, 5 Pkg, Open Space, **Suitable for International Companies & Airlines,**

Negotiable price

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Office in Mirdamad
5th floor, 110 Sq.m, 4 Bdrs, fully furn, 12
tel lines, \$2800

Mr.Nader: 09128440157

Office in Jordan
110 Sq.m, 3 rooms, completely renovated, guest Pkg, nice lobby, clean, high security, reasonable price, **Suitable for Foreign Companies**

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Office in Mirdamad
5th floor, 110 Sq.m, 4 Bdrs, fully furn
tel lines, \$2800 12

Mr.Nader: 09128440157

Amazing Office in Valiasr
.sq.m, excellent view, good access 150
security, Pkg, lobby 24

Reasonable Price

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Administrative license Office
In Jordan

Sq.m, high security, Good Access 85
furnished, 10 Tel Lines, **\$1700**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Administrative license building
in Vozara/Argentine
.Sq.m, open office, nice balcony 500
lobby, Pkg lot, high security, **Full of**

Foreign Companies

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Shopping center leasing & management

Project Development
Leasing and Releasing
Management and consultancy

راه اندازی مراکز خرید
اجاره و فروش
مدیریت و بهره برداری مراکز خرید

فروش و اجاره تعداد محدودی از
بهترین مراکز خرید کشور

Manager

09122841274 - Mr.Tayyar

parsdiplomatic@gmail.com
info@parsdiplomatic.com

Section Manager "Tina 09128103205"
Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

Best Consultation, Best Services, Best Result

Hot Line: 28141

مالکین محترم

ملک های فروش و اجاره ای خود را (آپارتمان، ویلا، مستغلات، اداری و تجاری) به ما بسپارید.

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

مالکین محترم املاک مبلیه و غیر مبلیه، مسکونی، اداری و تجاری، ویلا و مستغلات شما را جهت اجاره به سفارتخانه ها و شرکت های خارجی نیازمندیم.

مالکین محترم

ویلاهای شما را جهت اجاره به منزل سفیر و مدیران شرکت های بین المللی در مناطق شمالی تهران نیازمندیم.

Snored to death: The symptoms and dangers of untreated sleep apnea

By Paul G. Mathew

Sleep is a critically important component of human existence. On average, humans spend about 25%-35% of their lives sleeping. Sleep allows both the body and brain to rest and recover from the stress of daily life. As such, trouble sleeping can cause a range of health problems, and if left untreated dire consequences.

Longing for more sleep

There is a common misconception that there is an exact amount of sleep that the body requires. The necessary hours of sleep can vary, as some people can require as little as five hours or as much as nine hours to function optimally. In addition, too little or too much sleep can cause problems. The classic example is someone who sleeps in on the weekends. Although one may think getting more sleep than usual would leave a person feeling well rested, sleeping an extra 2-3 hours can actually cause the person to feel groggy and less rested. For my migraine patients, both under and over sleeping can serve as triggers for more migraines. Naps can also be detrimental to sleep hygiene, as they often lead to poor sleep that evening.

Quality, not just quantity

Even if sleep duration is good, sleep quality can be quite poor. Sleep interruptions can fragment sleep. When a person goes back to sleep after an interruption, it can take one hour to reach the restful part of the sleep cycle. Another interruption before reaching deep sleep will cause yet another delay in the cycle. People who wake up many times during the night can have some nights with zero hours of deep, restful sleep. Poor sleep quantity and/or quality can cause excessive daytime drowsiness (falling asleep while reading, or even driving), chronic fatigue, headaches, mood issues, irritability, poor memory, and cognitive dysfunction.

Urine trouble

When discussing sleep interruptions, many patients will claim that they have to get up to use the bathroom, which is common, particularly for elderly patients. In reality, the bladder is rarely waking up a majority of these patients, and they instead are



experiencing something else. After they wake up, they realize, "Oh, there is some urine in my bladder...that must be the reason I woke up." When there is disbelief, I suggest that the patient reduce fluid intake, and yet they still wake up with the same number of interruptions.

Raining cats and dogs

I fondly recall one patient who came to see me due to worsening headaches. She told me about how miserable she was from not only her daily headaches, but also from her constant fatigue and worsening memory. While we were talking, I could not help but notice the fur all over her black fleece and black pants. After making this observation, I asked, "Do you have a dog?" and she said, "Yes, I have two dogs and three cats." I then asked, "Where do your pets sleep?" She replied, "On my bed with me and my husband." Given the potential for sleep interruptions, I recommended that she stop sharing the bed with her

pets, and keep them two closed doors away from the bedroom. Keeping them just outside the bedroom door would surely lead to clawing on the door and other noises that would interrupt her sleep. After following just this simple advice, she experienced a significant improvement of her headaches, fatigue, and memory. I, on the other hand, experienced a significant improvement of the amount of animal fur on the furniture and floor of my office.

Snore in trouble

Sleep apnea is literally when a person stops breathing during sleep. As a result, the brain undergoes repeated moments of suffocating. In popular culture, snoring is viewed as funny, and people often laugh when a snoring person lets out a sudden explosive snort. The reality is this loud snort is often the person gasping for air as the brain is not getting enough oxygen. Sleep apnea interrupts sleep for both the person and their partner. In the

case of a female patient whose husband refuses to get evaluated despite showing signs of sleep apnea, I often urge the patient to bring their husband with them to their next appointment with me. Whether it's the patient or the spouse, I often hear the line "I have always slept this way." When that happens, I explain that recovering after an all nighter without sleep in our 20s tends to be much easier than trying to pull an all nighter in our 50s. That being said, younger brains tend to be more resilient to toxic situations, like alcohol consumption and sleep dysfunction, than the same brains later in life.

If improvement of headaches, mood, energy, wakefulness, memory, and cognition are not motivation enough, I also advise that untreated sleep apnea leads to an increased risk of stroke, heart attack, and dementia (brain damage). That usually gets people's attention, and reduces the need for me to perform unnecessary surgeries like a husbandectomy to allow the wife with insomnia to get a good night's sleep, and subsequently less headaches.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

The necessary hours of sleep can vary, as some people can require as little as five hours or as much as nine hours to function optimally.

Woman charged with practicing health care without a license

Woman charged with practicing health care without a license. The St. Johns County Sheriff's Office announced Monday that a 48-year-old Duval County woman was arrested on two counts of practicing as a health care professional without an active, valid Florida license.

Amy Suzanne Pohlman, 48, 4515 Ortega Farms Circle, was booked into the county jail Monday on \$50,000 bond.

A Sheriff's Office release said Pohlman claimed to be a registered nurse, to have a PhD and that she was an advanced registered nurse practitioner. She was hired as nurse administrator for a Ponte Vedra Beach company (Ponte Vedra Home Care) in October 2015.

Pohlman had documents saying she had a nursing license at the time. Her duties included writing up care plans, clients visits and assisting with the company's

marketing. As she became familiar with more clients, she offered nursing care independently as a care manager, according to the Sheriff's Office.

In June, company officials became suspicious after attempting to determine whether Pohlman's nursing license was still valid because they couldn't find that she was licensed, the release said.

The company notified the Department of Health. Pohlman resigned, and an investigation began.

Detectives with the Sheriff's Office Special Victims' Unit along with the assistance from a medical investigator from the Jacksonville Office of the Florida Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit took over the investigation in September and discovered that the suspect had signed a DNR order and created a fake ARNP license. She is also charged with perform-

ing a physical exam on an applicant of the home care company.

The investigation revealed that the suspect did not have a doctorate of philosophy of physiology degree that she claimed, nor did she have a master's or any other degree in nursing.

Detectives also located an award plaque that was displayed in her office from the Trustees of the Mayo Clinic: Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, issued on March 9, 2016, in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was determined that there was no such award given by the Mayo Clinic, and investigators found that the suspect ordered and paid for the plaque which was created at a local awards business in Jacksonville.

Additional charges are pending further investigation. Anyone that may have come in contact with Pohlman on a professional



basis is asked to contact SVU Detective David Rosado at the Sheriff's Office at 209-2161. (Source: staugustine.com)

Lithium ion batteries are exploding and disfiguring consumers

E-cigarettes are devices designed to deliver nicotine to the user without ever having to light up a conventional cigarette.

These devices were first patented in 2003, and have been available for sale in the U.S. since 2007.

Manufacturers of these products advertise them as safer than traditional forms of smoking, and as a way to actually quit smoking.

Right now, the jury is still out on the long-term health effects from e-cigarettes.

Recent studies have shown a link between the use of e-cigarettes and a very serious and irreversible lung disease, known as "popcorn lung."

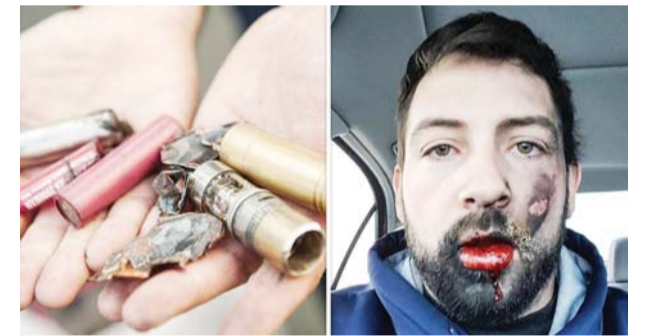
The lung disease is a result of e-cigarettes being flavored with a chemical that can cause scarring of the air sacs in the lungs resulting in the thickening and narrowing of the airways.

Symptoms of popcorn lung include coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath, similar to the symptoms of COPD.

But what we're focusing on today are the lawsuits being filed against the manufacturers of e-cigarettes because the lithium-ion batteries in the devices have been known to explode during normal use and during the charging of batteries.

Eighty percent of the fires with e-cigarettes occur while the device is being charged in a USB port. The problem stems from the fact that different USB ports put out different levels of voltage and current, which can cause the battery in the e-cigarette to overheat.

This overheating triggers a reaction that has been called "thermal run-away," and once this reaction begins, there is nothing that can be done to stop it.



This thermal run-away creates a super-heated explosion that has caused second or third degree burns AND in some cases the e-cigarette explosions have caused bone fractures, muscle damage, and blindness.

You need to understand that these aren't just small sparks - these are full throttle explosions.

According to a report by FEMA in 2014, these devices essentially become missiles with an explosive impact. The FEMA document states e-cigarettes are "more likely than other products with lithium-ion batteries to behave like 'flaming rockets' when a battery fails."

And just like real rockets and missiles, the explosions created by these e-cigarette batteries can be devastating.

In 2012, a man in Florida had an e-cigarette explode in his mouth, shattering most of his teeth and blowing off a portion of his tongue.

In December 2016, an e-cigarette device exploded in a man's pocket while riding a bus in California. The explosion caused third degree burns and that seems to be a repetitive problem.

In January of this year, an Idaho man had an e-cigarette blow up, knocking out seven of his teeth and leaving 2nd degree burns on his face. It also shattered his bathroom sink when the exploding device flew onto his counter.

The FDA has documented more than 130 incidents of battery explosions since these devices were brought onto the market.

Unfortunately, it was not until 2016 that the FDA even acquired the authority to regulate these devices.

But formal science-based public hearings are not set to even begin until April 2017.

This problem will only become worse, as the use of these devices continues to grow.

More than 3 million middle and high school students used e-cigarettes in 2015, making these devices the most utilized tobacco products among kids.

Nearly four percent of adults in the U.S. regularly use e-cigarettes.

The growing use can be attributed to both the number of people using the devices to quit smoking traditional tobacco, AND to the aggressive marketing campaigns that Big Tobacco is using to sell e-cigarettes.

(Source: trafire.com)

FIRST CHOICE REAL ESTATE
Mr. Ghanizadeh Nobody does it better
آژانس املاک انتخاب اول در خدمت شماست
TEL: 22041212 - 09121081212
APARTMENT - VILLA - OFFICE
PROPERTY@FIRSTCHOICECO.COM
WWW.FIRSTCHOICECO.COM

Don't Waste Your Time
Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties
www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners
HOME
Real Estate
Member of DELTA Real Estate Group
(021) 8888865

CHINESE RESTAURANT GOLDEN DRAGON
SINCE 1968
(+9821) 22230292 - 22219036
Add: Shariati Ave., Pol-e-Roomi, Top of Qeytariyh, Tehran

TEHRAN TIMES
INTERNATIONAL DAILY
times1979@gmail.com
Explore a Brand New Market in Iran for Goods & Services

maharaja
Indian Restaurant
FIRST INDIAN RESTAURANT IN IRAN
PRIVATE PARKING LOT
Jahan Hotel (Exelsior) - Rahimzade Alley - Taleqani
Crossroads - Valiasr St. Tel: 66476855

Advertising Dept:
times1979@gmail.com
+9821 430 51 450
www.tehrantimes.com

ISF-EHSANI Real Estate
IRAN-SARAYE-FERESHTEH
1- 250 sq.m super luxury, classic plan, beautiful view, natural light, high security
2- 300 sq.m luxury furnished, full facilities, high security, beautiful entrance
3- 500 sq.m villa, green yard, open pool, big trace, triplex, very good plan
Elahieh 0912-4388634
Tel: (021) 22022920 Fax: (021) 26201855
www.maskanfereshteh.com maskanfereshteh@gmail.com
Add: No. 18, Hozjat Bldg., Sharifmanesh Intersection, Fereshteh, Elahieh

CAMRY GLX
Model 2013
Very Chic, Ready for Annual Rent to Foreign Companies without Driver
(NADER)
09121944548

10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

- 1** Gmail users can now receive attachments up to 50MB.
As Google notes, however, you still can't send files larger than 25MB. For that, you can use the usual Google Drive method, which is far more reliable and secure anyway.
- 2** Amazon admits that a typo took the internet down this week.
As Amazon explains it, some of its S3 servers were operating rather sluggish, so a tech tried fixing it by taking a few billing servers offline.
One of the inputs to the command was entered incorrectly and a larger set of servers was removed than intended.
- 3** An Army drone flew 600 miles astray then crashed into a tree.
While testing an RQ-7 "Shadow" drone at Fort Huachuca in Arizona, the military lost control of the device soon after launch.
Army presumed that it had quickly been destroyed until a hiker found it crashed into a tree in Evergreen, Colorado.
- 4** Travis Kalanick apologizes for blowing up at Uber driver who complained about drop in pay.
Uber CEO Travis Kalanick has penned an open letter of apology for a heated exchange he had with his Uber Black driver back in January about the impact of competitive pricing.
- 5** Japanese-based messaging app Line is building its own digital assistant called Clova.
According to a new report from the Financial Times, Line is branching out again and developing its own digital assistant called Clova to compete with the likes of Alexa and Google Assistant, complete with its own line of smart speakers.

- 6** VP Mike Pence used AOL email for state business while governor and hackers appear to have accessed the account.
The current governor of Indiana has released 30 pages of emails and also notes that a number of emails were not released because the state considered them "confidential."
- 7** Linux Skype goes from alpha to beta and gets new features.
It's all part of Skype's pivot to the cloud. Skype for Linux is adding a bunch of features to make it more useful for everyday communication.

- 8** Yahoo hackers accessed 32 million accounts with forged cookies.
Among that information is the news that hackers who obtained Yahoo's code and were able to create their own cookies were able to access 32 million accounts through 2015 and 2016.

- 9** Snap shares soar 44% to \$24.48 on first day of trading, worth \$28 billion.
Snapchat owner Snap finished its first day of trading on the New York Stock Exchange at \$24.48 per share. That left the company with a market cap north of \$28 billion.
That's far, far, and away above the price Snap set last night, \$17 per share, when the company raised \$3.4 billion — a 44 percent increase. It's also a smidge — 2 percent — above Snap's opening price of \$24 per share.

- 10** Spotify said it has reached 50 million paid subscribers, growing 25 percent in less than six months and extending the Swedish music streaming service's lead over its closest rival, Apple Music.
Spotify, which has not yet shown a profit as it spends to grow internationally, is considering a potential U.S. stock market listing, according to a February TechCrunch report.

"Google Meet" a Hangouts app for businesses

Google has quietly unveiled Meet by Google Hangouts, a big part of its strategy to shuffle the Hangouts app towards businesses and away from consumers. While it hasn't made a formal announcement, it launched an iOS app and partially-functional website (spotted by TechCrunch), though it's not yet on Android, oddly enough. The app will likely become part of Google's Cloud-powered G Suite, though it's not yet listed there, either.

Google said last year that it would "increasingly focus" Hangouts for businesses, but it wasn't clear exactly how. We can now see that there's a few key changes from the current app, though. It supports HD video meetings with up to 30 members rather than 10, lets you dial in to meetings (for enterprise customers only) and join with a single click. G Suite users also get integration with Gmail and Calendar, making it easy to convert a Hangout conversation into a meeting, possibly using the Google Assistant.

Google recently killed its Hangouts API and said that consumer apps that use it won't work after April 25th. The search giant said last year that it wouldn't abandon Hangouts, but it's not clear if it'll allow consumers to keep using it or push them over to Duo.

To make the product more professional for business users, it recently acquired Sweden's Lime Audio to improve call quality, particularly on wonky connections. As with recent moves by Facebook and Microsoft, it will likely integrate its Google Assistant bot into the program to help you schedule appointments, exchange contacts and more.

(Source: Techcrunch)

How Trump is impacting tech exits

By Faisal Khan

We've heard a lot of noise about how 2017 will be the year to "save" the IPO market. For now, all eyes (or Spectacles) are on Snap to see how it will perform after its IPO. And other hotly anticipated companies like Spotify will be eager to see results as they wait their turn in line.

That buy-out money is appetizing to VCs stuck in a constricted IPO market. Buy-outs are the other way for VCs to get their money back, but given the high valuations on unicorns, only the biggest tech companies could shell out a few billion on unproven companies.

Startups have often been proud of refusing buy-out offers, with Snap's Evan Spiegel famously turning down Mark Zuckerberg's \$3 billion proposition. Startups refuse such offers for a few reasons, such as fear the acquirer will slash jobs in an effort to cut costs. But now many startups are taking these measures themselves. With slower private market funding, startups are looking for legitimacy and hoping to show investors they can spend responsibly.

VCs could also force open the slow IPO market. Funds have to return money to investors eventually, and the clearly aging VC bull market is now in its seventh year while funds are taking longer and longer to liquidate. With 101 unicorns currently waiting



and a record \$40 billion of additional funds added to VC funds last year, the clock is ticking to get out one way or another.

As viewers of HBO's Silicon Valley know, most VCs prefer to take board seats and have major influence on such strategic issues. If a big name comes knocking with a wheelbarrow of cash to offer, these investors are only going to become more likely to push for a sale than they were in the past.

Of course, all the excitement over an

M&A frenzy in tech hinges on one detail: The current president implementing his tax agenda, including the repatriation holiday. That's no small task given how things have been going so far.

Although the tax holiday itself seems to enjoy wide-spread support, the news cycle has been quickly filled with the new administration's seeming other priorities — namely, an anti-immigration binge squarely at odds with the feelings of the tech community.

The tech companies that are the most cash-rich in tech, including Apple, Google, Microsoft are also the ones that have been most up-front about their opposition to the new immigration policy.

Tech companies have been front and center in the fight against the "Muslim ban" and many other immigration changes—positions lauded by many in the Valley for showing courage.

But the new leadership is notoriously thin-skinned and might be loathe to grant free candy to an industry deemed "disloyal." Meanwhile, Trump has other bargaining chips like proposals on restricting the H1-B visas critical to tech hiring, and California representatives have proposed requirements for tax holiday funds be used on infrastructure. If Trump's tax propositions don't come through, foreign cash could be an easy way to plug the budget hole.

For the time being, the big companies seem to be hedging their bets about the tax holiday, issuing bonds for quick cash while they wait for the political grind to continue. As Trump appears to double down on his immigration efforts, startups seem likely to be caught between hope and fear for what the administration's decisions might hold.

(Source: venturebeat)

No Man's Sky wins GDC 2017 Award

No Man's Sky Developer Hello Games won the award for innovation at this year's Game Developers Choice Awards, but it clearly wasn't expecting to. As a result, the indie team wasn't there in person to accept its award from host Tim Schafer.

Why? They were otherwise preoccupied — Hello Games team members who made the trip to San Francisco for GDC were eating dinner at the time — and said they didn't expect to win anyway.

When Schafer announced that No Man's Sky had won the Innovation Award at tonight's festivities, he called out, "Going once... going twice..."

After it appeared that no one was a route to the stage to accept the neon green robot trophy. Once it was clear no one from Hello Games was on hand to receive the award, Schafer accepted it on the devel-



oper's behalf.

The GDC Awards are voted on by folks in the

industry, so the nominees and winners always come from an interesting perspective. Here's the list of winners:

Best Audio: Inside (Playdead) / Best Debut: Campo Santo (Firewatch) / Best Design: Overwatch (Blizzard Entertainment) / Best Mobile/Handheld Game: Pokemon Go (Niantic) / Innovation Award: No Man's Sky (Hello Games) / Best Narrative: Firewatch (Campo Santo) / Best Technology: Uncharted 4: A Thief's End (Naughty Dog) / Best Visual Art: Inside (Playdead) / Best VR/AR Game: Job Simulator: The 2050 Archives (Owlchemy Labs) / Audience Award: Battlefield 1 (EA DICE) / Game of the Year: Overwatch (Blizzard Entertainment) / Pioneer Award: Jordan Mechner / Ambassador Award: Mark DeLoura / Lifetime Achievement Award: Tim Sweeney

(Source: polygon)

For the first time, bitcoin is more valuable than gold



Today marked a weird but auspicious moment in human history. The value of a single bitcoin, the most mainstream of cryptocurrencies, surpassed the price of one ounce of gold. While that's specifically due to a good trading day for the former and slightly bad one for the latter, resulting in a moment where a loosely-comparable unit of bitcoin value topped that of gold, both have been trending toward this point for a while.

That's because, as both CoinDesk's Bitcoin Price Index (BPI) and Coinbase have tracked, the cryptocurrency has been slowly recovering from a low point at \$200 per unit in mid-2015 up until today, when it hit \$1,238.11.

This topped gold's value of \$1,237.73 per ounce, according to Bloomberg Markets, which has hovered around that price point for a couple years. Those values have varied throughout the day, although bitcoin's supremacy remains as of the time of publishing.

People aren't necessarily ditching their gold to buy bitcoin -- their prices don't trade in correlation -- but they're both alternative assets, points out TechCrunch. Gold has traditionally been used as a more secure bet than volatile investments like real estate, so bitcoin's rise in value is encouraging for cryptocurrency advocates who have been hoping it could supplant the "gold standard" of safer investing.

And it may become much easier to invest in bitcoin very soon, as the SEC is about to announce whether they will approve the Winklevoss bitcoin ETF, which would be the first bitcoin ETF in a U.S market, and make it much easier for both Wall Street and regular investors to buy the digital currency.

(Source: engadget)

Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer just lost her bonus



Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer's take-home pay will be less than usual this year.

Mayer will not receive her bonus, nor will she get a stock award this year, NPR reports. The decision comes after an internal investigation found that senior executives at Yahoo "mishandled" the company's security breaches in 2013 and 2014. An independent board that investigated the matter also determined that Yahoo senior executives failed to "properly comprehend or investigate" the 2014 security breach, NPR reports.

In September of last year, Yahoo disclosed that a massive security breach occurred in 2014. About 500 million Yahoo accounts were compromised. Hackers obtained personal information, but not credit card details. Then in December of last year, Yahoo disclosed that another breach occurred in 2013, but this one was even bigger: Nearly one billion user accounts were hacked, making it the biggest breach in history.

In a blog post, Mayer explained why she agreed to forgo her bonus and annual equity grant:

"When I learned in September 2016 that a large number of our user database files had been stolen, I worked with the team to disclose the incident to users, regulators, and government agencies," she wrote. "However, I am the CEO of the company and since this incident happened during my tenure, I have agreed to forgo my annual bonus and my annual equity grant this year and have expressed my desire that my bonus be redistributed to our company's hardworking employees, who contributed so much to Yahoo's success in 2016."

In addition to the actions against Mayer, NPR reports, the company's general counsel also resigned. He left without severance pay because of his department's response to the security breaches.

(Source: fortune)

Hard drives of the future could be made of DNA



Our data-driven society is churning out more information than traditional storage technology can handle, so scientists are looking for a solution in Nature's hard drive: DNA. A pair of researchers at Columbia University and the New York Genome Center recently wrote a full computer operating system, an 1895 French film, an Amazon gift card and other files into DNA strands and retrieved them without errors, according to a study published in the latest edition of Science.

There are several advantages to using DNA. It's a lot smaller than traditional media; a single gram can fit 215,000 times more data than a one terabyte hard drive, The Atlantic notes. It's also incredibly durable. Scientists are using DNA thousands of years old to de-extinct woolly mammoths, for example. But, until now, they've only unlocked a fraction of its storage capacity.

Study coauthors Yaniv Erlich and Dina Zielinski were able to fit the theoretical maximum amount of information per nucleotide using a new method inspired by how movies stream across the internet.

"We mapped the bits of the files to DNA nucleotides. Then, we synthesized these nucleotides and stored the molecules in a test-tube," Erlich explained in an interview with ResearchGate. "To retrieve the information, we sequenced the molecules. This is the basic process. To pack the information, we devised a strategy—called DNA Fountain—that uses mathematical concepts from coding theory. It was this strategy that allowed us to achieve optimal packing, which was the most challenging aspect of the study."

Although companies like Microsoft are currently looking into DNA as a storage option, Erlich estimates it'll be more than a decade before it goes mainstream.

(Source: TheAtlantic)

Martian winds carved giant mountain in Red Planet's Gale Crater

Martian winds shaped the mountain that stands tall in the middle of the Red Planet's vast Gale Crater, new observations from NASA's Curiosity rover suggest.

While the atmosphere of Mars is roughly 100 times thinner than Earth's, it is still thick enough to support weather, clouds and swirling winds. These appear to be the dominant force shaping the Red Planet's landscape, NASA officials said in a statement.

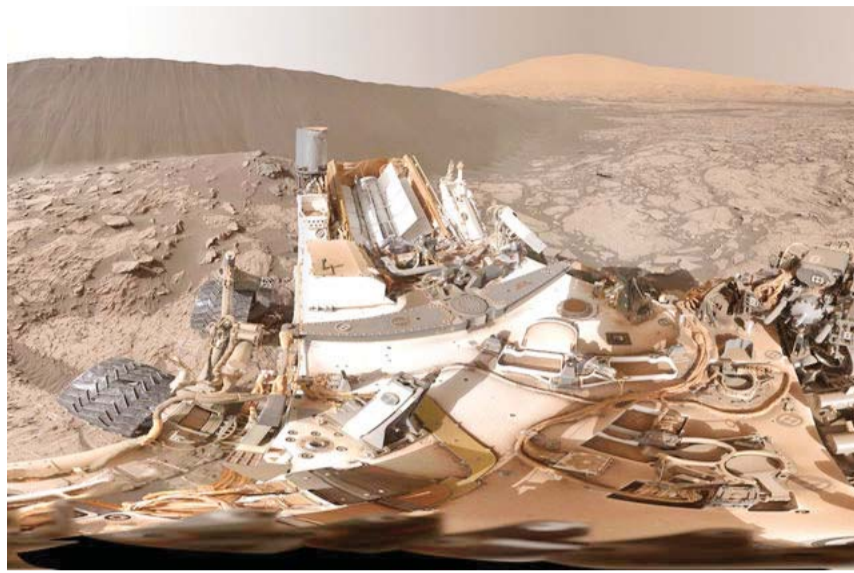
Using observations from Curiosity and NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, scientists found that Martian winds have slowly been carrying dust and sediment out of Gale Crater for billions of years, leaving behind the 3.4-mile-high (5.5 kilometers) layered mountain known as Mount Sharp.

Rows of ripples

The left side of this 360-degree panorama from NASA's Mars rover Curiosity shows the long rows of ripples on a linear-shaped dune in the Bagnold Dune Field on the northwestern flank of Mount Sharp.

The left side of this 360-degree panorama from NASA's Mars rover Curiosity shows the long rows of ripples on a linear-shaped dune in the Bagnold Dune Field on the northwestern flank of Mount Sharp.

Gale Crater measures 96 miles (154 km) wide and was blasted out by an asteroid or a comet that hit the Red Planet



more than 3.6 billion years ago. Ancient rivers later deposited sediments including rocks, sand and silt into the basin, filling it to the brim. Then, when the planet's climate became drier, wind eroded the

deposited sediments, NASA officials said.

This map shows the two locations of a research campaign by NASA's Curiosity Mars rover mission to investigate active sand dunes on Mars. In late 2015, Curiosi-

ty reached crescent-shaped dunes, called barchans.

Research campaign

This map shows the two locations of a research campaign by NASA's Curiosity Mars rover mission to investigate active sand dunes on Mars. In late 2015, Curiosity reached crescent-shaped dunes, called barchans.

"Scientists first proposed in 2000 that the mound at the center of Gale Crater is a remnant from wind eroding what had been a totally filled basin," NASA officials said in the statement. The "new work calculates that the vast volume of material removed — about 15,000 cubic miles (64,000 cubic km) — is consistent with orbital observations of winds' effects in and around the crater, when multiplied by a billion or more years."

Curiosity investigated crescent-shaped dunes in late 2015 and early 2016. However, the rover's latest work is focused on a group of ribbon-shaped linear dunes, as the Red Planet enters its summer season — the windiest time of year.

"In these linear dunes, the sand is transported along the ribbon pathway, while the ribbon can oscillate back and forth, side to side," Nathan Bridges, a Curiosity science team member at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, said in the same statement.

(Source: space.com)

The left side of this 360-degree panorama from NASA's Mars rover Curiosity shows the long rows of ripples on a linear-shaped dune in the Bagnold Dune Field on the northwestern flank of Mount Sharp.

Superbugs which pose greatest threat to humanity identified by WHO

Superbugs which cause sepsis, pneumonia, and salmonella will soon be resistant to antibiotics, the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned as it called on governments to stop relying on pharmaceutical companies to solve the crisis.

Health officials have drawn up a list of 12 types of bacteria which pose the "greatest threat to human health" because soon no drugs will be able to fight them off.

Experts have previously warned that resistance to the drugs that are used to fight infections could cause a bigger threat to mankind than cancer.

If antibiotics lose their effectiveness, key medical procedures - including organ transplantation, Caesarean sections, joint replacements and chemotherapy - could become too dangerous to perform.

Around 700,000 die annually

Around 700,000 people around the world die annually due to drug-resistant infections and, if no action is taken, it has been estimated that such infections will kill 10 million people a year by 2050.

Now, the WHO has come up with a list of antibiotic-resistant "priority pathogens" - 12 families of bacteria that pose the greatest threat to human health.

Medical research charity the Wellcome Trust said that the list was important to steer research into new anti-

biotics.

The bacteria on this list can cause severe and often deadly infections such as bloodstream infections and pneumonia and the most critical group includes multi-drug resistant bacteria that pose a particular threat in hospitals and nursing homes.

Other increasingly drug-resistant bacteria, which are deemed 'high' and 'medium' priority, cause more common diseases such as gonorrhoea and food poisoning caused by salmonella.

"Antibiotic resistance is growing and we are fast running out of treatment options," said Dr. Marie-Paule Kiery, WHO's assistant director-general for health systems and innovation.

"If we leave it to market forces alone, the new antibiotics we most urgently need are not going to be developed in time."

Development of new drugs

The WHO said that it hoped the list would spur governments to put in place policies to incentivize the development of new drugs.

Experts came up with the list by examining a number of criteria, including how deadly the infections the bacteria cause are and whether new antibiotics to treat them are already in the pipeline.



Commenting on the publication of the list, Tim Jinks, head of drug resistant infections at Wellcome Trust, said: "This priority pathogens list, developed with input from across our community, is important to steer research in the race against drug resistant infection - one of the greatest threats to modern health."

"Without new medicines to treat deadly infection, lifesaving treatments like chemotherapy and organ transplant, and routine operations like caesareans and hip replacements will be potentially fatal."

(The Telegraph)

Ancient human tree cultivation shaped Amazon landscape

Ancient indigenous peoples had a far more profound impact on the composition of the vast Amazon rainforest than previously known, according to a study showing how tree species domesticated by humans long ago still dominate big swathes of the wilderness.

Researchers said on Thursday many tree species populating the Amazon region appear to be abundant because they were cultivated by people who populated the area before Europeans arrived more than five centuries ago. These include the Brazil nut, cacao, acai palm, rubber, caimito, cashew and tucuma palm.

"So the Amazon is not nearly as untouched as it may seem," said study

researcher Hans ter Steege, a forest community ecologist at the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in the Netherlands and Free University of Amsterdam.

Composition of trees

The researchers used data on the tree composition of forests at 1,170 sites throughout the Amazon and compared it to a map of more than 3,000 known archaeological sites representing past human settlements.

The study found that 85 tree species known to have been used by Amazonian peoples for fruit, nuts, building materials and other purposes over the past roughly 8,000 years were five times more likely to be dominant in mature Amazon forests

than species that had not been domesticated.

It also found that forests closer to the pre-Columbian settlements were much more likely to boast tree species domesticated by ancient peoples.

Rainforest, a natural feature

The Amazon rainforest is a commanding natural feature in South America and one of the world's richest biological reservoirs, teeming with plant and animal life. Much of it is situated in Brazil but parts are also in Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador and French Guiana.

Many of the trees found in large numbers represent species critical for the live-

lihood and economy of Amazonian peoples. At the time of European conquest, there were an estimated 8 to 10 million people in the Amazon, speaking at least 400 different languages.

"Past civilizations have had a great role in changing, both consciously and unconsciously, the vegetation in the surroundings of their settlements and along paths that they used to travel," added study researcher Carolina Levis, a doctoral candidate in ecology at Brazil's National Institute for Amazonian Research and the Wageningen University and Research Center in the Netherlands.

(Source: Reuters)

To make better computers, researchers look to microbiology

Computer engineers have created some amazingly small devices, capable of storing entire libraries of music and movies in the palm of your hand. But geneticists say Mother Nature can do even better.

DNA, where all of biology's information is stored, is incredibly dense. The whole genome of an organism fits into a cell that is invisible to the naked eye.

That's why computer scientists are turning to microbiology to design the next best way to store humanity's ever-increasing collection of digital data.

With every new app, selfie, blog post, or cat video, the hardware to store the world's vast archive of digital information is filling up. But, theoretically, DNA could store up to 455 exabytes per gram. In other words, you could have 44 billion copies of the extended versions of all three of The Lord of the Rings movies on the tip

of your finger. (For reference, watching all those movies would take more than 164 million years.)

Digital information

George Church, a geneticist at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, first used DNA as storage for digital information in 2012, which he reported in a paper published in the journal Science. At the time, he revealed his success during an interview on the Colbert Report by showing Stephen Colbert a tiny piece of paper on which there was a small spot that contained millions of copies of Dr. Church's book, "Regenesis," in the form of DNA.

Church and his colleagues were focused on proving that digital information could indeed be encoded in DNA at the time. But since then, teams of engineers and biologists have expanded on this proof-of-concept and worked to squeeze more and more data into DNA,

eyeing the vast storage Church had predicted possible.

A team at the European Bioinformatics Institute (EBI) in Hinxton, Britain, reported that they had made the largest DNA archive ever in 2013, putting 739 kilobytes worth of computer files into DNA strands. (Church's book had required about 650 kilobytes.)

In July 2016, a team of Microsoft and University of Washington researchers announced that they had reset that record, storing 200 megabytes of data in DNA.

Now, researchers at the New York Genome Center and Columbia University have ramped up the density of data stored in DNA molecules. They were able to reach a density of 214 petabytes per gram of DNA, according to a paper published Thursday in the journal Science — which is over eight times as dense as previous work.

(Source: csmonitor.com)

Maskan Investment Group Appreciated as Leading Holding Enterprise

Maskan Investment Group was lauded as pioneering holding economic enterprise at 2nd Top National Holding Festival, Public Relations Dept. of the Group reported.

With due observance to the said issue, Maskan Investment Group was introduced as leading holding firm at 3rd Intl. Holding and Group of Companies Conference and at 2nd Top National Holdings Festival.

This prestigious Conference was held at IRIB Conferences Center in the presence of senior officials of public and private sectors with the aim of identifying and supporting top holdings and leader companies.

Mohammad-Reza Amini Managing Director of Maskan Investment Group of Companies received Plaque of Honor and statue of Festival, the report added.

It should be noted that the following indicators were taken into consideration for the selection of top and leading companies: Eyeing international markets, strategic management, implementation of corporate governance strategies, social responsibility at the economic enterprises and development of knowledge-based economy in holdings, etc.

Jackfruit seeds could help ease looming cocoa bean shortage

Chocolate lovers could soon have a harder time satisfying their sweet tooth. Worldwide demand for this mouth-watering treat is outstripping the production of cocoa beans, its primary ingredient. But in a study published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, scientists report that compounds found in jackfruit seeds produce many of the same aromas as processed cocoa beans and are a potentially cheap, abundant substitute for use in chocolate manufacturing.

Globally, farmers produce about 3.7 million tons of cocoa annually. This yield is not expected to increase significantly in the next decade, but estimates suggest that worldwide demand for these beans will grow to 4.5 million tons by 2020. To meet growing expectations, scientists are investigating alternative sources that can mimic chocolate's distinct aroma and flavor. One of these possibilities is jackfruit, a large tropical fruit found in South America, Asia, Africa and Australia.

In some countries, its sweet-smelling seeds are boiled, steamed and roasted before eating, providing a cheap source of fiber, protein and minerals. But in Brazil, the largest cocoa producer in the Americas, jackfruit seeds are considered waste. Looking to put these waste seeds to better use, Fernanda Papa Spada, Jane K. Parker, Solange Guidolin, Canniati Brazaca and colleagues sought to determine if any of the compounds within them could be used to produce chocolate aromas.

The researchers made 27 jackfruit seed flours by acidifying or fermenting the seeds prior to drying. They roasted these flours for various times and temperatures using processes similar to those used to enhance the chocolate flavor of cocoa beans. Using gas chromatography-mass spectrometry, the team identified several compounds from the jackfruit flours that are associated with chocolate aromas, including 3-methylbutanal, 2,3-diethyl-5-methylpiperazine and 2-phenylethyl acetate.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Elephants never forget, and barely sleep either

Elephants are famous for their remarkable memories.

But scientists have recently discovered another odd feature about elephants: They sleep for the shortest time of any mammal.

Researchers fitted two wild African elephants in Chobe National Park in Botswana with the scientific equivalent of a fitness tracker in their trunks and a GPS collar to monitor when they went to sleep, and for how long. The study followed the elephants for 35 days.

The study, published in the journal PLOS One, found that the two matriarch elephants slept for an average of two hours per day, and sometimes stayed awake for up to 48 hours without sleep if threatened by predators or poachers. The animals can sleep standing up or lying down, and generally slept in the early hours of the morning.

Elephants in captivity sleep for around four to six hours a day. Larger-bodied mammals generally sleep for less time than smaller ones. Lack of sleep, even over a short period, can lead to brain damage in mammals.

The study also found that elephants only dream — by entering a deep kind of sleep known as Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep — every three to four days. REM sleep is thought to be part of the process of memory consolidation, but the researchers said the study's results cast doubt on this link.

The baby elephant sleeps as a mahout feeds its mother before leaving for the jungle at Chitwan National Park in Chitwan, south of Kathmandu, Nepal, December 30, 2014. Wild African elephants sleep for as little as two hours a night, according to a study.

(Source: Newsweek)

Scientists say Canadian bacteria fossils may be Earth's oldest

They are microscopic artwork: tiny tubes and long filaments, strange squiggles etched into some of the most ancient rocks known.

On Wednesday, researchers reported that these may be the oldest fossils ever discovered, the remains of bacteria thriving on Earth not long, geologically speaking, after the very birth of the planet. If so, they offer evidence that life here got off to a very early start.

Martin J. Van Kranendonk, a geologist at the University of New South Wales, called the patterns in the rocks "dubiofossils" — fossil-like structures, perhaps, but without clear proof that they started out as something alive.

Heated disputes are nothing new in the search for the earliest life on Earth. In 1993 J. William Schopf, a paleontologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, and his colleagues found what they, too, argued were the world's oldest fossils: chainlike blobs in 3.46 billion-year-old rocks made, they said, by bacteria. Other researchers later argued that the structures were just oddly shaped minerals.

But additional specimens from other sites came to light over the past two decades, and many of them have withstood scrutiny. There is now solid evidence of life dating back about 3.5 billion years.

Earth was a billion years old by then, and scientists have long wondered if even older fossils might be found.

In August, Dr. Van Kranendonk and his colleagues reported discovering fossils in Greenland dating back 3.7 billion years.

(Source: The NYT)

Simple life, skillful hands, silk weaving

Balam Jerk, a 400-year-old village in Minudasht city, the northern province of Golestan, with only 210 families is almost unknown.

The inhabitants mostly pursue farming, livestock breeding, and on top of everything, sericulture, silk weaving, and yarn spinning.

Women of Balam Jerk village are mostly occupied with weaving silk and spinning yarn to make an honest living. They obtain silk from scratch by rearing larvae of silkworms to form cocoons.

The silk cloth and yarns woven and spun skillfully will be exported to other cities or in some cases to other countries.

While the village has untapped potentials for growth and becoming a tourist hub in the province, people are experiencing economic deprivation.



PHOTO

Fatemeh Abedi

Tehran Times and Mehr news agency photographer



Maryam is picking the cocoons from the tree.



Kobra, 57, is feeding silkworms.



A group of women are picking cocoons from tree branches.



A woman has collected tree leaves wet with rain to dry off and then feed the silkworms.



A photo of a 32-day silkworm which will weave a net to hold itself in a week.



Fatemeh is rearranging the tree leaves wet with the rain on the rooftop to dry.



Zeinab, 18, is hanging the wet silk thread to dry.



Mehrnesa and her daughter-in-law Houriyeh are spinning thread and weaving silk cloth.



A woman is weaving a silk cloth.

Setboun: Islamic revolution made me professional photojournalist

1→ **When and how did you know Imam Khomeini?**

A: I was in Iran since the beginning of 1978, covering the uprising (against the Shah regime). Imam Khomeini was the magical name during the demonstrations, but we had no image of him, only on billboards, paintings... When Imam Khomeini arrived in Paris, I was told by Bani Sadr (the first Iranian President) to come to Paris [when I was in Iran] and I did it. I was one of the first people to see him in Neauphles-le-chateau.

The first prayer in the garden, then his speech under the apple tree. That was very impressing to see him for the first time.

We had a brief talk; I was introduced by Bani Sadr who told him I was covering the revolution in Iran. After a few days I met him again and he (Imam) told me, like a grandfather, that my duty was to be in Iran, covering the revolution which he said was more important than he himself.

I decided to fly back to Iran to continue my work in the streets.

What attracted you to the Imam and his revolution?

A: For French people, revolution is a special word. For me Iran was a kind of rehearsal of the events in France in 1968. The people were fighting for the end of dictatorship. That was also a social fight.

Is there any particular reason that you follow the Imam and his revolution for photography?

A: When you are in such a big story, you can't miss that, and Iranian people and traditions are very photogenic... the black chador, whatever you think about it is very photogenic especially in the wind.

What is your assessment of the people's emotion when the Imam returned home in February 1979? Did it excite you to shooting differently?

A: Again like during the manifesta-

tion, everybody helped me. Since I have spent some months with the people of Tehran, I could feel their emotion. If I can say, it was like God coming back on Earth, or a prophet landing on Iran's soil.

What is your feeling of the current atmosphere in comparison to the revolution days?

A: After 38 years you can imagine so many things have changed. It's difficult to compare today with the past. The majority of the Iranian population are too young to know the revolution. They have just heard about the revolution from their parents or seen the photos of the revolution.

Let us speak about your book which is a collection of the famous photos of the revolution. What was the goal of such a work?

A: I had that project in my mind since several years ago; I could see on my different websites that I had a minimum of 10,000 connections every day from Iran. I understood how important this memory was for the Iranian people. Some Iranian



ans who had been captured by camera requested their photos and this motivated me to do that work. I had put photos on my website for free because I wanted to share that memory. If the pictures are mine, this history belong to the Iranian people. To share that online was also a way to give back to Iran, what Iranian people gave to me.

How was your book received by the French and Iranian people?

A: You can imagine that in Iran the book was very welcomed. I was very honored by this publication, and I want to thank the publisher, the association of Revolution and Sacred Defense Photographers, etc. for their cooperation.

For the moment it's impossible to find the book in France, but my regular publisher, the editions de la Martinière, is very excited to publish the book. I think it will be a little bit different; of course I will have more information about that in the next few weeks.

What is your goal in photography? What do you hope to achieve?

A: Happiness. I just love to record life, light, color, beauty, human beings. My goal is to be able to continue to do what I love until the end of my life.

Do you have any advice for an aspiring photographer?

A: Very difficult to answer. The world of photography has changed; it's not what it used to be; so many magazines have disappeared; now the life is "online"... it's difficult to give any advice. The only thing I could say is that you have to be confident of yourself and what you do. You have to work hard, but if you enjoy it it's never a pain.

Anything else you'd like to say to Iranians?

A: Thanks for the chance Iranians people gave to me; thanks for the recognition of my work, and I am always very happy when I am considered as an Iranian even if I don't speak Farsi. I am also very pleased when I am told I am looking like a famous Iranian actor.

Egyptian-Iranian détente a boon for the region and beyond

2→ Egypt's hands-off stance in the war unleashed by Saddam Hussein on Iran (1980-1988) was reversed in favor of an inter-Arab collaboration to stop Saddam from swallowing up Kuwait (1990-1991). This was followed by an apprehensive wait and see regarding America's 2003 war of choice on Iraq. The historic pendulum of Egyptian politics towards Persian Gulf issues can be seen as emblematic of Egyptian diplomacy's aim to balance foreign relations.

Such desire to bifurcate Egyptian foreign policy makes the resumption of ties with Tehran a necessity. There are grounds to be optimistic about a future Cairo-Tehran rapprochement, as evident by the following facts:

1. The negative reaction of the GCC towards the Iran nuclear deal found no tangible expression of sympathy in Cairo;

2. The charges by America and some regional states

about Iran's fomenting terrorism or instability find no echoes in Cairo;

3. The Egyptian role in the so-called Arab coalition against Houthis in Yemen has been confined to safeguarding safe passage through the Gulf of Aden;

4. Iran's role in support of the Syrian regime has now been directly bolstered by Cairo's recognition of the folly of regime change in Damascus or anywhere;

5. Cairo's relationship with Riyadh has its ups and downs. This is especially so in regard to rising opposition by Al-Azhar to the Wahhabi stronghold on religious practices and education in the kingdom.

Egypt and Iran are the two most historically influential and leading civilizations of the Muslim world and indeed, humanity. Furthermore, any idea of a religious animosity between them today is grossly exaggerated. After all, it was the Shia Fatimid dynasty that constructed Cairo over a millennium ago.

Egypt and Iran are the respective powerhouses of the Sunni Arab and Shia worlds. Cooperation between them can play a critical role in managing regional conflict, alleviating Sunni-Shia sectarianism, and containing calamitous regional civil wars. Critically, Iran and Egypt also have principally a similar stance on terrorist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda. Therefore Cairo-Tehran have great historical responsibility to establish strategic cooperation to manage devastating crises in the region.

Seyed Hossein Mousavian is an Iranian former diplomat, now a Middle East specialist at Princeton University. He is the author of *Iran and the United States: An Insider's View on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace*.

Dr Yassin El-Ayouty is an attorney licensed in Egypt and the US, and professor of law. He is the author of *The New Egypt: From Chaos to the Strong State*.

Trump's 'moderate' defense secretary has already brought U.S. to the brink of war

1→ In an administration overflowing with Iran hawks, from CIA Director Mike Pompeo ("I look forward to rolling back this disastrous deal with the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism") to Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly ("Iran's involvement in [Latin America] ... is a matter for concern") to former National Security Adviser Flynn ("We are officially putting Iran on notice"), some may have naively expected Mattis to be the responsible adult in the room.

The defense secretary has been lauded by politicians and pundits alike: the "scholar-warrior" (New York Daily News) and "most revered Marine in a generation" (Marine Corps Times) with "the potential to act as a restraint" (New York Times) on an impulsive commander in chief as he is "the anti-Trump" (Politico) and therefore "good news for global order" (Wall Street Journal).

So why would a retired Marine Corps general such as Mattis be willing to provoke a conflict with Tehran over a single ship? The fact is that Mattis, too, is obsessed with Iran. He has hyperbolically called the Islamic Republic "the single most enduring threat to stability and peace in the Middle East" and — in a Trump-esque descent into the world of conspiracy theories — suggested Tehran is working with ISIS. "Iran is not an enemy of ISIS," Mattis declaimed in 2016, because "the one country in the Middle East that has not been attacked" by ISIS "is Iran. That is more than happenstance, I'm sure."

According to the Washington Post, in the run-up to the talks over Iran's

nuclear program, "Israelis may have questioned Obama's willingness to use force against Iran. ... But they believed Mattis was serious." The general, in his capacity as head of U.S. Central Command, even proposed launching "dead of night" airstrikes on Iranian soil in 2011, in retaliation for Tehran's support for anti-American militias in Iraq — a proposal rejected by White House officials who were worried that it "risked starting yet another war in the Middle East."

Mousavian is puzzled by the defense secretary's hawkishness: "He is one of the most experienced U.S. generals and he knows ... the consequences of confrontation with Iran would be tenfold what the U.S. experienced in Afghanistan and Iraq combined."

Mattis has, in fact, been tied to some of the worst war crimes of the Iraq invasion. It was he who gave the order to attack the village of Mukaradeeb in April 2004 — a decision he would later admit took him only 30 seconds to approve — which killed 42 civilians, including 13 children, who were attending a wedding there. "I don't have to apologize for the conduct of my men," he told reporters.

Six months later, in November 2004, it was Mattis who planned the Marine assault on Fallujah that reduced that city to rubble, forced 200,000 residents from their homes, and resulted, according to the Red Cross, in at least 800 civilian deaths.

There's a reason Mattis is nicknamed "Mad Dog." There's a reason his

militant maxims — or "Mattisisms" — include telling Marines under his command in Iraq to "be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everybody you meet," and telling an audience in California: "It's fun to shoot some people. ... I like brawling."

Is this the kind of "restraint" that we can expect from Mattis? Trump was rightly lambasted over his January raid in Yemen that led to the deaths of a U.S. Navy SEAL and at least 15 Yemeni women and children, but it was the defense secretary, joined by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who persuaded the neophyte president that the SEALs' attack on al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula would be a "game changer." It was the gung-ho Mattis who, according to Reuters, told Trump that he "doubted that the Obama administration would have been bold enough to try it." And this week, we learned, it is Mattis to whom Trump wants to give free rein to launch raids, drone strikes, and hostage rescues without prior presidential approval. What could possibly go wrong?

According to Parsi, Mattis "believes the U.S. needs to have a strong hegemonic position in the Middle East," and "if your aim is hegemony in the Middle East, Iran will be your No. 1 foe due to Tehran's rejection of Pax Americana — even though the U.S. and Iran share a lot of common interests, such as opposition to ISIS."

Yet even normally skeptical voices have bought into the myth of Mattis's moderation. "I actually do think he is the closest thing we have to a 'moderate' in

this administration," Andrew Bacevich, a conservative military historian at Boston University and long-standing critic of U.S. defense policy, tells me. This, to misapprehend a line from George W. Bush, is "the soft bigotry of low expectations." The defense secretary may not be a bigot or a crank like so many other top Trump appointees, but he could prove to be far more lethal in the long run.

Remember: It was not Dick Cheney or Donald Rumsfeld but "moderate" Secretary of State Colin Powell — another retired general — who was tasked with selling President Bush's Mesopotamian misadventure to the United Nations in February 2003. Who do you imagine would make a more convincing public case, on behalf of the Trump administration, for a future shooting war with Iran? The draft-dodging president or his decorated defense secretary? Ex-Breitbart boss Steve Bannon or "Warrior Monk" Mattis, who, lest we forget, 45 out of 46 Senate Democrats voted to confirm?

"War is once again on the agenda, whether by design or by accident," warns Parsi. So don't be fooled. Mattis is far from a sheep in hawk's clothing; he is a hawk in hawk's clothing. The defense secretary may once have described the three biggest threats to U.S. national security as "Iran, Iran, Iran," but if the Trump administration ends up going to war with Iran as a result of the defense secretary's recklessness, the three biggest threats to "stability and peace in the Middle East" may turn out to be "Mattis, Mattis, Mattis."

4 dead as Saudi jets pound N. Yemen with cluster bombs

At least four civilians have lost their lives and several others sustained injuries when Saudi regime fighter jets carried out fresh aerial attacks against residential areas in northern Yemen, using internationally-banned cluster bombs.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said three people were killed and four others injured when the House of Saud regime military aircraft struck the al-Barkah area of the northwestern Yemeni province of Sa'ada, located 240 kilometers north of the capital Sana'a, on Friday afternoon, Arabic-language al-Masirah television network reported.

Saudi regime jets also launched a morning raid in the Hayran district of the northwestern province of Hajjah, located approximately 130 kilometers northwest of Sana'a, killing at least one person and injuring seven others.

Cluster bombs are banned under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), an international treaty that addresses the humanitarian consequences and unacceptable harm caused to civilians by cluster munitions through a categorical prohibition and a framework for action.

Moreover, Saudi regime aircraft bombarded an area in the Mustaba district of the same Yemeni province, with no immediate reports of casualties and the extent of damage caused.

Saudi regime jets pounded the city of Sirwah, which lies about 120 kilometers east of Sana'a, as well, though no reports of casualties were available.

Elsewhere in the Nihm district of Sa'ada province, Yemeni soldiers and fighters from Popular Committees launched a BM-27 Uragan rocket at a gathering of militiamen loyal to resigned Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, leaving scores of the Saudi regime mercenaries dead and injured.

Yemeni forces and their allies also targeted Kofel military camp in the country's central province of Ma'rib, with no casualties among Saudi-sponsored militiamen immediately reported.

The United Nations humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick, says the Saudi campaign has claimed the lives of 10,000 Yemenis and left 40,000 others wounded.

However, in a report released on February 23, Yemen's Legal Center for Rights and Development, an independent monitoring group, put the civilian death toll in the war-torn country at 12,041.

The fatalities, it said, comprise 2,568 children and 1,870 women.

The rights body said the bombings have also wounded 20,001 civilians, including 2,354 children and 1,960 women, while more than four million others have been displaced.

Pentagon conducts 20 airstrikes in Yemen, first since failed raid

Elsewhere, the United States Pentagon said it carried out more than 20 airstrikes involving a mix of manned and unmanned aircraft in Yemen targeting al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) early on Thursday, in the first major operations against the group since a botched U.S. commando raid against the group left a number of civilians and a Navy SEAL dead.

The Pentagon said the strikes targeted al-Qaeda fighters, heavy weapons systems, equipment, infrastructure and the group's fighting positions.

Navy Captain Jeff Davis said the airstrikes targeted in three south-central provinces of Abyan, Shabwah and al-Bayda.

The U.S. military did not share a casualty estimate, but local officials said at least nine suspected al-Qaeda militants were killed.

Davis said the operation was coordinated with resigned President, Hadi, a strong ally of the House of Saud regime that has been engaged in its own military campaign against Yemen.

Military helicopters and drones launched a flurry of fresh airstrikes in Shabwah province early on Friday, witnesses said, according to Reuters.

The raids targeted the residence of Sa'ad Atef, an al-Qaeda leader, as well as other suspected militant positions in the area.

The unidentified aircraft, believed to be American, also deployed troops to the al-Saeed area of the southern province, who engaged suspected al-Qaeda militants on the ground for nearly an hour.

The military operations came more than a month since a January 29 raid, the first of its kind authorized by U.S. President Donald Trump, in al-Bayda which residents said left as many as 25 civilians dead.

An ongoing investigation by the U.S. Central Command has also determined that civilians, including possibly children, lost their lives during the botched raid.

The White House hailed the operation as a success, but critics said it was a failure since it resulted in the death of civilians and 36-year-old Navy SEAL Ryan Owens.

Three other Americans were also wounded in the Navy SEAL Team Six mission and a military aircraft worth \$75 million was destroyed after it crash-landed at the raid site.

Trump blames generals for botched raid

Meantime, Trump has tried to distance himself from the raid by emphasizing that the operation had been in the works long before he took office. "This was a mission that was started before I got here," he said in an interview with Fox News this week.

"This was something that, you know, they wanted to do. They came to see me and they explained what they wanted to do, the generals, who are very respected," the president said. "And they lost Ryan."

During his address to a joint session of Congress on Tuesday, Trump paid tribute to the fallen SEAL, and insisted that the operation yielded valuable intelligence that would "lead to many more victories in the future."

The United States conducts drone strikes in Yemen and several countries. Washington claims the airstrikes target members of al-Qaeda and other militants, but according to local officials and witnesses, civilians have been the victims of the attacks in many cases. Al-Qaeda in Yemen has grown in weapons and number since the start of the Saudi military campaign in March 2015, which was launched to bring back Hadi to power and undermine the Ansarullah movement.

UAE-trained militias ready to join Yemen battlefield

Elsewhere, the first battalion of militants trained by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is now ready to join other Saudi-backed mercenaries fighting on the ground against Yemeni armed forces.

The official Emirates News Agency published video footage of a ceremony, marking the end of the pro-Saudi militants' training process in the Yemeni port city of Aden.

Saudi regime has also recruited and trained militants loyal to the former government for ground operations against Yemeni army forces and allied Ansarullah fighters under the cover of Riyadh's air raids.

In another development on Thursday, Emirati forces staged a military exercise, codenamed Union Fortress, in the waters off Abu Dhabi. (Source: agencies)

Rio Olympics: Lamine Diack's son 'paid \$2m by Brazilian' as vote loomed

A Brazilian businessman gave \$2m to the son of the Lamine Diack, the now disgraced former IAAF president and at the time also an IOC member, just three days before Rio won the right to host the 2016 Olympics, the French newspaper Le Monde has claimed.

Citing sources among French investigators, Le Monde said it had established concrete information that Pamodzi Consulting, a company founded by Papa Massata Diack, received a \$1.5m payment from a holding company based in the British Virgin Islands. Diack Jr, at the time a marketing executive for the International Association of Athletics Federations, also received \$500,000 from the same company, which was transferred to a bank account in Russia.



According to the paper, French investigators believe the money may have been used to influence the election for the 2016 Olympics, which was held in Copenhagen in 2009. It said that French investigators had established

the holding company is linked to a Brazilian businessman who specialises in subcontracting. It also alleged that the businessman had been involved with many construction deals with the state of Rio, related to the Olympic Games.

Diack Jr, who was banned from athletics for life last year and is currently on the run from Interpol, told the paper: "Good luck for your article!" when asked for his response.

Last year the Guardian revealed how the Tokyo Olympic bid team also made a €1.3m payment to the Black Tidings secret bank account in Singapore, which is linked to Diack Jr, during Japan's successful race to host the 2020 Games. Diack Jr was also apparently involved in 2008 in a scheme to deliver "parcels" to six influential members of the IOC at a time when Doha, Qatar, was trying to bid for the 2016 Olympics.

Diack Sr, who is currently in custody in France facing charges of money laundering and corruption, refused to comment on the story. However the Rio 2016 spokesman Mário Andradá told Le Monde: "The elections were clean. Rio won by 66 votes against 32, it was a clear victory."

Le Monde also said that Diack Jr had transferred \$299,300 via Pamodzi Sports Consulting to the offshore company Yemli Limited on 2 October 2009 - and that Yemli Limited was linked to the former Namibian sprinter Frankie Fredericks, who was an International Olympic Committee scrutineer at the vote in Copenhagen.

Fredericks, who is also chair of the 2024 Olympics evaluation commission, told L'Équipe that the payment had "nothing to do with the Olympic Games". He said: "I had the idea to develop a relay championships. In addition I supported the IAAF marketing programme, the African athletics programme, the IAAF Continental Programme and the African athletics championships. My attendance at various events and promotional efforts are documented and accordingly these services can be substantiated by other evidence."

"Payment was in respect of services rendered in the period 2007 to 2011. The payment has nothing whatsoever to do with the Olympic games. By the way, I was not an IAAF board member at the time, but an IAAF ambassador, and did not breach any regulation or rule of ethics."

When asked why it was he had been paid in 2009, precisely on the day of the election day for the 2016 Olympics, he replied: "Despite the contract being concluded in 2007 I had not been paid, and therefore started to put pressure on Pamodzi Sports Consulting, and this culminated in the payment in 2009."

(Source: Guardian)

Luis Enrique says needed to 'disconnect' from Barca's constant pressures

The crushing weight of expectation that comes with managing Barcelona eventually proved too much for Luis Enrique, who said on Friday he felt a sense of relief after announcing his plans to walk away at the end of the season.

"It's evident that there are some clubs with a bigger impact than others. I am switched on for too many hours of the day and I need to disconnect," Luis Enrique told a news conference on Friday ahead of Barca's La Liga game with Celta Vigo.

"This is a unique profession in which you have to take decisions constantly, it's something every coach has to accept. Some coaches can handle it and can stay in their jobs for a very long time and be happy but that's not the case with me."

The coach, who has won eight out of 10 trophies since taking charge in 2014, echoed the words of current Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola, who also quit Barca after a trophy-laden era in 2012, declaring: "I'm empty and I need to fill up".

Luis Enrique had previously said would decide his future at the end of the season but explained a weight had been lifted off his shoulders in announcing his departure on Wednesday, saying he felt "elated" about his final few months in the job.

"I haven't lost any strength in the last four days and in one sense I feel a little relieved but focused on the objectives we set for ourselves at the start of the season," he added.

Barca are one point clear at the top of the standings and with fixtures against title rivals Real Madrid and Sevilla to come their hopes of lifting a third La Liga crown under the coach are in their own hands.

The Catalans have also reached the final of the King's Cup although their chances of remaining in the Champions League hang in the balance after losing their last 16 first leg game to Paris St Germain 4-0, with the second leg coming up next Wednesday.

Athletic Bilbao coach Ernesto Valverde is reported to be the number one choice to take over at Barca next season with Sevilla's Jorge Sampaoli also in the running. Luis Enrique said he would have no say in picking his successor.

(Source: Reuters)

Puyol anticipating memorable matches in Russia

The upcoming festival of football in Russia is getting closer, with the FIFA Confederations Cup 2017 now just over 100 days away. Carles Puyol, who captained Spain to triumph at the 2010 FIFA World Cup™, came to Russia to have a look at how preparations are progressing ahead of the Tournament of Champions.

It was a short but extremely busy trip. In just two days, Puyol managed to fit in a visit to the Saint Petersburg Stadium, a chat with Russian football fans, a meeting with prospective volunteers for the Confederations Cup and World Cup, plus a ride on the Moscow Metro. The former Barcelona man gave his impressions on the country's preparations for the Confederations Cup and spoke about his expectations for the upcoming tournament in an interview with FIFA.com.

■ FIFA.com: What was your reaction to how Russia is preparing for the FIFA Confederations Cup 2017?

Carles Puyol: It was an extremely memorable visit. I went to the stadium in Saint Petersburg and I can say that it looks ready to stage top-level football matches. It is really impressive. I met with volunteers in Moscow and rode on the world-famous metro. In both cities I sensed a growing anticipation; I felt that Russia simply cannot wait for the tournament to arrive. You can see that Russia really wants to host both the Confederations Cup and the World Cup at the highest level.

■ What impressed you most of all? It was interesting to see how deep the Moscow Metro went underground. It was also amazing how clean it was. It's nothing like other underground lines. I didn't get to see a lot of Saint Petersburg, but I really liked it there, and I want to come again to enjoy the beautiful views in this city.

You have supported the Volunteer Campaign in Russia since its inception last June. It seems you have a special bond with volunteers.

It's been really nice meeting with volunteers in Russia, both in June last year and this time around. The fact that more than 176,000 people applied to be volunteers shows how great the interest is in Russia for these tournaments. I don't doubt they'll contribute massively towards a successful competition. After all, volunteers play a vital role in hosting major sporting events. It would be just impossible to host



these tournaments without them.

■ You competed at the Confederations Cup in 2009: what memories do you have of this tournament?

On the one hand, it didn't turn out well for Spain. We lost in the semi-final against the USA, and we deserved to lose. The Americans were stronger in that game. On the other hand, the tournament was extremely important in light of our victory at the 2010 World Cup. We already knew what to expect in South Africa, and that gave us an advantage in 2010. But it's important to remember that the Confederations Cup is not just the dress rehearsal for the World Cup. It's a significant tournament in its own right, featuring actual champions, and one in which victory would be a prestigious feat.

■ Coming back to the forthcoming Confederations Cup, who in your opinion are the favourites?

First of all, I'm looking forward to memorable and spectacular matches in Russia involving excellent players. Bearing

in mind the kind of football Germany and Chile have been playing recently, I'd say these two are favourites.

Russia are taking part in the Confederations Cup for the first time in their history. You played against them at UEFA EURO 2008, a successful tournament both for Russia and Spain.

I've got fantastic memories from that tournament because it was the start of the most successful period in Spain's history. The Russian side has also stayed in my memory. I thought that those two teams, Russia and Spain, set out to play wonderful football at that tournament. Russia had superb players back then, so it was especially good to beat them in the group stages (4-1) and in the semi-final (3-0). Those were perhaps our best two performances at the competition.

■ What do you know about the Russian national team today?

Football always goes in cycles, and Russia are starting a fresh one, with new, young players and a different coach. Plus

they're in a completely unique position as hosts of the Confederations Cup and World Cup. This will give them extra motivation and added support from the fans. So it's an interesting time for this team. I'll keep an eye on Russia; let's see how they get on.

■ Spain are starting a new cycle as well. What chances do they have of reclaiming the trophy in 2018?

I like the current Spanish team. They've made a great start to the World Cup qualifiers, but there's a long way to go. We'll see how they cope with qualification. I'm confident we'll get to the World Cup, even though we're in a tough group. After that, we'll see.

■ Who will be the favourites at the 2018 World Cup?

If they teams are in good form, then Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Italy or Spain, but it's hard to say right now. There's more than a year to go until the tournament and a lot can change. Let's wait and see who qualifies for Russia.

(Source: FIFA)

Former France and Real Madrid great Kopa dies aged 85

Former France soccer great Raymond Kopa, who won three European Cups with Real Madrid in the 1950s, died at the age of 85 on Friday.

"Raymond Kopa was a legend of French football... and was one of France's most admired sportsmen," French president Francois Hollande said in a statement.

A crafty advanced playmaker, Kopa guided France to third place at the 1958 World Cup won by Pele's Brazil, and was named the tournament's best player.

"It is a terrible loss, he is a legend," French football federation president Noel Le Graet said in a statement.

Kopa was one of four French players, with Michel Platini, Zinedine Zidane and Jean-Pierre Papin, to have won the Ballon d'Or, football's top individual award.

Born in northern France in a family of Polish immigrants, Kopa won three consecutive European Cups with Real Madrid from 1957.

A pit boy in the coal mines of Noeux



les Mines, he lost a finger in a mining accident before starting his football career at Angers at 17.

In 1951, he joined Reims, leading them to the European Cup final in 1956, losing 4-3 to Alfredo Di Stefano's Real Madrid.

Kopa scored 18 goals from 45 caps with France between 1952-62.

(Source: Reuters)

West Ham rejected Chinese bids for Carroll - Bilic

West Ham United rejected bids from Chinese Super League clubs for striker Andy Carroll, manager Slaven Bilic has confirmed, saying the Premier League side have no plans to sell one of their "best players".

The 28-year-old Carroll has been strongly linked by the British media with a move to the far east during their winter window, which closed this week.

"No way, no way," Bilic told British media when asked about reports claiming the club had secured an agent. "He's one of our best players and we want to keep him."

"I know the Chinese clubs sent their representatives to watch our games. Apparently they were watching other players, but they fell in love with Andy. We turned down an offer."

Carroll, who has scored four goals in his last four games, has missed West Ham's league draws against West Bromwich Albion and Watford with a groin injury.



Bilic expects the England forward to make his return in Monday's London derby against league leaders Chelsea.

"I hope he's going to be fit," Bilic added.

"I am always trying to be optimistic but this time it is not crazy optimistic it is realistic that he will be fit and available."

(Source: Reuters)



@atleticodemadrid FANTASTIC NEWS!
♥ Fernando Torres has been discharged and has left the hospital



@dembabafoot It's all about love and respect for my big brother. What a MAN...! ?



@aaronramsey Tucking into my first pancake of the day! Happy Pancake Day

Asian hopefuls ready to battle in Malaysia

The final qualifying chapter for the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup Bahamas 2017 starts this weekend on the beach sands of Pantai Batu Buruk in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, as 12 teams will contest this year's AFC Beach Soccer Championship. Three spots at Bahamas 2017 are on offer for the contestants from 4 to 11 March 2017, with this year's Asian qualifiers being staged for the first time in South-east Asia after the previous seven editions took place in the Middle East.

On Tuesday, Asia's beach soccer hopefuls learned which groups the three qualified teams will play in at Bahamas 2017. The newly-crowned Asian champions will advance to play Mexico, Italy and Nigeria in Group B at the Beach Soccer World Cup. The runners-up at the AFC Beach Soccer Championship were drawn in Group C, where they will face Paraguay, Panama and Portugal at the world finals. The third-place finisher at Malaysia 2017 will play in Group D versus Poland, Tahiti and Brazil in the Caribbean.

For these Asian aspirants to secure those three spots, they must advance to the semi-finals at Malaysia 2017 as winners of one of the three groups drawn in early January or be the best second-placed team in the competition. The semi-final winners will earn their places at Bahamas 2017, while the two losing semi-finalists will play for the third and final qualifying spot.

Top-ranked Iran look for second title. Drawn in a five-team group at the AFC Beach Soccer Championship, there will be expectations on Iran to win their second Asian beach soccer title after a productive build-up to Malaysia 2017.

Currently the top-ranked side in Asia, Iran head into the qualifiers in good form after winning last month's Persian



Beach Soccer Cup title with victories over World Cup-bound Italy and Poland on home sand. Last November, Mohammad Hossein Mirshamsi's side finished second behind Brazil at the Beach Soccer Intercontinental Cup in Dubai. The Iranians will face 2006 Asian champions Bahrain, tournament hosts Malaysia, Afghanistan and China PR in Group A.

Defending champions aim for repeat. Oman travel to South-east Asia with aims of repeating their successful efforts of two years ago when they claimed their first Asian title in Qatar. The Sultanate have been drawn in Group B, where they will face Lebanon and Thailand in a revised three-team group following

the last-minute withdrawal of Uzbekistan from the qualifiers.

Talib Hilal Al Thanawi's side have also had a good build-up to Malaysia 2017, having defeated European powerhouse Switzerland in two recent friendlies in the Omani capital of Muscat before earning wins over Bahrain last month.

Uzbekistan's late withdrawal will make the task of reaching the semi-finals from Group B more challenging, as the successful side will likely need two victories to win the group and advance to the last four.

Looking for a third Asian crown. Group C consists of two sides looking to become the competition's most successful team in Japan and United

Arab Emirates. The Japanese were Asian champions in 2009 and 2011, while UAE claimed the title in 2007 and 2008.

Marcelo Mendes's Japanese squad will also have the extra motivation of trying to go one better than two years ago when they lost on penalties to Oman in the final. Their preparations included success at last month's Thailand 5s Beach Soccer Championship, where the Far East nation scored an impressive 32 goals in four matches in Bangkok.

Qatar, who hosted the last two editions of the AFC Beach Soccer Championship, and Iraq round out the field in the four-team Group C.

(Source: FIFA)

FIDE President thanks Iran for hosting Women's World Chess



S P O R T S FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov thanked the Iranian officials for hosting the Women's World Chess Championship.

Tan Zhongyi from China defeated Ukraine's Anna Muzychuk and claimed the title.

The competition took place in the Espinas Palace Hotel in Tehran, Capital of Iran.

"First of all, I would like to congratulate Tan Zhongyi for winning the Women's World Chess Championship. I wish her all the best," Ilyumzhinov said in the closing ceremony.

"I want to thank Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Iran's Ministry of

Youth Affairs and Sports, Iran Chess Federation and all of those involved in the competition. It was a historical competition in Iran and I hope the country to host a chess competition once again," Ilyumzhinov added.

"Iran had already hosted the FIDE World Chess Championship in 2000 and I am sure they will host another tournament as soon as possible," the Russian concluded.

The Women's World Chess Championship 2017 was a 64-player knock-out tournament, to decide the women's world chess champion. The final was won by Tan Zhongyi over Anna Muzychuk in the rapid tie-breaks.

IPL: Tractor Sazi held by Saipa, Padideh beat Gostaresh



S P O R T S Tractor Sazi football team were held to a goalless draw by Saipa in the 23rd week of Iran Professional League at Tabriz's Yadegar Emam Stadium on Friday.

Saipa goalkeeper Hamed Lak was man of the match as he saved numerous chances. Lak has now kept six clean sheets in the last eight games for Saipa.

The draw will be another blow for Amir Ghalenoei's team who are Persepolis' main title rivals this season.

With just seven games until the end of the season for Tabriz based side, they are now five points behind league leaders Persepolis and five points ahead of Esteghlal.

Elsewhere in Mashhad, Padideh beat Gostaresh Foolad 3-2. Reza Nasehi, Mohsen Yousefi and Akbar Imani scored for Padideh while Luciano Pereira Mendes and Dariush Shojaeian scored for Gostaresh.

In Abadan, Sanat Naft edged past Paykan 1-0 thanks to a 65th minute goal by Hakim Nesari. In the other game Saba and Foolad Khuzestan played out a goalless draw.

This week's games will be as follow:

■ **Saturday**
Esteghlal Khuzestan vs. Machine Sazi
Esteghlal vs. Siah Jamegan

■ **Sunday**
Sepahan vs. Zob Ahan
Naft Tehran vs. Persepolis

Reza Yazdani undergoes successful foot injury

Two-time world champ Reza Yazdani underwent a successful surgery on his right ankle.

Yazdani underwent the successful operation performed by Professor Bertil Bouillon in the German city of Cologne on Wednesday.

According to the surgeon, Yazdani, nicknamed "The Leopard of Juybar" will return to wrestling after four months.

Yazdani competed in the London 2012 Olympics but was injured in the semi-final, in the match against Ukrainian competitor Valeriy Andriytshev.

The -97kg freestyler also took part in the Rio 2016 Olympics but was knocked out after suffering two defeats against Azerbaijan's Khetag Gazyumov and Magomed Abdulmuminovich Ibragimov of Uzbekistan.

(Source: Tasnim)

Ronaldo set to miss Eibar trip for stuttering Real Madrid

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane is set to be without three of his main forwards for Saturday's trip to Eibar after Cristiano Ronaldo missed training on Friday with an ankle knock, joining the suspended Gareth Bale and Alvaro Morata on the sidelines.

Real visit tiny Eibar hoping to get their bid for a first league title since 2012 back on track after losing top spot to Barcelona following Wednesday's 3-3 draw with Las Palmas but Zidane said he would not risk his team's talisman.

"He (Ronaldo) felt something was

not right and that's why he did not train today. Every game is important but the most important thing is that our players are ok, and so we'll wait and see what we do with Cristiano."

Ronaldo scored twice late on to salvage a point in a chaotic game against Las Palmas which saw Bale sent off for the first time in his Real career, earning the Wales forward a two-game ban to miss the fixtures with Eibar and Real Betis.

Morata, who scored the winner in last week's 3-2 win at Villarreal, is also suspended against Eibar for

accumulating yellow cards, meaning Zidane will look to Karim Benzema and Lucas Vazquez to lead his side's attack, while winger Marco Asensio could be in line for a return to the team.

"I have 24 players and the message has always been the same since I arrived: every player is important, if we want to win the league we can't drop many more points but as we play every three days we have to rotate our squad," Zidane said.

Real have dropped five points in their last three games, losing to Valencia and scraping a 3-2 win over Villarreal before

drawing with Las Palmas.

Zidane admitted morale was low in the dressing room after the disappointing results but said there was no reason his team could not turn things around.

"I have noticed a bit of negativity, which you always get when you don't play well or get the result you wanted," he said.

"I'm used to that but for me the word crisis doesn't exist in Real Madrid or football because every three days you have the chance to do things better."

(Source: Reuters)

Iranian volleyball teams learn fate in continental competitions

Breathtaking actions await volleyball enthusiasts when a total of eight top-flight AVC indoor tournaments will be held this year, with lots for six competitions having been drawn by the Asian Volleyball Confederation at Dusit Princess Srinakarin Hotel here on Monday.

Dr Eom Han-Joo, Chairman of the AVC Sports Events Council, presided over the drawing of lots ceremony, while Mr Somporn Chaibangyang, President of the Thailand Volleyball Association, was guest of honour to deliver a welcome address to all participants.



Also in attendance in the ceremony and press conference were AVC Secretary-General Mr Shanrit Wongprasert, Mr Jaksuwan Tocharoen, TVA Secretary-General and Secretary of the AVC Sports Events Council, Dr Rueangsak Siriphol, General Manager of the AVC Headquarters, AVC Referees Committee Chairman Mr Songsak Charoenpong and representatives from SMM, the Thailand-based multimedia company and AVC's marketing partner from 2016 to 2019, and Thairath TV, the Thai TV channel which won the rights to broadcast AVC tournaments to every household in Thailand for four years. Local journalists also turned out in large numbers to observe the drawing of lots ceremony.

"With eight major tournaments being held by the AVC this year, I'm convinced this will help promote volleyball across the continent and in Thailand in particular. As the AVC Headquarters is located in Bangkok, we (TVA) are very happy and honored to be part of the AVC. We will throw our strong support behind the governing body in order that they will gain more achievements in whatever campaign in the near future," Somporn said in his speech.

A total of eight AVC tournaments will take place this year. However, drawing of lots have already been conducted for two competitions earlier. They comprised the 11th Asian Girls' U18 Championship to be held in Chongqing, China from March 5 to 13 and the 11th Asian Boys' U19 Championship due to take place in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar between March 28 and April 5.

Among the six tournaments, of which drawing of lots had been conducted on Monday, four of them will be qualification rounds for future FIVB World Championships.

Results of the drawing of lots are as follows

1 The 2nd Asian Men's U23 Championship in Ardabil, Iran from May 1 to 9, 2017. A total of 12 teams will take part in the championship.

Pool A: Iran, Philippines, Pakistan
Pool B: Chinese Taipei, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan
Pool C: China, Australia, Malaysia
Pool D: Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka

2 The 2nd Asian Women's U23 Championship in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand between May 13 and 21, 2017. A total of 14 teams will participate in the tournament.

Pool A: Thailand, Macao, Hong Kong
Pool B: Japan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam
Pool C: Chinese Taipei, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, Australia
Pool D: Philippines, Iran, Malaysia, New Zealand

3 The 2017 Asian Women's Club Championship in Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan during May 25 and 31, 2017. A total of eight teams to compete in the championship.

Pool A: Kazakhstan, Thailand, Iran, Chinese Taipei
Pool B: Japan, China, Vietnam, Philippines

4 The 2017 Asian Men's Club Championship in Nam Dinh and Ninh Binh, Vietnam between June 28 and July 6, 2017. A total of 14 teams will participate in the tournament.

Pool A: Vietnam, Iraq, Sri Lanka
Pool B: Iran, Chinese Taipei, United Arab Emirates
Pool C: Qatar, Kazakhstan, Hong Kong, Australia
Pool D: Japan, China, Maldives, Thailand

5 The 19th Asian Sr. Men's Championship in Surabaya, Indonesia from July 24 to August 1, 2017. A total of 16 teams will take part in the championship. However, teams in the Western Zone are still competing in the qualification round to vie for the top two slots. The winning team have been drawn in Pool A, with the team finishing second will be in Pool B.

Pool A: Indonesia, Qatar, Kazakhstan, W.Z 1
Pool B: Iran, Chinese Taipei, Pakistan, W.Z 2
Pool C: Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Sri Lanka
Pool D: Australia, China, Thailand, Hong Kong

6 The 19th Asian Sr. Women's Championship in Manila, the Philippines during August 9 and 17, 2017. A total of 14 teams will compete in the tournament.

Pool A: Philippines, Kazakhstan, Hong Kong
Pool B: China, Japan, Australia
Pool C: Korea, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, New Zealand
Pool D: Thailand, Chinese Taipei, Iran, Maldives

(Source: asianvolleyball.net)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari
■ Editor-in-Chief: Hassan Lasjerdi

▶ Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98(21) 88808214 editor@tehrantimes.com
▶ Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
▶ Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
▶ Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
▶ Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
▶ www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co. Tel: 88911433
▶ Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
▶ Printed at: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



Iranian dubber Mahin Kasmai dies at 78

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian dubber Mahin Kasmai, who lent her voice to many characters played by Audrey Hepburn and Elizabeth Taylor, died in the United States on Thursday. She was 78.



Kasmai, who was in the U.S. over the past few years, was suffering from cancer, the Iran Dubbing Association announced on Friday.

Mahin was a niece of Ali Kasmai, who was considered the father of voice acting in Iran.

Mahin also lent her voice to many leading characters acted by Diane Keaton, Maria Schell, Suzanne Pleshette, Jennifer Jones, Jean Seberg and Shirley MacLaine.

Iranian movie theaters to refresh schedules for Noruz

A R T TEHRAN — Six Iranian films are scheduled to go on screen at Iranian theaters during Noruz, the Iranian New Year celebration, which will begin on March 21.

Two comedies, "Guidance Patrol 2" by Saeid Soheili and "Three Aliens" by Mehdi Mazlumi, are among the films, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance announced on Friday.

Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian's acclaimed political drama "The Midday Event" is another movie for the Noruz holidays. It focuses on the terrorist atrocities of the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization in Iran of the 1980s.

The movie won the Crystal Simorgh for best film and the audience award at the 35th Fajr Film Festival in January.

"A Special Day" by Homayun Asadian and "Aba Jan" by Hatef Alimardani are also on the lineup for the springtime celebration.

Starring Mostafa Zamani and Parinaz Izadyar, "A Special Day" is about the organ trade in Iran. It tells the story of Hamed whose sister is waiting for a heart transplant.

"Aba Jan" is about a middle-aged mother who is waiting for the return of her son who was reported missing in action during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. Fatemeh Motamed-Arya stars in the film.

There will be no change of films for those theaters currently screening Peyman Qasemkhani's comedy drama "The Good, the Bad and the Frivolous" in Noruz.



Hamid Farrokhnejad acts in a scene from "Guidance Patrol 2". (Photo by Mohammad Badrilo)

Starring Hamid Farrokhnejad, Sam Derakhshani and Pejman Jamshidi, the film tells the story of a filmmaker who, contrary to his desires, has to use two superstars for his new film.

Gholam-Hossein Amirkhani decorated with top French honor

A R T TEHRAN — Master of Persian calligraphy Gholam-Hossein Amirkhani received a top French honor in Tehran on Tuesday from French Ambassador François Sénémaud who made him a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters.

Speaking during a ceremony held at the Embassy of France, Sénémaud praised Amirkhani for training many artists and creating numerous priceless works of Persian calligraphy.

He also acknowledged Amirkhani's key role in the introduction of Persian culture and literature, and lauded his service to culture and art by inscribing masterpieces from Persian poets such as Sadi and Hafez.

In a short speech, Amirkhani said, "What raises the hope in the hearts of people in today's chaotic world



Master calligrapher Gholam-Hossein Amirkhani attends a ceremony held at the Imam Ali (AS) Religious Arts Museum in Tehran on February 3, 2017 to celebrate his 77th birthday. (Tehran Picture Agency/Ahmad Aghasiani)

is art." "Sooner or later, art will help the human community pass this chaotic stage to reach a moderate condition," he added.

Amirkhani, 77, who is also the director of the Iran Calligraphers Association expressed his appreciation to the French government for the decoration and presented Sénémaud with one of his works.

The Order of Arts and Letters was established in 1957 to recognize eminent artists and writers, as well as people who have contributed significantly to furthering the arts in France and throughout the world.

The Order of Arts and Letters is awarded three times annually under the auspices of the Minister of Culture and Communication.

Iranian cartoonist Kambiz Derambakhsh also received the award in 2014.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran hosts symposium on media in Islamic world

CULTURE TEHRAN — The 1st International Symposium of Media, Culture and Islamic World Issues was held in Tehran on March 3.

A number of scholars including Seyyed Javad Miri, Vahid Aqili and Mehdi Montazer-Qaem from Iran, and Ahmad Murad Merican from Malaysia will deliver speeches during the symposium.

The Iranian Association of Cultural Studies and Communication organized the event in collaboration with the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Tehran and Al-Mustafa International University in Qom.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting

■ An exhibition of paintings by Katayun Vatani, Ebrahim Khormai, Soha Abed-Doost and Negar Moqimi-Dehkordi is currently underway at Sayeh Gallery.

The exhibition entitled "The Fourth Sky" runs until March 8 at the gallery located at 3 Aqakhani Alley, Omidvar St. in the Niavaran neighborhood.

■ Paintings by Asieh Ramezani are on display in an exhibition at Golestan Gallery. The exhibit will be running until March 8 at the gallery, which can be found at 34 Kamasai St. in the Darus neighborhood.

■ A collection of paintings by Esmaeil Mehrabian is on display in an exhibition at Sa Gallery. The exhibition entitled "Evolution" runs until March 12 at the gallery located at No. 134, 8th Bustan St., off Pasdaran Ave.

Photo

■ Photos by Ain Fazlollahi are currently on display in an exhibition at Arte Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Rituals of Varanasi" will run until March 10 at the gallery located on Molla Sadra St. near Vanak Square.

■ An exhibition of photos by Nima Malakuti and Milad Mokhtari is on display at Not Gallery.

The exhibition named "Unfinished" will run until March 12 at the gallery that can be found at No. 3 Shabnam Alley, Qaem Maqam St.

We need to talk about Brexit: Britannia hears her people in new play

GLoucester, ENGLAND (Reuters)

— Brendon O'Donnell voted to leave the European Union because he felt British money should go to struggling communities or local hospitals rather than Brussels, and his voice was not being heard.

Now it will be heard in theaters across Britain along with the voices of dozens of other people from different corners of the country, in the first play to tackle Brexit.

"My Country; a work in progress", opens at London's National Theatre this week before touring nationwide. It weaves verbatim quotes from members of the public with speeches from politicians, all spoken by actors.

The play also includes new material by Carol Ann Duffy, who as Britain's official poet laureate since 2009 has chronicled important national events in verse.

The project started in the heated days after the EU referendum last June, when

the theater sent out a team of "gatherers" to record the views and stories of Britons from different walks of life and from both sides of the debate.

One of the places targeted was Gloucester, an ancient cathedral city in southwestern England with high levels of poverty and discontent. In the referendum, 58.5 percent of voters there opted for Brexit, compared with 51.9 percent nationally.

Among them was O'Donnell, a former butcher and care worker in his early 40s who now relies on state benefits because of a debilitating illness. He told his story for the Brexit play.

His frustrations ranged from cuts in public services, which he said were making life harder for people like him, to his view that it was too easy for immigrants to move to Britain and claim benefits. O'Donnell also vented his anger with politicians he thinks were out of touch.

"You do feel like you were ignored for a long time. It was never 'what do the people want?' first," he told Reuters at a community center in the social housing estate of Matson on the outskirts of Gloucester.

"We all moan about it to each other but no one wants to accept that and take it any further, so it kind of falls on deaf ears," said O'Donnell, who runs activities for children and young people at the center.

In recent years he and his wife have been hard-hit by austerity measures as the government tries to reduce a big budget deficit, including by curbing welfare spending. O'Donnell lost one of his benefits at one point, and had it restored only after a bureaucratic appeal process.

"WE LOVE THESE PEOPLE" The premise of "My Country" is that the allegorical figure of Britannia calls a meeting to listen to her people, and a passionate debate ensues.

Traditionally depicted in flowing robes with a shield, trident and plumed helmet, Britannia appears in modern dress in the play, although the helmet and trident feature as props.

Some of her lines are quotes from speeches by the likes of David Cameron, the pro-EU prime minister brought down by the referendum result, and Boris Johnson, who campaigned to leave and is now foreign secretary.

Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and three English regions - the northeast, East Midlands and southwest, which includes Gloucester - are each represented by one actor who gives voice to several real life interviewees.

"We have tried to make this as unbiased and as equal and open as it can be," said Adam Ewan, who plays the southwest, speaking in a back room at the National Theatre, a hulking 1970s concrete building on the south bank of the Thames.

Hugh Jackman returns as clawed mutant Wolverine in "Logan"

Australian actor Hugh Jackman returns as Wolverine in "Logan", playing the clawed mutant one last time after 17 years in the popular "X-Men" franchise.

The film is the third stand alone "Wolverine" movie in the comic superhero franchise, which has had various sequels and new casts since Jackman first played Wolverine/Logan in "X-Men", alongside Patrick Stewart's wheelchair-bound Professor Xavier.

"I'm excited to see...what happens next with whoever takes on...the claws and battles," Jackman told a news conference in Beijing on Wednesday where he and Stewart promoted "Logan".

"I know there would be more people, there should be more people, both Professor Xavier and Logan are great characters, they are great heroes but also complex characters and I think they should be played by many people."

In the movie, Logan/Wolverine is trying to hide away on the Mexican border while caring for Professor X, played by Stewart. Things change, however, with the arrival of a new



Actor Hugh Jackman poses with a cloth puppet, a traditional type of opera during a news conference during Asian premiere of the X-Men series film 'Logan' in Taipei, Taiwan February 28, 2017. (REUTERS/Tyrone Siu)

young mutant.

"All of the principal characters, at least the good guys in this movie, have one ambition - they want to get across a border to somewhere where they would be safe," Stewart said.

"All around the world there are hundreds of thousands of people experiencing that pain, that suffering, the fear and the loneliness. This film addresses that and may even give some touch of hope of optimism to what can be a very discouraging not to say desperate situation."

"Logan" begins its worldwide cinema roll out this week.

Klimt painting sells for \$59 million at record-breaking London auction

LONDON (Reuters) — A painting of flowers by Gustav Klimt sold in London for 48 million pounds (\$59 million), a record for a work by the Austrian artist and the third-highest price for any work sold at auction in Europe, Sotheby's said on Thursday.

Described in the auction catalog as a masterpiece of Viennese fin-de-siecle art, "Bauerngarten", completed in 1907, depicts poppies, daisies, zinnia and roses in full bloom in a garden.

It was the star attraction at Sotheby's sale of impressionist, modern and surrealist art, which took place on Wednesday evening.

The auction as a whole netted \$241 million, which Sotheby's said was the highest total for any auction staged in London, propelled particularly by Asian buyers.

"Tonight's outstanding result is a new benchmark for London sales as much as it is a statement on the momentum of the global art market in 2017," said Helena Newman, chairman of Sotheby's Europe, in a statement.

The two artworks that previously sold for higher prices at European



Workers pose with Gustav Klimt's "Bauerngarten (Blumengarten)" ahead of an upcoming sale at Sotheby's auction house, in London, Britain February 22, 2017. (REUTERS/Peter Nicholls)

auctions were Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti's "Walking Man I", which sold for 65 million pounds in 2010, and Flemish master Peter Paul Rubens' "The Massacre of the Innocents", which went for 49.5 million pounds in 2002.

Sotheby's said another highlight of its Wednesday sale was Pablo Picasso's 1944 work "Plant de tomates", which sold for 17 million pounds.

The auction also set a record for a work by Alfred Sisley, a British impressionist who worked mostly in France. His 1874 painting "Effet de neige a Louveciennes" sold for 7.4 million pounds.