



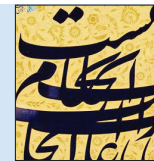
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IMF sees Iran's GDP growth at 3.8% in 2018

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its latest World Economic Outlook titled "Seeking Sustainable Growth: Short-Term Recovery, Long-Term Challenges" predicted a 3.8 percent real GDP growth for Iran in 2018, rising from 3.5 percent in 2017. "In 2018, growth is expected to in-

crease to 3.8 percent, mostly reflecting stronger domestic demand in oil importers and a rebound of oil production in oil exporters," the report said. Iran's GDP will increase to 4.1 by 2022, while the country's consumer price inflation which stands at 10.5 percent in the current year will fall to 10.1 percent in 2018 and to 8.7 percent by 2022.

Zarif, Majlis mull over possible responses to Trump

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran **d e s k** will react strongly to any U.S. move against the nuclear deal with global powers, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told the Majlis on Wednesday, according to a parliamentarian who attended the session.

"In the closed session, Zarif emphasized that if the Americans take any steps against the nuclear deal the Islamic Republic of Iran will give them a more crushing response," Shahbaz Hassanpour, a lawmaker representing the city of Sirjan, told reporters after the session. **→13**

Russia: Terrorists operating 'under U.S. nose' in Syria

Russia says the U.S. is allowing ISIL (Daesh) terrorist group to operate "under its nose" in Syria, calling on Washington to explain why terrorists enjoy freedom of movement in a border area where the Americans have a military base.

The U.S. has declared an expanse stretching 55 kilometers (34 miles) around the al-Tanf area a "de-confliction zone," only letting in forces allied

to Washington and blocking out the Syrian army. Tanf is located in a zone, where Syria, Iraq and Jordan's borders meet, and is, hence, of paramount strategic importance.

Russia's Defense Ministry questioned how around 300 Daesh terrorists had been allowed to cross the area under U.S. forces' watch and move out to block an important road linking the Syrian capital, **→13**

Literati discuss Hafez poetry at Tehran meeting

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The poetry **d e s k** of Hafez who is one of the finest lyric poets of Persian classical literature was discussed in a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday evening.

The session was organized by the Iranian Society of Cultural Works and Luminaries to commemorate Hafez National Day, just two days before its due date.

Several literati, including Mir Jalaeddin Kazzazi, Hassan Bolkhari, Gholamali Hadd-

ad-Adel and Asghar Daadbeh, delivered speeches on various aspects of Hafez poetry.

Kazzazi, who is mostly known for his studies on Persian poet Ferdowsi, put the focus of his lecture on divination based on consultation within the Divan of Hafez, which he said is only common among Iranians.

He said that the flexible nature of things makes them eligible to be used as an instrument for divination.

In his view, the Divan of Hafez is the most flexible book in the Persian language. He said that the "watery nature" of Hafez poetry makes the book useful as a source of consultation.

"Water is not solid and hard but is fluid and shapeless so it takes the shape of its container. All the debates that have been ongoing about Hafez and his poetry are rooted in the water nature of Hafez poetry," he stated. **→16**

PM May reaffirms UK's strong commitment to JCPOA

Prime Minister Theresa May has reaffirmed Britain's commitment to a 2015 Iran nuclear deal in a telephone conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump ahead of a key U.S. decision on whether Tehran has stuck to the terms of the pact.

Trump has cast doubt on the future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which put limits on Iran's nuclear program in return for lifting most Western economic sanctions.

A senior U.S. administration official said last week that Trump - who has criticized the pact as an "embarrassment" and "the worst deal ever negotiated," - was expected to decertify Iran's compliance ahead of an Oct. 15 deadline.

"The (prime minister) reaffirmed the UK's

strong commitment to the deal alongside our European partners, saying it was vitally important for regional security," said a statement from May's office following the call on Tuesday evening, Reuters reported.

"(The prime minister) stressed that it was important that the deal was carefully monitored and properly enforced."

In a separate statement, Britain's Foreign Office said Iran had upheld its nuclear commitments, adding to international pressure on Trump not to jeopardize security in the region.

"The nuclear deal was a crucial agreement," Foreign Minister Boris Johnson said.

"It was the culmination of 13 years of painstaking diplomacy and has increased security, both in the region and in the UK. It is

these security implications that we continue to encourage the U.S. to consider."

Johnson spoke by telephone with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif on Tuesday.

Britain and the United States are two of eight signatories to the deal, along with Iran, China, France, Russia, Germany and the European Union.

China, Russia and the European states have already expressed their continued support for the deal, while Iran has said Trump would not be able to undermine the pact.

If Trump declines to certify Iran's compliance, U.S. congressional leaders would have 60 days to decide whether to reimpose sanctions on Tehran suspended under the agreement. **→16**



ARTICLE
By Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

Iran's gas exports: potentials and challenges

Although Iran ranks first in the world in terms of natural gas reserves - according to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy, the country holds around 18 percent of total proven natural gas reserves globally-, when it comes to exports, it has a long way to the top of the list of gas exporting countries.

The country is currently recovering only a small share of its gigantic gas reserves, something about 280 billion cubic meters per year, from which even a much smaller portion is exported to the neighboring countries.

The situation raises the question of what Iran, as the country with world's largest gas reserves, should do to gain its deserved share in world's gas markets, and what approach the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) should be following to reach this goal.

In general, the gas recovered from a reserve is consumed in different areas, a portion is injected to oil wells to improve their recovery factor, a part is supplied to the national gas network, some is exported and a part is used for generating electricity in power plants.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), natural gas supplies 22 percent of the world's energy needs, and accounts for nearly a quarter of electricity generation worldwide, **→4**



I.R Iran Customs Administration (IRICA)
Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry
International Public Tender
Notice (Two Stage)
"Purchase of 20 drug & narcotic
detection dogs

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Caspian seal freed after rehab

A Caspian seal which was in rehab for a few days was released to the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea.

The Caspian seal is now classified as endangered on the IUCN red list of species threatened with extinction.

U.S.-led coalition destroys everything in Syria except for ISIL: Syria FM

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem says the US-led coalition purportedly fighting the ISIL (Daesh) terrorist group is trying to destroy the Arab country and prolong the armed conflict there.

Muallem stated that Damascus would demand the dissolution of the military contingent, stressing that thousands of Syrian women and children had been killed by coalition airstrikes in the troubled northern province of Raqqah and the eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr.

The top Syrian diplomat further noted that the Pentagon was using the coalition to cover up its destruction campaign in Syria.

He added that the US-backed militiamen from the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are fighting Syrian army forces to gain control over the oil-rich areas of the country.

Damascus would not allow any external force to violate its sovereignty, Muallem pointed out.

The SDF forces "are now intoxicated with US aid and support, but it must be understood that this assistance will not last forever," he said.

The US-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes against what are said to be Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a UN mandate.

The military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of achieving its declared goal of destroying Daesh.

Fifteen people were killed on October 4, when US-led warplanes targeted a residential building in the al-Kahroba neighborhood of Raqqah, located about 455 kilometers (283 miles) northeast of the capital Damascus.

The development came only a day after 21 civilians lost their lives and 14 others sustained injuries in US-led aerial attacks against al-Tausiyah neighborhood of the same Syrian city. (Source: SANA)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Rezaee says Iranian nation will defeat Trump

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Expediency Council secretary Mohsen Rezaee said on Wednesday that U.S. President Donald Trump will be defeated by the Iranian nation should he play any games against the country.

"I am personally confident that Trump will be defeated by the Iranian nation because his conduct shows he does not know the Iranian nation and has miscalculated our capabilities," Rezaee was quoted by ISNA as saying.

The former IRGC chief added that the nation has successfully overcome great pressures and sanctions over the years.



Top Republican lawmaker backs enforcing, not ditching Iran deal

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Republican chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs committee said on Wednesday the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the JCPOA, should be strictly enforced, but did not call for an end to the agreement, saying Washington should work with allies.

"As flawed as the deal is, I believe we must now enforce the hell out of it," Representative Ed Royce said at a hearing on Iran, Reuters reported.



Four new governors appointed

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Interior Ministry on Wednesday appointed four new governors for the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Golestan and Markazi, Tasnim news agency reported.

Interior Ministry spokesman Salman Samani said four candidates for the posts were proposed and approved in the Wednesday cabinet meeting headed by President Rouhani.

Mohammad Mahdi Shahriari, Bahman Moradnia, Manaf Hashemi, and Ali Aghazadeh were respectively named governors of West Azarbajian, Kurdistan, Golestan, and Markazi.



Iranian economy not affected by U.S.: VP

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian economy is not affected by "a foreign official's remarks," the vice president for economic affairs said on Wednesday as President Trump is expected to announce U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal within days.

Speaking after a cabinet meeting, Mohammad Nahavandian said Iran's economic relations with the world develops day by day and the U.S. government's "foolish, unconsidered remarks" could not change that.

He stressed that Iran's supporters are more than that of America, adding that the U.S. is isolated for its hostile stance against the Iran nuclear deal.



Iran protests Somalia over fishing boat shooting

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Wednesday strongly criticized Somalia for opening fire on an Iranian fishing boat, which killed the captain of the vessel and injured a sailor.

"Iran has conveyed its protest to Somalia in this regard through relevant channels," Qassemi told ISNA.

He added that the ministry was following up on the case.

The incident occurred last week when Somali security forces opened fire on the vessel during an operation in the Indian Ocean.



White House: Trump to announce Iran strategy

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said on Tuesday that U.S. President Donald Trump has reached a decision to deal with Iran.

"The president has reached a decision on an overall Iran strategy and wants to make sure we have a broad policy to deal with that, not just one part of it, to deal with all of the problems of Iran being a bad actor," she said.

Contrary to repeated reports by the UN nuclear watchdog that Iran is abiding by its commitments to the July 2015 nuclear agreement, Trump is expected to announce within days that he will no longer certify Iran's compliance.

Iran, Tanzania say prepared to share anti-terror knowhow

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran is ready to share its experiences in fighting terrorism with friendly countries, President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday.

President Rouhani made the remarks in a meeting with visiting Tanzanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Augustine Philip Mahiga in Tehran on Wednesday.

He pointed to terrorism as a big problem of the world and urged all countries to fight the problem.

The fact that no country openly dares to support terrorist groups such as al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda, al-Shabab, Boko Haram and Daesh indicates that the world realized the danger of terrorism, Rouhani noted.

Meanwhile, Mahiga said Tanzania is ready to take advantage of Iran's expe-



riences in fighting terrorism and extremism, organized crimes, human trafficking and money laundering.

He also expressed Tanzania's readiness to develop ties with Iran in all fields.

In a separate meeting with Mahiga, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed Iran's resolve and readiness to develop relations with African states, Tanzania in particular.

He added that the two countries' state and private sectors could strengthen their bilateral ties in various fields, including banking, tourism, energy, science, and technology.

Mahiga, for his part, hailed Iran's achievements in the fields of politics, economy, science, and culture, calling for enhanced ties between the two nations.

Britain 'fully committed' to nuclear deal: diplomat

The British Ambassador to Iran, Nicholas Hopton, has said that his government is fully and strongly committed to the successful implementation of the 2015 nuclear deal.

"The British government is fully and strongly committed to the successful implementation of the JCPOA [the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] because it believes that this presents the best option for the establishment of peace, stability, security and welfare for the region," ISNA quoted Hopton as saying in an interview published on Wednesday.

The ambassador added that the UK continues working with the partners that are committed to successful implementation of the agreement.

Commenting on bilateral ties, Hopton said, "It is an honor to say that the growth of economic ties have been quick and many important contracts have been concluded between Iranian and British companies and that many other negotiations are on the way."

The British embassy tried hard to link Iranian and British companies following removal of sanctions and implementation of the JCPOA since January 2016, he added.

"The precise extent of bilateral cooperation cannot be easily estimated, but we are sure that the growth of trade between the UK and Iran has at least doubled. This is important and the British government stresses supporting the JCPOA and endeavours to increase the bilateral trade in the future."

The nuclear deal was signed by Iran, the U.S., Britain, France, China, Russia, Germany, and the European Union in July 2015. It went into effect in January 2016.

On September 20 Financial Times reported that a UK company plans to build one of the world's largest solar power farms in Iran, highlighting European investor enthusiasm for the country despite its renewed diplomatic tensions with the U.S.

Quercus, a green investment company in London,

Russia says ready to mediate between S. Arabia and Iran

Russia is ready and willing to mediate in establishing relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov has stated.

"We tried several times and offered [to help Iran and Saudi Arabia sit down at the negotiating table], but we do not impose our intermediary role," Bogdanov

told reporters.

"But we have always told our partners in both Saudi Arabia and Iran that we are ready to provide both a platform for contacts and friendly services."

Bogdanov added that Moscow has always highlighted the need to resolve the issues between the two countries.

"Many problems would have been much easier to resolve had there been mutual understanding and trust between Tehran and Riyadh," Bogdanov remarked.

He added that the situation in the entire region, especially regarding anti-terrorism efforts, depends on mutual understanding and cooperation between

Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Bogdanov stressed that Russia always tells Saudi Arabia and Iran that it is ready to report something from one side to another or to organize their bilateral contacts. "These proposals remain on the table both with our Saudi and Iranian partners."

(Source: RT)

Foreign forces not needed in the region: commander

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The deputy chief of the Iranian Army on Wednesday dismissed any need for presence of foreign powers in the Middle East, saying regional countries can ensure the security of the region.

"The countries of the region can resolve issues and problems through dialogue and interaction," Brigadier General Ahmadreza Pourdastan said in a meeting with Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman Marshal Matar bin Ali al-Obaidani.

Regional states have the capability to establish security in the region without the presence of outsiders, he added.

The general further said that Iran's defense doctrine is based on deterrence and, therefore, the strengthening of the country's military power is not aimed at aggression.

During the meeting, the two sides also exchanged views on deepening bilateral cooperation and military relations.

The commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman arrived in Tehran on Monday. During his visit he met with his Iranian counterpart Brigadier General Hassan Shahsafi.

In recent years, Iran and Oman have developed strong ties, with their top officials making regular reciprocal visits.



Iran's deputy Army commander Pourdastan (L) in meeting with Oman's Royal Air Force chief Marshal Matar

Rouhani: U.S. angry because IRGC humiliated Daesh

Country leaving JCPOA will lose reputation, president says

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday any party that walks away from the multilateral 2015 nuclear agreement would be damaging its own reputation, adding the U.S. is angry with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) because it has "humiliated" Daesh.

The remarks by Rouhani comes as President Donald Trump is expected to declare this week the withdrawal of the U.S. from the nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Speaking at a cabinet meeting, Rouhani said the signatories that choose to honor their sides of the bargain are in fact protecting their own international reputation.

The president said if the U.S. quits the nuclear deal which has been endorsed by the UN Security Council it

will be standing "against the world and the United Nations".

The U.S. is angry over the JCPOA because at a "sensitive time that they wanted to say that Iran is a liar and secretly wants to build nuclear arms, Iran, by attending (nuclear) negotiations, proved that they (Americans) are liars," Rouhani stated.

He also noted that the number of countries and regimes that support Washington's hostile stance on the nuclear deal could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

On the contrary, he said, "Today, the world backs the path that the Islamic Republic of Iran has chosen and there is no one, even among America's allies

in Europe, who supports destroying the agreement."

In an indirect reference to U.S. President Donald Trump who is undoing what his predecessor Barack Obama did, Rouhani said, "It is really a shame for a government whose argument is that I oppose any work by the former legitimate government."

Rouhani added it is becoming "quite clear" which government is "rogue" and also "trampling international law".

He also expressed full support for the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) amid a possible plan by Trump to designate the IRGC as a terrorist group as part of his "new Iran strategy".

"Through its support for the nations

Rouhani says it is becoming "quite clear" which government is "rogue" and is "trampling international law".

PM May reaffirms UK's strong commitment to JCPOA

I → Earlier, the White House said Trump would make an announcement later this week on an "overall Iran strategy", including whether to decertify the nuclear deal.

May's office said she agreed with Trump that their teams should remain in contact ahead of the decision on recertification.

Trump, who has repeatedly expressed his strong opposition to the nuclear accord, has desperately sought a pretext to scrap or weaken it.

In his speech at the UN General Assembly, Trump made the harshest attack against the July 2015 nuclear deal, saying it was an "embarrassment".

Trump's stance on the nuclear deal comes as the International Atomic Energy Agency has verified Iran's adherence to the terms of the nuclear agreement for eight times.

All international dignitaries have said the agreement which went into force in early 2016 is working well.

■ **British foreign secretary stresses London's support for nuclear deal**

"The (prime minister) reaffirmed the UK's strong commitment to the deal alongside our European partners, saying it was vitally important for regional security."

Iran's nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi met with Johnson in London on Wednesday. During the meeting, Johnson said his country backs efforts to protect the nuclear deal.

Johnson hailed the JCPOA as an international achievement.

He further emphasized that Britain is resolved to support the nuclear deal and stressed the need for efforts to protect it.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views about the future of the JCPOA and the latest developments in the region and the world.

Speaking ahead of the meeting with the Iranian official, the British foreign secretary said, "...the UK supports the deal and stresses the importance of all parties continuing to uphold their commitments."

Iraq court orders arrest of Kurd independence vote organizers

An Iraqi court Wednesday ordered the arrest of senior Kurdish officials responsible for organizing an independence referendum, in the latest salvo by the central authorities over the disputed vote. The decision ratchets up pressure on Iraqi Kurdistan just over two weeks after voters in the autonomous region overwhelmingly backed independence in the non-binding ballot slammed as illegal by Baghdad.

Acting on a request from the National Security Council headed by Iraq's prime minister, a court in east Baghdad issued warrants against the chairman of the vote's organizing commission Hendren Saleh and two other members, Supreme Judicial Council spokesman Abdel Sattar Bayraqdar told AFP.

It ruled that the three "organized the referendum in contravention of a ruling by the Iraqi supreme court," which had found the vote unconstitutional and ordered it called off.

The supreme court ruling came one week before the Sept. 25 referendum, but the organizers went ahead with it regardless. In retaliation the central authorities have already severed ties between the region and the outside world by cutting international air links, while neighboring Turkey and Iran have threatened to close their borders to oil exports. The court's arrest order is part of a broader legal onslaught from the central government.



slaughter from the central government.

The National Security Council on Monday said "a list of names" of Kurdish officials who helped organized the referendum had been compiled and "judicial measures have been taken against them".

Iraq has also launched a probe into Kurdistan's

lucrative oil revenues and pledged to expose "corrupt" officials in the region who might have illegally monopolized the market.

Baghdad - which has already demanded to take over Kurdistan's airports and borders - is looking to reclaim control over mobile phone companies in the region, including two of the largest providers in Iraq.

The authorities also announced Tuesday that they are looking to reopen a key oil pipeline to Turkey that would rival a competing Kurdish export route.

The Iraqi pipeline was cut off after Daesh (ISIL) seized swathes of the country in 2014, halting a flow of oil to Turkey of up to 400,000 barrels a day.

The angry dispute over the referendum - also rejected by the United States - is the latest twist in the decades-long movement by Iraq's Kurds to break away from Baghdad.

Iraq is pushing Turkey and Iran - which both opposed the ballot over fears of fuelling demands from their own sizeable Kurdish communities - to close their border posts with Kurdistan and stop all trade with the region.

Washington warned the referendum could "increase instability" in the region and have an impact on the battle against Daesh, in which Kurdish fighters have been a key force.

(Source: AFP)

Abadi says ISIL to be completely defeated in Iraq this year



Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi says the ISIL (Daesh) terrorists group will be totally defeated in the Arab country until the end of the current year.

The Iraqi prime minister made the remark in a televised speech on Tuesday, five days after Iraqi army forces, backed by allied fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units, liberated the strategic town of Hawijah from the grips of Daesh after more than two weeks of fierce battle.

The recapture put an end to Daesh's presence in northern Iraq and left the terror group in control of a stretch of land skirting the western border with Syria, including the town of al-Qaim. Abadi, at the time, described the latest gain as a "victory not just of Iraq but of the whole world."

Hawijah lies between the two major routes north from Baghdad, to the second city Mosul, and to Kirkuk City and the semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

The most decisive blow to Daesh, however, came in July, when Iraqi forces liberated the northern city of Mosul, used to be Daesh's de facto capital in the Arab country, after being under the control of the terror group for the previous three years. The battle for recapturing Daesh's last urban bastion lasted for nine months. Earlier in the day, the Iraqi army announced that the air force warplanes had conducted precision airstrikes against Daesh positions in a road linking the small town of Akashat to the militant-held town of al-Qaim, located nearly 400 kilometers northwest of the capital Baghdad, killing at least 17 terrorists.

The Takfiri terrorists swept through parts of northern and western Iraq in June 2014. The terrorists then began a reign of terror across the captured areas, committing crimes against all ethnic and religious communities in Iraq, including Shias, Sunnis, Kurds, Christians and others.

(Source: Press TV)

Spanish govt, opposition to study reform of constitution

Spain's government and main opposition Socialists have agreed to study reforming the constitution to try to end the crisis in Catalonia, the leader of the Socialists said Wednesday.

"The agreement which I have with the prime minister is that we open the political road, the road of constitutional reform," Pedro Sanchez told reporters.

Spain threatened Wednesday to suspend Catalonia's autonomy if it follows through on its threat to break away as an independent country.

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has vowed to do everything in his power to prevent Catalan secession following a banned referendum in the region, which remains deeply divided over independence.

He held an emergency cabinet meeting after Catalonia's president Carles Puigdemont announced on Tuesday that he had accepted the mandate for "Catalonia to become an independent state."

Rajoy asked the Catalan leader to clarify whether he had actually declared independence, which could trigger moves by Madrid to suspend the region's semi-autonomous status.

The Catalan crisis is Spain's most serious political emergency since its return to democracy four decades ago.

World leaders are watching closely and uncertainty over the fate of the region of 7.5 million people has damaged business confidence.

Puigdemont said the referendum had given him a mandate for independence but immediately asked regional lawmakers to suspend the



declaration to allow for negotiations with the central government.

"The cabinet agreed this morning to formally ask the Catalan government to confirm whether it declared independence," he said in a televised address after emergency cabinet talks.

"The answer from the Catalan president will determine future events, in the next few days," Rajoy said.

"The government wants to offer certainty to Spaniards, especially Catalans. It wants to avoid the confusion that has been generated by Catalan authorities."

Rajoy could choose to trigger constitution article 155, which allows Madrid to impose control over its devolved regions -- a move many fear could lead to unrest.

The leader of the opposition Socialist Party, Pedro Sanchez, said meanwhile that his side and the government had agreed to study a possible constitutional reform "to try to end the crisis."

The debate would focus on "how Catalonia remains in Spain, and not how it leaves," Sanchez told reporters.

While separatist leaders say 90 percent of voters opted to split from Spain in the October plebiscite, less than half of the region's eligible voters actually turned out.

The drive to break Catalonia away from Spain has raised concern for stability in a European Union still coming to terms with Britain's shock decision to leave the bloc.

The EU on Wednesday urged "full respect of the Spanish constitutional

order," with European Commission vice-president Valdis Dombrovskis saying the bloc was following developments "closely".

Crowds of thousands gathered outside the parliament building in Barcelona on Tuesday ahead of Puigdemont's speech, waving Catalan flags and banners and screaming "democracy" in the hope of witnessing history in the making.

But Spain's political establishment rounded on Puigdemont following his declaration, and support among separatists in Catalonia was mixed.

Barcelona resident Maria Rosa Bertran said she was against a delayed secession, which meant "suffering a longer agony. Indecision and uncertainty is the worst thing that can happen to us," she told AFP.

The government stuck to its stance that it would not accept mediation or any talks until Catalan leaders drop their independence bid.

"Neither Mr Puigdemont, nor anyone, can expect to impose mediation without returning to legality or democracy," Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Saenz de Santamaria told reporters on Tuesday.

She said Puigdemont was "a person who doesn't know where he is, where he's going or with whom he wants to go".

Following his declaration to parliament, Puigdemont and his allies signed an independence declaration outside the chamber, but its legal validity was unclear.

Regional government spokesman Jordi Turull said the declaration was "a symbolic act", adding that any official decision would need to be decided by the Catalan parliament.

Madrid has consistently said independence is not up for discussion.

"I did not expect independence to be declared today because of all the processes that the government of Spain has begun, both with police actions and with threats," Marc Cazes, a student in Barcelona, said on Tuesday.

Police violence against voters during the referendum vote sparked international concern.

The crisis has caused deep uncertainty for businesses in one of the wealthiest regions in the eurozone's fourth-largest economy.

A string of companies have already moved their legal headquarters -- but not their employees -- from Catalonia to other parts of the country.

The Spanish stock market was up 1.4 percent by midday on hopes for a breakthrough in the crisis.

Demands for independence in Catalonia, one of Spain's 17 semi-autonomous regions which has its own language and cultural traditions, date back centuries.

But a 2010 move by Spain's Constitutional Court to water down a statute that gave Catalonia additional powers, combined with a deep economic meltdown in Spain, sparked a surge in support for independence.

(Source: AP)

U.S. offers \$12mn reward for tips about two Hezbollah officials

The United States has offered a \$12 million bounty for information leading to the arrest of two senior officials from the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement.

The U.S. State Department said on Tuesday that it will pay up to \$7 million for tips about Talal Hamiyah, head of Hezbollah's foreign operations, and \$5 million for Fu'ad Shukur, a top military officer of the movement.

Nathan Sales, the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism, told reporters that the reward, the first of its kind in a decade, was "another step to increase the pressure" on Hezbollah. Sales denounced the resistance movement as a "global threat" and stressed that "countering Hezbollah is a top priority for the [U.S. President Donald] Trump administration." He further signaled that Washington would press countries into designating Hezbollah as a terrorist group and into making no distinction between the group's political and military wings. "Hezbollah has no political wing. It is a single organization, a terrorist organization," he claimed.

The U.S. labels the entire Hezbollah a terrorist organization. Most recently, the Congress Foreign Affairs committee voted for a network of additional sanctions against the movement.

Additionally on Tuesday, Nicholas Rasmussen, director of the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), claimed that Hezbollah "seeks to develop and maintain a global capability to carry out acts of terror."

"We in the intelligence community do in fact see continued activity on behalf of Hezbollah here inside the homeland," Rasmussen added.

Separately, Israeli minister of military affairs, Avigdor Lieberman, claimed that Hezbollah controls the Lebanese army.

"We are talking about Hezbollah and the Lebanese army, and to my regret this is the reality. The Lebanese army has turned into an integral part of Hezbollah's command structure," he added. Hezbollah has played a critical role in the Syrian military's counter-terrorism operations over the past few years. The movement says the mission is aimed at preventing the spillover of the Syria crisis into Lebanon.

In the latest gain against terrorists, Hezbollah and the Syrian military successfully purged Daesh elements from Syria's Qalamoun region on Lebanon's border. The Qalamoun operation came following a similar joint campaign at Lebanon's highlands of Arsal.

Now, the U.S. and Israel see their interests at stake as their proxy militants have been dealt heavy blows amid sweeping advances by Syrian government forces on the battlefield.

■ 'U.S. bans won't change Hezbollah course'

On Sunday, Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said U.S. sanctions had affected the group, but vowed that the bans would not weaken the group's resolve.

"There is a new American policy against Hezbollah," Nasrallah said in a televised speech. "But it will not change Hezbollah's course -- not in our positions against Israel, against the Takfiris, against the U.S. scheme in the region or internally within Lebanon."

He also blamed the U.S. for delaying the battle against the Daesh Takfiri terrorist outfit on the Lebanese-Syrian border.

(Source: Press TV)

Second Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD

International Public Tender Notice (Two Stage) "Purchase of 20 drug & narcotic detection dogs"



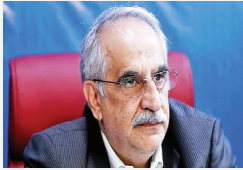
Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) intends to purchase 20 drug & narcotic detection dogs through Public, international tender according to the following conditions. Therefore, all eligible Iranian or foreign company agencies are requested to refer to mentioned address to obtain the tender documents.

- 1) Tender Participation:** International Public Tender Notice (Two Stage)"Purchase of 20 drug & narcotic detection dogs
- 2) The amount of Participation Guarantee Bank** shall be either 700,000,000 Iranian Rials or 17,530 Euros
- 3) Tender Participation Guarantee:** As a Bank Guarantee issued by one of the Iranian banks (accredited by Central Bank of I.R.I) or be deposited to account No.4001001106370306 in the name of IRICA at the Central bank of I.R.I and submit the receipt
- 4) Deadline for obtaining tender documents:** Oct. 11, 2017 – Oct. 21, 2017
- 5) The address for obtaining tender documents and submitting bid envelops:** Tenders & Contracts Bureau, Room No.109, Development & Equipment Dept. 1 st floor Iran Custom Administration Bldg. Next to Nasser Alley, upper than Valiasr Sq. Tehran, Iran.
- 6) Deadline for submitting bids:** Nov. 21, 2017
- 7) Opening bid envelops:** Nov. 22, 2017

Further information would be available at www.irica.gov.ir also "National Database Portal of Iran Tenders Information" or Tel: +98 21 82992169

Development and Equipment Dept.
of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Tenders & Contracts Bureau

NEWS IN BRIEF



Karbasian appointed Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee's new chairman

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Masoud Karbasian was appointed as the new chairman of Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee, Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday.

Karbasian was appointed to the post replacing Mahmoud Vaezi, the previous minister of communications and information technology.



Germany to fund 100MW solar farm in Iran

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — An Iranian-German company is going to finance a 100-mega-watts solar farm worth \$120 million in Iranian central province of Yazd, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

According to the managing director of the company this solar farm is part of a 500MW project which is due to be implemented in Iran by the company.

The first phase of the 100MW solar farm with a capacity of 10MW will be implemented by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2018).



Iran's September oil output at 3.827m bpd: OPEC

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — According to OPEC's latest monthly report published on October 11, oil production in Iran stood at 3.827 million barrels per day (bpd) in September, increasing 1,000 bpd from 3.826 million bpd in August, based on secondary sources.

The OPEC's report also announced Iran's oil output based on direct communication. It said the country's oil production in September stood at 3.848 million bpd, a 3,000 bpd rise from 3.845 million bpd in August.

Meanwhile, the report put the country's heavy oil price at \$52.27 in September, an increase of \$3.57 or 7.3 percent from \$48.7 in August.



Iran, Vietnam to open joint chamber of commerce in 2 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Mohammadreza Karbasi announced that Iran-Vietnam Joint Chamber of Commerce will be inaugurated within the next two months, IRIB news reported on Wednesday.

Karbasi, who led an ICCIMA delegation to Vietnam, in a meeting with the head of Vietnam-Iran Joint Council, called for expansion of ties between the two countries.

During the meeting, the Vietnamese official, for his part, said that his country's trade with Iran is planned to hit \$2 billion per annum and Vietnamese banks are ready to boost relation with Iranian counterparts.



Expansion of trade ties discussed between Iran, Japan

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Industry Minister Mojtaba Khosrotaj and a top official from Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) conferred on developing mutual trade bonds in Tehran, the official website of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) reported on Wednesday.

In this meeting, Khosrotaj, who is also the head of TPO, discussed increasing cooperation on auto industry, manufacturing spare parts and other fields with the Japanese official.

Taking advantage of JETRO's experiments in establishing banks for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as applying new methods of empowering firms to participate in international markets were among the other issues discussed in the meeting.



Joblessness rate falls 0.9% in Iran during summer: SCI

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's unemployment rate in summer 2017, which corresponds to the second quarter of current Iranian calendar year (June 22- September 22), dropped to 11.7 percent, down 0.9 percent compared to the figure in the same season in 2016, the Statistical Center of Iran announced.

Unemployment rate stood at 12.6 percent in summer 2016, the report said.

According to Iranian Labor Minister Ali Rabiei, the government can create 300,000 to 400,000 job opportunities annually but based on the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021), more than 900,000 jobs should be created per year.

Renault planning for long-term presence in Iran: CEO

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Carlos Ghosn, the CEO of Renault, announced that his company has a long-term serious plan for presence in the Iranian market.

Making the remarks during a press conference in Paris last week on revealing the company's mid-term plan, the CEO underlined the significance of Iranian market and stressed that Renault

will not leave the country, public relations department of Renault's office in Tehran reported on Wednesday.

According to the company's plan, Renault's production for Iranian market will reach over 250,000 cars per annum during six years. Also, manufacturing capacity of Renault cars inside Iran will increase by 150,000 vehicles.

Based on this plan, in addition to in-



roducing new products, Renault will develop its distribution network in Iran in a way that it will gain over 15 percent of the market within six years.

Last year, Renault experienced its best performance in Iran during its non-stop

presence in the Middle East country since 2004, as the company hit a record of production and sales in this market. The French carmaker also registered some new records in Iran during the first nine months of 2017.

Iran raises November light crude price for Asia

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iran has raised its light crude's official November selling prices for Asia at 80 cents above the Oman/Dubai average for the same month, Reuters reported quoting an industry source with direct knowledge of the matter.

November price is 30 cents higher than the price set for the previous

month which was 50 cents above the Oman/Dubai average.

Meanwhile, the country reduced its heavy crude's official selling price (OSP) for November by 10 cents to fall \$1.09 below the Oman/Dubai average for this month.

OPEC's third largest oil producer changed the pricing formula for its So-

rough grade in August in a way that it is now priced against the Oman/Dubai average.

With a 30 cent rise, the price of Iranian light oil for the northwest Europe market is also set \$2.65 lower than Brent index for November.

After the implementation of the nuclear accord (called JCPOA) in January

2016, Iran has been seeking to expand its target markets. Since then, oil exports to Europe have risen by more than 300 percent.

Exempted from the OPEC, non-OPEC curbs, Iran has increased its crude output to 3.79 million barrels per day (bpd) in August from 3.78 million bpd in July.

Tbilisi hosts Iran-Georgia business forum, economic committee meeting

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran-Georgia business forum and the 6th meeting of the two countries joint economic committee was held in the Georgian capital, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported on Wednesday.

The business forum was reportedly attended by the Iranian Labor Minister Ali Rabiei, Georgian Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Giorgi Gakharia, head of Georgian Chamber of Commerce, head of Iran-Georgia Joint Chamber of Commerce, and the two countries' ambassadors.

As reported, the forum gave a platform to the government authorities as well as representatives of Georgian and Iranian companies to establish communication for more productive future cooperation.

The participants in this event investigated available economic opportunities for cooperation and got familiar with each other's economic private sectors for joint further cooperation and entering one another's markets.

According to Georgia's Ministry of Economy, the main interests of Iranian business delegation included transport, chemical products and oil transportation, food



industry, wood processing, manufacturing of electric equipment, oil and gas, financial sector, AGENDA.GE reported.

At the forum Georgian authorities showcased the country's favorable business environment and urged Iranian business delegation to invest in Georgia, the same report confirmed.

"We know that a very large project has been initiated, which is meant to create an oil processing enterprise... In

Iran's gas exports: potentials and challenges

1→ it is used and transported in various forms including Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as well as through pipelines.

In recent years the demand for gas as a more clear fuel has increased drastically and natural gas market has become more globalized.

Contrary to our country which has a very low level of gas exports, in most of the gas producing countries a great portion of the recovered gas is exported to other countries.

Due to the West-imposed sanctions in the past few years, Iran has not been able to keep up with other gas producing countries in this regard, Iranian gas is mostly exported to the neighboring countries through pipelines and Euro-zone is almost completely out of Iran's

reach for gas exports.

The country is currently producing 800 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas per day of which only 34.8 mcm is exported.

Hamid Hosseini, an Iranian gas expert, believes that Iran's gas market being limited to the neighboring countries is what hurting the gas industry the most.

"The country should add a variety of new products to its exports basket in order to be able to compete with other gas exporting countries," Hosseini said.

"As the country with the most natural gas reserves in the worlds we should have a long term plan for gaining some share in Europe's market as well," the expert added.

However, Iranian Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Trading Amir-Hossein Zamaninia still believes

that neighboring countries and India should be Iran's top priority for gas exports and not Europe.

In August 2016, Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said that Iran plans to increase gas exports to 200 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d), emphasizing that exports via pipelines to neighboring countries and the completion of LNG projects are prioritized.

Considering the gap between the current level of exports and what is on the agenda, it seems what Hosseini said is true and the country needs to improve its downstream sector to a great extent in order to expand the domain of its gas customers beyond the neighboring countries. Of course, reaching this goal necessitates attraction of a great amount of foreign investment.

According to several energy sources, since January 2016 several Asian and

European companies have been negotiating with Iran to participate in the completion and commissioning of gas projects and that could be a good opportunity for realization of an ideal downstream sector for the gas industry.

Of course foreign investment is just a part of what is necessary for progress, NIGC should attract the participation of the private sector alongside foreign investment.

With Iran signing numerous deals with giant companies like France's Total, and having plans for developing new fields alongside completing South Pars phases, a steep rise in natural gas output in near future doesn't seem out of reach, but the country should consider diversifying its exports basket and development of new gas refineries and LNG plants in order to expand its destination markets to Europe and even America.

Trump's preferred way to judge trade deals is not a good measure of their success

The Trump administration has made trade deficits the yardstick for measuring the success of trade deals, but that's a miscalculation, analysts said.

President Donald Trump has applied labels such as a "disaster" and "horrible" to various U.S. trade deals, including the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, and the South Korea-U.S. free trade agreement, known as Korus.

Trump says what proves those deals are so horrible is that the U.S. has trade deficits, meaning it imports more from some trade partners than it exports to those nations.

"The United States has trade deficits with many, many countries, and we cannot allow that to continue," Trump said in June in a meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

But analysts have said trade deficits, especially with a focus on manufactured goods, don't offer much as an indication of a pact's benefits. As it currently stands, the measurement of trade disparities is often separated into goods and services categories, with the U.S. administration prioritizing goods.

Yet despite the White House focus on deficits as evidence of deals' failures, some large trade imbalances can't even be tied to any pacts.

"Take China, for example, which is the country with which we have the largest trade deficit — over \$300 billion. We don't even have a trade agreement with China," said Miriam Sapiro, the deputy U.S. trade representative during the Obama administration who also served in the Reagan,

Bush and Clinton administrations.

Sapiro also noted the U.S. had a trade surplus last year with Canada, which is a party to NAFTA along with Mexico.

"We didn't see Canada rushing to try to renegotiate NAFTA because it was worried," Sapiro, who currently heads the D.C. office of public relations firm Finsbury, told CNBC's "Squawk Box" on Thursday.

Others said the goal of eliminating trade deficits was unlikely to succeed.

"The odds of perfectly balanced trade between any two countries are near zero," said Deborah Elms, executive director of the Asian Trade Centre. "I would argue that it's impossible to have perfectly balanced trade, especially when measured in trade in manufactured goods," she said.

Elms noted that the Trump administration has focused its attention largely on manufactured goods, without much consideration given to the service sector, where the U.S. often runs surpluses.

Additionally, she said trade agreements don't tackle larger reasons for the U.S. trade deficits, particularly the low savings rate.

"When it spends, it's sucking in imports," she said. "So the U.S. automatically runs a trade deficit."

Others acknowledged that the trade deficit could potentially weigh on U.S. job creation, but that wasn't a reason to try to achieve more balanced trade.

"All else equal, a more favorable trade balance will raise demand and boost employment. But all else is not equal," J.W. Mason, an assistant professor of economics at John

Jay College-CUNY and a Roosevelt Institute fellow, said in a note last year.

He said that because the world essentially operates on a dollar standard, similar to the previous gold standard, the U.S. can finance its trade deficits indefinitely, while other countries can't.

"[P]olicies intended to improve the U.S. trade balance are likely to lead to lower growth elsewhere, imposing large costs on the rest of the world with little or no benefits here," he wrote.

Mason advised that instead of "costly" efforts to reach a trade surplus, the U.S. would be better off with measures to increase productive investment in both the public and private sectors.

Others have noted that assigning the blame for trade deficits to trade deals may result from a failure to understand those pacts.

For example, at the same June meeting between Trump and Moon, U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross complained that the U.S. goods trade deficit with South Korea doubled since Korus took effect, which he blamed primarily on autos.

But measures in Korus related to autos haven't yet been phased in. And some economists have blamed the rise in the goods trade deficit on South Korea entering a recession as the deal was completed in 2011, a circumstance that undoubtedly dampened demand for imports.

The U.S., it's worth noting, has a surplus in services exports to South Korea.

(Source: cnbc)

OPEC raises oil demand forecast for 2017, 2018

OPEC's production hit the second highest monthly level this year in September, returning to growth after the oil cartel's output fell for the first time in five months in August.

On a more bullish note, the producer group on Wednesday raised its forecast for world oil consumption in 2017 and 2018 for a third-straight month. The improved demand outlook from both OPEC and the International Energy Agency last month underpinned the oil market rally in September.

OPEC's 14 members pumped 32.75 million barrels a day in September, up about 88,500 barrels, according to independent sources cited in the group's monthly report.

OPEC is partnering with other major oil exporters, including Russia, to keep about 1.8 million barrels per day of supply off the market through March. The goal is to shrink global crude stockpiles and drain a glut that has weighed on prices for the last three years.

Nigeria and Libya, both exempt from the production cuts, led the gains with monthly increases of about 50,000 bpd each.

Nigeria's production held above 1.8 million bpd for a second month. Africa's biggest producer has said it will consider production limits once its output stabilizes above that level. OPEC gave Nigeria and Libya a waiver because internal conflicts caused big production declines in both countries last year.

Iraq, OPEC's second-largest producer, posted the third-biggest increase. Its output grew by nearly 32,000 bpd to just under 4.5 million in September. Iraq has yet to drive down output to levels it agreed to last winter.

Saudi Arabia reported a slight supply increase, though independent figures showed a small decline and the Saudis were still pumping well below their quota. OPEC's biggest producer has provided the lion's share of cuts since the cartel implemented the caps in



January.

■ Supply and demand forecasts

OPEC forecasts the world's appetite for oil will grow by 1.5 million bpd this year and 1.4 million bpd in 2018. The cartel raised both forecasts by 30,000 bpd. It cited higher-than-expected demand in China and developed nations this year and an improving economic outlook in 2018, particularly in Russia and China.

Traders will be watching the monthly report from the International Energy Agency, due on Thursday, for confirmation of the demand trend.

Heading into the winter, OPEC sees strong demand for distillates — refined petroleum products like heat-

ing oil — due to forecasts for a colder winter compared with last year. Stockpiles of distillates are below the five-year average, OPEC reports, and U.S. refinery disruptions caused by Hurricane Harvey only quickened the already-steady decline in inventories.

OPEC lowered its forecast for output growth from producers outside OPEC by 100,000 bpd in 2017 and 60,000 bpd in 2018.

Crude stockpiles in the OECD, a group of mostly developed nations, stood at just under 3 billion barrels in August, according to OPEC. That is about 171 million barrels above the five-year average, the level OPEC is trying to hit. (Source: CNBC)

One of Europe's biggest banks plans to stop working with shale oil players



BNP Paribas, France's biggest listed bank, said on Wednesday it would no longer work with oil and natural gas companies that primarily do business in shale or oil sands as it plans to boost support for renewable energy projects.

The bank also said that it would no longer finance new projects that are primarily involved in the transportation or export of oil and gas from shale or oil sands.

"We're a long-standing partner to the energy sector and we're determined to support the transition to a more sustainable world," BNP Paribas Chief Executive Jean-Laurent Bonnafé said in a statement.

The bank previously said it planned to spend 15 billion euros (\$17.72 billion) to finance renewable energy projects by 2020 and invest 100 million euros in start-ups specializing in energy storage and efficiency.

The lender has already stopped financing coal mines and coal-fired power plants, and no longer supports coal companies that are not planning to diversify their energy sources.

BNP Paribas's smaller rival Societe Generale said in October last year that it would quit financing coal-powered electricity plants from January and increase its support for renewable energy projects.

(Source: CNBC)

Turkmenistan to spend \$93b on oil and gas sector



Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov has vowed to spend tens of billions of dollars to prop up the country's oil-and-gas sector, which has been hurt by low global prices and falling demand from Russia.

"In the next seven years, we will make investments of 240 billion manats. In the oil-and-gas complex, we will invest 159 billion manats (\$93 billion)," Berdimukhammedov said.

He was speaking on October 9 at a meeting of the Council of Elders, an unelected body that offers no real check on the powers of the authoritarian Turkmen leader.

Sitting on the world's fourth-largest gas reserves, Turkmenistan has become dependent on energy sales to

China after Russian halted purchases of Turkmen gas in 2016.

Berdimukhammedov also promised that Turkmenistan would soon start producing electric cars in a bid to diversify the country's heavily hydrocarbon-dependent economy.

Berdimukhammedov said he would boost government revenues by cutting state subsidies that had been introduced by his predecessor, Saparmurat Niyazov.

Berdimukhammedov said "the time has come to save and use state funds effectively."

The subsidies introduced in the 1990s effectively granted citizens of the repressive ex-Soviet republic free gas, water, and electricity.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Oil rises on signs of tighter market, but 2018 looks more uncertain

Oil prices rose for a third day on Wednesday on signs that markets are gradually tightening after years of oversupply, though the outlook for 2018 remained less certain.

Brent crude futures, the international benchmark for oil prices, were trading at \$56.94 per barrel at 0948 GMT, up 33 cents. Brent closed 2 percent higher the previous day.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$51.37 a barrel, up 45 cents from their last settlement. WTI also closed 2 percent higher on Tuesday.

"We have finally shifted fundamentally from build mode to draw mode," Barclays said in a note. "For now, inventory draws will continue to leave room for a geopolitical risk premium to reemerge."

The bank raised its price outlook for the fourth quarter of this year and the first quarter of 2018, but warned that "we expect a return to build mode next year."

Bullish forecasts from the International Monetary Fund late on Tuesday also supported prices. The IMF project-



ed global economic growth of 3.6 percent this year and 3.7 percent for 2018, an indication that fuel demand would rise.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, trimmed crude sup-

plies to its biggest buyers in Asia, sources told Reuters, a sign that the kingdom will meet its supply restraint commitment in a pact led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

The group, along with other produc-

ers including Russia, agreed to cut output by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) through March 2018 in an effort to balance the market.

Still, longer-term indications were less rosy. PVM's Stephen Brennock noted that the IMF warned the economic recovery "is on thin ice."

"Several market participants will have taken solace from yesterday's rally but the jury is out on whether it has the legs to go the distance," Brennock wrote.

The United States is not participating in the supply cut, and its output has risen 10 percent this year to more than 9.5 million bpd.

Speaking at the Reuters Global Commodities Summit, Vitol chief Ian Taylor said U.S. output would climb by another 0.5 million to 0.6 million bpd next year before flattening.

Later on Wednesday, the American Petroleum Institute will release weekly U.S. fuel inventory data, followed by official figures from the U.S. Department of Energy on Thursday.

(Source: Reuters)

Driverless cars are giving engineers a fuel economy headache

Judging from General Motors Co's test cars and Elon Musk's predictions, the world is headed toward a future that's both driverless and all-electric. In reality, autonomy and battery power could end up being at odds.

That's because self-driving technology is a huge power drain. Some of today's prototypes for fully autonomous systems consume two to four kilowatts of electricity -- the equivalent of having 50 to 100 laptops continuously running in the trunk, according to BorgWarner Inc. The supplier of vehicle propulsion systems expects the first autonomous cars -- likely robotaxis that are constantly on the road -- will be too energy-hungry to run on battery power alone.

In an industry where the number of LEDs in a brake light are scrutinized for their impact on gas mileage, processing data from laser, radar and camera sensors will be an enormous challenge -- not just for coders working on machine learning, but for engineers trying to power vehicles efficiently. As major markets from California to China ratchet up pressure to curb pollution, automakers and their suppliers will have to find creative new ways to offset emissions produced by feeding the car's increasingly intelligent brain.

"We've been battling all the time because the governments are always pushing for a few percent improvement every year," Scott Gallett, vice president of marketing at BorgWarner, said of fuel-economy standards. "This just amplifies that challenge."

■ Driverless rides

The autonomous features on a Level 4 or 5 vehicle, which can operate without human intervention, devour so much power that it makes meeting fuel economy and carbon emissions targets five to 10 percent harder, according to Chris Thomas, BorgWarner's chief technology officer.

To be sure, those calculations are based on prototype cars with sensors rigged on the roof, and the power demands of electronics inside the car will inevitably fall as the technology improves. But even if chipmakers pull off promises to reduce power consumption by as much as 90 percent, automakers will still need to make fuel efficiency gains elsewhere in the vehicles to compensate for all that computing, Thomas said.

"They're worried about one watt, and now you're adding a couple thousand," Thomas said. "It's not trivial."

A fully autonomous subcompact car like a Honda Fit, for example, will get 54.6 miles to the gallon in 2025 in the best-case scenario, more than 5 miles below the U.S. emissions target, according to BorgWarner. A small pickup or SUV would be at 45.8 mpg, versus a target of 50.

Engineers don't have much time to resolve this, as companies are planning to deploy their first fully self-driving cars in the next couple of years. GM's Cruise Automation announced last month that a version of the all-electric Chevrolet Bolt that can operate without a driver is now capable of being mass produced.

Musk had said Tesla Inc. plans to demonstrate a fully autonomous cross-country trip by the end of this year, although he cautioned during an earnings call in August that the timing of the drive may slip.

■ Hybrid solutions

One way for automakers to meet the power-hungry needs of self-driving systems will be to use gasoline-electric hybrid models rather than purely electric cars, said Mary Gustanski, chief technology officer of supplier Delphi Automotive Plc's powertrain business.

Sam Jaffe, founder of Cairn Energy Research Advisors, said hybrid-electric vehicles probably make sense for the first driverless cars, which are likely to be robotaxis.

"They're going to favor plug-in hybrid EVs, and they're going to require that extra gasoline engine, both to extend the range to be able to do a taxi type of duty cycle, but also to help mitigate the proportion of the autonomous systems on the battery pack itself," said Jaffe, whose research and consulting firm specializes in energy storage.

Alphabet Inc.'s Waymo, which started an experimental service ferrying people around in its self-driving cars in Phoenix earlier this year, has been using Chrysler Pacifica hybrid minivans. Another automaker envisioning autonomous hybrids is Ford Motor Co., which said last week it had set up a new unit to accelerate development of electric vehicles.

"If you are trying to maximize your utilization" of an autonomous vehicle, a battery-electric car "is really restrictive for your business," Jim Farley, Ford's president of global markets, told investors on Oct. 3. He said Ford believes hybrids are "the right tech to start with."

(Source: Bloomberg)

Europe stands divided on Gazprom's Nord Stream 2 pipeline

Nord Stream 2—Gazprom's pipeline project to twin the existing Nord Stream pipeline between Russia and Germany via the Baltic Sea, is dividing European nations and European Union (EU) institutions—with one group cheering on the resultant cheap gas, and the other group fearing Russia's increased grip on the region.

Proponents and supporters of the project argue that Germany and neighboring countries will get cheap, reliable gas from Russia that will complement—not replace—gas from existing supply routes.

Opponents of the project argue that Russia's Gazprom will increase its share of the European gas market, which would boost its already dominant position in Central and Eastern Europe, and therefore undermine the efforts of some European countries to diversify their gas supplies away from Russia.

Opponents also see Nord Stream 2 as Moscow gaining political leverage over the EU.

Nord Stream 2—currently planned for completion by the end of 2019—faces stiff opposition from Poland, the Baltic countries, and several other EU countries.

Germany, on the other hand, which will be the main beneficiary of the new gas supplies, says that the project is just business, and should not be made political. Denmark is now looking to amend a legislation that would block pipelines in its waters, citing security and foreign policy concerns along with environmental concerns.

(Source: oilprice.com)

The trouble with the new U.S. North Korea travel ban

As the war of words between Washington and Pyongyang has escalated, the window of opportunity for Americans and North Koreans to actually interact directly with one another – small as it was to begin with – is closing. On September 1, the State Department restricted the use of U.S. passports to enter North Korea. Three weeks later, the Trump administration added North Korea to the list of countries whose nationals are barred from entering the United States.



To be sure, the number of people affected by either of these twin North Korea travel bans is relatively small, and the ban on North Korean entry to the United States will not have the same far-reaching consequences as the bans on entry from other, predominantly Muslim, countries has had. But as part of a long-term strategy to promote change within North Korea, the United States should be actively encouraging contact with the North Korean people – not arbitrarily restricting it.

When I first traveled to North Korea as a U.S. Senate staff member in 2002, I discovered that North Korean officials were poorly informed about the United States' system of government and political culture, and were making significant decisions based on faulty analysis. Over time, I realized the same dilemmas applied to Americans attempting to analyze or make policy decisions about North Korea. I have found that having direct interactions with North Koreans, from across as broad a spectrum of their society as is possible, has provided an important counterweight to this mutual tendency toward misperception.

■ The tragic circumstances

The recent ban on U.S. travel to North Korea was prompted by the tragic circumstances surrounding the case of the American college student, Otto Warmbier. Stopping the approximately 1,000 Americans who travel every year as tourists to North Korea may help prevent a similar tragedy from happening in the future, even if it comes at the cost of restricting Americans' freedom to travel abroad as they choose. However, the new travel restrictions go beyond restricting tourism, prohibiting all travel on U.S. passports except for that by journalists and by individuals whose travel the U.S. government believes to serve a "compelling humanitarian interest."

To its credit, the State Department solicited input from U.S. humanitarian NGOs as travel ban compliance guidelines were being developed. Yet, the resultant process is not ideal for humanitarian workers, requiring them to apply for a "special validation passport" for each trip – making it harder for NGOs to plan for routine site visits or respond to emergencies, and providing an additional challenge for organizations that must already spend significant time and resources navigating an increasingly complex global sanctions regime. The State Department's development of a multiple-entry mechanism for humanitarian NGOs would be an important step in the right direction.

Americans who conduct humanitarian work in North Korea have helped to treat infectious diseases including multi-drug resistant tuberculosis, to provide nutritional supplements to orphanages and hospitals, and to help persons with disabilities lead fuller lives.

While humanitarian visits to North Korea may become more difficult for Americans, other categories of non-tourist travel may simply not be possible under the new system. Korean-Americans trying to reunite with family members in North Korea; academics wishing to conduct scholarly research; and individuals seeking to participate in educational projects may also be barred from travel.

■ An unfortunate addendum

There may be a justifiable rationale for restricting U.S. tourist travel to North Korea, but the ban on North Korean entry into the United States is an unfortunate addendum to the North Korean government's own stringent restrictions on letting its citizens travel abroad. It appears that North Korean refugees who have been granted asylum, or those who have already resettled in the South, will still be eligible for U.S. entry. North Korea's diplomats at the DPRK Mission to the UN in New York, including those engaged in back-channel diplomacy with Washington, will also continue to be able to enter the United States.

However, the ban on other North Korean entrants is not purely symbolic. Since at least the 1990s, U.S. NGOs and universities have welcomed North Korean delegations seeking to learn about topics such as agriculture, medicine, or market economics. North Korea has also sent sports teams, as well as delegations engaging in Track II dialogues on security issues with U.S. experts. Since 2011, the University of British Columbia has hosted an annual cohort of North Korean university professors to study business and economics for a six month-long program, and it is not inconceivable that a U.S. university could one day host an exchange program for North Korean students, as well.

There are several precedents demonstrating the positive impact that even a limited number of such people-to-people exchanges can have. Ping Pong diplomacy famously helped to facilitate the U.S. opening to China. As Andrei Lankov, a veteran Pyongyang-watcher, has frequently pointed out, two of the first Soviet students to study in the United States in the 1950s eventually became key supporters of Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms. And the United States has a long history of hosting exchanges even with states such as Cuba, or Myanmar, on the understanding that the people of those countries and the regimes ruling them are distinct.

Even as the United States implements a "maximum pressure" campaign against North Korea and bring the long-running nuclear crisis to a head, Washington should simultaneously implement a long-term strategy to facilitate increased interaction between Americans and North Koreans. For now the two countries continue as ships passing in the night, ever closer to collision in no small part due to lack of communication and mutual misunderstanding. *(Source: The Diplomat)*

Turkmens unite against Kurdish designs on Kirkuk

The Sept. 25 referendum, in which voters overwhelmingly voted for independence for Iraqi Kurdistan, increased the division between the Turkmen and Kurdish populations in the disputed city of Kirkuk. But Turkmen believe the Kurdish move, which raised objections from several parties, offers an opportunity to strengthen their position in Iraq.

Turkmens reported intimidation and repeated attacks on their party in Kirkuk both before and after the referendum. On Oct. 2, someone reportedly fired on the party headquarters and even lobbed a grenade at the building. Turkmen parliament member Hassan Tauran confirmed the news in a TV interview, adding, "This is the fifth attack during the week that followed the referendum."

Turkmens strongly oppose the Kurdistan Regional Government's efforts to annex Kirkuk and other mixed-population areas, and they hold the Kurdish side responsible for the attacks. On Sept. 19, Turkmen parliament member Jassim Mohammed al-Bayati accused what he called the "gangs" of Kirkuk's Kurdish governor of kidnapping a young Turkmen.

But it is difficult to get to the truth behind these attacks amid the tension plaguing the city. Kurdish forces affiliated with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan gained full security and military control over the city after June 2014, when the Iraqi army's 12th division withdrew in the face of the Islamic State (ISIS)'s overwhelming advance.

■ Sectarian conflict

Turkmens are the third-largest ethnic group in Iraq and say they have been denied their rights since Saddam Hussein was overthrown as president in 2003. Part of the problem is the deep sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shiite Turkmen that kept them from forming unified political blocs.

When the new regime based on sectarian and ethnic quotas was established in Iraq, the Turkmen lacked the political experience of the Shiites and Kurds. The Turkmen have been involved in sectarian strife in many areas, particularly in Tal Afar, reaching the point of military clashes.

"These differences have caused the Turkmen a great deal of damage in all political aspects and have negatively affected their unity in the eyes of the Iraqi,



Demonstrators wave Turkish and Iraqi Turkmen (blue) flags during a protest against the independence referendum in northern Iraq, in Istanbul, Turkey

Turkmens strongly oppose the Kurdistan Regional Government's efforts to annex Kirkuk and other mixed-population areas.

regional and international public opinion," Yahya Shemsettin, a Turkmen journalist from Kirkuk, told Al-Monitor recently.

Unlike other factions in Iraq, Turkmen haven't had armed wings in recent years and failed to carve out a clear role in Kirkuk's security.

Ali Mahdi, a Turkmen member of Kirkuk's provincial council, said in an Oct. 3 TV interview, "We have been calling since 2006 for the formation of a joint force of Turkmen, Kurds and Arabs to defend Kirkuk, but the Kurds have stood against this idea."

When it comes to foreign support, Turkey often talks about supporting Turkmen in Iraq, but in reality it doesn't do much, especially after the rapprochement between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and KRG President Massoud Barzani.

For instance, Turkey has benefited from the Kurdistan Democratic Party forces' control of the most important oil wells in Kirkuk as well as oil exports through Turkish territory. The Turks signed

a 50-year agreement with the Kurds in this regard despite objections by the Iraqi Turkmen. Most recently, the Iraqi Turkmen Coordination Council asked the central government in Baghdad on Sept. 26 to "impose full control over the oil wells in Kirkuk and give back the task of exporting oil [to Iraq's State Oil Marketing Organization], as well as provide protection to oil wells by the federal police."

■ Political understandings

Meanwhile, Turkmen point to past political understandings between Shiite and Kurdish parties.

Tauran, the Turkmen lawmaker, said Oct. 2, "The Turkmen were victims of agreements between the central government and the KRG."

Various Turkmen parties have united in recent years to try to restore their status.

Shemsettin, the journalist, said, "After the events of 2014, the Turkmen [parliament members] began to move together and established the Iraqi Turkmen Coordination Council, which

includes Shiite and Sunni figures as well as figures from various political views, all of which became unified." He added, "The Turkmen public, elites and intellectuals are generally pleased with this move."

Turkmen parties were also able to establish armed factions within the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) in mixed areas such as Tuz Khormato and al-Bashir. Shiite forces such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq backed the Turkmen PMU factions to pressure the Kurds in these areas.

The central Iraqi government and the Turkish government both reject the Kurdish referendum, which Turkmen see as an opportunity to strengthen their positions in Iraq and push for greater gains.

After long years of division, Turkmen are trying to advance in the political game and exploit events that have weakened their Kurdish rivals. However, nothing is guaranteed in light of unpredictable events and the ever-shifting alliances in crisis-ridden Iraq.

(Source: Al Monitor)

Why Tillerson can't stay

By Rich Lowry

If Secretary of State Rex Tillerson resigned, how would anyone know?

Even before his unusual apology speech last Wednesday, he had become the nation's least influential top diplomat in recent memory. His relationship with the president of the United States is strained at best, he has no philosophy or signature initiative, he has barely staffed his own department, and he's alienated the foreign service. The former CEO of ExxonMobil has taken one of the power positions in the U.S. government and made it an afterthought.

Who knows the truth of the NBC story that he was close to quitting last summer over clashes with President Donald Trump? But Tillerson's press availability on October 4 swearing his loyalty to the president is not the sort of thing loyalists usually have to do.

The secretary of state dodged questions about whether he had, indeed, as NBC reported, called Trump a "moron" — almost certainly the first time in U.S. history a Cabinet official has been asked about personally insulting the president he works for and apparently not been able, in good conscience, to deny it.

At his appearance, Tillerson issued a stilted endorsement of the president's "America First" agenda that felt as if it had been written by someone else or was the product of an internal negotiation.

■ Trump's platform

Per Tillerson, Trump's platform "has given voice to millions who felt completely abandoned by the political status quo and who felt their interests came second to those of other countries" and seeks to "break the mold of what people traditionally think is achievable on behalf of our country."

If Tillerson is on board for this program, it's hard to see how his tenure has helped achieve it.

Tillerson doesn't have an easy job, obviously. He works for a mercurial and bombastic boss who has a well-developed skill for humiliating his underlings. Even a practiced and slick diplomat — even Henry Kissinger, heck, even Cardinal Richelieu — would find the circumstances trying. But Tillerson is at sea.

He's an accomplished and impressive man who ascended to the leadership of a quasi-state as CEO of ExxonMobil. As such, he had done plenty of work abroad. It was in business, though, not government.



If he believes what he said about his boss's goals, his best move is to step aside.

Making him secretary of state turns out to have been like selecting the head of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs to run a Fortune 500 company.

It is hard to credit this professed commitment to a radical departure in our foreign policy. Arriving at State without a well-developed worldview beyond advancing the interests of ExxonMobil, Tillerson has bobbed along the surface of the stream of conventional thinking. His abiding obsession has been the technocratic (although worthy) cause of reorganizing the department.

Usually establishmentarians have the advantage, if nothing else, of a great store of government experience. Brent Scowcroft devoted most of his adult life to public service; Tillerson devoted most of his adult life to ExxonMobil, joining the company after college in 1975.

■ A professional guiding

Unlike, say, James Mattis advising Trump on defense matters, this is not a professional guiding an amateur; it's another amateur trying to school an amateur. Is it any wonder that it hasn't gone well?

Recent Republican secretaries of state provide two models for how to operate. There's the Colin

Powell approach of attending to the needs of "the building," i.e., the civil service, and neglecting your relationship with the president. Then there's the Condi Rice approach of tending to your relationship with the president and ignoring the building. Tillerson has done neither.

In a nationalist administration, he is a man without a country. He doesn't have a constituency in the foreign policy establishment, in the media, in Congress or in the bureaucracy. He and his top aides are a thin layer spread atop the org chart to little effect.

Neither of the opposing dispensations in American foreign policy should feel vested in Tillerson. If you're a liberal internationalist who wants Trump checked and redirected, you'd prefer someone better suited to the task.

If you're a Trumpist who wants Trump empowered to transform American foreign policy, you want someone who is in actual sympathy with that goal.

Tillerson has been on the other side of Trump on big issues like the Paris climate accord and the Iran nuclear deal. There's no doubt that Trump's instincts need to be restrained and channeled, but that's different from trying to frustrate them, which is bound to create friction and run afoul of Dean Acheson's maxim: "The most important aspect of the relationship between the president and the secretary of state is that they both understand who is president."

The Trump-Tillerson tension has been out in the open. Tillerson has distanced himself from Trump on Charlottesville, and Trump has distanced himself from Tillerson on North Korea. Perhaps the gap between the two on North Korea is a good cop-bad cop routine, although it's impossible to distinguish it from incoherence.

Tillerson's diplomatic skills haven't yet been tested on anything important. At this point, he probably fails a threshold test: Can he reliably be thought to speak for the United States government?

The former ExxonMobil chief might imagine himself indispensable as a "minder" of the president. Yet Trump is now surrounded by generals who no one doubts are responsible and influential. If Tillerson left, the government would operate as before — except with some chance there'd be a secretary of state better suited to the role.

(Source: politico)

Shadow of the Old strategist over the White House

By Hossein Yari

The recent meeting of the U.S. President with former Foreign Minister Henry Kissinger who is also one of the most prominent U.S. foreign policy strategists, had a widespread reflection in western media. The meeting included talks on how the United States should face the nuclear deal with Iran (JCPOA), as well as North Korea's nuclear issue. The point is that this meeting was held in the absence of Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson. Recently, we are seeing escalating tensions between Trump and the U.S. secretary of state. Trump, while praising Kissinger, called him the "Immense Talent". At any rate, we can now see Henry Kissinger's increasing presence in the field of U.S. foreign policy. This was while during the presidency of Barack Obama, he had a rather faint presence.

Henry Kissinger, 93, is still trying to play a unique role in the U.S. foreign policy! Donald Trump and Republicans won the presidential campaigns on November 8th this year, and this made Nixon's Secretary of State hopeful for a soft return to the White House! Kissinger looks at the establishment of Trump's government as an institution that he can run his theories through it. However, it is not still clear that how much are there harmony between Trump's styles and methods as the head of the political and executive equations of America, and Kissinger's recommendations on foreign policy.

Over the course of past weeks or even months, Henry Kissinger has had regular meetings with Donald Trump and has given him advices on how to deal with international developments. "Restraining China" is considered to be the main concern of Henry Kissinger. On the other hand, Henry Kissinger is aware of Donald Trump's desire to build close ties with Moscow. Therefore, Kissinger's strategic recommendation to Trump is



a combination of these two propositions and facts: the establishment of close relations with Russia in order to curb Beijing! Kissinger, unlike Zbigniew Brzezinski, who has a more realistic approach to current issues in the international system, always emphasizes on the United States as a superpower. This is despite the fact that, according to the vast majority of American theorists and politicians, the time of the monopoly system has come to an end.

During the 2016 presidential election campaign, Trump promised to re-establish the position of the United States in the international system. One of the characteristics that Kissinger and Trump have in common is their roaming in this hallowed atmosphere! An atmosphere that has been formed around America's being the superpower of the world. In any case, Kissinger has now become more ambitious in the face of American foreign policy, in his capacity as a theorist and foreign policy strategist, to present his experiences to Trump's government. Trump's hostile approach toward Beijing (which he showed itself during his telephone conversation with Taiwan's authorities) could be a reflection of his meetings with Henry Kissinger.

However, if Brzezinski had played the backdrop of American foreign policy during Obama's presidency, it is now time for Kissinger to play this role in Trump government.

Many international affairs analysts are trying to measure and assess the true role of Kissinger in U.S. foreign policy during Trump presidency. What does Kissinger really have in this equation? Does Trump act accurately on Kissinger's recommendations, in contrast to other international players, or will Kissinger join critics of Trump's approaches in the field of American foreign policy in near future? Existing evidences suggest that there is a good relationship between Trump and Kissinger. While many of the neo-conservatives, including John Bolton, have been essentially rejected by the White House, Kissinger retained his position as a U.S. foreign policy strategist.

Another concern of Trump is the issue of how to deal or interact with Russia. As news sources have reported, Henry Kissinger has made recommendations to Trump about Russia. Some of these measures include recognizing Russia's domination in former Soviet republics, including Ukraine, Belarus,

Georgia and Kazakhstan. The lifting of Russia's sanctions due to the Ukrainian crisis in exchange for the withdrawal of pro-Russian forces from Eastern Ukraine has been the other recommendation of Kissinger to the President of the United States.

It seems that some of Kissinger's recommendations to Trump about Russia are not operational. Some of these will be confronted with the resistance of the U.S. Congress and even the Republican Party's top officials. However, one should expect to see the reflection of Kissinger's recommendations to Trump in the U.S. foreign policy.

There is still no detailed report on the content of the recent visit of the President of the United States and Henry Kissinger. However, holding this meeting on the eve of the release of the Trump report on Iran's nuclear program (addressed to Congress) means Kissinger has been involved in the preparation of this report or has directly and explicitly implicated it. In any case, we should expect the effects of the presence of Kissinger alongside Trump. Although he is now 93 years old, he is trying to transfer his latest experience in U.S. foreign policy to Trump. However, one should not forget the fact that many of Kissinger's experiences in the U.S. foreign policy have not been successful. Therefore, the presence of Kissinger by Trump's side does not mean the soliloquy of the spirit of rationality in the U.S. foreign policy body. Since the time of Trump's presence at the White House, we haven't yet seen rational and mindful behavior by the President of the United States. Trump's confrontation with the Paris Climate Agreement and Iran's Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the escalation of the U.S.-North Korean conflict and the continuation of U.S. warmongering policies in the West Asia region are all indicative of this approach taken by the United States of America.

French protest against Macron economic reform

By Saeed Sobhani

Emmanuel Macron has a hard time ahead. The protest of French workers to Macron's economic reforms continues. The widespread recent strike in France showed that Macron's opponents in France had a lot of power in front of the Elysées Palace. Hence, in the coming months, we will see an intensification of trade union opposition with the French President's economic reforms. Although these protests were foreseeable, few believed that the protests would be widely held.

As The Telegraph reported, France's nine main unions united for the first time in a decade in public sector protests against President Emmanuel Macron's plans to freeze pay and shed 120,000 state workers in five years.

Thirty per cent of flights were cancelled from French airports and many schools shut, yet in a boost to Mr Macron's reform drive, turnout was relatively low; police said 209,000 people from among France's 5.4 million public workers took to the streets around France, while unions said it was double the number.

The education ministry said less than a fifth of the country's teachers had gone on strike and public transport was running more or less normally.

There were a few sporadic clashes between protesters in Paris and police, who made eight arrests. The protests were the fourth round of demonstrations in France since September aimed at forcing France's 39-year-old centrist head of state to reverse reforms, which unions called a "deep disappointment".

"In the space of a few weeks, Macron has gone from being Jupiter to Thatcher without any warning," said Pierre-Marie Ganozzi from the FSU, France's biggest state sector union in the southern Bouches-du-Rhône département.

The French president's plans to water down a wealth tax have seen the Left dub him "president of the rich". He has also faced accusations from opponents and the unions of treating workers with contempt after he was recorded describing a group of workers at a struggling factory as "wreaking havoc".

The outburst came weeks after he blasted opponents of reform as "slackers".

As crowds gathered near Paris's Place de la République, one placard read "Slackers of the world unite", while another featured portraits of Mr Macron, his prime minister and finance minister reading: "The ones wreaking havoc".

But the movement has so far not reached the scale seen as necessary to force the government into major U-turns, analysts say. On Monday, Edouard Philippe, the prime minister, insisted the government had no plans to change course, while assuring public sector workers they were "not at all unappreciated".

The government has announced plans to cut spending by €16 billion (£14.3bn) next year via



measures that include freezing civil servants' pay and cutting nearly 1,600 public jobs – the first of 120,000 posts to go by 2022. State sector worker are angered at his plans to reduce sick leave compensation by making the first day unpaid. He has also irked regional governments who have seen their funding from Paris cut by €450 million.

Thierry Arnaud, political editor at BFM TV, pointed out that despite appearances, the unions remained highly divided and there was no sign for now of any rising tide of discontent. Frederic Dabi of the Ifop polling agency said that unless rolling strikes ensued or young people angered by cuts to student housing subsidies took to the streets, the coast appeared relatively clear for the president.

"What is positive for Emmanuel Macron is that he is seen as facing down the street and implementing his programme," he said.

In any case, recent strikes in France have put a hard time on the authorities. Macron is now well aware that he will not have a quiet day at Elysee Palace. If he fails to convince his country's public opinion about this, he will face a lot of crises. In this case, he may not be able to win the presidential election in 2022. Just as happened to Sarkozy and Hollande.

An overview of recent polls in France can be particularly useful.

The poll, conducted by Ifop for newspaper Le Journal du Dimanche (JDD), showed Macron's "dissatisfaction rating" declining to 53 percent in September, from 57 percent in August. Some 45 percent expressed satisfaction with the centrist leader – up from 40 percent in August.

The poll of 1,989 people was carried out on Sept. 15-23. Macron's approval ratings have dropped sharply in opinion polls since his election in May, dragged down by labor reforms and planned budget cuts, including a decrease in housing aid for students. The new poll comes as French far-left opposition party leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon drew tens of thousands to a rally on Saturday against Macron's labor reforms, aiming to reinforce his credentials as Macron's strongest political opponent.

Anyway, protests in France could reduce the popularity of the country's president. In this case, Macron

can not win the presidential election of 2022. Under such conditions, the extreme left and right parties will have a better chance of power.

John Lloyd in Reuters reported that Protestors against President Emmanuel Macron's proposed liberalization of French labor laws were on the streets of the country's cities on Tuesday. The marchers, chanting slogans and brandishing placards, halted traffic as they moved slowly through the streets. A fringe of anarchists broke windows; police responded by firing tear gas. But this was no rerun of the mass marches of past years, let alone the semi-revolutionary eruptions of 1968.

As Reuters reported, France's second-largest union, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) was the only one of the three main workers' organizations that took part. Another protest, this one organized by the far-left France Insoumise (France Unbowled) party is scheduled for Sept. 23. This week's marching columns numbered, nationwide, in the few hundred thousand rather than the many millions hoped for – the police claimed 223,000, the organizers 400,000. There was little effect on production, services or transport.

It was neither victory nor defeat for either side. Instead, Macron's changes to the vast labor code – hiring and firing will be easier, some workplace issues will be negotiated at company level – hang in the balance. The CGT, the left and the far-right National Front all oppose them, but Macron and his government have a solid, if inexperienced, majority in the Assembly.

More than his predecessors who tried and failed to liberalize France's labor market – the center-right Nicolas Sarkozy and the center-left Francois Hollande – Macron has pinned the credibility of his presidency on systemic, cultural change, a deliberate jolting of French society and economy out of the rut into which he believes it has fallen. He is contemptuous of both former presidents (he knew Hollande well, having been both his advisor and Finance Minister), believing them to have given up too soon and too easily. When Macron spoke, as he did earlier this month, of "slackers," he said when challenged that he meant those who retreated from the necessary surgery on France's body politic. The marchers, however, seized on the word and put it on their placards: "Macron, the slackers will kick you out," read one.

The slackers have a point. Indeed, they have several. Labor productivity in France is relatively good, only a little behind that of the United States and the highest of Europe's major economies. When French workers work, they work well.

Finally, the French president faces public protests in the face of economic reforms, and on the other hand, he must be careful about the movements of the far right – left. Meanwhile Macron's economic policies are opposed to the two right-wing (conservatives) and left-wing (socialists) parties.

Who is the terrorist and terrorist form?

By Cyrus Fatolah

The US plans to name the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in the list of terrorist groups that everyone acknowledges, the IRGC's efforts have led to increased security in the region.

There is no doubt that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps plays a key role in securing the West Asian region; however, takfiri in Iraq and Syria, and intend to attribute attributes that they themselves deserve to the security guards of Iran and the region, and their determination and determination to contain the takfiris will be loose.

It should be said that these governments, especially the US government, are hard on the wrong side, since these forces have taken this conviction and faith in this direction and attributed to them every accusation and affair, have never gone their own way from the uprising of Imam Hussein (AS) is not dissuaded.



It is clear that everyone acknowledges that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has played a major role in defeating the terrorist groups, especially ISIL, in Iraq and Syria, and has defaced the dismantling of the region, which is a map of the Americans and Zionists. The Revolutionary Guards are the backbone of the resistance axis, which puts all the evil planes of the Americans and Zionists in the West Asian region.

The Islamic Republic of Iran cites as one of the most influential sides of the resistance in defending the oppressed nation against oppressive cruelty to a clear and well-known strategy founded on genuine Islamic teachings; this is what sends it from other countries. Who, in their own words, are defending democracy, defending human rights and confronting the Takfiri terrorists, but those countries that deny Iran's role in security in the region, either do not realize or have fallen asleep. With the strategy they are taking, they are more than security and relaxation the region, resulting in crises and riots in the region.

But after the Syrian crisis began in 2011, and some regional and transnational states were taking steps to support the Takfiri terrorist groups, it was the Islamic Republic of Iran that, at the request of the legitimate Syrian government, ran to the Syrians and Announced that it was ready to resolve the crisis peacefully, but given the fact that the terrorist groups and their supporters did not believe in solving the crisis peacefully, they sent dispatching military advisers to Syria.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps played a significant role in sending military advisers to Syria and Iraq; with the arrival of military advisers to the military forces of the Iraqi and Syrian crises, the balance of power in the interests of the military of these two countries was changed and the vast majority of the territories occupied by Takfiri terrorists were free. Became.

Iran's missile attack on the positions of the Takfiri terrorists in Deirul Zur, which killed some of the senior commanders of this terrorist group, was the culmination of all the actions that Iran has shown in the fight against the terrorists and showed that the country was determined to eradicate the Takfiris and did not. It does not chant and, like some other countries, has not launched a dramatic coalition.

The victories that the Syrian army gained through Iran's military advisers has led terrorist countries to take on Iran's role in balancing the benefit of the axis of resistance and to force Iran to engage in negotiations aimed at resolving the Syrian crisis.

But due to the fact that the IRGC's fighters fired a crackdown on ISILs, both in Iraq and in Syria, they had hit hard on this terrorist group, and the bulk of the areas occupied by Iraq and Syria under the auspices of these terrorists. They have been taken back, have endangered the interests of the masters and supporters of the terrorists, the supporters of these terrorist groups have been angry and intend to place this revolutionary institution on the list of terrorist groups!

This is despite the fact that many senior Syrian and Iraqi officials, including the army and the state, praise the role of this revolutionary institution in the fight against Takfiri terrorists and the liberation of the occupied territories by the Islamic State and criticize the US-led anti-ISIL coalition's dual conduct, and have argued that this The coalition appears to claim to fight ISIS, but only by observing some of their actions in Iraq and Syria it can be concluded that their goal is just to prolong the life of this terrorist group in the region, under the pretext of apparent struggle with their sinister plans West Asian region.

At the end of the day, it should be reaffirmed that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps will continue to stand as a firm fortress against takfiri terrorists and any action by the United States and its regional allies whose purpose is to undermine the security of the region and the fishing of muddy water. It has neutralized and does not return from the path that it has chosen, and it is clear to everyone who is in the terrorist area and who is seeking terrorism.

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How to live life to the max

By Nazia Ansari

Let's take a look at aspects of a Beginner's Mind and see how they can transform our life:

1. Take one step at a time. We tend to think in sequences. For example, when we go grocery shopping, our mind is on what we need to buy and where to shop. We're likely to skip over all the little experiences on the way: locking the front door, seeing the neighbour standing at the window, rain splattering on the windscreen, the noise of traffic, and so on.

The same thing happens when we learn something new. We're always looking towards what we'll know or be able to do in the future, instead of focusing on the next step right now. I'm definitely guilty of that. You too?

Tip: Take one step at a time without worrying about the journey.

2. Fall down seven times, get up eight times. Yesterday a friend of mine brought her toddler to visit. The little girl, Stephanie, is just learning to walk. She would pull herself up, wobble along a few steps and then plop down on her bottom. She had a determined look on her face and got up again, over and over. When did we last learn something with such determination and such little obvious success?

Tip: Celebrate falling down as well as getting up: it's all part of learning.

3. Use Don't Know mind. In martial arts, a don't know mind is the wisdom of the warrior. Because we can easily get it wrong by prejudging a situation. When faced with a big opponent or a big challenge, we might assume that we will lose out. And when faced with an opponent who seems smaller or weaker, or a challenge that seems surmountable, we might assume that we will be on top. In both scenarios our judgment might be wrong. Don't know means keeping an open mind and responding according to circumstances, not according to how we assume things will be. A don't know mind leaves room for intuition.

I think don't know mind has wider implications. Because, we really only know things up to now. Let me give you an example: I have a couple of dear friends who are moving into adolescence. It's a time of great change. One day they're still playing Ninjas, next day they're confiding in me about the kiss their boyfriend stole



behind the bikeshed. If I had a fixed view of who they are, I'd miss all the changes along the way and lose connection with them.

Tip: Let go of knowing – that's real wisdom.

4. Live without shoulds. I could write a whole book about how I should be, what I should have done and what I should be doing, couldn't you? The world seems to be full of experts on my life who like to tell me what I should be doing. Living with Beginner's Mind means letting go of shoulds. I'm not advocating living without our own moral standards. I think that most of our shoulds reflect other peoples' ideas on what or life should look like. We can let go of them.

Tip: Shake off shoulds and own your life.

6. Make use of experience. Beginner's Mind is great, but it's not so useful when crossing the road. You don't want to be squashed flat by a car in the process of learning anew that you need to get out of the way! It's always good to use our experience and native wisdom. That's how we learn. Beginner's Mind doesn't mean negating experience; it means keeping an open mind on how to apply our experience to each new circumstance.

Tip: Utilize your native wisdom and experience.

7. Let go of being an expert. We are all experts. Experts in our job, in raising children, in crossing the road, in signing our name. It's difficult to let go of being an expert. Because it means confessing that we really know nothing. What we know belongs to the past. Whereas this moment now is new and offers its unique challenges. If I let go of being an expert, I can listen to others with an open mind. Then I can find that even a beginner has something to teach me.

Tip: Letting go of being an expert enables you to keep learning.

8. Experience the moment fully. Have you ever taken a small kid to the movies for the first time? Everything is amazing for them. They stare at the bright lights in the foyer. They investigate each popcorn with great concentration. They stare at everyone sitting around them. They flinch when the music starts. They scramble on to your lap when the monster appears on screen. They laugh out loud when it's funny. They live each moment.

Just imagine living like that! Most of the time we live in a daydream in which we think of the past, and dream of the future. Meanwhile life runs on without

It's difficult to let go of being an expert. Because it means confessing that we really know nothing. What we know belongs to the past. Whereas this moment now is new and offers its unique challenges.

us. Without us being present, that is. We miss so much when we live in a daze. Beginner's Mind allows us to take it all in. Then even ordinary things begin to shine.

Tip: Live life to the full – one moment at a time.

9. Disregard common sense. 'Common sense' is what the culture we live in regards as 'normal'. If inventors like Da Vinci or Edison had stayed with a 'common sense' mindset, our life would be very different because their inventions changed the world. In an interview Thomas Edison said about energy:

"Someday some fellow will invent a way of concentrating and storing up sunshine as energy. I'll do the trick myself if someone else doesn't get at it."

I bet you that Edison's fellow citizen's thought he was crazy. "Turn sunlight into energy – how absurd!" they would have said because his idea didn't fit with the common sense of the time.

Tip: Release yourself from common sense and become creative.

10. Discard fear of failure. When did you last start something new? Was it maybe a while back? As children we are always starting something new. Then, as we go through our twenties, thirties, and further, we become more hesitant about being a beginner again. Why? Maybe because we don't want to look silly when we fail. There are always plenty of people ready to snigger when we take the first wobbly steps. But it's our choice whether to take notice or not.

Tip: Immerse yourself in your actions and forget the watchers.

11. Use the spirit of enquiry. Beginner's Mind is about using the spirit of enquiry – without getting stuck in preconceived ideas. There's a Zen story about this:

A professor once visited a Japanese master to inquire about Zen. The master served tea. When the visitor's cup was full, the master kept pouring. Tea spilled out of the cup and over the table.

"The cup is full!" said the professor.

"No more will go in!"

"Like this cup," said the master, "You are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

You can see how this story applies not only to learning about Zen, but to learning about anything at all. The spirit of enquiry is the mind that is open to the unknown, and empty of pre-conceived ideas.

(Source: [goodlifezen.com](#))

How to add strength training to your exercise routine when you have diabetes

By Vanessa Caceres

You've probably heard a lot about the benefits of aerobic exercise when you have diabetes (and even if you don't). Exercise can help shape up your body, boost your mood and prevent chronic diseases.

But have you made strength training a regular part of your exercise routine?

Strength training also has a multitude of benefits if you have diabetes. First, it can reduce fasting blood glucose levels for 24 hours, says Cary Raffle, a certified personal training and certified orthopedic exercise specialist in New York.

Strength training also can assist with weight loss. As you build more lean muscle through strength training, your body burns more calories at rest, Raffle adds.

Strength training also helps to prevent health problems like heart disease, muscle mass loss and osteoporosis, says certified personal trainer and running coach Meghan Kennihan of La Grange, Illinois.

Consistency is key when it comes to exercise, and strength training plays a role there. "It is really important for people with diabetes to keep engaged in a consistent exercise program," Raffle says. "Strength training can be an easy way to add variety and interest."

How often should I do strength training? The general guideline for exercise is 150 minutes a week (or 30 minutes, five times a week) to enhance your health or 300 minutes (one hour, five times a week) to lose weight, Raffle said. If you're new to physical activity, check with your doctor first regarding any restrictions or limitations. If you're approved to exercise, you can slowly work up to the recommended timing.

"Strength training at least two times per week in addition to at least 30 minutes of moderate-to-hard intensity aerobic exercise at least five days a week can help maintain weight and reduce the risk for heart disease," says registered dietitian Jessica Levings of Balanced Pantry in Orlando, Florida.

For someone with more exercise experience, Kennihan recommends five days a week of exercise with three days that focus on strength training and two days that are cardio or high intensity interval training, or HIIT. "For those looking to lose weight, HIIT is going to be very important and can even be included as part of the strength routine as a 'finisher' or a five- to 10-minute intense total body exercise at the end," she says.

The good news is that you don't have to do a large chunk of exercise all at once. "It can be helpful to think of your minutes of exercise being deposited into a piggy



bank," Raffle says. "Put in as much as you can each day, but it doesn't necessarily have to be equal."

Consider doing cardio and strength training on alternating days. It's important to give your muscles a rest day between strength sessions. And try to keep your scheduling mix of cardio and strength training simple for better consistency. "The most important thing about your exercise program is that you stick to it," Raffle says.

Do I need to do anything different to monitor my blood sugar? Generally speaking, this is more of an issue when you use insulin. Ask your doctor for his or her advice, and check your blood sugar before and after a strength training session so you can see how it affects you.

The general guideline for exercise is 150 minutes a week (or 30 minutes, five times a week) to enhance your health or 300 minutes (one hour, five times a week) to lose weight.

It can be helpful to eat a light snack with 15 grams of carbohydrates (such as a small piece of fruit) before a strength training session, Levings says. If you plan to exercise for an hour or more, include an ounce of protein to help slow digestion and prevent low blood sugar. "Five to six whole-grain crackers with one ounce of cheese or one tablespoon of peanut butter are good choices," she says.

As your body builds more muscle, it will be able to store glucose more effectively, and that helps to regulate blood sugar even when you are at rest, Kennihan says.

Do I need to go to a gym to do strength training? Not necessarily. There are plenty of bodyweight exercises you can do at home, in addition to the use of hand weights, dumbbells and resistance bands. "There's an endless variety of equipment, videos, classes and other ways of getting yourself into a fitness program, but the real issue is finding what's going to work for you," Raffle says.

However, the many choices for exercising can be overwhelming, and it can be hard to match the right program to your goals, physical fitness level and general health on your own. You may want to invest in some sessions with a qualified personal trainer to see which equipment and exercises are right for you, Raffle recommends.

How many reps should I do? Ten to 15 repetitions of the same exercise is a reasonable start, but it can vary depending on your level of physical fitness. After a couple of weeks, as that set becomes easier, add a second set. "Once you're able to do all the sets and all the reps with more energy in the tank, it's time to increase the weight," Kennihan advises. For example, you may start doing squats using only your body weight but after you do three sets of 15 without much fatigue, add weight such as dumbbells or a barbell.

It's important to change up your routine from time to time so you don't get bored and so that you challenge your body. Add exercises that strengthen your core or that you have to perform on an unstable surface – for example, standing exercises, single-leg exercises or those that use stability balls and balance boards, Raffle says.

What kind of strength training exercises should I do? The answer is a little different for everyone. You may have other health problems that affect what you can do, such as high blood pressure, a knee problem or a herniated disk, for example, Raffle says. "All of these factors need to be addressed in a personalized exercise program," he says.

That said, some examples of great strength training exercises you can do on your own include:

Pushups (You can do them on your knees, feet, or pushing against a wall, Kennihan says.)

- .. Dips
- .. Squats
- .. Planks
- .. Lunges

Kennihan likes compound movements like squats and pushups that activate several muscles at once.

(Source: [usnews.com](#))

Exercise for healthy skin: the unknown benefits of being active

Want a smart list of the benefits of regular exercise?

Beyond helping you get that toned body you always wanted, there are some terrific skin benefits.

What most people don't realize is that exercising can actually help your skin look and stay healthy. As an add-on to proven skin health remedies, you can exercise to help improve your acne, wrinkles, dull skin, and more. New research shows that exercise may help reverse skin aging, even for people who don't start exercising until later in their life.

There are a lot of benefits to working out for your skin, but here are a few of our favorites:

Acne relief

Consistent, regular physical activity increases blood circulation. Exercise nourishes your skin. Blood and oxygen flowing through the skin help draw toxins out of the body, including toxins that clog pores. Sweating actually helps propel those toxins, oils and dirt out of your pores.

Don't assume that your skin will automatically completely stop breaking out if you start working out, it just doesn't work like that. Exercise – then shower as soon after as possible. Make sure that you're cleansing your face and other areas that generally break out to take advantage of the process the exercise began. Exercising helps flush your pores but if you don't clean your skin after, you'll be negating the positive effects exercise can have on your skin. And if you're using doctor recommended topical products for acne control, ask your doctor if you should reapply if you have a mid-day shower after a workout.

The acne /endorphin connection

Exercise produces endorphins (the hormones that make you feel good) and subsequently, helps reduce your stress levels. Stress reduction and endorphins help decrease cortisol and other acne-provoking hormones that occur naturally when you are under stress. And did you know that too much cortisol will also increase collagen breakdown?

Healthy, glowing skin with O2

Aerobic exercise provides your body with a heavy dose of oxygenated blood. Your skin instantly glows more and that glow is maintained for hours after a workout. This is because the skin is filled with blood vessels that lie close to the surface. When we work out, the vessels dilate and give the skin a healthy, vibrant appearance.

Working out also helps the body to produce collagen, which is a protein that helps to keep your skin supple, firm, and elastic.

The sleep connection

Exercise also helps you rest and sleep better. Your body and skin need repair time and does it best when you're sleeping well. Research has also suggested that regular physical activity can help your skin repair itself faster.

The outdoors exercise plus

Being outside, whether it's while taking that daily walk or run or taking the kids to the pool or beach or soccer, is a natural endorphin booster. Fresh air, negative ions from trees, blue sky – all help you feel better about life in general. Put on your hat, your sunscreen and go start making your skin healthier and better looking.

(Source: [totaldermatology.com](#))

This is the best time of day to drink coffee



By Brooke Nelson

A morning cuppa could be more effective (and boost your alertness!) if you have it at this specific time.

If you're anything like the rest of us, you probably make a beeline for the coffee machine as soon as you wake up in the morning. In fact, over 85 percent of Americans consume caffeine regularly—and coffee is the preferred medium. As for the optimal time to drink your daily cup of Joe? There's a "sweet spot" that could maximize your caffeine kick, and surprisingly enough, it's not first thing in the morning.

Although having your coffee right away may cause your alertness to spike in the a.m., that feeling quickly crashes just a few hours later. That's why you should "definitely limit coffee when you first wake up," Laura Cipullo, registered dietitian and author of Women's Health Body Clock Diet, told CNBC.

To get the most bang for your brew, experts recommend drinking your coffee in the mid-morning or early afternoon, instead. Getting a hit of caffeine about three to four hours after you wake up will do the trick, too. Why? At that point in the day, your body is low on cortisol—the stress hormone that makes you feel alert—and desperately needs a good pick-me-up.

Of course, if you can't function without your morning cuppa, then by all means, continue drinking! Not everyone abides by the mid-morning theory, anyway. Registered dietitian-nutritionist Melanie Dellings believes it's the amount of caffeine you consume, not when you consume it, that matters the most. She recommends limiting your intake to two to four cups a day.

Regardless of when you decide to drink your java, try to avoid drinking coffee (or stick to decaf!) after 2 or 3 in the afternoon. Research shows that caffeine can disrupt your sleep up to six hours after you consume it.

(Source: [rd.com](#))

Iran set to tap into Halal tourism

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — An Iranian tourism official **d e s k** says special attention should be paid to Halal tourism as an emerging economic powerhouse to materialize the goal of attracting 20 million tourists annually by 2025.



CHTHO Deputy Director Mohammad Moheb-Khodai

“For achieving the goal of drawing 20 million [foreign] tourists under a 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country needs to devote considerable attention to Halal tourism,” IRNA quoted Mohammad Moheb-Khodai as saying on Monday.

A subcategory of traveling, Halal tourism is geared toward the specific needs of Muslim individuals who seek to abide by the Islamic rules.

“Unlike its rivals in the hospitality sector, Iran doesn’t need to establish an infrastructure for Halal tourism as all its infrastructures are existing in the country,” said Moheb-Khodai, the deputy director of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization.

In this line, the potential of Iranians expats for attracting foreign tourists and the need for offering incentives should be taken into account.

Iran will debut its first International conference on Halal food and business with the motto of “Halal Orientation, The New Global Trend” in Tehran during December 4 to 7, IRIB reported. The conference is expected to raise the country’s share of the global Halal market, the organizers say.

Back in June, the Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI) announced plans to establish a set of standards to promote Halal tourism in the country.

The Arabic word Halal refers to what is permissible or lawful in traditional Islamic law; frequently applied to permissible food and drinks. A subcategory of traveling, Halal tourism is geared toward the specific needs of Muslim individuals who seek to abide by the Islamic rules.

In 2016, over 5.5 million foreign travelers from the Middle East, the Americas, Europe and South and East Asia set foot in Iran, fetching close to \$8b in revenues.

Filled from corner to corner with ancient bazaars, museums, mosques, monuments, gardens and palaces set inside bustling cities, historical ruins and rich rural landscapes, the country is increasingly filled with camera-wielding Westerners seeking adventure, archeology and art.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Lakes of Ounianga

Located in northeast of Chad, in a hot and hyper-arid desert setting with less than 2mm rainfall per year, the Lakes of Ounianga comprises a total of 18 lakes, in two groups, displaying a variety of sizes, depths, colorations and chemical compositions.



An undated photo shows one of the few remaining lakes at Ounianga, northeast Chad.

The property, inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list, covers 62,808 ha and has a 4,869 ha buffer zone.

The Lakes of Ounianga ensemble is located in a basin which, less than 10,000 years ago, was occupied by a much larger lake and has a globally unique hydrological system, sustaining the largest permanent freshwater lakes system in the heart of a hyperarid environment.

The property also displays a range of striking aesthetic features, with varied coloration associated with the different lakes and their vegetation, and the presence of dramatic natural desert landforms that all contribute to the exceptional natural beauty of the landscape of the property.

The shape and distribution of the lakes, combined with the effect of the wind moving the floating vegetation in the lakes, gives the impression of waves of water flowing in the desert’.

(Source: UNESCO)

Naqsh-e Rostam: A must-see tourist hotspot in southern Iran

The site is prepared to get a UNESCO tag

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — A variety of spectacular massive rock-hewn tombs and bas-relief carvings at Naqsh-e Rostam has turned the ancient site to a must-see for holidaymakers traversing Iran.

The Achaemenid necropolis is situated near Persepolis, itself a bustling UNESCO World Heritage site near the southern city of Shiraz.

Naqsh-e Rostam, meaning “Picture of Rostam” is named after mythical Iranian hero which is most celebrated in Shahnameh and Persian mythology. Back in time, natives of the region had erroneously supposed that the carvings below the tombs represent depictions of the mythical hero.

One of the wonders of the ancient world, Naqsh-e Rostam embraces four tombs are where Persian Achaemenid kings are laid to rest, believed to be those of Darius II, Artaxerxes I, Darius I and Xerxes I (from left to right facing the cliff), although some historians are still debating this.

There are gorgeous bas-relief carvings above the tomb chambers that are similar to those at Persepolis, with the kings standing on thrones supported by figures representing the subject nations below. There also two similar graves situated on the premises of Persepolis probably belong to Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III.

Beneath the funerary chambers are dotted with seven Sassanian era (224–651) bas-reliefs cut into the cliff depict vivid scenes of imperial conquests and royal ceremonies; signboards below each relief give a detailed description in English.

At the foot of Naqsh-e Rostam, in the direction of the cliff face, stands a square building known as Ka’beh-ye Zardusht, meaning Kaaba of Zoroaster. The building, which is roughly 12 meters high and 7 meters square, probably was constructed in the first half of the 6th century BC, although it bears variety of inscriptions from later periods.

Though the Ka’beh-ye Zardusht is of great linguistic interest, its original purpose is not clear. It may have been a tomb for Achaemenian royalty or some sort of altar, perhaps to the goddess Anahiti, also called Anahita believed to be associate with royalty, war, and fertility.

Getting ready for being World Heritage

The process of preparing Naqsh-e Rostam to get a UNESCO World Heritage tag has entered a new stage with conducting several restoration projects by the means of setting massive scaffolding and laser scanning, a cultural heritage official says.

The site is aimed to be incorporated into the profile of the adjacent Persepolis, itself a World Heritage site, IRNA quoted Masoud Rezaei-Monfared as saying on Monday.

“Laser scanning will provide clear-cut details of the site in order to support exact restoration, the official added.

Under tourists’ eyes

In what follows, a select of comments that foreign visitors have already posted to TripAdvisor with regard



A view of Naqsh-e Rostam

to the historical site, a fairly popular travel website, has been given:

“A must visit after Persepolis”

They are impressive. The place itself, where they built their tombs, with the high cliffs is an impressive place. You tend not to speak too loud. You admire. You feel humble and modest.

Really an impressive place, far less crowds than Persepolis. Especially on warm afternoons are there is strictly no shade. And the reflection of the sun on the cliff makes this place feel like an oven. Take care of sun burns.

Beautiful sculptures as well by the Sassanids. An absolute must see. Be careful with the heat. Even in spring, I cannot imagine how it is in August. (Eric P. from Bordeaux, France; reviewed April 2017)



A bas-relief carving at Naqsh-e Rostam depicts the triumph of Shapur I over the Roman emperors Valerian and Philip the Arab.

UK attracting record number of tourists

Tourism is booming in the UK with nearly 40 million overseas people expected to have visited the country during 2017 - a record figure.

Tourist promotion agency VisitBritain forecasts overseas trips to the UK will increase 6% to 39.7 million with spending up 14% to £25.7bn this year.

Britons are also holidaying at home in record numbers.

British Tourist Authority chairman Steve Ridgway said tourism was worth £127bn annually to the economy.

He called the sector an “economic powerhouse” and a “job creator right across Britain”.

“Two-and-a-half times bigger than

the automotive industry, employing three million, tourism is one of our most successful exports and needs no trade deals to compete globally.”

The UK has become a cheaper place to visit for tourists from overseas following the fall in the value of the pound since the Brexit vote last year.

But Mr Ridgway said: “Tourism is a fiercely competitive global industry and you cannot just build a strong, resilient industry on a weaker currency.

“We must continue to invest in developing world-class tourism products, getting Britain on the wish-list of international and domestic travelers and we must make it easy for visitors to make

that trip.”

Tourism Minister John Glen said: “Tourism contributes billions to the UK economy and supports millions of jobs.”

He added that the record figures for overseas and domestic holidaymakers were “testament to our world-class attractions and the innovation of our tourism industry”.

During the first six months of the year there were a record 23.1 million overseas visits to the UK - up 8% on the same period in 2016 - and the figures for July topped four million for the first time, with only a slightly smaller number of visits made during August.

Britain’s beaches and attractions have

also attracted more domestic users with “staycations” on the rise.

From January to June this year, domestic overnight holidays in England rose 7% to a record 20.4 million with visitors spending £4.6bn - a rise of 17% and another record.

On Monday, figures from trade body UK Finance showed UK tourists’ debit card spending when abroad was down sharply compared with last summer, providing more evidence of the trend towards holidaying at home.

Spending on UK debit cards overseas was down nearly 13% in August compared with the same month in 2016.

(Source: BBC)

Early days on the 747: Power, style and size

The 747, one of history’s most iconic airplanes, is heading toward retirement. Mark Vanhoenacker, a pilot and the author of “Skyfaring: A Journey with a Pilot,” writes that for “those who grew up under 747-crossed skies, it can be hard to appreciate how revolutionary the jet’s dimensions were when it first (and improbably, to some observers) got airborne in 1969.”

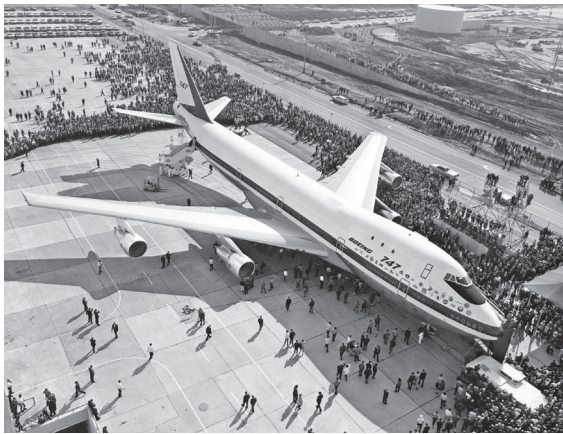
Here is a look at how the plane was marketed by the airlines that adopted it, and how The New York Times covered its (sometimes rocky) early days. Early marketing for the 747 emphasized two notable aspects of the plane: its amenities and its size.

The airlines didn’t hold back on selling those frills, which included full meals, liquor service and a lounge area up a flight of stairs. Take this ad from TWA:

“On this plane, you choose your own time to eat,” one character says. “On the DC-3,” his friend responds, “we were happy with a ham sandwich.” (That latter option might sound sadly familiar to modern fliers.)

The plane represented a new level in luxury, including on its domestic routes. TWA highlighted this opulence in a series of ads featuring the actor Peter Sellers playing foreign stereotypes, including a suave Italian:

(Sellers’ upper-crust Englishman in another ad is equally over-the-top hilarious; the ad also features a cameo by the staircase leading to the second-level



The first Boeing 747 rolled out of the Boeing plant in Everett, Wash., in 1968.

lounge.)

Safety was a related concern. An article from Jan. 18, 1970 — just days before the planned inaugural flight out of Kennedy Airport — notes that the fears revolved around two issues: “the sheer size of the 747 — with the specter of 350 or more passengers dying in a single disaster — and the spotty safety record of many jetliners

during their year or so of service.” The article went on to attempt to allay those fears: the plane, it quotes John H. Shaffer, the head of the Federal Aviation Administration, as saying, “will be the safest airliner anybody’s ever built.”

A charming article, from March 22, 1970, tracked, moment by moment, one of the plane’s first commercial flights, out of Kennedy Airport, from the perspective of the cockpit. It emphasized size, speed and technological advances: “Like a prehistoric beast, the giant airship waddles down the runway, six hours from London. In the cockpit: a \$57,000-a-year captain and his crew, backed by computers.”

A few weeks later, with almost three months of service under the plane’s belt, another article recounted early passenger reactions — the headline captures them nicely: “Some Riders Find 747 Is ‘Great’ But Others Vow, ‘Never Again.’” The big complaints? A three-hour delay out of San Juan, PR., and a variety of technical issues, including “complete chaos” during liquor service.

Oscar Sepp, of Glen Cove, N.Y., “called back as he dashed from an American Airlines 747 from Los Angeles: ‘More things fell apart than I ever experienced in my life. The mechanism controlling the seats and the light fell into my lap. And my meal tray was damaged.’”

At least some things seemed to have improved in air travel. (Source: The New York Times)

What filthy old birds can tell us about air pollution

By analyzing sooty birds housed in museum collections, scientists have been able to track patterns of U.S. air pollution over the last 135 years. As the new study shows, air at the turn of the 20th century was even dirtier than we thought — a finding that will now be used to improve our climate models.

Horned larks, in addition to their dazzling yellow chins, feature a white underside that, unfortunately for them, is really good at absorbing tiny bits of black carbon; free-floating atmospheric soot clings to their feathers like dust to a feather duster.

Today, most of these songbirds are able to maintain their bright, white appearance, but at the turn of the 20th century, horned larks were a miserable dark grey, particularly in areas where coal was king.

■ New research

New research published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences shows that, by tracking the degree of sootiness in these birds over time, scientists can build a historical record of atmospheric soot. In this case, scientists from the Field Museum in Chicago and the University of Chicago compared the amount of soot on 1,347 birds kept in Rust Belt museum collections to track environmental pollution over the past 135 years (Rust Belt cities tracked in the study included Detroit, Chicago, Pittsburgh, etc.).

The ‘soot on these birds’ feathers allowed us to trace the amount of black carbon in the air over time, and we found that the air at the turn of the century was even more polluted than scientists previously thought,” said Shane DuBay, a co-author of the new study, in a statement. “If you look at Chicago today, the skies are blue. But when you look at pictures of Beijing and Dehli, you get a sense for what US cities like Chicago and Pittsburgh were once like. Using museum collections, we were able to reconstruct that history.”

Atmospheric black carbon is still a serious public health and environmental concern. Produced by burning coal, it’s a major contributor to human-instigated



climate change.

■ Environmental data

Scientists need accurate environmental data to track historical changes in air pollution over time, and crucially, to build increasingly accurate models for future climate scenarios. Unfortunately, however, modern environmental sampling didn’t start until the 1950s, so there’s a big gap in the scientific literature. This latest study is an effort to fill in some of this missing data.

As this new study reveals, that missing data is em-

bedded within the feathers of birds kept in natural history collections. Ornithologists at the Field Museum and elsewhere are well aware that specimens from the early 1900s are darker than expected, with atmospheric soot considered the likely culprit.

For the study, co-author Carl Fuldner developed a photographic technique that allowed him to measure the amount of reflected light bouncing off the birds (fewer reflections means more soot has been absorbed by the feathers).

(Source: Gizmodo)

Scientists need accurate environmental data to track historical changes in air pollution over time, and crucially, to build increasingly accurate models for future climate scenarios.

Scientists find treasure trove of giant black hole pairs

For decades, astronomers have known that Supermassive Black Holes (SMBHs) reside at the center of most massive galaxies. These black holes, which range from being hundreds of thousands to billions of solar masses, exert a powerful influence on surrounding matter and are believed to be the cause of Active Galactic Nuclei (AGN). For as long as astronomers have known about them, they have sought to understand how SMBHs form and evolve.

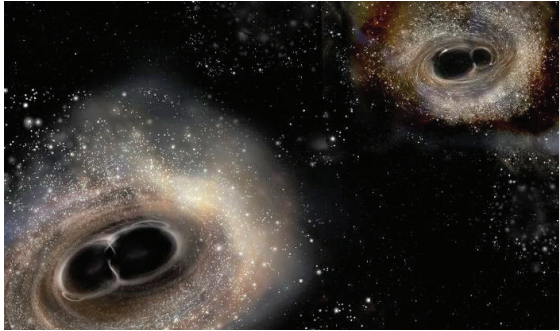
In two recently published studies, two international teams of researchers report on the discovery of five newly-discovered black hole pairs at the centers of distant galaxies.

■ Mid-Infrared Color

This discovery could help astronomers shed new light on how SMBHs form and grow over time, not to mention how black hole mergers produce the strongest gravitational waves in the Universe.

The first four dual black hole candidates were reported in a study titled “Buried AGNs in Advanced Mergers: Mid-Infrared Color Selection as a Dual AGN Finder”, which was led by Shobita Satyapal, a professor of astrophysics at George Mason University.

This study was accepted for publication in The Astro-



physical Journal and recently appeared online.

The second study, which reported the fifth dual black hole candidate, was led by Sarah Ellison — an astrophysics professor at the University of Victoria

“Astronomers find single supermassive black holes all over the universe.

But even though we’ve predicted they grow rapidly when they are interacting, growing dual supermassive black holes have been difficult to find.”

■ Black hole pairs

The black hole pairs were discovered by combin-

ing data from a number of different ground-based and space-based instruments. This included optical data from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS) and the ground-based Large Binocular Telescope (LBT) in Arizona with near-infrared data from the Wide-Field Infrared Survey Explorer (WISE) and x-ray data from NASA’s Chandra X-ray Observatory.

For the sake of their studies, Satyapal, Ellison, and their respective teams sought to detect dual AGNs, which are believed to be a consequence of galactic mergers. They began by consulting optical data from the SDSS to identify galaxies that appeared to be in the process of merging. Data from the all-sky WISE survey was then used to identify those galaxies that displayed the most powerful AGNs.

They then consulted data from the Chandra’s Advanced CCD Imaging Spectrometer (ACIS) and the LBT to identify seven galaxies that appeared to be in an advanced stage of merger.

The study led by Ellison also relied on optical data provided by the Mapping Nearby Galaxies at Apache Point Observatory (MaNGA) survey to pinpoint one of the new black hole pairs.

(Source: Universe Today)

Huge Investment, Worth \$9b, in PGSEZ: CEO

A hefty investment, worth \$9 billion, will be made in the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone (PGSEZ).

Chief Executive of Persian Gulf Mining and Metal Industries Special Economic Zone (PG.M.I.S.E.Z) Hassan Khalaj Tehrani announced the above statement on the sidelines of visit of Hormozgan Province Governor General from the capacities and potentials of this zone and said: “Establishment of more than 29 investors in this Zone is of paramount importance which differentiates it from other special economic zones in the country,” as large as approx. 5,000 ha, construction operation of this giant special economic zone is underway in four southern, middle and northern sites.”

Turning to the salient advantages of this Zone, he said: “Neighborhood and easy access to the free wa-

ters and several desalination units, nearness to Shahid Rajaei Port Complex as the largest trade port in the country, existence of nationwide rail terminals and also easy access to the mines of country, existence of rich iron ore mines, etc. are considered as salient advantages of this special economic zone.”

In the end, Chief Executive of Persian Gulf Mining and Metal Industries Special Economic Zone (PG.M.I.S.E.Z) Hassan Khalaj Tehrani pointed to the other advantages of this Zone as follows: Benefited from private rail campus with two communication lines inside the zone, establishing relationship with the nationwide rail lines, construction of highway, as long and 20 km, up to Bandar Abbas International Airport and Shahid Bahaonar Wharf, construction of highway, as long as 5 km, up to Shahid Rajaei Wharf, etc.



Senior Officials of BMI’s Hamburg Branch Visit Museum

Chief executives of Bank Melli Iran’s Hamburg Branch paid a visit to the Museum of Bank Melli Iran (BMI), the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

The bank’s chief executives in Ham-

burg branch attended the venue of the bank for teaching “Principles and Generalities of European Banking” course.

It is noteworthy that the Museum has been very valuable and from two as-

pects, the issue of which has attracted more tourists and visitors.

As located on Ferdowsi Ave., opposite Embassy of Germany, the building of Museum was constructed in 1933 and

became operation in 1939.

It should be noted that enthusiasts and respected visitors can visit the Museum from Saturday to Wednesday every week from 13 to 17.

EDBI Chief Visits Ghana with Banking Delegation

Dr. Salehabadi Chief Executive of Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) paid a visit with members of Ghanaian banking delegation, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

In this meeting, Ms. Giti Colena Member of Board of Directors of Exim Bank of Ghana and Chief Executive of Export Promotion Organization of this country as well as Ms. Florence Arapa Advisor to the chief executive of the organization held talks and conferred with the senior executive official of EDBI Dr. Salehabadi on broadening and enhancing mutual relationship.

Dr. Salehabadi was the first speaker who termed joint

cooperation between import-export banks of the two countries as “significant” and said: “At the first step, banking relation between the two countries will be strengthened. Issuance of guarantee letter, opening Letter of Credit (L/C), launching long- and short-term credit lines, etc. will be discussed at the next step.”

Various companies and economic enterprises are busy active in oil and petrochemical fields and also food industries in Ghana, most of them are facing serious problems in the banking field, he maintained.

In the end, the two sides placed special emphasis on broadening and enhancing bilateral ties, the report ended.



Gene therapy for blindness appears initially effective, says U.S. FDA

Spark Therapeutics Inc’s experimental gene therapy for a rare inherited form of blindness is effective, though it is unclear whether the benefit lasts over time, according to a preliminary review by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The therapy, Luxturna, or voretigene neparvovec, would be the first-ever gene therapy for any inherited disease to be approved in the United States.

The FDA’s review, posted on Tuesday on the agency’s website, comes two days ahead of a meeting of outside advisers who will discuss the treatment and recommend whether it should be approved.

Michael Yee, an analyst at Jefferies, said the FDA documents “look fairly benign and as expected,” and said he expects the advisory panel is likely to vote in favor of approval.

The FDA noted there is no available long-term data to show whether the effectiveness of the therapy is maintained after a year, so the clinical benefit beyond that “is unclear.”

Inherited retinal diseases are a group of rare conditions caused by mutations in one or more than 220 different genes, including one known as RPE65, which tells cells how to produce a crucial enzyme needed for normal vision.

Spark studied Luxturna in people with one of these conditions, Leber congenital aumaurosis, whose disease was mediated by defects in the RPE65 gene.

Clinical trial results showed 93 percent of participants experienced some improvement in their functional vision as measured by their ability to navigate obstacles in poor light.

(Source: Scientific American)

Study shows North Atlantic wind farms could power the whole world

A new study has found that the North Atlantic Ocean has the ideal conditions for wind farms, such as the Block Island Wind Farm that opened up off the coast of Rhode Island last year.

Wind is one of the cleanest energy sources available, and the U.S. is sitting next to a gold mine. A new study has found that wind speeds over the oceans could allow offshore turbines to generate far more energy than a land-based wind farm — with the North Atlantic, in particular, theoretically able to provide enough energy for all of human civilization.



In tapping into wind as an energy source, the U.S. has for decades lagged behind Europe and UK, which are home to the largest offshore wind farms in the world, including the London Array and the Netherlands’ Gemini wind farm. But the U.S. is catching up: the country’s first facility opened up off the coast of Rhode Island last year, and if the Trident Winds project goes ahead, it could snatch up the title of world’s largest wind farm.

In addition to being safer to bird life and less disruptive to humans, the main advantage of setting up wind farms offshore is the fact that the wind speeds are higher out there. In theory, those speeds mean there’s five times as much energy blowing around over water than there is over land, but whether that would translate to electricity production gains was another question. Researchers from Carnegie Science set out to find the answer.

“Are the winds so fast just because there is nothing out there to slow them down?” asks Ken Caldeira, co-author of the new study. “Will sticking giant wind farms out there just slow down the winds so much that it is no better than over land?”

(Source: New Atlas)

Bacteria self-organize to build working sensors

Researchers at Duke University have turned bacteria into the builders of useful devices by programming them with a synthetic gene circuit.

As a bacterial colony grows into the shape of a hemisphere, the gene circuit triggers the production of a type of protein to distribute within the colony that can recruit inorganic materials. When supplied with gold nanoparticles by researchers, the system forms a golden shell around the bacterial colony, the size and shape of which can be controlled by altering the growth environment.

The result is a device that can be used as a pressure sensor, proving that the process can create working devices.

While other experiments have successfully grown materials using bacterial processes, they have relied entirely on externally controlling where the bacteria grow and have been limited to two dimensions. In the new study, researchers at Duke demonstrate the production of a composite structure by programming the cells themselves and controlling their access to nutrients, but still leaving the bacteria free to grow in three dimensions.

“This technology allows us to grow a functional device from a single cell,” said Lingchong You, the Paul Ruffin Scarborough Associate Professor of Engineering at Duke. “Fundamentally, it is no different from programming a cell to grow an entire tree.”

Harnessing such construction abilities in bacteria would have many advantages over current manufacturing processes. In nature, biological fabrication uses raw materials and energy very efficiently. In this synthetic system, for example, tweaking growth instructions to create different shapes and patterns could theoretically be much cheaper and faster than casting the new dies or molds needed for traditional manufacturing.

(Source: Gears of Biz)

Play therapy center inaugurated in Tehran

SOCIETY TEHRAN — A new play therapy center aiming to help children with social or emotional deficits was inaugurated in Tehran on Wednesday.

This is the first state-run play therapy center in Iran which was established by the State Welfare Organization (SWO).

“The center offers free-of-charge services to 5 to 6 children per day,” IRNA quoted SWO official Leila Karimi as saying.



She said that the center receives children who are introduced by councilors.

According to Psychology Today, therapeutic play helps children learn to communicate better, change their behavior, develop problem-solving skills, and relate to others in positive ways.

It is appropriate for children undergoing or witnessing stressful events in their lives, such as a serious illness or hospitalization, domestic violence, abuse, trauma, a family crisis, or an upsetting change in their environment.

The goal is to help children learn to express themselves in healthier ways, become more respectful and empathetic, and discover new and more positive ways to solve problems.

This is thought to help them towards better social integration, growth and development, emotional modulation, and trauma resolution.

\$1.4b allocated for improving technical-vocational skills

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran has allocated 55 trillion rials (nearly \$1.4 billion) for improving technical and vocational education and training, the deputy labor minister said on Tuesday.

Unfortunately, jobseekers don’t usually qualify for many jobs as they have not been well-trained at schools or universities, Abolhassan Firouzabadi said, adding, the educational curriculum needs to be altered to prepare students for their future jobs.



Firouzabadi further expressed hope that within the next three years technical and vocational education and training would be compulsory at schools.

“Sadly we only provide students with one-sided education while students need vocational training as well,” he highlighted.

Technical and vocational education and training helps learners acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to develop professional careers and enter the world of work, creating a vibrant labor market and contributing to economic growth.

LEARN ENGLISH

Making a Bank Transfer

A: Good Morning welcome to bank. How may I help you today?

B: Hi I need to transfer some money to another account. It’s **urgent**.

A: Okay, have you made a wire transfer at our bank before?

B: No. I’ve never made a transfer before.

A: It’s alright, I will **take you through** the **procedure**. Are you transferring funds to a company or an individual account?

B: A company account. I need to pay a bill.

A: Okay, I’ll need the name of the company and their **bank routing number** as well as their bank’s address and phone number.

B: I have all the information in this folder.

A: Well you’ve come prepared .You have all the necessary materials so we can go ahead and make the transfer right now. It’s a simple **transaction**, and we can **process** it today.

B: Oh, that’s such a relief. I didn’t want the payment to be **overdue**. Thank you so much.

A: It’s my pleasure.

■ Key vocabulary

urgent: important, needing immediate attention

take one through: guide someone along the process

procedure: a series of actions

bank routing number: a nine digit number used to identify financial institution in a transaction

transaction: an occurrence in which money is transferred from one account to another

process: to deal with an official document, request etc. in the usual way

overdue: not paid at an expected or required time, missing the deadline

■ Supplementary vocabulary

vault: a large solid steel box used to keep money or valuables

ATM: Automatic Teller Machine

Letter of Credit: a trade document used primarily in trade finance, which usually provides an irrevocable payment undertaking

travelers cheque: a preprinted, fixed-amount cheque designed to allow the person signing it to make an unconditional payment to someone else

withdrawal: removal from a place of deposit or investment

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Iran, Indonesia enhance scientific co-op

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The **d e s k** Islamic World Science Citation Database (ISC) affiliated with the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology signed a memorandum of understanding with Indonesia’s Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education to facilitate research and scientific cooperation.

The director of ISC Mohammad-Javad Dehqani and the Indonesian minister of research, technology, and higher education Mohamad Nasir signed the MOU in the Iranian city of Shiraz on Tuesday.

The agreement aims to encourage cooperation and exchange of knowledge between research centers of the two countries as well as initiating student and faculty exchange programs.

Minister Nasir called for stronger ties between Indonesian universities and ISC.



Mohammad-Javad Dehqani (L) and Mohamad Nasir

Dehqani, for his part, also provided the Indonesian delegation with the indices pertaining to the status of their

universities in the Islamic world regarding their academic research performance.

Nasir has travelled to Iran at the head

of a delegation comprising chancellors of the Bandung Institute of Technology and Gadjah Mada University.

According to ISC’s official website Dehqani has also recently travelled to Indonesia and signed MOUs with 13 Indonesian universities.

The establishment of ISC was approved by the Organization of the Islamic Conference during the Fourth Islamic Conference of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research held in October 2008.

It only indexes journals from the Islamic world. It is managed by the Islamic World Science Citation Center, located in Shiraz.

In 2009, ISC partnered with Scopus, world’s largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed research literature that allows ISC’s publications to be indexed in Scopus.

October 13: International Day for Disaster Reduction



The International Day for Disaster Reduction was started in 1989, after a call by the United Nations General Assembly for a day to promote a global culture of risk-awareness and disaster reduction. Held every 13 October, the day celebrates how people and communities around the world are reducing their exposure to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of reining in the risks that they face.

■ Home Safe Home: Reducing Exposure, Reducing Displacement

The 2017 campaign seeks to raise global awareness about effective actions, policies and practices taken to reduce exposure to disaster risk at the community level, thereby contributing to saving homes and livelihoods. This is a considerable challenge which can be accomplished only through coordination, cooperation and collaboration among many stakeholders.

■ Background

By resolution 44/236 (22 December 1989), the General Assembly designated the second Wednesday of October International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. The International Day was to be observed annually during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 1990-1999.

By resolution 64/200 of 21 December

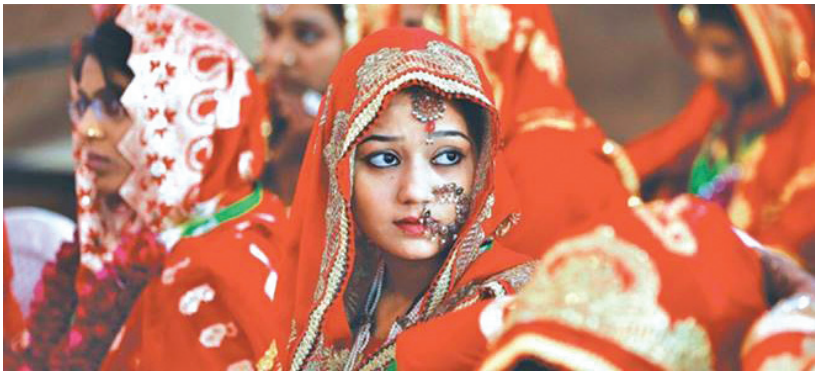
2009 the General Assembly decided to designate 13 October as the date to commemorate the Day and to change the Day’s name to International Day for Disaster Reduction. The objective of the observance is to raise awareness of how people are taking action to reduce their risk to disasters.

At the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the international community was reminded that disasters hit hardest at the local level with the potential to cause loss of life and great social and economic upheaval. Sudden onset disasters displace millions of people every year. In 2014, 19.3 million people were newly displaced by disasters. Disasters, many of which are exacerbated by climate change, have a negative impact on investment in sustainable development and the desired outcomes.

It is also at the local level that capacities need to be strengthened urgently. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction document is people-focused and action-oriented in its approach to disaster risk reduction and applies to the risk of small-scale and large-scale disasters caused by man-made or natural hazards as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks.

(Source:un.org)

Over 20,000 girls married off illegally each day: report



At least 20,000 girls around the world are married off illegally each day, with child marriage often deeply rooted in tradition despite being outlawed in a growing number of countries, according to new analysis released on Wednesday.

About 7.5 million girls become child brides every year in countries where early marriage is banned, the World Bank and global charity Save the Children said in a report.

More than a fifth are in West and Central Africa, where 1.7 million illegal child marriages occur each year, the highest rates in the world, the report said.

The figures show the challenges in enforcing anti-child marriage laws, since the practice can often be entrenched in community traditions and religious customs, the report said.

“Laws banning the practice are an important first step. But millions of vulnerable girls will continue to be at risk unless child marriage is tackled head on,” Helle Thorning-Schmidt, head of Save the Children, said in a statement.

“We need to change attitudes in communities so that we can end this harmful practice once and for all.”

Early marriage not only deprives girls of education and opportunities, but also increases the risk of death or serious childbirth injuries if they have babies before their bodies are ready. Child brides are also at greater risk of domestic and sexual violence.

Poverty is often the driving force behind child marriage. Parents may marry girls off so they have one less mouth to feed and in Africa will receive a “bride price” for the girl.

The World Bank in June said ending child marriage would reduce population growth, boost girls’ educational achievements and increase their earnings.

“When a girl gets married too young, her role as a wife and a mother takes over. She is more likely to leave school, she may become pregnant and suffer abuse,” said Thorning-Schmidt.

Around the world, nearly 100 million girls do not have laws protecting them from being married, the report added.

Worldwide, 15 million girls are married off as children every year - millions of them without breaking any law.

(Source: Reuters)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ ب

Majlis may discuss altering weekend holidays

The Iranian parliament (Majlis) may discuss the possibility of altering weekend holidays from Thursday to Saturday, Mehr news agency reported.

The bill was not approved by the social committee of the Majlis, MP Abolfazl Aboutorabi said, adding that 15 MPs have undersigned a request to the presiding board of the Majlis to discuss the proposed plan later in an open session. According to him, the four-day holiday difference with almost the whole world is causing difficulties for Iranians.

In 2007 Riyadh Summit, Aboutorabi said, Islamic countries have opt for Friday and Saturday for their weekends which decreases the differences to one day with the world.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Thick as thieves

■ **Explanation**: very close-knit; friendly; allied.

■ **For example**: Mary, Tom, and Sally are as thick as thieves. They go everywhere together.

PHRASAL VERB

Dream on

■ **Meaning**: used to tell someone that they are hoping for something that will not happen

■ **For example**: You think I’m going to help you move house? Dream on!

ENGLISH IDIOM

Think better of

■ **Explanation**: if you think better of something, you decide not to do what you intended doing

■ **For example**: I was going to go shopping, but when I saw the crowded car park, I thought better of it.

Hamas, Fatah resume reconciliation talks in Cairo

Rival Palestinian factions Hamas and Fatah have kicked off unity talks in the Egyptian capital amid high hopes that the negotiations would usher in a long-awaited national reconciliation.

"We meet in Cairo full of hope to draw and lay down a roadmap" for national reconciliation, senior Hamas delegate Izzat Reshiq said on his Twitter account of the three-day talks that began on Tuesday.

"Unity and national reconciliation among all our Palestinian people is our strategic option to move forward," he added.

The Palestinian leadership has been divided between Fatah and Hamas since 2006, when the latter scored a landslide victory in parliamentary elections in the Gaza Strip. Hamas has ever since been running the coastal enclave, while Fatah has been based in the autonomous parts the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Previous reconciliation attempts by the two sides have failed.

In September, however, Hamas said it had accepted key reconciliation conditions offered by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and under-



lined its "desire to achieve national unity."

The resistance movement also invited the Palestinian unity government formed in 2014 to return to Gaza, dissolving an administrative committee that runs the Israeli-besieged territory as a step towards fresh national elections in Gaza

and the West Bank.

The statement followed negotiations in Cairo between the movement's officials and a delegation sent by Abbas.

On October 2, the Authority's administration, led by Prime Minister Rami al-Hamdallah, held its meeting in Gaza

for the first time since 2014.

During the talks in Cairo, the two sides are expected to examine ways to implement a 2011 agreement brokered by Egypt, under which 3,000 Fatah security officers would join a Gaza police force over the course of a year.

Under that deal, Hamas' 25,000-strong armed wing, Ezzedine al-Qassam, which has defended Gaza against three deadly Israeli wars over the past decade, would maintain its position. The resistance group says the force is non-negotiable.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned Palestinians against "bogus reconciliations," and reiterated Tel Aviv's demand for the disbandment of Hamas's military arm.

In an apparent attempt to influence the Cairo-brokered talks, an Israeli delegation landed in Cairo to meet with Egyptian officials, Israeli paper Ha'aretz cited Palestinian media as saying.

The delegation landed in a private plane in Cairo's International Airport for a number of hours to meet with the officials, the reports said.

(Source: agencies)

UN tells Myanmar's Suu Kyi to halt violence against violence

The United Nations human rights office has urged Myanmar's de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, to halt the persisting violence and discrimination against the Rohingya Muslim minority in the country.

"Our ask of Aung San Suu Kyi is certainly to immediately stop the violence," Director of the UN's Asia and Pacific region human rights office Jyoti Sanghera said on Wednesday.

She was speaking during a briefing in Geneva to present a report on Myanmar's military campaign against the embattled minority population in the country's northern Rakhine State.

Sanghera expressed concern that the displaced Rohingya refugees that have fled to neighboring Bangladesh might be "incarcerated or detained" on their return to Myanmar, where she said they lacked citizenship status or any other civil and political rights.

The development came a day after the world body declared that it remained on "full alert" for a mass exodus of Rohingya Muslims as reports indicated a sharp rise in their flight from the Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

Myanmar's army intensified a brutal crackdown on the ethnic minority population in August, with numerous reports of massacre and rape by Myanmar soldiers and Buddhist mobs against the Rohingya. The military had already laid siege to the Muslims in Rakhine late last year.

Authorities in Myanmar, led by Suu Kyi, have been tightly controlling access to Rakhine since August, when purported attacks by Rohingya fighters prompted a brutal military response that has forced over 515,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh.

The crackdown has left scores of Rohingya villages torched and completely destroyed. Estimates as to how many Muslims have been killed vary from 1,000 to 3,000.

Suu Kyi, who has won a Nobel Peace Prize, has refused to take any action to end the violence.

Meanwhile, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), a large-scale cholera immunization campaign has begun near Cox's Bazar, in Bangladesh, with the goal of safeguarding newly-arrived Rohingya and host communities from the deadly disease.



WHO further said that 900,000 oral vaccine doses were set to be distributed among children under five, 650,000 of which during were to be distributed in an initial 10-day campaign, to be followed by a second round from October 31.

(Source: agencies)

Trump sought dramatic increase in U.S. nuclear arsenal

U.S. President Donald Trump wanted to dramatically increase the country's nuclear arsenal, he said in a meeting with his national security advisers in July, NBC News reported on Wednesday, citing three officials who were present in the room.

Trump's reported comments come as tensions remained high with North Korea and as Trump is expected to make an announcement on whether to decertify the international deal surrounding Iran's nuclear program.

The president spoke on July after he was shown a chart indicating the stockpile of U.S. nuclear weapons had slid from a high of 32,000 in the 1960s.

Trump said he wanted to have that same number now, NBC reported.

The United States currently has about 4,000 nuclear warheads earmarked for use in its military stockpile, according to the Federation of American Scientists.

In a post on Twitter on Wednesday, the president said, "Fake @NBCNews made up a story that I wanted a 'ten-fold' increase in our U.S. nuclear arsenal. Pure fiction, made up to demean. NBC = CNN!"

Trump said in an interview with Reuters in February that he wanted to ensure that the U.S. nuclear arsenal was at the "top of the pack."



Although U.S. presidents have modernized weapons stockpiles over the years, adding to the nuclear arsenal or building a prohibited type of weapon would be a violation of treaty agreements, according to NBC.

After the meeting, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson referred to Trump as a "moron," according to NBC. U.S. news reports have painted the relationship between Trump and Tillerson as tense.

MSNBC reported in 2016 that as a candidate, Trump asked a foreign policy adviser three times in a one-hour meeting why the United States could not deploy its nuclear weapons.

(Source: NBC)

U.S. flies bombers over Korea

The U.S. military flew two strategic bombers over the Korean peninsula in a show of force late on Tuesday, as President Donald Trump met top defense officials to discuss how to respond to any threat from North Korea.

Tensions have soared between the United States and North Korea following a series of weapons tests by Pyongyang and a string of increasingly bellicose exchanges between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

North Korea has launched two missiles over Japan and conducted its sixth nuclear test in recent weeks as it fast advances toward its goal of developing a nuclear-tipped missile capable of hitting the U.S. mainland.

The two U.S. Air Force B-1B bombers were joined by two F-15K fighters from the South Korean military after leaving their base in Guam, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement on Wednesday.

After entering South Korean airspace, the two bombers carried out air-to-ground missile drills in waters off the east coast of South Korea, then flew over the South to waters between it and China to repeat the drill, the release said.

The U.S. military said in a separate statement it conducted drills with Japanese fighters after the exercise with South Korea, making it the first time U.S. bombers have conducted training with fighters from both Japan and South Korea at night.

The U.S. bombers had taken off from the Andersen Air Force Base in Guam. In August, Pyongyang threatened to fire intermediate-range missiles toward the vicinity of Guam, a U.S. Pacific territory that is frequently subjected to sabre-rattling from the North.

Guard raised

South Korean and U.S. government officials have been raising their guard against more North Korean



provocations with the approach of the 72nd anniversary of the founding of North Korea's ruling party, which fell on Tuesday.

Trump hosted a discussion on Tuesday on options to respond to any North Korean aggression or, if necessary, to prevent Pyongyang from threatening the United States and its allies with nuclear weapons, the White House said in a statement.

Trump was briefed by Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford at a national security team meeting, the statement said.

U.S. and South Korean wartime operational plans, including a plan to wipe out the North Korean leadership, were stolen by North Korean hackers last year, a South Korean ruling party lawmaker said on Wednesday.

Some 235 gigabytes of military documents were taken from South Korea's Defense Integrated Data Center in September last year, Democratic Party representative Rhee Cheol-hee said in radio appearances on Wednes-

day, citing information from unidentified South Korean defense officials.

In May, an investigative team inside the defense ministry announced the hack had been carried out by North Korea, but did not disclose what kind of information had been taken.

Ships banned

The United Nations Security Council, which has imposed a series of ever tighter sanctions on North Korea, has banned four ships from ports globally for carrying coal from North Korea, including one vessel that also had ammunition.

The vessels are the first to be designated under stepped-up sanctions imposed on North Korea by the 15-member council in August and September over two long-range ballistic missile launches and Pyongyang's sixth and largest nuclear test.

China, North Korea's main ally and trading partner, has consistently argued sanctions alone will not work, urging Washington and Pyongyang to lower their rhetoric and return to the negotiating table.

China's influential Global Times tabloid expressed alarm at how far the rhetoric on both sides had gone and how it had increased the risk of a "fatal misjudgment".

"The international community won't accept North Korea as a nuclear power. North Korea needs time and proof to believe that abandoning its nuclear program will contribute to its own political and economic advantage. This positive process is worth a try," the paper said in an editorial late on Tuesday.

"War would be a nightmare for the Korean Peninsula and surrounding regions. We strongly urge North Korea and the U.S. to stop their bellicose posturing and seriously think about a peaceful solution," it said.

(Source: Reuters)

Russia: Terrorists operating 'under U.S. nose' in Syria

1→ Damascus, and the northeastern city of Dayr al-Zawr, Russia's Sputnik news agency reported on Wednesday.

It said the road targeted by Daesh is used for delivering humanitarian aid for civilians and supplies for the Syrian army. It urged "the US side to explain its selective blindness regarding militants" operating near US forces in Syria.

Dayr al-Zawr is the capital of a province of the same name. The province is one of Daesh's last major strongholds in Syria, and is, thus, the subject of counter-terrorism operations by the Syrian army, backed by Russian air power.

The U.S. has long been accused of colluding with Daesh to provide safe passage and logistic support to the members of the Takfiri group in conflict zones. Reports revealed last month that the US military had several times airlifted Daesh Takfiri terrorists amid Syrian army advances on Dayr al-Zawr.

Meanwhile, Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov cited another incident, in which terrorists -- whom he did not identify by affiliation -- had used the U.S.-controlled zone to enter a sensitive area nearby.

On October 2 and 3, a group of 600 terrorists, who had previously been based at the Rukban refugee camp, located in the American-controlled area, headed westward in SUVs, and after covering some 300 kilometers (186 miles), entered a nearby "de-escalation" zone. The "de-escalation" zone is one of the four such demarcations, which have been set out during talks between the Syrian government and opposition, under the auspices of Russia, Iran and Turkey.

Konashenkov said the entry of the terrorists into the zone could undermine de-escalation efforts there.

"Considering such significant reinforcement in terms of manpower, medicines, and food, at the U.S.' tacit approval, one does not have to be an expert to forecast an attempt to derail the truce in the southern de-escalation zone," he said.

"By another strange coincidence, almost simultaneously with them, two convoys [30 and 60 tons respectively] with medicines and products for the local population entered this de-escalation zone... All humanitarian aid that arrived and, above all, medicines, was unloaded and is under control of the militants who came from al-Tanf," the spokesman noted.

He added that the areas transgressed by the terrorists are under the control of " sleeper cells" belonging to Jabhat Tahrir al-Sham, formerly known as al-Nusra Front or al-Qaeda's Syria offshoot. Konashenkov said the 600 terrorists are, therefore, assumed to have entered the areas to either "fight these cells for medicines and food, or act jointly with them," Sputnik cited him as saying.

The spokesman underscored that "the U.S. would solely bear all the responsibility for sabotaging the peace process in Syria," he added, according to the agency.

It quoted Director of the North America Department at the Russian Foreign Ministry, Georgiy Borisenko as saying that the U.S. actions near al-Tanf gave rise to the speculation that it was trying to divide the country by creating governing bodies controlled by Washington and its allies.

(Source: TASS)

Russia 'may cut number of U.S. diplomats to 300 or fewer'

A Russia Foreign Ministry official says Moscow may order Washington to slash the number of its diplomatic personnel across Russia to 300 people or even fewer in a tit-for-tat measure against the US.

The statement was made Wednesday by the head of the Foreign Ministry's North America Department, Georgiy Borisenko, during an interview with Russia's RIA news agency.

It came following warnings by Russian officials of their intention to respond to the September shutdown of Russian diplomatic missions across the US, including its consulate in the west coast city of San Francisco.

Earlier, Moscow ordered Washington to cut the number of its diplomatic and technical staff working throughout Russia by almost 60 percent — reducing the number to 455 — during a diplomatic row that began by the expulsion of 35 Russian diplomats in the final days of the former president Barack Obama's administration in December 2016.

The dispute intensified when the US Congress imposed new sanctions on Moscow in July.

The figure of 455, according to Borisenko, had been meant to mirror the total number of Russian diplomats working in the US, but also included Russian diplomats serving at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

"The fact that in the summer, we took into account the people working for Russia's mission at the UN, this was good-will," he said.

"If they haven't appreciated this, we have the full right to reduce... the number of US diplomats further," he said, explaining that Moscow could stop taking the number of Russian UN staff into account when calculating what parity between the two countries meant.

"In this case," he said, "the number of American personnel in Russia should decline to a level of 300 or below."

The development came two days after Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told his American counterpart, Rex Tillerson, that the Russian diplomatic properties had been "illegally seized" by the U.S. government, demanding their return to Moscow's embassy in Washington.

(Source: RT)

Zarif, Majlis mull over possible responses to Trump

1→ Another lawmaker Behrouz Nemati also said the foreign minister discussed specific steps Trump and the U.S. Congress might take, and Iran's plans for reciprocal action to each anticipated U.S. move. Nemati did not say what actions Zarif had proposed.

Pakistan barred from international football

Pakistan has been suspended from international football because of what global soccer body FIFA described as undue third-party interference in the country's football federation (PFF). FIFA said in a statement that the suspension would prevent Pakistani teams, including the national side, from playing in international competition and the PFF from benefiting from FIFA development and training programs.

"The PFF offices and its accounts remain in control of a court-appointed administrator, which constitutes a violation of the PFF obligations to manage its affairs independently and without influence from any third parties in accordance with the FIFA Statutes," said FIFA. "The suspension will be lifted once the PFF offices and access to the PFF accounts are returned to the PFF." A PFF spokesman told Reuters by email they had no immediate comment but were preparing a statement to explain "the background which led to this and also our views on the suspension". According to FIFA records, Pakistan, 200th of 211 teams in the world rankings, have not played a full international since a 0-0 draw with Yemen in a World Cup qualifier in March 2015. Pakistan have never qualified for the World Cup.

(Source: Reuters)

Robben: Future is bright for Netherlands

Arjen Robben believes better times are ahead for Netherlands despite their failure to qualify for a second successive major tournament. Netherlands missed out on a place at the 2018 World Cup as their 2-0 win over Sweden proved not to be enough to seal a play-off berth.

Robben marked his final international appearance with a brace to secure victory and, though Netherlands will not be featuring at Russia, Robben feels the future is bright for the Oranje, who also failed to qualify for Euro 2016.

"If you're at school, children who play football, you give everything to win...If you don't succeed, that's a huge disappointment. Then it's okay to be sad, but better times are coming," Robben said. Asked how he felt about the fans chanting his name at the Amsterdam Arena, Robben replied: "That was wonderful. I'm so grateful. I've played here for 14 years. I've witnessed so many wonderful things. If it's so well appreciated by the Dutch fans, then I can only be grateful."

Right-back Daryl Janmaat echoed Robben's sentiments over the future of the team. "Positive," Janmaat responded when pressed for his assessment of Netherlands going forward. "Everyone is being real negative, that's easy. We have enough good players. We are in a difficult period now. That's clear and also very painful. "But you see we're better than most of the countries, like Sweden. We were better two times. That is why it's extra painful we don't go to the World Cup."

(Source: Fox Sports)

Kyrgios fined \$10,000 for Shanghai walk off

Australia's Nick Kyrgios has been fined \$10,000 and deducted his \$21,000 first-round losers' cheque following his decision to walk off after losing the first set against Steve Johnson in the Shanghai Masters on Tuesday. The tempestuous Kyrgios had just been beaten in a tiebreak against Johnson when he walked to the net, offered his hand to the American and stormed off court to the bemusement of his opponent and chair umpire Fergus Murphy. Kyrgios, 22, was booed off court by the crowd.

The ATP said on Wednesday that Kyrgios had been punished for "unsportsmanlike conduct", saying he had failed to complete a medical visit to explain his actions.

Kyrgios, ranked 21 in the world, said later on Twitter that he had been suffering with a stomach bug and a shoulder problem. "I've been battling a stomach bug for the past 24 hours and I tried to be ready but I was really struggling on the court today which I think was pretty evident from the first point," Kyrgios said.

"My shoulder started to hurt in the practice which didn't help either and once I lost the first set I was just not strong enough to continue. I've not eaten much in the past 24 hours." Last year, Kyrgios was fined \$16,500 and banned for eight weeks for deliberately throwing a game during his second-round defeat by Mischa Zverev in Shanghai. The ban for "conduct contrary to the integrity of the game" was reduced to three weeks after he agreed to a "care plan" under the direction of a sports psychologist. He was also docked a penalty point against world number one Rafael Nadal in the China Open final last week following a disagreement with the chair umpire.

(Source: Daily Star)

Dortmund agreed to let Aubameyang leave

Borussia Dortmund were happy for Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang to leave the club during the most recent transfer window, the Gabon striker has confirmed

Aubameyang finished last season as the top scorer in the Bundesliga and was heavily linked with moves to AC Milan or the Chinese Super League, having also regularly spoken of a desire to join Real Madrid. Speaking in July, Dortmund sporting director Michael Zorc alluded to an unspecified period of time during which a transfer involving the 28-year-old could be sanctioned. But Aubameyang remained in place for the current campaign under new boss Peter Bosz and has 13 goals in all competitions for the league leaders.

"There was a time in the window when I could have changed. We [Aubameyang and the Dortmund board] agreed on this together in all openness but nothing happened," he told Sport Bild. "I have always felt very comfortable in Dortmund, in the team and at BVB, and that is true today, too. BVB is my family!"

Dortmund are five points clear of champions Bayern Munich at the top of the Bundesliga after seven matches and host fourth-placed RB Leipzig on Saturday.

(Soruce: Soccerway)

Will Lionel Messi win the Ballon d'Or after Argentina heroics?

Lionel Messi could be about to steal the Ballon d'Or from under the nose of Cristiano Ronaldo.

■ What happened?

Argentina travelled to Estadio Olímpico Atahualpa to face an Ecuador side needing three points to qualify for the World Cup. La Albiceleste's record in Ecuador can be best described as ropey: they had only won on the road there three times, in 1947, 1960 and 2001.

Jorge Sampaoli's men arrived in Quito in poor shape, sitting on the cusp of elimination having somehow contrived to draw against Paraguay last time out.

Argentina went a goal down inside the first minute but then Messi struck, hitting a hat-trick as the two-time World Cup winners grabbed an automatic qualifying spot.

A hat-trick against an Ecuador, ranked 35th in the world, may very well sound par for the course for a player of Messi's caliber. However, context is everything here: Argentina had to win, the rest of the team appear to have contracted the yips, they were playing some 3,000-odd meters above sea level and, realistically, this will more than likely be Messi's last World Cup at his peak.

Argentina needed him and Messi delivered.

And that could deliver Messi the Ballon d'Or. Messi was humble in the wake



of his performance while his coach was a little more effusive.

■ What did Messi say?

"There was always the fear of coming here to play. Luckily, we could react and we managed to play well.

"We were calm, we achieved the goal and that is the most important thing. Thanks to God, we fulfilled the objective."

"It would have been crazy not to be in the World Cup. The group deserved to qualify."

■ What did Jorge Sampaoli?

"I told the group: Messi did not owe the World Cup to Argentina, but football owed the World Cup to Messi."

"The nationality of the best player in the world is luckily Argentine.

"Football, the World Cup, could not be left (the same) without Messi. We had to play with that in mind. As a consequence of that pressure we are stronger now, this qualification will make us stronger to face the future.

"We had the possibility to help him to be in another World Cup. He is the best player in the history of football and I'm very excited to be in a group near him."

■ What bearing will have this on the Ballon d'Or?

Messi's intervention might have been perfectly timed. France Football have just

announced the 30-man shortlist for the Ballon d'Or with voting not due to close until November. Cristiano Ronaldo had been the favorite to win the award after helping Real Madrid claim a league and Champions League double.

Had Argentina need to go through the play-off then it may have been a different matter entirely, as votes would have been cast ahead of his decisive intervention (assuming he made one).

Late interventions have of course swung voting before. In 2013, Franck Ribéry had been the favorite for the award. However, Cristiano Ronaldo ended up winning it after voting was extended from November 15 to 29, on account of the fact FIFA had received "a response of less than 50% from eligible voters before the original deadline."

And on November 19, Ronaldo, the Ballon d'Or incumbent, hit a hat-trick that propelled his side to the 2014 World Cup in Brazil courtesy of a 3-2 win over Sweden on the night and a 4-2 win on aggregate.

Ronaldo's late heroics were crucial to him winning the coveted award. Will Messi's Ecuadorian excellence propel him to a sixth win? Or will Ronaldo hold on?*

*yes there are 30 men on the shortlist but, let's be honest, this is a straight shootout between Messi and Ronaldo.

(Source: Eurosport)

Netherlands join England, Germany and Spain in top Nations League division



England, France, Germany and Spain are among the 12 teams confirmed as participants in the top division of the new UEFA Nations League competition.

Portugal, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Poland, Iceland and Croatia are also in League A. The inclusion of Netherlands, who make the cut despite failing to qualify for Euro 2016 and the upcoming World Cup, may come as a surprise, the line-ups having been decided according to teams' position in the UEFA coefficient rankings as of October 11.

League B contains Austria, Wales, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Ukraine, the Republic of Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Northern Ireland, Denmark, Czech Republic and Turkey.

Scotland, Norway, Greece and Serbia are among 15 countries in League C, while the 16-team League D includes minnows like Liechtenstein, San Marino

and Gibraltar, along with sides such as Belarus and Macedonia.

Each league will see the teams split into separate groups, with Leagues A and B splitting into four groups of three teams.

At the end of the first Nations League, teams will be promoted and relegated from each division.

Winners will be crowned at the Nations League finals in June 2019, while there is also a route to Euro 2020 available for the top-ranked teams in each of the four leagues who do not qualify for the competition in the regular qualifying groups.

The draw for specific groups in the Nations League, which will largely replace international friendlies, will be made on January 24, with the first games taking place next September.

(Source: Mirror)

Barcelona ready to relaunch Coutinho bid



Barcelona are ready to reignite their interest in Liverpool star Philippe Coutinho during the January transfer window, although chief executive Oscar Grau insists the LaLiga leaders must sell to buy.

Coutinho handed in a transfer request at Liverpool, who reportedly rebuffed three bids from Barca during the closing weeks of the window – the last of which was understood to have come in at £119million.

Barca director Albert Soler claimed Liverpool attempted to broker a €200m sale on deadline day, only for the Catalan giants to balk at the price.

Reports this week suggested Soler would step away from footballing duties at Camp Nou and, speaking at a news conference to announce Barcelona's latest financial results, Grau insisted a move for Brazil midfielder Coutinho was still on the agenda.

"We are ready for buying Coutinho in the winter market or any player the technical staff requests," he said.

"But it is important to adjust ourselves, so if there have to be arrivals there must be exits as well."

Grau announced Barcelona's income to have reached €708m for the 2016-17 season, with a record budget of €897m in place for 2017-18.

Neymar's world record departure to Paris Saint-Germain for €222m in August did much to swell the coffers and Grau outlined how Barca benefited from the windfall.

"We must forget about the price paid for Neymar last summer," he added.

"After taxes we received about €188m in income and a direct financial impact on the club's treasury of €144m."

(Source: Four Four Two)

Stunned U.S face major questions after World Cup debacle

In one of the biggest upsets of this qualifying cycle, the United States failed to reach the World Cup for the first time in more than 30 years and now face some major questions over the progress of the sport in the country.

A 2-1 defeat to an already eliminated Trinidad and Tobago meant the U.S. finished an embarrassing fifth out of six teams in their CONCACAF qualifying group.

Mexico topped the standings with Costa Rica in second place while the third automatic spot went to Panama.

The Central American nation reached the World Cup for the first time in their history thanks to a last gasp 2-1 win over Costa Rica, while Honduras ended fourth and will play Australia over two legs for a place in Russia next year.

The impact of the U.S's absence will be felt at broadcasters Fox, who take over coverage of the World Cup from ESPN starting with the 2018 tournament and a host of sponsors, such as Nike, who had been hoping for plenty of World Cup exposure.

But on a deeper level, the outcome raises a host of questions about whether American soccer truly is progressing.

The country did not feature in any World Cup from 1954 to 1986, but after making it to Italia 90 and then hosting the tournament themselves in 1994, the game appeared to be on the rise.

The U.S reached the quarter-finals in 2002 and more



recently impressed in Brazil four years ago by reaching the second round, finishing above Portugal in their group. On the domestic front, Major League Soccer, which began in 1996, has produced a stable league for the first time in North America and has grown to 22 teams, many playing in new soccer specific stadiums.

■ NO EXCUSES

"This is an utter embarrassment, with the amount of money that is in Major League Soccer and in this sport, you can't get a draw against Trinidad? You don't deserve to go the World Cup" said former U.S. striker Taylor Twellman, now a television pundit for ESPN.

"If this failure does not wake up everyone from U.S Soccer (Federation) to Major League Soccer to 'pay to play' (youth soccer), to broadcasters, everything, then we are all insane."

"That should never have happened with the billion dollars plus that is going into MLS and youth soccer de-

velopment but it did and every single person should look themselves in the mirror," he added.

But in the immediate aftermath of the defeat coach Bruce Arena, who was brought back in November last year following the firing of German Juergen Klinsmann, rejected the idea that major change was needed.

"There's nothing wrong with what we're doing," Arena was quoted as saying by Sports Illustrated (www.si.com). "Certainly, I think if our league continues to grow it benefits the national team program. We have some good players coming up. Nothing has to change.

"To make any kind of crazy changes I think would be foolish. We're building a consistent professional league. We have players playing abroad of a certain quality. There's enough there. There's no excuses for us to not qualify for the World Cup."

U.S. Soccer president Sunil Gulati, who is expected to face a challenge to his leadership with two potential candidates having expressed an interest in standing against him in the next elections, also questioned the need for change.

"You don't make wholesale changes based on the ball being two inches wide or two inches in. We'll look at everything, obviously, and all our programs, both the national team and all the development stuff" he said.

"But we've got a lot of pieces in place that we think are very good and have been coming along. Tonight obviously wasn't what we hoped for."

(Source: Reuters)

World Cup hosts Russia held by Iran in friendly

S P O R T S World Cup hosts Russia needed a second-half equaliser from Zenit St Petersburg striker Dmitry Poloz to secure a 1-1 draw against Iran in a friendly in Kazan on Tuesday.

Russia fell behind when Iran striker Sardar Azmoun beat back-up goalkeeper Andrei Lunev in the 57th minute after Mehdi Taremi powered through the Russian backline.

Russia, however, hit back in the 74th minute, with Poloz sliding in to get a touch on cross by Alexander Samedov, beating Iranian goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand.

Russia came into the game on the back of a confidence-boosting 4-2 win against South Korea at the weekend, when they were aided by two own goals from South Korean defender Kim Ju-young.

As World Cup hosts, Russia have not had the opportunity to measure themselves against Europe's best in qualifying.

The friendly against South Korea was Russia's first international test since they exited the Confederations Cup at the group stage in June, which added to a long list of recent failures.

Russia also made an early exit at both the 2016 European Championship and the 2014 World Cup, failing to win a match in both tournaments, and they are eager to avoid embarrassment at next year's finals.

Iran, three-times Asian champions, finished first in their qualifying group for the World Cup. They will be making a fifth World Cup appearance next year.

The World Cup finals run from June 14 to July 15 in 12 venues spread across 11 cities including Moscow, St Petersburg and Sochi.



Russia coach Cherchesov happy with draw with Iran



S P O R T S Russia football coach Stanislav Cherchesov is pleased with draw against Iran in the friendly match.

The World Cup host was held to a 1-1 draw by Iran in Kazan.

It was Russia coach Cherchesov's fourth draw in 14 matches since he took over in August 2016.

"After the break we looked a lot better but then we conceded a goal on a counter-attack," Cherchesov said.

"I'm pleased with my team's reaction as we have not only levelled but created more scoring chances," he added.

"Now we need to analyze our performance in the

matches with South Korea and Iran to draw the right conclusions," the Russian coach added.

Azmoun broke the deadlock for Iran in the 57th minute, firing past Lunev from a short cross by Mehdi Taremi.

The hosts hit back in the 74th minute when Poloz converted Alexander Samedov's cross to level.

Russia piled on the pressure but their poor finishing let them down.

"It was a good game and an excellent lesson for us," said Iran manager Carlos Queiroz.

"I really enjoyed the football today but we still have plenty of homework to do."

'It would be good' if Alexis Sanchez joined PSG - Dani Alves

Dani Alves has opened the door for Alexis Sanchez to join him and Neymar at Paris Saint-Germain in the future after Brazil ended Chile's hopes of qualification for the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

A youthful Brazil side, captained by Alves' current PSG teammate Marquinhos and featuring Neymar, beat Sanchez's Chile 3-0 in Sao Paulo on Wednesday.

Alves, who has scored two goals and assisted two more across all competitions since joining PSG in the summer, was asked after the match if Sanchez could join him in Paris once his Arsenal contract ends next summer.

"He is wanted by many teams," Alves told reporters in the mixed zone. "It would be good if he came with us. I will always appreciate him. I want what is best for him wherever he goes."

When asked if he had spoken with former Barcelona teammate Sanchez, Alves added: "I didn't want to speak



much because I know how tough it is and also because I didn't want for people to

interpret things in a way that would have put my professionalism in doubt."

Reigning Copa America champions Chile finished sixth in the South American qualification zone behind Peru, who now face a playoff to confirm their World Cup spot.

Alves, Neymar, Marquinhos and Thiago Silva, who missed the game against Chile because of injury, will now all return to France and all will be assessed before Unai Emery picks his squad for Saturday's trip to face Dijon.

Silva injured his right thigh during the 0-0 qualifying draw away at Bolivia in La Paz and had to be substituted after 29 minutes.

Although he decided to remain with the national team until the end of the international break, he could be rested by PSG this weekend with an Anderlecht double header to come in the Champions League and then Le Classique away at Marseille and Nice at home before the end of the month.

(Source: Soccernet)

Lionel Messi: A World Cup without Argentina 'would have been crazy'

Lionel Messi said "it would have been crazy a World Cup without Argentina" after his dramatic hat trick secured the nation's qualification for the tournament.

Argentina went into Tuesday's game against Ecuador likely needing a result to book their flight to Russia next summer, and Messi helped them overcome an early deficit to rally for victory, scoring twice before half-time and adding his third after the break to seal the win.

After the match, Messi, who along with the rest of Argentina's players had boycotted the media since November 2016 as a protest against perceived mistreatment, said he had feared the worst when his side went behind, but now they could celebrate qualification.

"Fortunately everything went well and we are into the World Cup," he said. "We are calm now after achieving the main goal -- that is the most important thing. All this time that we were away from the press, the fans helped us to be closer.

"It would have been crazy a World Cup without Argentina, this group didn't deserve it. The team will change, will grow a lot and will come out stronger.

"It was a relief because we were in a tough spot. We got ourselves into this mess. It was not easy to play here, a lot of things happen from my mind when the 0-1 came, but the group overcame the situation very well and was quick to take the lead.

"There was some fear of missing the World Cup. We let pass a lot of opportunities and we had to decide our future in this game. We had to qualify, now it's time to enjoy."

Meanwhile, Javier Mascherano has asked Argentina

fans for a fresh start following their qualification for the World Cup.

"The message is to rebuild so that we can all think about what happened," he told TYC Sports. "We never looked for excuses. There were many things that while not being done on purpose, ended up affecting the team.

"As players of the national team we went through a lot. I don't want to sound like a victim, but we need to analyse it, not just for this generation but for the next one. At some point, these players will leave and we have the duty to leave something behind for those that are next.

"The reality is that we all want to move forward together, and that Argentina does not have the need to go through a similar situation. We want this to be a starting point."

Mascherano hailed Barcelona teammate Messi for his heroics.

Messi's hat trick took him to 21 career CONMEBOL World Cup qualifying goals, breaking Hernan Crespo's record of 19, with Uruguay's Luis Suarez also matching him with a brace on Tuesday against Bolivia.

"Leo proved yet again that he owns this game," Mascherano said. "When you are like him, you have that capacity, there's no context for him. From now on, it's not just a case of enjoying it, but helping him."

The Argentina players celebrated in the changing room after the game in Quito to leave behind a tense week following Thursday's goalless draw at home against Peru that had put their qualifying campaign in jeopardy, with the side having failed to win in their



previous four games.

"We knew that this could have been the end of the story for many of us," Mascherano said. "Thanks to God it wasn't the case. I hope that we can analyse the past three years and rebuild Argentinian football.

"We now need to enjoy ourselves and relax. We need to think about the next seven or eight months that we have ahead to arrive in Russia in the best form and make it a hit."

Mascherano, who has made 139 appearances for Argentina since his debut in 2003, says he will retire after the World Cup.

"I will try to get to Russia, although I'm not the one that decides, it's the national team coach [Jorge Sampaoli]," the 33-year-old said. "But that will be the end, it's very clear to me."

(Source: ESPN)

We didn't underestimate Germany: Abbas Chamanian

TASNIM — Iran's U-17 football coach Abbas Chamanian said they respect Germany and didn't underestimate the European team in Group C match.

Iran defeated Germany 4-0 in the FIFA U-17 World Cup on Tuesday.

"We respected the German team and we did not underestimate them," said Chamanian.

"Germany is always a tough opponent for any team in the world. We saw a brilliant team performance from a united team (Iran), we defended excellently and were great in attack. Our players play for each other," he added.

"Our fundamental plan was to control Germany's attack and to keep possession. We knew and studied about the attacking abilities and formation of Germany.

"We also had two very important training sessions before this game. One of them was focused solely on learning to control and stop the Germans in attack and the other training session was to utilize and capitalize on the weak points of the German defence," Chamanian concluded.

Iran is mentally, physically strong, Germany U-17 coach says

Germany U-17 football coach Christian Wuck said that Iran is a physically and mentally very strong team.

Germany lost to Iran 4-0 in Group C of the FIFA U-17 World Cup on Tuesday.

"I told my players that during their careers they will face many setbacks and this is probably one of their biggest setbacks but we have to come back strongly against Guinea," Wuck said in the post-match news conference.

"We knew in advance that Iran is physically very strong so we also wanted to field strong players. They are also mentally a very good team. All the players, not only the goalkeeper (Luca Plogmann) were not at their best," he lamented.

(Source: Hindustan Times)

Iranian, Russian football federations ink MoU

MNA — The friendly match between Iranian and Russian football teams led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between federations of the two countries.

Russia held National Iranian football team at a one-all draw in an international friendly on Tuesday evening in the Russian city of Kazan. On the sideline of the encounter, Secretary General of Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) Mohammad Reza Saket and officials at the Russian Football Federation held a joint session to make necessary arrangements to continue bilateral cooperation.

Iran's Saket, while confirming the statement in a radio interview, said "the joint meetings led to signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Iran and Russia."

Under the terms of the agreement, main football teams of Iran, while organizing camps in Russia, will hold several tournaments in the country hosting the 2018 World Cup.

The cooperation agreement pertains to transferring know-how and technology, maintaining security, holding workshops and various tournaments. Expansion of cooperation in futsal and beach soccer have also been included in the deal.

United States miss out on World Cup after Trinidad loss

The United States will be absent from the World Cup finals for the first time since 1986 next year after a humiliating 2-1 defeat at the hands of Trinidad & Tobago in Couva on Tuesday.

Despite an inconsistent qualifying campaign, the Americans entered the Ato Boldon Stadium needing only a win of any sort over the bottom team in the CONCACAF final qualifying group to punch their ticket to Russia.

But two first-half goals - an Omar Gonzalez own goal in the 17th minute and an Alvin Jones effort 20 minutes later - proved too much for the Americans to overcome despite Christian Pulisic's strike after the break.

Instead, Panama qualified for the World Cup finals for the first time with their 2-1 victory over Costa Rica, while Honduras beat Mexico 3-2 to pip the United States to a playoff place against Australia.

"Clearly very disappointing," U.S. coach Bruce Arena told reporters.

"We had everything there for us today. There are no excuses for us not getting the second goal and at least a point out of the game.

"It's a blemish for us. We should not be staying home for this World Cup and I take the responsibility for that."

It was a stunning turn of events for the U.S., who were supposed to be rebuilding their program after hiring Arena last year. Weathering some bumps in the road, the Americans pulled off an emphatic 4-0 win over Panama last week to take a two-point edge over both Panama and Honduras and regain control of their destiny.

But the U.S. got off to an ominous start against the Soca Warriors when defender Gonzalez tried to clear the ball only for it to loop up and over goalkeeper Tim Howard and into the net.

"The guy hit an early cross, and when I went to clear it, he touched it first and it hit off my shin and it happened to go right over Tim Howard," Gonzalez said. "It's one of the most unlucky goals ever. It's one that will haunt me forever. I never thought I would see this day, it's the worst day of my career."

Jones doubled the lead when he unleashed a piledriver of a shot from well outside the penalty area that flew past Howard and into the net just inside the far post.

(Source: Reuters)

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Iran's "Light Sight" wins award at Wimbledon filmfest

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Seyyed d e s k Moslem Tabatabai's animation "Light Sight" won the Best Student Film Award at the 9th Wimbledon International Short Film Festival in London on Saturday.

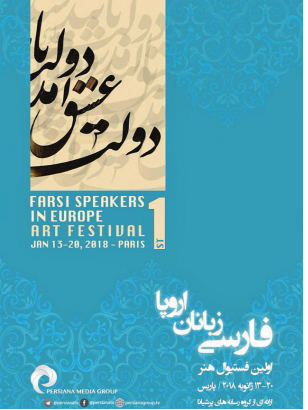


The movie is about a creature named M.E. who is fascinated by a white light outside its room. It tries to reach the light but there are obstacles in the way.

"The Full Story" by Daisy Jacobs from England was named the best film, while "Xamarim" by Kelen Balint Rafael from Hungary received the best animation award at the festival.

Iranian comedians on Persian Speakers in Europe Art Festival jury

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian comedian couple d e s k Mehrab Qasemkhani and Shaqayeq Dehqan have been selected for the jury of the stand-up comedy section of the 1st Persian Speakers in Europe Art Festival, the organizers announced on Wednesday.



Dehqan is mostly known for her roles in television comedy series such as "Pavarchin" and "Barareh Nights" by Mehran Modiri and "Physicians' Building" by Soroush Sehat, in which her husband collaborated as a writer.

Organized by the Persiana Media Group, the festival, which intends to introduce Persian art and culture to the world will be held in Paris from January 13 to 20, 2018.

The festival will be held in the categories of visual arts, stand-up comedy, photo and dubbing.

The organizers also plan to arrange different exhibitions and concerts on the sidelines of the festival.

Iranian theater troupe to perform "Israfil's Trumpet" Greek festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — An Iranian troupe led d e s k by director Amer Mosafer Astaneh will perform "Israfil's Trumpet" at the 52nd edition of the Dimitria Festival, an art and culture event that is underway in Thessaloniki, Greece.

The play is the story of a small boy, who needs to stay with his cruel grandmother in a warzone. His presence gradually affects the grandmother and other people around him.



Fatemeh Naqavi, Kazem Sayyahi, Bahar Katuzi, Mehdi Hosseini and Ilia Nasrollahi are the main members of the cast for the play, which will go on stage on October 19 at the festival.

The Dimitria Festival features various programs, including photography exhibitions, theatrical and musical performances, visual art exhibitions and films screenings.

The festival opened on October 1 and will run until October 22.

Literati discuss Hafez poetry at Tehran meeting

1 → Kazzazi said that he has followed the guidelines he received based on his consultations with the Divan of Hafez in two important decisions of his life.

In his speech, Bolkhari made a comparison between Hafez and Ibn Arabi, the Arab Andalusian poet who is also the most influential Sunni scholar of Islam, and said that Hafez described the truth in a way that people from intellectuals to ordinary individuals understand it without an intermediary.

"If they were unable to gain a deep understanding of Hafez poetry, at least they would come to a romantic realization of his poems," he added.

A large number of literati and lovers of Persian literature will come together at Hafezieh, the tomb of Hafez in Shiraz today to celebrate Hafez National Day.

The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance and a number of cultural officials are scheduled to attend the celebration.

Several musical performances have also been arranged.

In addition, Hafez expert Saeid Hamidian will receive a Hafez Medal during a special ceremony to be

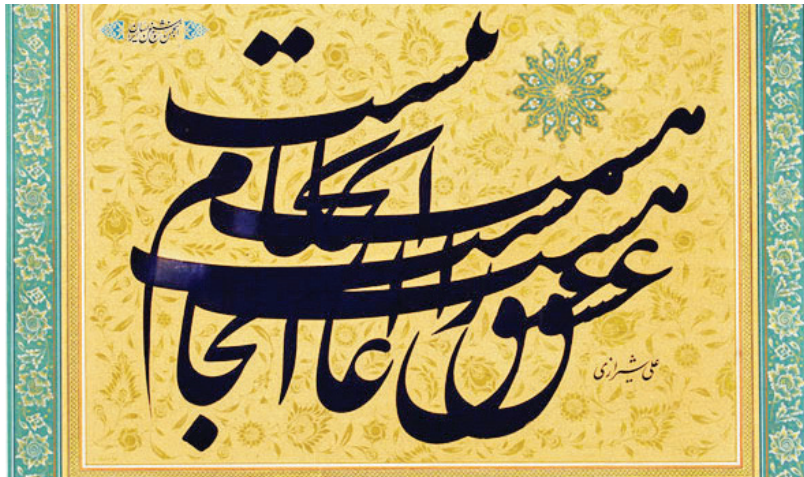


People visit the tomb of Hafez in Shiraz in an undated photo.

organized today by the Iranian Center for the Study of Hafez in Shiraz.

He is the author of "A Commentary containing the author's 25 years of studies on Hafez."

Iranian association declares national day for Persian calligraphy



A calligraphy work by Ali Shirazi

A R T **TEHRAN** — The d e s k Iran Calligraphers Association has declared that Mehr 21 (October 13) in the Iranian calendar year will be celebrated as the National Day of Persian Calligraphy.

Speaking to reporters at the Iranian Artists Forum on Tuesday, the director of the association, Gholamhossein Amirkhani, announced the decision.

Persian calligraphy will be featured during a weeklong festival, which will begin on that day every year, he added.

This year, calligraphers are scheduled to visit several branches of the association in different cities during the week.

Two exhibitions displaying works by several distinguished calligraphers will open at two galleries of the forum on October 15.

Several sessions with experts and scholars have also been arranged during the week for lectures about different styles of Persian calligraphy.

A number of active calligraphers will be honored during the closing ceremony at the forum on October 20.

Amirkhani also paid a tribute to Mehdi Bayani (1906-1967), an expert on rare Persian manuscripts who launched several calligraphy courses at the then culture ministry on October 13, 1950.

"The association feels deeply indebted to Bayani so we decided to designate October 13 as the National Day of Persian Calligraphy," he said.

"Bayani helped Persian calligraphy find ways to reach people from all walks of life including the poor," he stated.

Da Vinci portrait of Christ expected to fetch \$100 million at auction

NEW YORK (Reuters) — The last privately owned Leonardo da Vinci painting and one of fewer than 20 by the Renaissance artist known to still exist is hitting the auction block, Christie's announced on Tuesday.

"Salvator Mundi," an ethereal portrait of Jesus Christ which dates to about 1500, is expected to sell for about \$100 million at Christie's in November, making it among the most highly-valued works ever to be sold at auction.

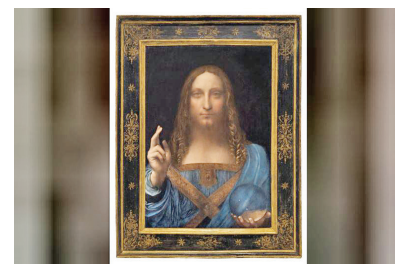
"This is truly the Holy Grail of art rediscoveries," said Alan Wintermute, Christie's senior specialist for Old Master paintings, explaining that the portrait sometimes called the male Mona Lisa had long been thought to have been lost or destroyed.

The portrait depicts Christ in vivid blue and crimson robes holding a crystal orb.

First recorded in the private collection of King Charles I, the work was auctioned in 1763 before vanishing until 1900, by which time Christ's face and hair had been painted over, which Wintermute said was "quite common" practice.

Sold at Sotheby's to an American collector in 1958 for 45 pounds, it again sold in 2005 as an overpainted copy of the masterwork, he said.

The new owner started the restoration process, and after some six



"Salvator Mundi," an ethereal portrait of Jesus Christ which dates to about 1500, the last privately owned Leonardo da Vinci painting, is on display for the media at Christie's auction in New York, NY, U.S., October 10, 2017. (Courtesy Christie's New York/Handout via Reuters)

years of research it was authenticated as da Vinci's more-than 500-year-old masterpiece, which culminated in a high-profile exhibition at London's National Gallery in 2011.

The auction house did not identify the seller, a European private collector who acquired the work after its rediscovery in 2005 and lengthy restoration. The painting stands as the first discovery of a da Vinci painting since 1909.

"Salvator Mundi" will be sold at Christie's in New York at its Nov. 15 sale of post-war and contemporary art following public exhibitions in Hong Kong, London and San Francisco.

Intl. festivals to screen films from Iran



A scene from Farshad Afshinpur's documentary "A Journey to Amadai"

A R T **TEHRAN** — Three d e s k Iranian films have been selected to go on screen at international events around the world.

"A Journey to Amadai", a documentary by Farshad Afshinpur, will be competing in the Internationales Bergfilm-Festival Tegernsee, which will be held in Germany from October 18 to 22.

The documentary is about over 30 animal species, including eagles and wolves, in the mountainous Amadai, a region in the western Iranian province of Hamedan. All of them withstand harsh winters and scalding summers.

Aryan Vazir-Daftari's "Not Yet" will go on screen in the Show Me Shorts, a festival of short films in New Zealand

opening on October 28. The film will be screened in the Worlds Collide section of the festival.

"Not Yet" is about a middle-aged couple who try to celebrate their expatriate young daughter's birthday via Skype.

The Crystal Palace International Film Festival, an annual festival running in South East London from October 27 to November 18, will also screen Farnush Abedi's acclaimed short animation "The Servant".

The film is about a servant who becomes a master and a bug becomes his servant. After a while, the man understands that he has begun a game that has no rules.

Luc Besson sets next film "Anna" with Helen Mirren, Luke Evans

WASHINGTON (Variety) — Lionsgate and EuropaCorp have closed a co-production deal for Besson's next action film, which will be titled "Anna." Lionsgate will also distribute the pic.

EuropaCorp will produce the film, while Lionsgate will distribute it. The movie starts production this November and will be released under Lionsgate's Summit Entertainment label.

"We are delighted to be reunited with Luc and his EuropaCorp team on another exciting, action-packed film featuring an A-list cast," said Lionsgate MPG chairman Patrick Wachsberger and president of acquisitions and co-productions Jason Constantine. "Luc is a visionary filmmaker with whom we are proud to extend our longstanding relationship."

Besson's new project is the first film to be produced under EuropaCorp's new mandate post "Valerian".

During last month's shareholders meeting, EuropaCorp's CEO Marc Shmuger outlined the outfit's aim to focus on making action thrillers and science-fiction films, in line with the company's DNA, along the lines of "Taken", "Lucy", "The Professional" and "The Fifth Element".

On top of shrinking its slate to two to three English-language films a year, a source close to the company told Variety that EuropaCorp will now work with more modest budgets ranging from \$25



million to \$35 million.

Going forward, Besson is expected to be more creatively involved in all of EuropaCorp's projects.

Aside from Besson's next directorial outing, EuropaCorp is also actively developing a sequel to Scarlett Johansson-starrer "Lucy" whose script has already been written by Besson, according to Shmuger.

Besson directed the Scarlett Johansson-starrer "Lucy" and "Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets." He also co-wrote and produced the hit action franchise "Taken". Marc Shmuger will produce the upcoming project on behalf of EuropaCorp.

Evans was most recently seen in "Beauty and the Beast" and "Fast and Furious 8". He can be seen next in "Professor Marston and the Wonder Women" in theaters this Friday.

Mirren recently starred in "Collateral Beauty", and can be seen next in Disney's "The Nutcracker and the Four Realms".