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Petchem output stands at near 40m tons in 9 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Petrochemical production in Iran during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2017) stood at over 39.9 million tons, IRNA reported on Monday citing the data offered by the National Petrochemical Company (NPC). The production of petrochemicals in

the ninth calendar month Azar (November 22-December 21, 2017) stood at about 4.3 million tons, the same report said.

Last July, Ali-Mohammad Bossaqzadeh, the production control director of NPC, announced that seven new petrochemical projects were planned to be implemented in the country by the end of the current calendar year (March 20, 2018). **→ 4**

World not scared by 'crazy' Trump: Shamkhani

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said on Monday that the strategy of scaring the international community by decisions of Donald Trump, whom he described as a "crazy person", has no effect.

Shamkhani made the remarks during a meeting with visiting Syrian Parliament Speaker Hammoudeh Sabbagh in Tehran.

The top security official said the U.S. has become isolated due to its officials' "unwise" decisions and "repeated mistakes".

Shamkhani also said threats by Trump to pull out of the 2015 nuclear deal unless the multilateral agreement is revised are just propaganda intended to deprive Iran of the economic benefits of the pact, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. **→ 2**

Bloodshed in Baghdad: Twin bombings kill over 3 dozens

Iraqi security forces say twin bomb attacks in central Baghdad have killed at least 38 people, amid weeks of relative calm in the Iraqi capital.

Another 105 people have reportedly sustained injuries. The bombings occurred

at Tayaran (Aviation) Square in the Iraqi capital on Monday morning.

General Saad Maan, a spokesman for the Iraqi Joint Operations Command, said two individuals had blown themselves up at the busy square. **→ 13**

Entessar: EU support for JCPOA needs more than statement

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN - Professor of Political Science hopes Iran prepare commensurate response to Trump's possible withdrawal of the JCPOA beyond issuing condemnatory statements and intensify diplomatic pressure on Europe.

U.S. president Trump on Friday renewed Iran sanctions relief once again and at the same time warned that it was the last time that he renewed the Iran sanctions relief and asked the Europeans to work on changes to the JCPOA.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Nader Entessar Professor and Chair of Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice, University of South Alabama.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ What is your general assessment of Trump's latest approach toward the JCPOA?

A: Trump's latest decision to extend his administration's approval of U.S.'s commitments under the JCPOA while threatening to withdraw from the agreement in if changes are not made to it was vintage Trump. President Trump's statement included its usual dose of bluster, threats and hyperbole while keeping everybody in limbo as to what his administration's next move will be.

■ What changes is Trump after?

A: The two most important changes Trump wants to make to the JCPOA are 1) eliminating the so-called "sunset clause" in the nuclear agreement to make Iran's nuclear obligations permanent, and 2) to include a clause in the agreement prohibiting Iran from developing ballistic missiles. In other words, Trump wants to weaken Iran's

deterrence capabilities and weaken its defense posture.

■ Considering the EU, Russia and China support to the JCPOA and Iran's opposition to any changes to the nuclear agreement, how realistic is Trump's requests? Will the EU and other signatories to the deal give up and adhere to his requests?

A: Although it does not appear that the 5+1 JCPOA signatories favor Trump's demands at this time, it is not inconceivable to construct a scenario in which some European countries would cave to Trump's demands and put pressure on Iran to agree to revise the JCPOA. We have already seen overt and covert attempts to compel Iran to accede to Trump's demands on ballistic missiles. Iran has to be extremely careful not to fall into another trap. **→ 7**

New U.S.-backed 'border force' in Syria infuriates Ankara, Damascus

By staff & agencies

The so-called military coalition led by the United States in Syria is reportedly planning to set up a new large border force of up to 30,000 personnel with the aid of its militia allies in war-torn country, a move that will further infuriate Turkey, a NATO ally that is already angry over Washington's strong support for Kurdish-dominated forces in the Arab country.

A top Turkish official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters on Sunday that the main reason behind summoning Philip Kosnett, the American charge d'affaires in Ankara, last week was in fact Washington's training of the new "Border Security Force" (BSF) within Syria, a move that was denounced by Turkish Presi-

dent Recep Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman, who called it "worrying."

Meanwhile, Damascus says it is determined to end U.S. military presence after Washington declared plans to build a 30,000-member "border force" in the Arab country that Russia says could lead to Syria's partition.

Syria's Foreign Ministry on Monday slammed the plan as a "blatant assault" on its sovereignty.

State television cited an official source in the ministry as saying that the Syrian army is resolved to end any form of U.S. presence in the country.

The U.S., purportedly fighting the Daesh terrorist group, is planning to build the so-called

"Border Security Force" on the Syrian territory held by the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) which is dominated by Kurdish militants.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Washington's decision to form a zone held by U.S.-backed militants could lead to the division of the Arab country.

"The announcement that this zone will be controlled by the U.S.-backed groups - by the force up to 30,000 people - this is a very serious issue, which causes concerns that a course was set for the partition of Syria," Lavrov said at an annual news conference.

The U.S., he said, is helping those who are seeking to topple the government of Syria rather than trying to resolve the Syrian crisis. **→ 13**



EDITORIAL

By Mohammad Ghaderi
Tehran Times editor-in-chief
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Trump and riddle of JCPOA

Although some news agencies have viewed the U.S. president stance on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) positively, the fact is Washington has long been breaching the nuclear deal.

On the one hand, The United States chooses selectively to keep part of the JCPOA which defines the obligations of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the deal, and on the other hand, it refuses to fulfill its obligations to the accord. Furthermore, the U.S. President has made an effort to add new clauses to the content of the JCPOA. Thus, we are now witnessing a clear nuclear deception by the United States.

In the meantime, European countries are apparently 'backing' the JCPOA, but in practice, they have done nothing to lift Iran's nuclear sanctions - the main objective of the JCPOA. The economic and commercial hurdles between Iran and Europe still remain intact. What is certain is that the United States, during both Obama's and Trump's presidencies, has practically withdrawn from the nuclear deal.

The U.S. Treasury Department, again under the last two U.S. Presidents, has prevented the normalization of banking relations with Iran, an issue that has been acknowledged by the economic analysts in the world.

Donald Trump once again has extended the suspension of nuclear sanctions. However, he has announced that this would be the "last time" to waive the sanctions against Iran unless talks on Iran's missile program begin, and Iran's nuclear constraints, which have been scheduled for 10 years, become permanent. He also called for an inspection of Iran's military sites. Meanwhile, a White House official has told reporters that Trump is calling for additional strict measures in the JCPOA, and in case of Iran's lack of commitment to these new conditions, the United States would be able to immediately resume the sanctions. During his one year of presidency, Trump publicly confirmed Iran's commitment to the deal a couple of times, but failed to do the same around three months ago. **→ 13**



ARTICLE

By Sajad Abedi
Political analyst

Defense diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran has employed 'defense diplomacy' to strengthen efforts of the defense sector through peaceful employment of defense in the process of rebuilding the country's prosperity. The nonviolent use of military forces has been used as a new concept and been emphasized in the formulation of a national defense and national security strategy.

Defense diplomacy is part of the national power of a country that along with foreign policy forms the source of power to enhance the capacity of a country in foreign relations. This diplomacy will not only monitor the application of political policy, but also guarantee the sharing of diplomacy in defense policy.

Indeed, the nexus between defense, military and diplomatic activities can be a powerful interconnected tool in the national power. On the other hand, the use of defense diplomacy will be effective both during peaceful and war times as well as in prevention of conflicts.

Iran is considered to be a regional power with its defensive capabilities growing somewhat after the revolution. This cannot be considered the only component of enhancing regional defense capabilities of Iran, because of the country's cross-border security conflicts with neighboring states promotes the use of defense treaties.

Defense diplomacy is a mechanism that plays an important role in achieving the goals of the country's foreign and security policy. The objective of the defense diplomacy is to create desired political, national and international conditions for the preservation and expansion of the vital values of the country against actual and potential enemies. In this regard, the realization of Iran's defense strategy within the framework of the defense guide requires a combination of both soft and hard technologies.

Defense cooperation in Iran is based on the country's foreign policy framework. This policy determines the type and scope of the country's political and even economic and military cooperation with other states. In such cases, the objectives of defense diplomacy are in line with the general objectives of foreign policy. **→ 13**



Tehran Times / Behnam Tofighi

Klenke Quartet goes on stage at Fajr

The Klenke Quartet from Germany gives a performance during the 33rd Fajr Music Festival at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural center on January 14, 2018.

The quartet that made its debut in 1994 features Annegret Klenke and Beate Hartmann on violin, Yvonne Uhlemann on viola and Ruth Kaltenhäuser on violoncello.

The four musicians are all graduates of the Franz Liszt College of Music in Weimar.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



President Rouhani to visit Baku late March

POLITICS TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani is scheduled to visit Baku, the Republic of Azerbaijan, in the last week of March, Trend news agency quoted an informed source as saying.

The visit is due to take place after Noruz festivities which mark the Persian New Year.

Iran and Azerbaijan have seen a surge in bilateral ties over the past several years.

Azerbaijan's trade turnover with Iran amounted to almost \$229 million in January-November 2017.



Military chief praises police handling of protests

POLITICS TEHRAN — Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, chief of the Iranian Armed Forces, said on Monday that police managed to control the situation quickly and separate rioters from peaceful marchers patiently.

According to Tasnim, Baqeri said the enemy was seeking to blame the ruling system for the death of some rioters.

In protests which first started in Mashhad on Dec. 28 and then spread to other cities 25 people were killed. Security forces were among the dead. The protests lasted for a week.



Iran denounces twin bomb attacks in Baghdad

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Monday strongly condemned twin bomb attacks in central Baghdad that left tens of people dead and injured, highlighting the Islamic Republic's support for Iraq in the battle against terrorism.

Qassemi expressed sympathy with the Iraqis, especially the bereaved families, over the deadly attacks.

He further reiterated Iran's decisive support for Iraq in its "relentless battle against terrorism, which is rooted in extremist ideologies" propagated by foreign-backed Takfiri groups.



Parliamentary economic, legal committees to decide on FATF: MP

POLITICS TEHRAN — The economic and legal committees of the parliament will examine a bill to join the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an anti-money laundering organization, Majlis Economic Committee Chairman Mohammadreza Pourebrahimi has said.

Pourebrahimi said the two committees' decision on the issue will take into account the considerations of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, Fars reported on Monday.

He also pointed to the complications of the issue, saying a decision will not be made before the end of the current Persian year, which ends on March 20, 2018.



Damavand destroyer severely damaged, two crew missing: Army

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Army spokesman has said the Damavand destroyer has suffered a serious damage in violent storms in the Caspian Sea and that two of its crew members have gone missing.

Shahin Taqikhani said the extent of damage caused to the destroyer was evaluated minor in the first glance but after a team of experts evaluated the situation closely, it was realized that the destroyer has been severely damaged and it needs to undergo a major repair, ISNA reported on Monday.

He also said that the army is still searching for the two missing staff.



Nuclear deal based on verification, not trust: Moniz

POLITICS TEHRAN —Former U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest J. Moniz has expressed support for the Iran nuclear deal, saying the agreement "is based on verification, not trust."

"159 toughly negotiated pages of detailed constraints put a straitjacket on Iran's nuclear activities that effectively block its path to a nuclear bomb," he tweeted on Sunday.

This is while top Iranian officials have repeatedly said the country was not seeking to build nuclear weapons in the first place with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, issuing a fatwa against the acquisition, development and use of nuclear weapons.

Iran, as a signatory to the NPT, has insisted it accepted limits on its nuclear work to prove to the world that its activities were peaceful.

Sunken tanker was destined for South, not North Korea

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has said that the sunken Iranian tanker was destined for South Korea, dismissing claims that the ship's destination was North Korea.

"As it has been repeatedly stated since the bitter incident occurred, the tanker's destination was South Korea, and any rumors circulating on social media that say otherwise are completely false," Fars quoted Qassemi as saying on Monday.

The Sanchi, carrying 136,000 tons of light crude oil from Iran, sank on Sunday, days after a collision with Chinese freighter CF Crystal, some 300 kilometers east of Shanghai.

Iran sent a rescue team to the scene of the incident, including Iranian navy commandos on speed boats. But the teams couldn't get close to the burning tanker due to the heat.



On January 13, Chinese rescuers recovered the tanker's black box.

Qassemi said efforts are underway to find the victims' remains and the Foreign Ministry will spare no efforts in this regard.

He said the black box of the oil tanker would disclose the cause of the incident.

The spokesman stressed that the Foreign Ministry did all in its power but unfortunately could not save the lives of the crew members.

Qassemi also thanked the Chinese government for its cooperation during the rescue operations, saying the severity of the incident, the strong heat and the huge fire had all made access to the tanker impossible.

The South Korean Ambassador to Tehran, Kim Seung Ho, also responded to rumors around the incident, confirming that the tanker's destination was South Korea.

Top judge: Iran won't remain silent toward U.S. hostile moves

POLITICS TEHRAN — Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani said on Monday that the U.S. should be aware that Iran will give appropriate response to any hostile move.

During a meeting with a number of high-ranking judges, he said Tehran will not remain silent towards the U.S. act in imposing new sanctions on Iranian individuals and entities.

On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump imposed new sanctions on 14 Iranian individuals and entities including Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani.

Amoli Larijani said that he is being sanctioned is an "honor" for him.

"I personally consider this issue an honor. I believe this



act of the U.S. proves the fact that the path we have taken is right. So, the U.S. act has no importance. The important point is that the Islamic Republic, as a powerful system, is taking step on the path of independence and the system's officials have no fear because they are being backed by the people," the top judge remarked.

Commenting on the 2015 nuclear deal, he said the multilateral agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, is not changeable.

On Friday, Trump extended waivers of key economic sanctions on Iran for another 120 days. However, he said if the text of the deal is not revised during this period he would unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from it.

VP calls for national dialogue to counter challenges

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Monday that it is essential to maintain unity and hold national dialogue among rival political factions to counter the U.S. president's moves who has been working incessantly to undermine Iran's economic relationship with the outside world.

"The U.S. seeks to show that (political) atmosphere in Iran is insecure for business. In my opinion, the best thing to do is maintaining unity and holding national dialogue," Jahangiri said during a conference in Tehran.

He said that the U.S. is making efforts to portray Iran as insecure country to do business with, because it is well aware that the main problems the Iranians face today are unemployment and low living standards.

To counter such challenges it is needed to create a calm atmosphere inside the country, he suggested.

"My solution is to boost unity and integrity and hold national dialogue," he noted.



Jahangiri also said, "Today, the society, government and system are facing various difficulties which can be resolved by all the good opportunities that Iran has."

In recent protest rallies, which were mainly motivated by economic problems including unemployment and corruption, Donald Trump posted frequent tweets inciting violence by the demonstrators.

Russia says will not back U.S. bid to change nuclear deal

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday Moscow will not support attempts by Washington to modify the Iran nuclear deal.

Lavrov spoke days after U.S. President Donald Trump said he would waive nuclear sanctions against Iran for the last time to give Washington and its European allies a chance to fix what he called "terrible flaws" of the 2015 nuclear deal.

"We will not support what the United States is trying to do, changing the wording of the agreement, incorporating things that will be absolutely unacceptable for Iran," Lavrov told a news conference in Moscow.

Russia's top diplomat, who stressed that Russia will work to preserve the existing Iran nuclear deal, also warned that the agreement's collapse could be detrimental to dialogue with North Korea.

"If the deal is put aside and Iran is told, 'you keep up with your obligations



or we will impose sanctions again', then you have to put North Korea in its place," Lavrov said.

"They are being promised that sanctions will be lifted if they give up their nuclear program. They will give it up, but no one will lift the sanctions against Pyongyang."

(Source: Reuters)

Hardest of U.S. hardliners begin to play Iran soft

POLITICS TEHRAN — Fox News, a hardliner American news outlet especially on Iran policy, has in a commentary on Sunday by YJ Fischer advised U.S. President Donald Trump not to quit the Iran nuclear deal.

Warning that nixing the deal would hurt America, the article notes that Iran's government said on Saturday that it would refuse to renegotiate the deal and threatened to retaliate against the U.S. after President Trump imposed more limited sanctions not connected to the nuclear agreement against 14 Iranian individuals and entities.

It says some Americans are applauding President

Trump's strong stance, particularly in light of recent anti-government protest demonstrations held in some 80 cities across Iran, "but in reality, imposing harsh and broad economic sanctions on Iran would be a mistake and play right into the hands of [conservatives] in Tehran who pose the greatest threat to the United States."

Imposing additional crippling economic sanctions, especially if it's an attempt to force quick regime change is likely to stir up nationalism, serving stronger cross-party reconciliation among Iranians, the article added.

"Just look at Russia, where President Vladimir Putin has skillfully used economic pressure from the West as

a scapegoat to effectively rally his base and shore up his power. The Iranian government has been adept at doing this in the past, and it will jump at the chance to do it again," the article reads.

"If America imposes additional economic sanctions against Iran we will be doing so alone, since it would be in breach of the nuclear agreement," it further underlines.

The article concludes by saying "the United States has a terrible track record when it comes to imposing regime change in the Middle East. We failed to get the results we wanted in Iraq, Libya and Syria. There's no reason to think we can do better in Iran."

World not scared by 'crazy' Trump: Shamkhani

1→ On Friday, Trump extended waivers of key economic sanctions on Iran for another 120 days. However, he said if the text of the deal is not revised during this period he would unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from it.

■ **'Syrians will decide own destiny'** Elsewhere, Shamkhani said that the Syr-

ian people will decide about their destiny with firm determination.

He also said that presence of foreign forces in Syria is a threat against regional countries.

According to Reuters, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan threatened on Monday to "strangle" a planned 30,000-strong U.S.-

backed force in Syria "before it's even born."

The United States announced its support on Sunday for plans for a "border force" to defend territory held by U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led fighters in northern Syria.

The Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad responded on Monday by vowing to crush the new force and drive

U.S. troops from the country. Assad's ally Russia called the plans a plot to dismember Syria and place part of it under U.S. control.

But the strongest denunciation came from Erdogan, who has presided as relations between the United States and its biggest Muslim ally within NATO have stretched to the breaking point.

Larijani: World should hear Palestinians' voice

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Monday that the Parliamentary Union of the Islamic countries is the "voice of the Islamic community" and should invite the world to hear the "voice" of Palestinians.

The world has become more sensitive to the injustices against the Palestinians as U.S. President Donald Trump declared on December 6 that he recognizes al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel and ordered the relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds. The announcement on al-Quds prompted harsh international warnings.

"The Quds issue is one of the important concerns of the Islamic countries," Larijani said during a speech to the conference of the Parliamentary Union of OIC Member States in Tehran.

The Islamic countries should not let more oppression against the Palestinians, the parliament speaker suggested.

Larijani also attached great importance to expansion of economic cooperation among Islamic countries, noting



Muslim countries have many resources to use in line with expanding cooperation.

■ **Larijani slams Trump's 'offensive' language**

Larijani also slammed Trump's "humiliating" and "offensive" language against other countries.

During a meeting with U.S. senators on Thursday, Trump used an insulting language to describe Haiti, El Salvador and unspecified African countries, calling them "shitholes".

"Such remarks were offensive and humiliating which lead us to 'modern brutality'. The political language is not working in normal mode anymore and humiliating language is being used instead of respecting nations," Larijani said.

The top lawmaker noted that such remarks by Trump are "provocative".

"We, as Islamic countries, should denounce such behaviors. No president should humiliate other nations be it African or non-African," Larijani added.

Larijani said that such a language does not help cooperation among the countries and deepen division and animosities.

U.S. diplomats around the world were summoned for formal reproach, amid global shock that such crude remarks could ever be made in a semi-public meeting by the president of America, the Guardian reported.

The 55-nation African Union said the remarks were "clearly racist".

Erdogan: Turkey to attack Syria's Kurdish town soon

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says his country's military forces will continue to fight terrorism on the southern borders with Syria, threatening to attack the Kurdish town of Afrin in the northwestern Syrian province of Aleppo "in the days ahead" to clear it of "terrorists."

"God willing, we will continue our operations, which we started first with Euphrates Shield Operation, to clean our southern borders of terror in Afrin within the next coming days," Erdogan said at the provincial congress of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in the central province of Tokat on Sunday.

He added, "We urge the international community to support Turkey's legitimate efforts. The slightest disturbance on the border would be the signal for us to take a step."

Erdogan also said that Turkey does not differentiate between terrorists, and treats all terrorist groups equally no matter where they are located.

The Turkish president further hoped that Ankara's Western allies, particularly the United States, would not make "mistakes" and "take sides with" Kurdish militants during Afrin offensive. "I hope that during an Afrin operation, these powers will not make the mistake of appearing to be on the same side as a terror organization," Erdogan said.

He added Turkey would "resolutely" continue to fight against terrorism, both at home and abroad.

Afrin is controlled by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militants. Ankara views the YPG as the Syrian branch of the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that has been fighting for an autonomous region inside Turkey since 1984.

Erdogan has repeatedly said that Afrin should be cleared of "terrorists," and demanded the deployment of Turkish troops there during a speech back in November 2016.

This is while U.S. officials consider the YPG as the most effective fighting force against Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in northern Syria, and have substantially increased their weaponry and technology support to the militant group.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, re-



cently told Turkey's official Anadolu news agency that YPG militants in northern Syria have geared up to establish a regular army called the Army of the North with Pentagon's assistance.

The sources said the U.S. military has already completed

the training of 400 YPG members, following an announcement from the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Joseph Votel on December 22, 2017, about forming border guard regiments.

(Source: TRT)

Bahraini court upholds jail sentence for prominent rights activist



Bahrain's Court of Cassation, which has the ultimate say in the case of appeals in the country, upholds a two-year jail sentence issued for noted rights campaigner Nabeel Rajab. Rajab has faced two trials, one concerning his criticism of the ruling regime in alleged interviews he has given and statements made to foreign media, and another having to do with his critical tweets.

On Monday, the court confirmed the jail term issued against Rajab in the first trial over the charge of "disseminating rumors and false information", a judicial source was quoted as saying. The comments he has made to the media outlets include an article attributed to him and published by French daily Le Monde. The authorities have said the alleged statements "harm the interests" of the Manama regime and

other Persian Gulf countries.

He could also be served with a separate 15-year sentence over the tweets, in which he has slammed Saudi Arabia and its allies, including Bahrain, for their involvement in the three-year-old war on Yemen.

Rajab was first detained on June 13, 2016 for the tweets. He will face a new hearing over the case on February 21. UK-based rights body Amnesty International, which has repeatedly taken exception with Manama's campaign of suppression, has called Rajab's trials "farical". Manama considers Rajab one of the leaders of the protests which the regime has been facing since 2011.

Scores of people have been killed and hundreds arrested during the crackdown with the help of Saudi and UAE troops.

(Source: al Alam)

Pope warns world is one step away from nuclear war



Pope Francis said Monday he was really afraid about the danger of nuclear war and that the world now stood at "the very limit."

His comment, made as he flew off for a visit to Chile and Peru, came after Hawaii issued a false missile alert that provoked panic in the U.S. state and highlighted the risk of possible unintended nuclear war with North Korea.

Asked if he was worried about the possibility of nuclear war, Pope Francis said: "I think we are at the very limit. I am really afraid of this. One accident is enough to precipitate things."

He did not mention Hawaii or North Korea.

Pope Francis has often flagged the danger of nuclear warfare and in November he appeared to harden the Catholic Church's

teaching against nuclear weapons, saying countries should not stockpile them even for the purpose of deterrence.

As reporters boarded his plane bound for Chile, Vatican officials handed out a photograph taken in 1945 that shows a young Japanese boy carrying his dead brother on his shoulders following the U.S. nuclear attack on Nagasaki.

"I was moved when I saw this. The only thing I could think of adding were the words 'the fruit of war'," Francis said, referring to a caption put on the back of the image.

"I wanted to have it reprinted and distributed because an image like this can be more moving than a thousand words. That is why I wanted to share it with you," he said.

(Source: Daily Star)

China absence looms over Canada meeting on how to pressure North Korea

Foreign ministers from around 20 nations gather on Tuesday to discuss how to curb North Korea's nuclear ambitions through diplomatic and financial pressure, but China, seen as a key player in any long-term solution, will be absent.

The Vancouver meeting, co-hosted by Canada and the United States, comes amid signs that tensions on the peninsula have eased, at least temporarily. North and South Korea held talks for the first time in two years last week and Pyongyang says it will send athletes across the border to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics.

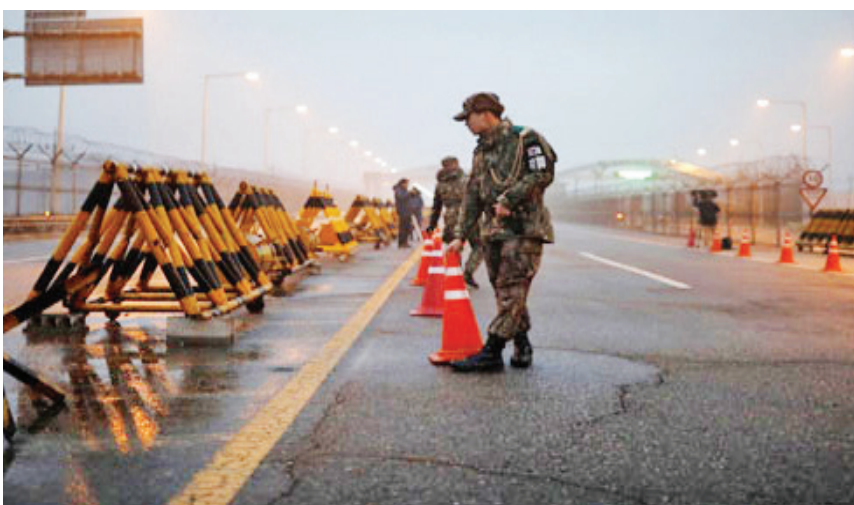
But the United States and others say the international community must look at ways of expanding a broad range of sanctions aimed at North Korea's nuclear program.

"There is growing evidence that our maximum pressure campaign is being felt in North Korea. They are feeling the strain," said Brian Hook, the State Department's director of policy planning.

Hook told a briefing in Washington that participants, including U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, would examine how to boost maritime security around North Korea to intercept ships trying to defy sanctions as well as "disrupting funding and disrupting resources."

The 17-nation Proliferation Security Initiative, which aims to prevent the trafficking of weapons of mass destruction, on Friday said "it is imperative for us to redouble our efforts to put maximum pressure on North Korea".

But North Korean leader Kim Jong Un



has shown no sign of willingness to give in to U.S. demands and negotiate away a weapons program he sees as vital to his survival.

Another challenge in Vancouver will be the absence of China, which has significant influence in North Korea. Beijing is Pyongyang's only ally and its chief trading partner.

The meeting primarily groups those nations that sent troops to the Korean war of 1950-53, when China fought alongside the North. Beijing condemned the gathering.

"Holding this kind of meeting that doesn't include important parties to the Korean peninsula nuclear issue actually cannot help in

advancing an appropriate resolution to the issue," foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a regular briefing.

Other invitees include Japan and South Korea, front-line U.S. allies in the Washington-led effort against North Korea.

Hook said China and Russia - which is also not attending - would be fully briefed on the conclusions. That said, Beijing's absence will be felt, say diplomats.

"Without China there is a real limit as to what can be achieved," said one senior diplomatic source.

Zhao Tong, a North Korea expert at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center in Beijing, said

the United States did not want Russia and China potentially distracting the discussion by raising their proposal to halt joint U.S.-South Korean military drills that the North says are a prelude to an invasion.

Fears of war have eased somewhat after the first round of intra-Korean talks in more than two years, and Trump, in an interview with the Wall Street Journal on Thursday, appeared to signal more of an openness toward diplomacy after a period of exchanging insults and threats with Kim.

But U.S. officials say hawks in the Trump administration remain pessimistic that the North-South contacts will lead anywhere.

Even so, debate within the U.S. administration over whether to give more active consideration to military options, such as a pre-emptive strike on a North Korean nuclear or missile site, has lost momentum ahead of February's Olympic games, the officials said.

For his part, Trump has vacillated between praising and criticizing China, which he has cast as critical to reining in North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

The White House on Friday welcomed news that China's imports from North Korea plunged in December to their lowest in dollar terms since at least the start of 2014, with trade curbed by United Nations sanctions.

Last month, however, Trump accused China of allowing oil into North Korea, which he said would prevent "a friendly solution" to the nuclear crisis. Beijing denied the charge.

(Source: Reuters)

Madrid to keep ruling Catalonia if exiled ex-leader reelected: PM

Spain will continue to rule the regional administration of Catalonia directly from Madrid in the event that its self-exiled former leader Carles Puigdemont is chosen as president by the Catalan parliament, Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said on Monday.

Puigdemont fled to Brussels in October after Rajoy fired him as Catalonia's leader when he declared an independent republic following an illegal referendum. He faces arrest and possibly decades in jail if he returns to Spain.

With only days before Catalonia's parliament convenes to elect a new regional government, separatists said Puigdemont was their candidate to lead the region again. They are exploring the possibility he could do so by video link from Brussels.

But Rajoy on Monday poured scorn on the idea.

"It's absurd that someone aspires to be president of the Catalan regional government as a fugitive in Brussels - it's a case of common sense," he said in a speech at his center-right People's Party (PP) Madrid headquarters. If Puigdemont tried to attend the parliamentary vote for a new head of region from Brussels, the Spanish government would challenge his appearance immediately in the courts, he said.

Rajoy said if Puigdemont was re-elected, constitutional powers invoked by the government in October to impose direct rule on the region would continue to apply. Rajoy had called regional elections in December to try and resolve the political crisis that led to an exodus of companies from the region. However, the election returned a slim majority to parties favoring independence, raising the possibility of a renewed push for a split from Spain this year. The parliament will meet for the first time on Jan. 17 to choose the committee that rules its day-to-day activities. A new leader could be voted in by parliament as early as Jan. 31.

(Source: Reuters)

Myanmar, Bangladesh hold talks on Rohingya repatriation

Officials from Myanmar and Bangladesh have met to "settle issues" over the repatriation of Rohingya Muslim refugees, who have fled a state-sponsored crackdown campaign in Rakhine State.

Officials from the two countries met in Naypyidaw on Monday over the repatriation deal that was signed last November, Bangladeshi officials familiar with the talks told AFP.

Under the deal, Myanmar vowed to repatriate the Muslim refugees, who have taken refuge in Bangladesh since the military launched a crackdown against the Muslim community in October 2016. It does not cover an estimated 200,000 Rohingya refugees, who were living in Bangladesh prior to October 2016.

According to the repatriation deal, Myanmar "would restore normalcy in Northern Rakhine (State) and to encourage those who had left Myanmar to return voluntarily and safely to their own households" or "to a safe and secure place nearest to it of their choice."

Most Rohingya refugees, however, say they will not return to Myanmar, where their villages in the State of Rakhine have been torched, according to AFP. Myanmar government troops have been committing killings, making arbitrary arrests, and carrying out arson attacks in Muslim villages in Rakhine.

The UN says nearly 655,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled the western state to Bangladesh since the bloody violence erupted last August. The Rohingya have lived in Myanmar for generations but are denied citizenship, and branded illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The UN has described a 1.1 million-strong Muslim community as the most persecuted minority in the world.

(Source: AFP)

Nephew of assassinated president Sadat says Egypt too repressive for election bid

The nephew of assassinated Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat said on Monday he would not, as widely expected, challenge incumbent Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in the presidential election because an environment of fear surrounds the vote.

Sisi has yet to announce his candidacy but is widely expected to run and easily win a ballot slated for March 26-28.

Mohamed Anwar al-Sadat, whose uncle led a sweeping economic liberalization program and opened ties with Israel before his assassination in 1981, had previously said he was mulling a run.

Though unlikely to upset Sisi's campaign, it would have carried the weight of a household name likely to garner some support.

Sisi, a general-turned-president, came to power in 2014, a year after he led the military in ousting elected but unpopular President Mohamed Mursi. Rights groups say Sisi has since led an unprecedented crackdown on political opponents, activists and critical media.

In a news conference accompanied by detailed election brochures and a video supporting his would-be campaign, Sadat announced that he had halted his run, denouncing what he called an election environment of fear where state-aligned media had pushed out opposing voices.

"Our real problem is can we, in this current environment and with what's happening now, move forward? I don't think so... so we've decided that we will not participate."

Sadat said he feared for the safety of supporters who had volunteered to collect votes of confidence required to appear on the ballot.

"People who volunteered to collect votes of confidence were scared away ... I'm scared for the young men and women and don't want to expose them to this, because we won't be able to do anything for them," he said.

Last week Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik, seen as the most serious potential challenger to date, said he was no longer considering a bid following a firestorm of criticism from state-aligned media and speculation that he was being held by authorities in a Cairo hotel.

Sisi's critics say his popularity has been dimmed by painful economic reforms, security problems and a crackdown on dissidents. Still, he is expected to readily win an election that has seen few serious challengers come forward.

(Source: AP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	97228.7
IFX	1087.94

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	43,890 rials
EUR	54,200 rials
GBP	60,900 rials
AED	11,900 rials

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$69.78/b
WTI	\$64.36/b
OPEC Basket	\$67.38/b
Gold	\$1,338.90/oz
Silver	\$17.38/oz
Platinum	\$1,003.65/oz

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



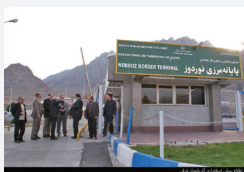
Annual cargo transit capacity in ports at 20m tons

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — According to one of the deputy heads of Iran’s Ports and Maritime Organization (POM) transit capacity of Iranian ports have reached 20 million tons per annum, IRNA reported on Monday. “Thanks to the improved infrastructure, 15 million tons of freight are transported via ports of Iran,” Mohamamd-Ali Hassanzadeh told IRNA on the sidelines of a conference.



Tehran hosts 1st intl. franchise conference

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Supported by the World Franchise Council, Iran’s first international franchise conference was held on Sunday at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground. Some of the world’s renowned Franchise forums, Iran’s Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade, the Ministry of Co-operatives, Labor and Social Welfare, and Iran Chamber of commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) were among the contributors to this event. According to the event organizers, the conference aimed for developing business opportunities, creating a suitable stage for delivering products and services to participants, developing communication and holding effective meetings between the people active in this industry.



Border terminals development cost at near \$160m in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Some seven trillion rials (about \$159.817 million) has been expended for development of transportation terminals at border locations in Iran during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2017), IRNA reported on Monday quoting Reza Nafisi, a director in Iran Road Maintenance & Transportation Organization. Iran has 23 terminals at its borders and development of these terminals is a top agenda for the Road Maintenance & Transportation Organization.

Iran’s petchem output stands at near 40m tons in 9 months

1 → He put petrochemical output at 51 million tons in the past calendar year, saying that the figure is estimated to reach 56 million tons by the end of this year, posting a record for the second consecutive year. Iran is among the few countries which have all kinds of petrochemical feedstock, according to the previous NPC Managing Director Marziyeh Shahdaie. Given that the country ranks the first and fourth in the world in terms of gas and oil

reserves, respectively, no country enjoys feedstock as much as Iran to develop its petrochemical industry, according to Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh. The future of Iranian petrochemical industry is promising after the implementation of JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action which lifted sanction against Iran in January 2016), Zanganeh said in the 13th edition of Iran Petrochemical Forum (IPF), which was held in Tehran in last April.



“About 25 percent of the country’s petrochemical exports was to Europe before the sanctions, while the figure fell to about five percent during the sanction time, but requests from European companies for Ira-

nian petrochemicals is on the rise after the implementation of JCPOA”, Farnaz Alavi, the NPC director for planning and development, told the Tehran Times in a press conference in last April.

S. Korea’s imports of Iranian oil up 29% in 2017

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — South Korea’s imports of Iranian crude oil in 2017 rose 29.1 percent from 2016, customs data showed on Monday. The country imported 18.07 million tons, or 362,884 barres per day (bpd) of Iranian oil in 2017, versus 14 million tons in 2016, Reuters reported. South Korea imported 1.08 million tons or 255,081 bpd of oil from Iran in December 2017, the same data indicate. The country’s imports of Iranian oil



dropped 30.6 percent in December from the year before. South Korea mainly buys condensate from Iran, an ultra-light form of crude.

IMF says China must fix shortcomings to lead globalization

China should be willing to loosen trade and investment restrictions if it seeks to play a leading role in globalization, International Monetary Fund First Deputy Managing Director David Lipton said. Speaking at the Asian Financial Forum in Hong Kong Monday, Lipton acknowledged that China’s leadership has been a “voice of reason” in terms of preserving the current system of rules-based international trade, but the nation also had more to do. “We believe that effective and credible leadership in support of globalization also requires a willingness to recognize and address one’s own shortcomings,” Lipton said. That means “protecting intellectual property rights and reducing the distortions of industrial policy, overcapacity, and policies that favor state enterprises.” Lipton spoke just days after a U.S. trade tribunal said in a preliminary ruling that imports of aluminum sheet from China are hurting American industry, setting the stage for the Trump administration to impose tariffs. Economists worry that heightened

U.S.-China trade tension remains one of the biggest threats facing global growth this year. President Donald Trump will travel to the World Economic Forum in Davos next week where he is expected to continue his trenchant criticism of globalization and multilateralism and to threaten new trade barriers to shrink America’s trade deficit with the world. The aluminum case is one of several the U.S. has launched to curb what Trump sees as China’s unfair trade practices. The White House is also weighing whether to slap tariffs on foreign shipments of the metal under the seldom-used section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which considers whether importation has implications for national security. China should also accelerate its efforts to bring its financial sector to a more stable footing, according to Lipton. “China has a window of opportunity to accelerate economic reforms that can secure sustainable and inclusive growth,” he said. “China has made considerable progress

in this area, as our recent assessment of its financial sector shows. But it is essential to sustain this effort to ensure that financial instability does not undermine the country’s extraordinary economic and social progress.” China is on track to build up a debt-to-gross domestic product ratio of more than 320 percent by 2022, a level that would rival Japan’s, Bloomberg economists estimate. Lipton said during a separate interview Monday on Bloomberg Television that policy makers are now “pointed in the right direction” on debt. “The Chinese have to bring credit growth down to grow less rapidly than the economy, or else credit will continue to be too big relative to the economy,” he said. Lipton sounded optimism about the current state of the global economy, in the context of next week’s publication of fresh IMF economic forecasts. “The signs point to faster growth across all regions,” he said in his prepared remarks. “We must also recognize that the global

economy is in a late stage of the long and gradual recovery from the global financial crisis. With economic slack in advanced economies diminishing, it is not clear how long the good news will continue.” Lipton’s warning on the world economy echoes a view increasingly shared by investors and policy makers that a growing list of worries from geopolitical tension to frothy markets could upend the world economy’s best performance in years. The IMF No.2 highlighted a risk of unexpected monetary policy developments or exchange rate fluctuations that could swing market sentiment and trigger a sudden reversal of capital flows. He also pointed to weak wage and productivity growth as among the concerns. “Our meaning is clear: now is the time to address vulnerabilities and structural issues that could impede sustained growth, and to take steps to enable stronger growth once cyclical recovery is no longer driving the economy,” Lipton said in his speech. (Source: Bloomberg)

Friendship and cooperation are key to Asia’s economic growth: ADB CEO

The key to Asian economic growth in 2018 will be greater friendship and cooperation between countries, according to the president of the Asian Development Bank. One of the reasons behind Asia’s success in growth and development is the region’s successful fostering of a “sense of cooperation” between countries in Asia, ADB President Takehiko Nakao told CNBC on Monday. “There can be differences in opinions, but it is important to manage and improve cooperation between countries in Asia,” he said.



“ASEAN is now more united and heading towards more market-oriented reform policies,” Nakao added, crediting Southeast Asia’s economic growth to the growing cooperation between members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Another key reason behind Asia’s economic growth is its integration into the global supply chain. Nakao said that, while Asian economies used to follow a “flying geese” model, which essentially meant countries followed one another in terms of investment,

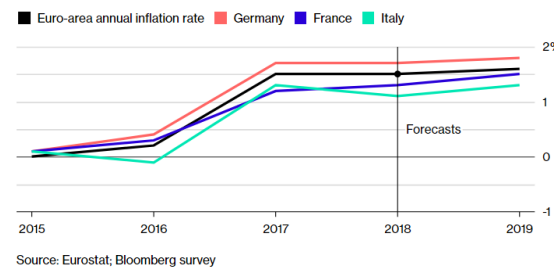
the region today follows more of a production sharing model. “One of the reasons India’s economy grew slower compared to China was because they were more domestic oriented. India was not part of the global supply chain as much as China was,” he explained. Today, however, “the Chinese develop in some sectors ... the Koreans develop in some sectors, so they are sharing comparative advantages through supply chains,” the ADB president said. (Source: cnbc)

Euro-area economic boom to roll on after strong start to ‘18

Europe’s growth resurgence is showing little sign of losing steam yet and economists have taken notice. In Bloomberg’s monthly survey, the first of the year, respondents bumped up their 2018 outlook to 2.2 percent, close to the decade-high 2.4 percent pace estimated for last year. The optimism is in contrast to the muted view at the start of 2017. Economists back then saw momentum slowing, but had to keep upgrading projections to keep up with the economy’s performance.

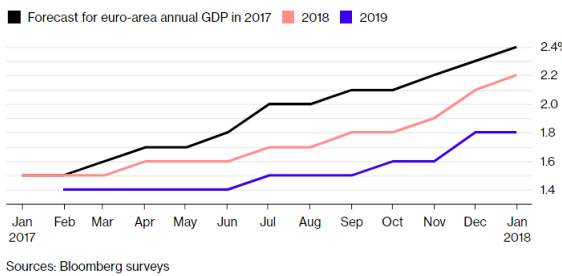
Improved sentiment Economists have become increasingly confident about euro-area growth. The 19-nation region has started the year with a string of positive numbers, including stronger business sentiment in Germany and France, its biggest economies. Having long cast off its “sick man” tag, the improvements have given fresh impetus to the European Central Bank’s hawkish policy makers to push for an end to crisis-era stimulus. “This current cycle has plenty of fuel left in the tank,” said Angel Talavera, an economist at Oxford Economics in London. “The rebound in the hard numbers provides

a more consistent growth picture for the eurozone.” The ECB has acknowledged the upturn, saying in comments published last week that it sees an “increasingly self-sustaining” expansion. The document, an account of its December policy meeting, also said Donald Trump’s U.S. tax cuts could have a greater than expected impact on euro-area growth. There was also a hint that its guidance on future policy actions could be revisited early this year. But with inflation still undershooting the goal of just below 2 percent, any changes will be gradual. Economists see consumer-price growth averaging 1.5 percent this year and 1.6 percent in 2019, and no interest-rate increases until 2019. As the economy improves, that’s given a lift to the euro, which is already up about 1.6 percent this year after a 14 percent jump in 2017. There’s a risk that could weigh on growth and suppress headline inflation. **Close, but no cigar** Consumer prices in the euro area are predicted to fall short of the ECB’s inflation goal. Euro-area industrial production rose more than forecast in November and unemployment continued to slowly decline. A Purchasing Managers Index of activity increased to the strongest in seven years in December. In Germany, the region’s biggest economy, business confidence is near a record high. That’s despite a political impasse that’s left Chancellor Angela Merkel unable to form a new coalition government since elections in September. There has been some progress, however, with her party reaching a preliminary accord with the Social Democrats late last week. **What our economists say...** The Bloomberg survey shows the breadth of the expansion, which some have dubbed the “Euroboom.”



Source: Eurostat; Bloomberg survey

The latest predictions are that Germany, France and Spain will all grow 2 percent or more this year. In Italy, where elections are one of the key risks, expansion may slow to 1.4 percent from 1.6 percent, though that’s still far above the average over the previous five years. Strength in the eurozone’s core economies is even set to help Greece, the country worst affected by the region’s debt crisis. German tour operator TUI AG says bookings for Greece were up 16 percent this year, a sign the tourism sector will continue to buoy the economy as it awaits much-needed investment. Economists see Greek gross domestic product growing 2.2 percent this year. At NordLB in Hanover, Christian Lips currently predicts an above-consensus 2.5 percent expansion for the euro area -- thanks in part to ECB support -- though he’s not sanguine about potential pitfalls. “We are optimistic for 2018 and expect the upswing to continue with similar momentum,” he said. “However, the currently positive corporate and consumer sentiment should not obscure the fact that the forecast for 2018 is subject to considerable risks, including geopolitical conflicts, political risks, Greece, elections in Italy.” (Source: Bloomberg)



Sources: Bloomberg surveys

SoftBank considers IPO for Japan wireless unit, said to seek \$18b

SoftBank Group Corp said on Monday it was considering listing its Japanese wireless business - a move that could reportedly raise \$18 billion and would accelerate the conglomerate’s transformation into one of the world’s biggest tech investors. A spin-off - potentially the biggest IPO by a Japanese company in nearly two decades - would give the unit more autonomy and help investors value the business as well as its parent which has myriad holdings across the tech industry. SoftBank Group is aiming to sell about 30 percent of SoftBank Corp, Japan’s No. 3 wireless carrier, for around 2 trillion yen (\$18 billion), the Nikkei newspaper said without citing sources. It added that proceeds will go towards investments in growth such as buying into foreign information technology companies. “It makes sense to spin off the mobile-phone business using a public offering that would leave SoftBank in control and provide SoftBank with more cash to pursue its strategy of investing in companies with potentially high growth prospects,” Erik Gordon, a professor at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business. “It is a way of obtaining capital without adding debt or diluting SoftBank’s equity interests in the growth companies.” SoftBank Group plans to seek approval from the Tokyo Stock Exchange as early as spring, the Nikkei said, adding that it was aiming to list around autumn in Tokyo as well as overseas, possibly London.


(Source: Reuters)

Oil spill on fire off China seen damaging less than Exxon Valdez


(Source: Bloomberg)



(Source: Bloomberg)



N.I.O.C
1396.4826



National Iranian
Drilling Company

Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First Publish/Seconed Publish)- Retender

One-Stage(compresed)

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
23,360	933,000,000	18,656,564,337	PARTS FOR NATIONAL HOOK MODEL HA-500	3,148,070	Tender No.: FP/17-96/052 Indent No.: 48-22-9622039	1

نهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۱۰/۲۶ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۱۰/۲۷

Democrats must not only denounce Trump’s racist agenda — They must defeat it

By Opal Tometi

As an organizer and advocate that works with Black immigrant communities and the daughter of Black immigrants, let me be clear: President Trump’s statement calling Haiti and African nations “shithole countries” is racist. The President is racist.

Unfortunately, it is all too believable that this is how the President speaks in private, because his public policies have been driven by racism and hatred since day one. This is about far more than just vulgar language. It is about Trump’s vicious policies that treat immigrants and people of color as less than human.



Trump’s racism has clearly driven his policy decisions during his first year in office — from his Muslim ban and his despicable treatment of DREAMers to his ruthless ramp-up of immigration raids and the callous termination of protections for Haitians and Salvadorans who fled natural disaster and violence.

President Trump has demonstrated time and time again that he is mentally incapable of imagining the humanity of anyone who looks different from him or hails from a different nation — unless that is a predominately white nation, like Norway. In which case, they help his Make America White Agenda much easier.

But it is not enough for our nation’s leaders, on both sides of the aisle, to denounce Trump’s words. Now is the time for action.

At this moment, our lawmakers are negotiating for a solution for DREAMers. Democratic legislators who like to count themselves as part of the Resistance must recognize that their actions will speak louder than anything out of the president’s mouth.

As an immigrant justice advocate, I of course want legal status for everyone trying to make it in this country. However, we cannot sacrifice one group of immigrants for another. Many of the concessions that leading Democrats seem willing to make — from cutting diversity visas to chipping away at family visas — would be made on the backs of Black immigrants, people from Africa and the Caribbean who deserve these policies to remain intact as some of the few legal tools they have to immigrate to this country.

If Democrats concede to Republican demands and allow DREAM Act negotiations to backdoor in policies that harm Black immigrants and their families, they will be just as complicit as the President. Just because they don’t use Trump’s vulgar language does not mean that history — or their constituents — will forgive them for furthering his racist agenda.

I call on Democrats to use their leverage to fight for a clean DREAM Act and to reject Trump’s racist agenda — not only in word, but indeed.

(Source: Time)

Italian politicians need to get real

With elections approaching, the parties are debating how to spend money that isn’t there.

Italy’s politicians aren’t well-known for sober realism, but the campaigns ahead of Italy’s elections on March 4 are something new. The political parties are outbidding each other with the most lavish pledges -- ranging from Silvio Berlusconi’s flat tax to the Five Star Movement’s “citizens’ income” -- while offering no credible explanations of how to pay for them.

This kind of fiscal daydreaming is especially reckless in Italy, where sovereign debt has topped 130 percent of national income. The country’s leaders should be arguing about how to bring this debt under control, not promising to make it bigger still.

Two factors help to account for the surge in irresponsibility. One is the country’s economic recovery, which has helped to reduce the government’s budget deficit to 2.3 percent of gross domestic product. The next government could use the upswing to cut borrowing further, making space to raise spending when the next recession hits. Instead, the better outlook is prompting calls for fiscal relaxation. Matteo Renzi, leader of the center-left Democratic Party, would like to raise borrowing to 2.9 percent of GDP for the next five years.

The second reason is Italy’s new electoral law -- a mixture of first-pass-the-post and proportional representation. The new rules will make it impossible for any party to govern alone. As a result, leaders know they won’t have to keep their word. They’ll be able to blame their broken promises on the need to do business with coalition partners.

A precious opportunity to discuss Italy’s towering public debt is therefore going to waste. The subject could hardly be more urgent. The European Central Bank has begun to scale back purchases of bonds, and the program is set to end in September. As the ECB’s extraordinary stimulus comes to an end, Italy’s borrowing costs are likely to rise.

Rome also needs to show more fiscal responsibility if it’s to have any influence in the upcoming debate on the future of the euro zone. The Italian government has long argued for greater risk-sharing between member states -- making the case for a joint unemployment insurance scheme, for instance. Germany is unlikely to agree to such measures unless Rome proves its fiscal rectitude.

Italy’s politicians seem intent on proving the opposite. The longer their fiscal daydreaming goes on, the more certain it is to end with a rude awakening.

(Source: Bloomberg)

‘Water war’ escalates between Egypt, Sudan

By Giorgio Cafiero

So far, 2018 has been a negative year for Egyptian-Sudanese relations. On Jan. 4, Sudan recalled its ambassador from Egypt. Without providing further details, Sudan’s Foreign Ministry stated that Ambassador Kamal al-Din Hassan Ali was recalled for consultations. Egypt’s Foreign Ministry is weighing how to “take appropriate action.” This diplomatic spat has unfolded in a complicated context in which numerous issues have fueled tensions in bilateral relations for years.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project has contributed to friction in Cairo-Khartoum relations. Egypt sees the project as a major threat to its water interests, while Sudan views it as a valuable opportunity. In November 2017, Cairo officially declared that technical negotiations with Sudan and Ethiopia had failed. Then, at the beginning of January, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi reportedly sent Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn a proposal to continue talks between Cairo and Addis Ababa over the megaproject, excluding Khartoum. Egypt denies that Sisi sent this proposal to Ethiopia’s leadership. Nonetheless, the Nile’s water supply remains a source of much disagreement between Cairo and Khartoum.

According to Sudanese state-owned media, the Egyptian military has since deployed its forces to waters off the coast of the disputed Halayeb?triangle border area, where Cairo has also sent warplanes. Although not a new conflict, Egypt and Sudan’s territorial dispute at the border area has recently escalated.

In April 2017, Khartoum saw itself in a stronger position due to more support from Persian Gulf Arab monarchies and a new administration in Washington that may have appeared far more open to a Sudan-U.S. rapprochement than any of U.S. President Donald Trump’s three predecessors. This prompted Sudanese officials to ask Egypt to relinquish control of the area; Cairo’s refusal led to harsh words in the Egyptian and Sudanese media. Then friction intensified once Khartoum re-established a requirement that Egyptians must possess a visa to enter Sudan. The following month, Sudan banned the importation of Egypt-sourced agricultural products, and President Omar al-Bashir accused Cairo of arming rebels in Darfur, which Egypt denied. Egypt fired back, pointing to the residence of several Muslim Brotherhood members in Sudan.

In the grander regional picture, Egypt and Sudan find themselves on opposite sides of an increasingly polarized Sunni Arab world, underscored by the Qatar crisis. Egypt — along with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — has sought to convince African states to back the Saudi/UAE-led bloc against Doha based on the narrative that Qatar is a rogue actor and a sponsor of terrorism. Yet



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (R) welcomes Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir (L)

In the grander regional picture, Egypt and Sudan find themselves on opposite sides of an increasingly polarized Sunni Arab world, underscored by the Qatar crisis.

Sudan has refused to join this anti-Qatar campaign. Khartoum’s “neutral” response to the Persian Gulf dispute has been an outcome of Sudan — in complete contrast to Egypt — not viewing Doha as a menace and Sudan’s understanding that close ties with all six Persian Gulf Cooperation Council Arab states, including Qatar, best serves Khartoum’s interests. Illustrative of Egypt’s inability to bring Sudan behind the campaign against Doha was Qatari Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Ghanim Bin Shaheen al-Ghanim’s visit to Khartoum at the end of last month, when he held discussions with his Sudanese and Russian counterparts about Red Sea security issues.

Since the eruption of Libya’s civil war in mid-2014, Egypt and Sudan have been opposing stakeholders in that conflict, with Khartoum aligning with Ankara and Doha instead of with Egypt and the UAE. Also, by November 2017, Egypt began inserting itself as an influential diplomatic actor in South Sudan’s internal environment for numerous reasons, namely to secure greater leverage over Sudan. Recent reports claim that Egyptian, Emirati and Eritrean military and political officials are coordinating, from Eritrea, with elements of Sudan’s opposition.

Egypt and Sudan have had an overall negative relationship since the aftermath of Hosni Mubarak’s visit to Addis Ababa in 1995, when gunmen tried and failed to assassinate him. Egyptian officials accused their Sudanese counterparts of plotting the assassination attempt.

By October 2016, there was renewed optimism regarding a rapprochement after Bashir accepted Sisi’s invitation to Cairo, where he received Egypt’s highest military medal as a gesture from the Egyptian leadership. The two countries further signed a strategic partnership agreement and 15 memorandums of understanding.

Such hope was short-lived, as the various issues that heightened friction in Egypt-Sudan relations throughout 2017 prevented Bashir’s 2016 trip to Cairo from establishing more of a solid foundation for better relations. Ultimately, the emergence (or re-emergence) of new and old sources of contention between Egypt and Sudan has left the two countries with conflicting interests and clashing agendas in Africa and the Middle East.

Yet what recently brought the tension in Cairo-Khartoum relations to an entirely new level was Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s visit to Sudan last month. Erdogan’s trip resulted in Sudan agreeing to temporarily give Turkey control of Suakin Island. This news alarmed many in Cairo and other Arab capitals who interpreted Bashir’s decision as essentially giving Turkey license to establish its second military base on the African continent. This also raised questions about Qatar or Iran being able to access a Turkish military installation within close proximity to Saudi Arabia and Yemen’s Red Sea coasts. The Egyptian media lashed out at

Sudan for embracing Erdogan and looking to Turkey for deeper military and economic ties. Cairo’s concern is that Sudan will use greater military might and diplomatic leverage from Ankara to step up pressure on Sisi with respect to both the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project and the Halayeb?triangle border area. Beyond such strategic factors, which leave Egypt concerned about Turkey’s new foothold in the Red Sea, officials in Cairo see Sudan as facilitating Erdogan’s “neo-Ottoman” and pro-Muslim Brotherhood foreign policy ambitions, which do not sit well with Egypt and other Arab states.

Among the numerous lingering tensions between Cairo and Khartoum, the future of the relationship between these two Nile countries — once close allies — will largely depend on water issues. Failure to mend fences will ultimately make it increasingly difficult for the two to address major regional challenges facing both of them, such as extremism, fast population growth, climate change and transformation of industries. Yet if Cairo and Khartoum can pursue a diplomatic course of action, such cooperation could exemplify the ability of governments worldwide to overcome political tensions in pursuit of peace and good neighborly ties. The gloomy alternative is a future in which fast-paced demographic and environmental changes exacerbate food security and other vital interests of nation-states, leading to more “water wars.”

(Source: Al Monitor)

French recognition of Iran’s Quds Force role

By Raad Hadi Jabareh

Writer and strategic expert

French President Emmanuel Macron has chosen the right time to make a telephone call to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani as the first Western leader to do so since demonstrations and violence broke out in Tehran and several other Iranian cities.

It is interesting to note that Macron praised the Iranian Quds Force for helping to eliminate terrorist gangs. The Quds Force plays a prominent role in Syria and Iraq, supporting the armed forces in the two neighboring countries. When a European leader, one of America’s allies, commends this achievement, it is a clear recognition of Iran’s power and the role of the Quds Force in defeating terrorism and rooting out the fiercest terrorist organization in the Middle East.

On the other hand, this recognition proves that even the Europeans themselves (not Washington and its regional allies) have been admitting that Tehran has a prominent role in eliminating the nightmare of terrorism and its crimes against nations in the region, a virtue that Baghdad and Damascus will never forget.

In addition, the French acknowledgment involves other



arguments, the most important of which is invalidating a fabricated claim by the U.S. that the Quds Force is a terrorist organization. To be fair, it has not committed even a single terrorist act against any nation. It has also provided its logistical support to Baghdad, Damascus and Beirut, at a time when Washington and its allies in the Persian Gulf region play the role of founder and

What happening in Persia

No matter how we differ ideologically from the brothers in Iran, our agreement with Iranian Muslim brothers is much immense and greater.

The Islamic Republic in Iran has provided support for the Islamic resistance in Palestine and Lebanon. The southern Lebanese will tell you about those who have provided finances and arms to their freedom fighters with no expectation.

The dwarf Mohammed bin Salman is a total puppet of the United States. So, don’t even think that he was in charge of

jeopardizing Iran’s ruling establishment or its security.

The U.S. administration with dirty money provided by certain Persian Gulf Arab states as well as exploitation of harsh living conditions in Iran, which are the result of the brutal Western-led economic sanctions on the country for decades, provoked the simple-minded Iranians to spark unrest in the country.

I believe the sedition in Iran will end soon, as we will finish it here, in Yemen, through faith and wisdom, despite the

aggression and the brutal siege going on over the past 33 months.

As the “kingdom of sand” began to raise prices madly this year, it will be the end of the regime of al-Saud, al-Nahyan, and their puppets.

There will be victory for the vulnerable people in Najd, and Hija, and loss for traitors of the nation’s religion and the Quran. The enemy will weep with their masters, Americans and Jews, and Jerusalem and Mecca will be liberated. The future is bright.

(Source: MNA)

Entessar: EU support for JCPOA needs more than statement

➔ Are European countries able to resist Trump’s requests?

A: They can resist Trump’s demands for a short period of time, but if push comes to shove, the European countries will cave in. Europe has long ceased to act as an effective counterpart to the U.S. in international affairs.

■ How serious should this threat be taken?

A: The mercurial and unpredictable nature of Trump’s decision-making calculus makes it difficult to predict his course of action. But it is always best if one looks at the worst case scenario and prepare for the worst alternative. In other words, one needs to hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

■ What will be the consequences of the possible withdrawal of Trump from the JCPOA for the U.S.? What do you think will be Iran’s possible reaction?

A: For the U.S., Trump’s withdrawal from the JCPOA will further damage the already tattered diplomatic reputation



of the country and will signal a heightened era of dangerous tensions and conflicts in the Persian Gulf region and beyond. It will demonstrate to the international community

that the signature and words of the U.S. presidents do not mean anything and that Washington cannot be trusted in international negotiations to uphold its commitments. I am not sure what Iran’s possible reaction will be in the event of the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA. Hopefully, those in charge of Iran’s foreign policy have already prepared a commensurate response beyond issuing condemnatory statements.

■ What can Iran do to reduce the U.S. pressures?

A: Iran must intensify its diplomatic pressure on Europe to go beyond issuing statements of support for the JCPOA. Iran must make it very clear to Europe that it cannot speak from both sides of its mouth and start taking concrete and measurable actions to uphold its commitments under the nuclear agreement. The Trump administration will continue to play its cat and mouse game as long as the other parties to the nuclear agreement are willing to play a game with Iran.

Will Trump stay in White House?

By Hanif Ghaffari

TEHRAN — Over the past months, there have been whispers in the U.S. political environments and the country’s media regarding Republicans bypassing Trump. The rejection of some Republican prominent senators, including McCain, with Trump, as well as the opposition of some of the United States former presidents, including George W. Bush, has aggravated this trend. However, few thought that at the end of 2017, while only about a year has passed since the presence of Trump at the White House, the confrontation between the dissatisfied Republicans and the U.S. President would become public.

The fact is that Republicans in the United States are now worried about the country’s 2020 presidential elections. Surveys in this country have shown that Trump’s popularity has fallen by about 35%. Even in some surveys, Trump’s popularity has dropped to 30% and below. Although the president of the United States claims that the polls are all fake, it is obvious that the popularity of Trump with American citizens has fallen since the time of the presidential elections in 2016.

The Republican defeat in the recent state elections in Alabama indicates the same thing. On the other hand, Democrats have already started their efforts to conquer the White House and return to power. People like Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders are listed as possible candidates for the Democratic Party in the 2020 presidential elections. Surveys show that if any of these two Democratic politicians stand against Trump, they can easily defeat him in the competitions. In such a situation, we are witnessing increasing objections to the President’s approach and, of course, an aggravated concern by Republican senators over the political situation of their party.



Dissatisfied Republicans are worried that their name is now tied up to Trump, and this will have heavy costs for the party. They are worried that the failure of the Congress elections this year, and the failure of the presidential elections of 2020, will only be a short-term expense! In other words, they are worried because of their support for Trump, they would lose the chance to return to the White House for many years.

On the other hand, in recent days, new theories have been raised about the 2020 presidential elections. «Opera Winfrey,» the American media proprietor, is one of the candidates who have been recently suggested as Trump’s rival in the upcoming presidential elections.

The White House said it welcomed Winfrey’s possible presence in the country’s presidential campaigns in 2020, and her challenging Donald Trump in that election. White House authorities have argued that they basically don’t care who would stand against Trump during the next Presidential Elections! However, the evidences indicate a continuous fear among the Republicans

regarding this matter.

The Republican defeat in the state of Alabama (after 25 years) has shown that the status of this traditional party has been challenged, even in those states where their votes have traditionally been in favor of the Republicans. On the other hand, the Congress elections going to be held this year. If the Democrats can win back two Senate seats of the Republicans in this election, they will have the majority of Senate at their hands. In the House of Representatives, Democrats don’t really have a hard time going to win Republicans.

Some analysts of the U.S. affairs mention that the Democrats will have an easy competition in the U.S. mid-term elections to win the Republicans. In other words, due to the presence of Trump at the top of the political and administrative equations of the United States, they will win without any troubles ahead. In this case, the situation will be terribly shaky for Trump and his administration at the White House.

On the other hand, the Republican’s defeat in United States mid-term elections, and

winning the majority of the Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives by Democrats is a prelude to the Republican’s failure in the 2020 presidential election. In this situation, Trump is scared of standing before people like «Joe Biden» or «Bernie Sanders».

Polls conducted in the United States show that if Biden is selected as the Democratic nominee for the 2020 presidential election, he will be able to overcome Trump by about 13 percent of the vote and thus enter the White House.

Bernie Sanders, on the other hand, is also very popular with American citizens. During the 2016 presidential competitions, he was eliminated from the scene as a result of secret lobbies of the Democratic leaders with Hillary Clinton.

However, polls showed that if Sanders had reached the end of last round of the elections, he could have easily beat Trump with a 15% advantage of the vote.

What is certain is that the claims of the White House authorities and Donald Trump regarding the election of 2020 and their confidence in winning this election, is in fact escaping the existing reality.

As noted, the Republican’s defeat in the state of Alabama showed that even in the red states (which their vote has traditionally been in favor of the Republicans), it’s quite possible that this party would be severely defeated in the upcoming presidential elections. Some surveys suggest that more than 30% of Republicans don’t intend to vote for Trump in the next presidential election.

This is the worst possible news for the party’s leaders. Without a doubt, the presence of Trump at the White House would be a major crisis for the Republican Party. The crisis that the Republicans of America have to deal with its consequences for many years.

Another defeat for McCain

By Mohammad Salehi

TEHRAN — John McCain’s name is familiar especially to those who have been watching the political developments of the United States since 2008. This Arizona’s Extremist Senator is a Republican. He was the party’s candidate for the 2008 presidential election. In that election, McCain was defeated by Barack Obama and couldn’t enter the White House. McCain is currently in the Senate, but he is one of the main opponents of the United States President Donald Trump.

The point here about McCain is his direct support for unrests and turmoil in Iran. In 2009, he has also supported the unrests in our country. Anyhow, just like other American politicians, McCain experienced a tough defeat against the nation of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Iran in this regard.

“YeniSafak”, a newspaper published in Turkey, wrote in its report that anti-Iranian Senator of the U.S. Congress, along with the US intelligence Service have played a very active role in recent unrests in our country.

YeniSafak has also emphasized that John McCain, the Republican Senator and the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and CIA have played a major role in recent unrest in Iran. YeniSafak said on its website: United States Department of Defense, started its plans for creating nightmares with Iran. The White House is fully supporting these protests. In Iran’s recent unrests, besides the monarchists, John McCain, who played an important role in the events of Syria along with the CIA, plays a major role.

Right after the beginning of the unrests in Iran, Senator John McCain issued a statement officially supporting these unrests. McCain, who suffers from brain cancer, had a history of meeting with the head of the “Mojahedin-e-Khalq” (Monafeghin) terrorist group and attending their banquets. The Republican senator and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services has also backed up the recent turmoil in Iran. He announced that America is standing next to Iranian protesters.

The fact is that John McCain has long been the loser in the political equations of the United States. In the course of the unrests in 2014 in Ukraine, John McCain announced his direct support for Yanukovych’s opponents. The result of this intervention has been the wretched state of instability that has dominated Ukraine since 2014. Though being in a terrible physical state, McCain continues his conspiracies against the nations of the world. The Arizona Senator, John McCain, has been diagnosed with brain cancer for some time now. The Mayo Clinic Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona, states:

Early diagnosis suggests that Senator McCain is suffering from Glioblastoma (a highly malignant form of cancer that spreads quickly due to its association with a large network of blood vessels in the brain). Johns McCain is 80 years old and was hospitalized due to blood clots and went under the surgery. John McCain’s illness had wide reactions in Washington followed.

In any case, McCain is considered an opponent of the nation of Iran and the Iranian regime and, during the recent turmoil,



he once again revealed its opposition to Iran. However, John McCain will be defeated like any other U.S. politician. The JCPOA is one of the issues that McCain has been opposed to. In 2015, McCain expressly opposed the nuclear deal and didn’t support it. John McCain and Lindsay Graham are two senators who opposed the nuclear deal with Iran from the outset. They voiced their opposition during the congressional vote in 2015.

However, these two senators, whose extreme positions towards Iran have always been taken into consideration by the American media, are now confused about the way and the kind of aggressive and wicked position of Trump against the nuclear deal. On the one hand, they can’t deny their opposition to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and on the other hand, they feel at risk from the effects of the current strategy of Trump towards the nuclear deal with Iran.

John McCain stated in one of his most recent positions: I believe that Iran should be kept responsible through imposing new sanctions on its ballistic missile program, imposing sanctions against Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), imposing sanctions against Iranians accused of violating human rights and intensifying the use of arms sanctions in Tehran!

McCain has tried not to take a clear stand in refusing or supporting the current approach of Trump towards the JCPOA. The 81-year-old Senator of Arizona, has said that the Congress is willing to work with Trump to resume the negotiations on the nuclear deal. However, he has not yet explicitly announced his comments on the formal breach of the JCPOA and the return of nuclear sanctions against Iran.

Finally, “the losing Senator” is a proper title for John McCain, the Senator of Arizona. McCain has become a symbol of the failure of Republicans against the Democrats in the US political equations and during the presidential election of 2008, as well as a symbol of the defeat of American politicians against Iran.

During the recent riots in Iran, McCain thought that these unrests were going to be permanent and that they needed to be supported! But he once again had miscalculations about Iran and our nation. Undoubtedly, not only McCain, but also other American politicians were hit hard in this regard, and in the future, if they continue their hostile and aggressive approach, they will experience even harder defeats. But McCain will no longer have an opportunity to understand this.

Iran’s missiles program is not covered by JCPOA: Shireen Hunter

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, tells the Tehran Times that that “It is generally understood that Iran’s missiles program is not covered by the JCPOA.

She adds But America, and key European countries such as the UK and France, believe that separate negotiations should begin regarding Iran’s missile program aimed at answering the concerns of Iran’s regional neighbors and other states.”

Professor Hunter also says that “Ultimately, the goal of all this maneuvering is to force Iran to abandon its opposition to American policies in the region.”

Following is the text the interview:

■ U.S. President Donald Trump approved the Iran nuclear deal only one more time before abandoning it if it is not changed. What are the changes that Trump emphasize on them?

A: In view of the fact that, since the coming to power of the Trump Administration, the United States has been stating that, without major changes, America will exit the JCPOA, it is quite likely that, unless some breakthrough occurs in Iran’s relations with the U.S., which is unlikely, Trump will abandon the JCPOA. But, some factors, such as European lobbying, and congressional resistance to such action could force President Trump to change his mind, and again renew the suspension of sanctions against Iran.

■ The White House wants a deal with EU signatories to make restrictions on Iran’s uranium enrichment permanent. Under the current deal they are set to expire in 2025. Do you think EU will accept this condition? If so, Will Iran accept it?

A: A major criticism of Trump and other detractors of the JCPOA has been that it does not limit Iran’s ability to resume its nuclear program beyond 2025. This close, they insist, defeats the purpose of the JCPOA that is to prevent Iran from acquiring the capacity to produce a nuclear device.

Thus, Trump wants the restrictions on Iran’s nuclear activities to remain indefinitely. This condition, of course would be difficult for Iran to accept, and has the potential to totally destroy the JCPOA.


■ Mr Trump also wants Iran’s ballistic missile programme to be addressed. Iran frequently has emphasized that ballistic missile is not related to JCPOA and will not negotiated about it. According to this, do you think that this condition meaning the end for JCPOA?

A: Part of the JCPOA’s purpose was to limit Iran’s potential capacity to threaten the security of its neighbors and other states, especially Israel. Now the United States is arguing that Iran’s missile program is also a threat to regional state.


Therefore, he argues it should be limited. It is generally understood that Iran’s missiles program is not covered by the JCPOA. But America, and key European countries such as the UK and France, believe that separate negotiations should begin regarding Iran’s missile program aimed at answering the concerns of Iran’s regional neighbors and other states.

Ultimately, the goal of all this maneuvering is to force Iran to abandon its opposition to American policies in the region, and to behave in a more conciliatory manner towards regional states, including Israel.

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Why are Tunisians protesting?

By Youssef Cherif

January 14 marks the seventh anniversary of the fall of Tunisia's dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. But instead of celebrating, Tunisians are out in the streets again. What went wrong?

The dictatorship established in the 1950s, which morphed into a police state in the later decades, banned politics and pushed citizens away from their country's public affairs. The Tunisian revolution swept away that closure and created the Tunisian homo-politicus. Since January 2011, Tunisians have become incredibly politicized and the political system has been opened to all. Yet what the Revolution did not do was create a Tunisian homo-economicus. The Tunisian economy remained mismanaged.

In fact, the economic situation has worsened since 2011. The country's public debt jumped from 39.2 percent of the GDP in 2010 to 60.6 percent in 2016. The Tunisian dinar, the local currency, lost around 40 percent of its value to the U.S. dollar. Unemployment persisted, es-

pecially among youth (around 35 percent now).

The prices of basic goods have been continually rising. Tunisians of all walks of life complain that their living conditions are deteriorating and that they are unable to make ends meet each month.

This is the main trigger of today's protests. And in a way, it was also the trigger of most of the demonstrations the country has witnessed for the past seven years. What sparked this wave of protests is the finance law which came into effect on January 1. The parliament passed the law last year and although it was discussed in the media, it did not catch the public's eye. It was only when prices went up that people paid attention.

■ Protest campaign launched

A group of mostly young activists launched a protest campaign against the law called "Fech Nestanaou" (What are we waiting for?). They were a few dozens whose means were limited to tags on walls and distributing tracts. The police,

unreformed and still working with the Ben Ali-era methods, harassed, brutalized and arrested (briefly) many of them. A smear campaign against the movement followed.

But because of the latent anger, many people went out demonstrating, independently from "Fech Nestanaou". Leftist political groups, some of them with anarchist tendencies, joined the movement as well. Protests spread in the streets of Tunis, Sfax, Jebeniana, Sousse, and other cities across the country. Criminal elements managed to take advantage of the situation and there were incidents of looting in some areas.

This latest crisis comes amid a larger one which has gripped the country since the fall of Ben Ali's regime.

The elections of 2014 elevated two winners: centrist party Nidaa Tounes and the Islamist Ennahdha. Nidaa Tounes, whose political campaign was built on countering Ennahdha, accepted to form an alliance with the latter.

This led to a general disappointment among the party grassroots and a wave of resignations ensued. Then, when the party leader Beji Caid Essebsi left the party to become president of Tunisia, a succession crisis erupted and the party felt apart.

The alliance was, therefore, from the beginning, a weak one and based on mistrust. The "consensus", which was mainly the result of agreements between Caid Essebsi and Ennahdha leader Rached Ghannouchi, could not go deep into the constituencies of the two parties. It remained purely nominal. Ministers and members of parliament were disconnected from their bases and many laws and measures they passed reflected their self-interest and had limited reach.

But while weakened as a political party, Nidaa Tounes remained symbolically strong. For many "secular" Tunisians, it is the secular alternative to Ennahdha. For members of the Tunisian bureaucracy, it is the old state-party. For the international community, it is the "modernist" facade of Tunisia.

As for Ennahdha's leadership, fearing the local and global hostility towards Islamism, Nidaa Tounes was a good smokescreen in which to hide. The "consensus", as dysfunctional as it is, remains the best alternative for two exhausted enemies.

Therefore, when the Parliament examined the finance law drafted by the government and largely inspired by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), there was very little opposition among the "consensus" MPs. They voted for the law, but they did not defend it in public and could not present it to their constituencies.

Additionally, due to disagreements between Prime Minister Youssef Chahed and the leadership of the political parties within his coalition government, communication about the finance law and its implementation was limited. His relationship with the president is also said to be rather dysfunctional, which adds another level to the existing deep-rooted crisis. ➔13

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Digital marketing in Iran on development track

By Setareh Behroozi

Digital marketing in Iran is increasing its hold on the domestic market share, as-

stant professor in marketing management and business advisor Mojtaba Pirzad said in an interview with the Tehran Times.

“An entrepreneur should keep in mind that today consumers are short of time and their world are encapsulated in their smartphones, which paves the way for digital marketing,” he explained.

Like other parts of the world, digital marketing in Iran is on the rise. Iranians have high affinity to technology and smartphone, which create a great opportunity for digital marketing and e-shops in the country.

Brand mentor Pirzad shed light on different aspects of management and marketing system in Iran.

Unfortunately, most companies and factories in Iran are based on traditional management systems. Hence, they face problem to provide and expand their services and products, he said.

To survive in a competitive world, they demand for professional business consultant to improve branding and marketing, which



An entrepreneur should keep in mind that today consumers are short of time and their world are encapsulated in their smartphones, which paves the way for digital marketing

were disregarded during decades, he said.

He named the aged managers and CEOs as one of the most important weak points, which holds back companies in modern time.

“The old managers run their business in traditional system, which was efficient at least 30 years ago,” he lamented.

Iran’s business is also tackled with individualism, which is also an impediment for improvement, he added.

“Whereas innovation, research and development (R&D) and future studies are very important in modern business strategic planning,” Pirzad stressed.

“To develop our business we should implement fundamental changes, not mere imitation,” he said.

Pirzad pointed to newly run digital marketing implemented by young entrepreneurs with a high turnover as good examples for modern management systems.

Self-esteem and self-confidence are very important factors for initiating a business, he said.

“However one cannot disregard the importance of education and academic studies, which are adopted for business market as well,” he concluded.

Some of worst parenting tips parents get

Parenting is definitely not one size fits all, but some pieces of advice are downright wrong. Our experts name the trouble-some tips you can feel free to ignore.

Boys will be boys

When young boys, bite, kick, or hurt other kids, the behavior needs to be addressed and not tossed into the pile of ‘boys will be boys.’ Children, both boys and girls, need to know about personal boundaries and which behaviors are and are not acceptable.

Don’t worry, she’ll grow out of it

Hurting friends, grabbing their toys, throwing things, or destroying property is not something that all kids do, nor is it something that should be let go in the hopes that a child will ‘grow out of it.’ Teaching the acceptable way to behave around others will help the child build positive long-lasting relationships with their peers, their teachers, and their parents.

Stop praising your kids so much

Kids do need praise and should be told when they have done something well. Catching a child doing something good, like sharing or helping another child down the slide, should be positively reinforced with praise. When children feel that the good things that they do are being noticed it gives them a sense of pride and builds self-esteem. Children who have a high sense of self-esteem are much less likely to grow up to be schoolyard bullies, as they don’t need to make someone else feel bad to build themselves up.

Everyone should get a trophy as long as they show up



Teaching kids that just showing up to an event or game is worthy of a trophy is not doing that child any favors. Instead, teach them that in addition to being present, they need to participate to the best of their ability. The focus should be on teaching teamwork, being ready and prepared for the game, being okay with either winning or losing, and how to exhibit good sportsmanship. These skills will help with everything children do throughout their entire educational career and into adulthood.

Leave them alone, they’ll figure it out

While space is an essential part of every healthy relationship, giving kids too much space can backfire. Growing kids need to be reassured every once in a while, and just letting your kid handle his concerns on his own at a young age can be counterproductive. It’s best to let him try on his own for

a little while but be ready to help when he asks.

Kids need strict rules

“You do need to set the ground rules when it comes to day-to-day activities and other crucial aspects of your home life, but being extra strict can have a major negative impact on your relationship with your child. Be the parent but in a super approachable way, so your child feels like he or she can come to you.

Don’t punish your kid

In an attempt to establish a happy parent-child relationship, you may be tempted never to punish your children and let them learn from their own mistakes, but that’s not something a good parent should do. Establishing a middle ground between being easy and strict is the way to go.

Kids should do their homework on their own—after all, it’s their assignment

I’ve found that high-performing students have parents who are highly involved in supporting their children as they do homework. That doesn’t mean that parents do the homework for their children. Rather, it means that parents are looking over the assignments the child has in their assignment book, checking that the child has done all the work assigned to them, finding out what happened to any missing pieces of work, ensuring that the child has a quiet place to work and is on task (this often involves sitting with or near the child while she does homework), and helping the child to neatly put the homework in the appropriate folder and pack up the school bag.

(Source: Reader’s Digest)

Flixweed seeds: Iranian khakshir



Flixweed is the common name of the plant descurainia sophia. Its weed, known as khakshir or khakshir in Iran, is used with water as a drink, which is mostly used as thirst quencher in hot weather.

However, khakshir is considered as a remedy for many other diseases according to Iranian traditional medicine.

Khakshir should be washed from dirt and soil specks before use. Spoon a desired amount of khakshir and let it sit in a bowl of water, preferably plastic, for about 5 to 10 minutes. Stir, and then pour the con-

tents into another bowl of water, rinsing out any residue that is leftover in the first one. Repeat two or three times to insure that your drink is clean and safe.

Its mixture with drinking liquid chicory extract (Kasni) and fumitory extract (Shah-tareh) detox liver.

Aqueous extracts of the manna of hedsarum (tarangabin) and khakshir is a great drink for those who suffer from kidney stones. If you mix khakshir with warm water, it becomes a laxative drink and its mixture with cold water turns it into a natural anti-diarrheal.

How to make pocket hand warmers?



Battling the cold weather? Add to your arsenal by making a batch of pocket-sized hand warmers. All you need is a little sidewalk salt, water and two plastic baggies.

When purchasing ice melt salt, be sure the label says it includes calcium chloride as an active ingredient.

Place one cup of calcium chloride ice-melt pellets in a sandwich-size Ziploc bag.

Pour ½ cup water in a snack-sized (half size) bag. Push all of the air out of the bag and seal.

Place the water-filled bag inside of the ice-melt-filled bag. Push the air

from the bag and seal. Take care to be certain all seals are complete to avoid any leakage when activated (double bag, if desired).

When heading out to face the winter weather, give the bag a squeeze to rupture the inner water bag and shake. Heat will activate almost immediately and lasts about half an hour. Tuck it into your pocket to warm chilly hands between shovelfuls of snow or while waiting for the bus that always seems to arrive late on cold mornings.

(Source: diynetwork.com)

Cleaning mistakes you’re probably making

Cleaning up your home may not be your favorite activity of the week but it is necessary. Well, it’s necessary if you want to avoid being evicted, prevent food poisoning and skip being crushed by piles of clutter.

Putting off cleaning jobs

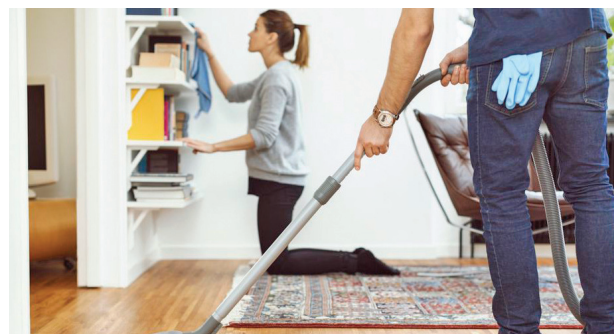


Do you wipe up the jelly that just hit the floor right away or leave it for a couple of days? Even if you’re in a hurry, if you leave it on the floor, there will be ants beating down your door and traces of jelly tracked all over the floor. You can spend 15 or 20 seconds now taking care of the problem or spend 20 to 30 minutes later cleaning up the mess.

The same principle applies to almost any cleaning job. A few minutes spent on cleaning and decluttering a room each day makes “heavy” cleaning much easier. The food preparation areas of a kitchen should be sanitized, dirty laundry placed in a hamper, bathroom sinks and shower doors wiped down after each use and clutter like mail, newspapers and receipts cleared away daily.

Then the weekly tasks of dusting, vacuuming, toilet cleaning, mopping kitchen floors and doing laundry are much more simple.

Starting at the wrong spot in a room



None of us want to spend more time cleaning than we have to. If you start at the wrong spot in a room when doing a thorough cleaning, you’ll have to back track and repeat steps.

First, declutter by picking up things that don’t belong in the room. Discard them or return them to their appropriate space. Handle items only once and get rid of them from the room. No need to take time to clean around them.

When ready to clean, start at the top of a room and work your way down. If you start by cleaning the floor and then move on to dusting the ceiling fan, wiping down cobwebs and dusting furniture, you’ll have to clean the floor again once the dust settles.

When cleaning shower walls and doors or windows, start at the top and you won’t have to backtrack to take care of drips.

Using the wrong cleaning products



Using a cleaning product that isn’t strong enough to do the job can mean you have leftover dirt and the task will have to be repeated. Have you ever washed clothes only to find that stains remain? You used the wrong laundry products. Read labels carefully and follow the directions for the best results.

Checking labels can not only save time, they can save money. Using the wrong cleaning product can permanently damage some surfaces. That’s why you can’t safely use a scrubbing powder on furniture or stone countertops. If you are trying to reduce the amount of chemicals used in your home, natural or green cleaning products can be quite effective if used correctly.

Using dirty cleaning tools



The tools you use for cleaning can be making matters worse and spreading bacteria and soil around. If not handled properly, kitchen sponges are breeding grounds for coliform bacteria (Salmonella or E.coli). A washing machine that has not been cleaned regularly can redeposit body soil and leave laundry smelling terrible. And, that dirty vacuum can be puffing out dust with every use.

Take time to wash cleaning cloths, mop heads and scrubbing brushes and clean vacuum filters and cups between every use. Disposable tools like disinfecting wipes, electrostatic cloths and dusters are great, but not if you try to use only one to clean the entire house. Tackle each cleaning task with a fresh disposable.

(Source: The Spruce)



101 ITEMS FOR YOUR BUCKET LIST!

#26. Befriend a stranger

Being a good conversationalist is important be it in business, social situations, or dating. Over the past years, I’ve met a lot of people in different contexts. During my seven-month trip across the U.S. and Europe last year, I met over hundreds of new people. Networking events are a norm to me as a business owner. My dating immersion has put me in many different date situations.

Whenever I meet new people, I find that the quality of our interaction is tied to two factors: (1) the compatibility of our values, and (2) our conversational skills.

Who says that there needs to be a reason to start a friendship? A connection can start anytime, anywhere, in any way. I have many great friendships that started off from the most random of situations.

Here we share 101 items to consider for your bucket list. Look through the list — any item that resonates with you? Take the items that resonate with you and use them for your own list!

(Source: personalexcellence.co)



#IRANIANLIFESTYLE

An Iranian woman deseed pomegranate in an undated photo (Instagram/@mariya.95a)



Germany now has the world’s most powerful passport

Germany has the world’s most powerful passport, according to the 2018 Henley Passport Index.

It’s the fifth year in a row in which the European country has topped Henley’s list, which takes into account the number of countries a passport holder can visit without a visa.

The ranking is based on data from the International Air Transport Association, which maintains the world’s largest and most comprehensive database of travel information.

German citizens can now visit 177 countries, up one from last year, according to the report.

In October, a separate list, the Global Passport Power Rank, produced by the advisory firm Arton Capital, named Singapore as having the most powerful passport in the world. But Germany has since reclaimed the top spot in that ranking also, solidifying its standing.

Here are the 15 most powerful tiers of passports, based on the number of countries their holders can visit visa-free, according to Henley:

- Germany 177
- Singapore 176
- Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden, UK 175
- Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland 174



- Ireland, South Korea, Portugal, US 173
- Canada 172
- Australia, Greece, New Zealand 171
- Czech Republic, Iceland 170
- Malta 169
- Hungary 168
- Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Slovenia 167
- Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia 166
- Estonia 165
- Poland 163
- Monaco 162

Ukraine (44th) and Georgia (53rd) were the biggest climbers on this year’s list, moving up by 15 and 14 ranks respectively, following their recent visa liberalization with the European Union.

Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan remain at the bottom of the index for the second year in a row, each able to access 30 or fewer countries visa-free.

Dr. Christian H. Kälin, the group chairman of Henley & Partners, thinks the need for visa-free access is greater than ever.

“Across the economic spectrum, individuals want to transcend the constraints imposed on them by their country of origin and access business, financial, career, and lifestyle opportunities on a global scale,” he said. “The Henley Passport Index shows individuals where they lie on the spectrum of global mobility, revealing the strength that their passport has in relation to other passports.”

(Source: *Independet*)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Fort and Shalamar Gardens in Lahore

The inscribed property includes two distinct royal complexes, the Lahore Fort and the Shalimar Gardens, both located in the City of Lahore, at a distance of 7 km. from each other.



The two complexes – one characterized by monumental structures and the other by extensive water gardens - are outstanding examples of Mughal artistic expression at its height, as it evolved during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Mughal civilization, a fusion of Islamic, Persian, Hindu and Mongol sources (from whence the name Mughal derives) dominated the Indian subcontinent for several centuries and strongly influenced its subsequent development.

The Lahore Fort, situated in the north-west corner of the Walled City of Lahore, occupies a site which has been occupied for several millenia. Assuming its present configuration during the 11th century, the Fort was destroyed and rebuilt several times by the early Mughals during the 13th to the 15th centuries.

The Shalimar Gardens, constructed by Shah Jahan in 1641-2 is a Mughal garden, layering Persian influences over medieval Islamic garden traditions, and bearing witness to the apogee of Mughal artistic expression.

The Mughal garden is characterized by enclosing walls, a rectilinear layout of paths and features, and large expanses of flowing water. The Shalimar Gardens cover 16 hectares, and is arranged in three terraces descending from the south to the north.

(Source: *UNESCO*)

Metropolitan Museum of Art home to over 7,000 Near Eastern artworks

The Metropolitan Museum of Art collection of ancient Near Eastern art includes more than 7,000 works ranging in date from the eighth millennium BC through the centuries just beyond the time of the Arab conquests of the seventh century CE.

Objects come from a vast region centered in Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and extending north to the Caucasus and the Eurasian steppes and south to the Arabian peninsula. To the west the region includes Anatolia, Syria, and the Levant, bordered by the Mediterranean; to the east, it extends through Iran and western Central Asia, with connections as far as the Indus River Valley.

■ What’s on view

The galleries for Ancient Near Eastern Art present objects in contexts that illuminate their significance as well as their connections to the art of neighboring cultures.

The art of the ancient Near East exhibits a great variety of forms and styles, reflecting the many peoples, cities, kingdoms, and empires that flourished in the region over thousands of years. Yet, in the midst of this diversity, there was also consistency and continuity.

One of the constant and primary aims of ancient Near Eastern art was to capture the relationship between the terrestrial and divine realms—a link expressed in some of the most distinctive works in the collection.

A progression of galleries leads visitors chronologically through an overview of Near Eastern culture beginning in the Neolithic period, when the first permanent settlements were built, through the development of writing, cities, and organized religion, the rise of territorial empires, and the development of international trade and diplomacy—demonstrating that, long before the Silk Road, much of the world was intensely engaged with the ancient



Human-headed Winged Bull and Winged Lion dating from the 9th century BC on display at Metropolitan Museum of Art

Near East.

■ History of the department

The first ancient Near Eastern objects to enter The Met collection—Assyrian stone reliefs, cuneiform tablets, and stamp and cylinder seals—were acquired in the late 1800s.

These were overseen by the Department of Decorative Arts until 1932, when

a separate Department of Near Eastern Art, comprising both the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras, was formed. With the influx of works of art, such as the ivories from Nimrud, and advancing scholarship, the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art was formally established in 1956.

The department’s collection has been acquired by gift, by purchase, and through

participation in archaeological excavations in the Near East. Sites where work has been supported by the Museum include Ctesiphon, Nimrud, and Nippur in Iraq, Hasanlu and Qasr-i Abu Nasr in Iran, and Tell ed-Duweir (ancient Lachish), Tell Brak, Tell Mozan and Umm el-Marra in the Levant and Syria.

(Source: *metmuseum.org*)

Five amazing and overlooked travel sites in Iran

Iran has a well-worn tourist circuit, encompassing very well-known historical sites, natural beauties and museums all over the vast country.

However, for those wanting to get off the beaten path, the country has a wealth of lesser-known destinations that rival the stunning beauty and historical significance of their more famous counterparts.

Here are five of the best:

■ Rudkhan Castle



Hidden in the humid green forests of Iran’s northern Gilan province is Rudkhan Castle, a medieval military fortress whose origins predate the rise of Islam in Iran.

Few foreign tourists have visited the site, which is a popular attraction among Iranians.

Work started on the castle during the Persian Sassanid era, between 224 CE and 651. Followers of the Ismaili sect (the infamous “Assassins” or “Hashashin”) are believed to have renovated and completed the fortress during the late 11th to 12th centuries.

The hike up to the castle, which is situated along two peaks of a verdant mountain, takes more than an hour, prompting many locals to call Rudkhan the “Castle of a Thousand Steps.”

■ Bekhradi Historical House



The State Department is asking U.S. tourists to be careful when visiting Mexico, but five states there have received the highest warning under an overhauled travel advisory system.

The department on Wednesday gave a “do not travel” advisory—the harshest of the new four-level alert classification—to northern Mexico’s border state of Tamaulipas and the country’s Pacific coast states of Sinaloa, Guerrero, Michoacan and Colima. The advisory says these states are rife with crime.

The department has previously warned about traveling to all or part of the five states, but the new rating puts them in the same category as Somalia, Yemen, Syria or Afghanistan, according to the Chicago Tribune.

“Violent crime, such as homicide, kidnapping, carjacking, and robbery, is widespread,” the advisory reads. “The U.S. government has limited ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens in many areas of Mexico, as U.S. government employees are prohibited from travel to these areas.”

If travelers decide to visit Mexico, the department tells them to use toll roads, if possible, and avoid driving at night. U.S. tourists are asked to be “extra vigilant” when using ATMs or banks and to exercise caution while visiting bars. Additionally, they should not display signs of wealth, “such as wearing expensive watches or jewelry.”

Overall, Mexico has a two-level warning,

meaning that tourists should “exercise increased caution,” but additional 11 Mexican states received a level-three rating, known as “reconsider travel.” The country has 31 states, half of which are placed under level three or four, the Tribune reported.

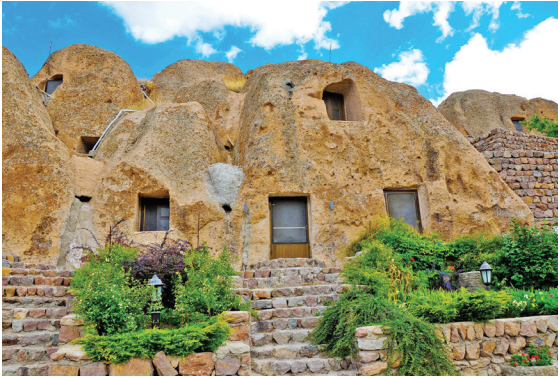
In an interview with Newsweek last month, Mexican Secretary of Tourism Enrique de la Madrid Cordero said that U.S. tourists feel safe in Mexico, despite a State Department report that cited 264 American deaths there in 2016, of which 75 were related to homicide—more than in any other country.

“In Mexico’s main tourist areas for foreigners—Cancún-Riviera Maya and Los Cabos—we haven’t heard of foreign tourists’

casualties that stemmed from insecurity in the last two years, so I would like to see those [death] cases and provide an answer based on that,” De la Madrid said at the time. “It may be anecdotal cases where one tourist kills his or her significant other or vice versa. These are not acts related to violence.”

Meanwhile, the State Department changed its position on Cuba under this ranking. The advisory advises tourists to “reconsider travel” there following the “health attacks directed at U.S. Embassy Havana employees.” Previously, Cuba received a warning that advised Americans not to travel to the island, Miami-based channel WLRN reported.

(Source: *Newsweek*)



According to local lore, mineral water sourced from Mount Sahand, long valued throughout Iran for its medicinal properties, originated in the biblical Garden of Eden.

Guests of the hotel can take a relaxing soak in this precious liquid. If there’s a spa tub in the room, the mineral water gets pumped in directly.

■ Toghrol Tower

Toghrol Tower is a Seljuk-era monument situated in the city of Rey, on the southern outskirts of Iran’s capital city, Tehran.

Often overlooked by visitors who tend to stick to the higher-income northern and central areas of the Iranian capital, Rey is the oldest county in Tehran province and is speckled with historical monuments, including a 500-year-old Safavid-era bazaar. The tower is said to serve as the mausoleum for Seljuk king Toghrol Beg, who established Rey as a major administrative



center of the Seljuk Dynasty until its destruction by Mongol armies in the early 13th century.

(Source: *CNN*)

Life in the Solar System likely exists and is more common than we think

It's one of the most compelling questions humanity has tried to answer: Is there life beyond Earth? Scientists are closer than ever to answering that question, thanks to a host of technological advances and each new spacecraft that launches — and sometimes even thanks to evidence falling right onto our laps.

Evidence like two meteorites that crashed into Earth in 1998. Nestled within those space rocks were tiny bright blue salt crystals, and inside of those crystals were tiny pockets of extraterrestrial water filled with organic compounds, the building blocks of life, according to new research.

"I think it's likely" that there is other life within our solar system, first author on that work, Queenie Chan, a planetary scientist at Open University in the UK, told Newsweek. And even better, she says, we're doing the science that might finally find it. "That's why we like searching missions, isn't it?"

■ NASA's Dawn spacecraft

That means missions like NASA's Dawn spacecraft, which has been studying the largest object in the asteroid belt, the dwarf planet Ceres.

Chan and her co-authors believe the salt crystals they studied may have first been formed on Ceres or a similar object, so they have paid close attention to the results the Dawn spacecraft has gathered. That includes identifying sodium chloride, better known as table salt, and sulfur dioxide. "When I



Life — as we know it, anyway — requires water, common chemicals like oxygen and carbon dioxide that scientists think could be forming on Europa's icy shell, and an energy source (on Earth, that's usually the sun, but on Europa it could be geological processes).

saw them I was like, 'Hey, I saw that in our sample too,'" she said.

Although the Dawn mission will end later this year, there are plenty of successors on the

way, like Europa Clipper, NASA's plan to fly by Jupiter's icy moon after a 2020s launch.

Scientists suspect that it could host life, thanks to the theory that the moon is hiding a giant salty ocean and volcanic activity under its icy shell.

■ Water and common chemicals

Life — as we know it, anyway — requires water, common chemicals like oxygen and carbon dioxide that scientists think could be forming on Europa's icy shell, and an energy source (on Earth, that's usually the sun, but on Europa it could be geological processes).

Chan says her new research supports these suspicions of life on Europa because the story she and her colleagues put together for the salt crystals they studied relies on conditions also believed to exist on this moon. In particular, they think the crystals found within the meteorite were shot off a particularly water-rich asteroid by cryovolcanism, a type of geologic activity that spews water or ice instead of lava.

Scientists suspect the cryovolcanism may occur on Europa as well. And unlike traditional geologic activity, these eruptions don't reach high temperatures that would irreparably toast these life-supporting chemicals. "Our study proves that, ok, this kind of scenario is similar to what we found on the meteorite," Chan said of scientists' hypotheses about what's happening on Europa. (Source: Newsweek)

Most people who try one cigarette likely to become habitual smokers: study



A new research suggested that it only takes one cigarette for the majority of people to become regular smokers. The research is based on surveys that were conducted between 2000 and 2016 in eight English-speaking countries.

In the study, published in the journal *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, researchers from the Queen Mary University of London in the United Kingdom examined the results of eight surveys conducted between the years 2000 and 2016.

These surveys included three from the United States, three from the United Kingdom, one from Australia, and, one from New Zealand.

The surveys, which were extracted from the Global Health Data Exchange, involved around 215,000 people who were chosen randomly in order to provide a general representation of the adult population.

■ Developing a regular habit

The results of the study found that about 60.3 percent of the people claimed they had tried a cigarette at some point in their lives, and around 68.9 percent among them developed a regular habit.

In other words, around three out of five people who tried smoking a cigarette went on to become daily smokers.

«In the development of any addictive behavior, the move from experimentation to daily practice is an important landmark, as it implies that a recreational activity is turning into a compulsive need,» said Peter

Hajek, the lead research of the study and professor at the Queen Mary University of London.

It is important to note that the result of the study has been considered to be an estimate because the surveys used different methods and came up with different results.

Also, the findings are based on self-reports, which raises questions about the accuracy of the recall the respondents had regarding their smoking history.

■ 480,000 deaths daily

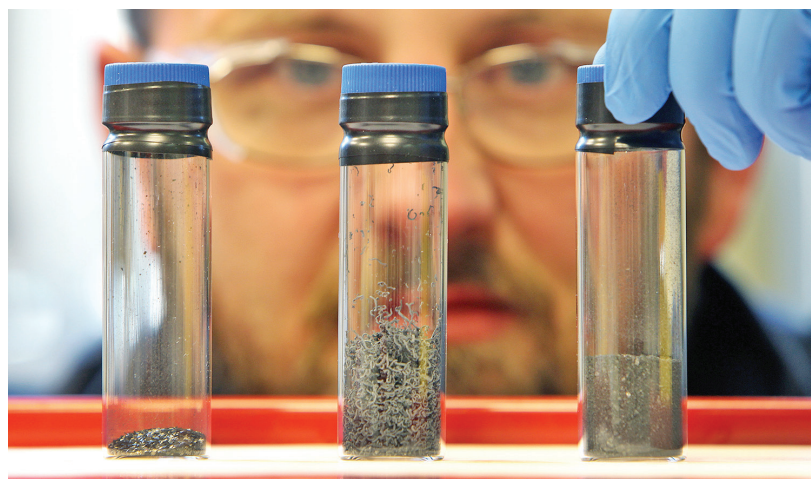
Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and deaths in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it is responsible for over 480,000 deaths every year in the country alone.

Cigarette smoking also caused around 7.1 million deaths worldwide in 2016 and is associated with a range of health conditions, which include cancer and respiratory diseases. In 2015, around 15 of every 100 American adults, or 36.5 million American adults, were cigarette smokers.

According to the CDC, the rate of cigarette smoking among American adults managed to drop from 20.9 percent in 2005 to 15.1 percent in 2015. In the United Kingdom, there's a dramatic reduction in cigarette smoking at the moment. Recent findings show that only 19 percent of people aged 11 to 15 years have tried to smoke a cigarette.

(Source: Tech Times)

Amazing uses for graphene, from filtering seawater to smart paint



Graphene is a single layer of graphite — also known as that soft material commonly found in pencil lead — with the atoms arranged in a honeycomb-like, hexagonal pattern. While that description is decidedly unexciting, graphene is actually emerging as one of science's most versatile new materials.

Just one atom thick (or thin, depending on how you think about it), graphene is among the strongest materials in the known universe, with 100 times the strength of steel, an astonishing amount of flexibility, and a whole lot of other talents lurking beneath the surface.

Do you remember that classic scene from *The Simpsons* in which Homer is offered "wax lips," described by the salesman as "the candy of 1,000 uses?" Well, graphene is the wax lips of the material science world. And while we don't have time to detail 1,000 uses, here are some of the most exciting graphene discoveries made so far.

■ Transparent display

Imagine a flexible, transparent display or light strip that's just a single atom thick. That's something graphene could help make a reality, as demonstrated by research from scientists at Columbia (University) Engineering, Seoul National University, and Korea Research Institute of Standards and Science.

By attaching small strips of graphene to metal electrodes and passing a current through them, the graphene was shown to heat — and light — up. Columbia professor James Hone described it as "the world's thin-

nest light bulb." Finding a way to translate this breakthrough into wearables such as smart clothing would be revolutionary.

Graphene can also act as a superconductor, meaning that electrical current is able to flow through it with zero resistance, a discovery that was made by researchers at the United Kingdom's Cambridge University. The effect is activated by coupling the graphene with a material called praseodymium cerium copper oxide (PCCO).

Why do superconducting materials matter? Because in the future, they could provide a source of unlimited energy, since they don't constantly need to be resupplied with current.

■ Dissipating energy

"One day, the dream is to make your computer or your iPhone work without dissipating energy," junior research fellow Angelo Di Bernardo, one of the researchers on the project, told Digital Trends. "You'll just charge it once and then you can forget about having to charge it again its entire lifetime."

To produce sound, regular speakers create a pressure wave in the air by physically moving back and forth. Graphene could eventually offer a different approach. Researcher from the UK's University of Exeter have demonstrated how graphene can create a non-moving solid-state audio device that may one day replace your existing bulky sound system with something called thermo-acoustic sound generation. (Source: Digital Trends)

Biologists peek into the past to see the future through tiny spider eyes

With the increasing advantages of DNA sequencing, University of Cincinnati biologists are unraveling many evolutionary mysteries behind the complex world of spider vision.

Looking closely at the mysterious genetic blueprint for how these peepers developed and function is helping researchers see great opportunities for future research. New studies could include gene therapies in humans with visual problems like macular degeneration or retinal cancer.

To get to these possibilities scientists like Nathan Morehouse, UC assistant professor of biology, had to look to 500 million years ago to a time called the Cambrian Period to put the evolution of spider eye genes into perspective.

"What we found is that we go from soft-bodied ancient aquatic arthropods with no eyes, or at least eyes that don't fossilize well, to suddenly eyes that look like the eyes that we see on insects and land animals today, with basically nothing in between these stages," says Morehouse.

While primitive spiders and insects came onto land as two totally separate groups, they are likely to have carried with them some of the same developmental patterns for building their eyes.

"We can use new genetic evidence from insects as a starting point for identifying important genes that are controlling eye development in spiders," says Morehouse. "This will excite spider biologists and people generally interested in vision into thinking about novel ways of building better vision. We're not quite there in terms of engineering solutions for building organic eyes yet, but hopefully that's in our future." (Source: eurekalert.org)

Coconut oil will help you to fight with heart disease

Consuming coconut-oil per day for just four weeks can diminish the risk of cardiovascular problems and stroke also suggests a recent analysis. Researchers Kay-Tee Khaw and Professor Nita Forouhi from University of Cambridge executed the study on 94 volunteers in between the ages of 50 and 75, not one of whom experienced a history of heart disease or diabetes accounts Independent.

They divide the members into several classes and each of those was questioned to eat up 50 g or about 3 tbsp of either coconut oil, extra virgin coconut oil or unsalted butter every day for four weeks. They desired to analyze that how ingesting these fats on a regular basis will affect the researchers' cholesterol amounts. The findings indicated the individuals, who consumed butter viewed a normal increase of 10 percent in their levels of LDL cholesterol, also known as the "bad cholesterol".

Individuals who consumed olive-oil found a slight decrease in LDL levels and a five percent increase in HDL cholesterol levels, which is usually called the 'good cholesterol'. The participants who ate coconut oil observed the main rise in HDL levels using a mean of 1-5 percent."

After one month, the professors had been amazed by the things they located. Just as anticipated, the hamburger band underwent the typical increase in LDL cholesterol approximately ten percent-age, together with side an increase in HDL cholesterol 5 percent.



Nevertheless, the actual shock came after they analyzed the consequence of ingestion coconut-oil to a few months. Much like coconut oil, also the coconut oil group underwent without any shift in LDL cholesterol, however, they demonstrated an important 1-5 percentage growth in HDL-cholesterol ... generating coconut-oil that the very visceral fat from considerably.

(Source: The Version Weekly)

Largest volcanic eruption in the ocean uncovered in New Zealand

Researchers have found that the world's largest deep ocean volcanic eruption happened in New Zealand. Named as Havre, the deep ocean volcanic eruption was first discovered in 2002. A solidified volcanic rock known as pumice raft — 400 square kilometers in size — found floating in the ocean near New Zealand in 2012 showed that underwater eruption had occurred.

The eruption involved 14 aligned vents causing a "massive rupture". "When this rock was produced by the volcano, it rose through the water column onto the sea surfaced and then it was dispersed by wind and sea currents," lead author Rebecca Carey, volcanologist at the University of Tasmania, was quoted as telling Xinhua.

"We knew it was a large scale eruption, approximately equivalent to the biggest eruption we've seen on land in the 20th Century," Carey added.

For the study, the team successfully mapped the remote location with submersible vehicles including a remotely operated vehicle and an automated underwater vehicle to make high resolution topographic maps of the sea floor.

They did about 12 different surveys for 8-12 hours each and those maps are so high resolution that were then able to use a remotely operated vehicle which is tethered to the ship, to actually go down and make observation of the eruption and also bring back samples.

With more than 80 per cent of the world's volcanoes located underwater, scientists like Carey believe it's vital to learn more about them.

"Volcanoes provide heat and chemicals to the ocean and that input is actually really important when it comes to sustaining life," Carey said.

"Havre is a cornerstone eruptive event because for the first time we are able to constrain exactly what happened, where it happened, at what depth, how much and how fast it erupted."

(Source: The Eastern Mirror)

BMI Exchange 36,000 SWIFT Messages in Nine Months

The domestic branches of Bank Melli Iran (BMI) managed to establish brokerage relationship with 32 foreign brokers in the nine months of the current year in 1396 (from March 21 to Dec. 22), the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

In the same direction, domestic branches of the bank in

the mentioned period succeeded in exchanging more than 36,239 SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) messages as well as launching SWIFT password (RMA) with a number of 32 foreign brokers from the country, the report added.

Also, the number of SWIFT messages received and issued

from BMI's foreign branches since the implementation of JCPOA up to Sept. 2017 at 181,451.

In the same direction, the bank managed to resume its brokerage relationship with the Brazilian banks in line with supporting and backing up foreign trade sector of the country, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.

EDBI and EGFI, Masters of Knowledge-Based Firms in Country

Many knowledge-based company own their existence to the salient activities of Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) and Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI).

Mohsen Ehteshami is the sole managing director of a knowledge-based company in the field of farming and processing saffron in the country.

With due observance to the said issue, EDBI enjoys this capability to play a leading role in the field of development of knowledge-based company, because, the issue

of financing is one of the most important barriers ahead of development of these companies.

Streamlining and invigorating activities of knowledge-based companies up to the commercialization stage strictly hinges on offering affordable facilities and loans by the banks to these companies.

Allocation of these facilities for marketing, ranging from growth stage to the complete maturity, seems necessary, the report concluded.



Iran to host rally racing for Muslim women

W O M E N d e s k TEHRAN — A rally racing competition for women of Muslim countries will be held this year in the city of Tabriz, northwestern Iran, CEO of Motorcycle & Automobile Federation of Iran said Sunday.

Iran has been chosen as the host country for the event, scheduled to be held in September, Mehr quoted Mahmoud Seydanlou, the head of Iran's Motorcycle and Automobile Federation, as saying. Negotiations with the president of Fédération Internationale



de l'Automobile (International Automobile Federation-FIA) have been fruitful, and Tabriz has been selected to host the competition due to its status as the Islamic Tourism Capital in 2018, he added.

After years of hiatus, Iran will also host a round of Middle East rally racing in the current year, Seydanlou added.

Iran will also hold a round of motocross competitions as approved by the Asian Automobile Federation, he added.

"Iran and a number of neighboring and Asian countries cannot take part in Formula One and Formula Two car racing, therefore the Asian Automobile Federation has provided the chance that each of these countries, including Iran, Azerbaijan and Turkey, to host each round of these competitions on the regional level," he added.

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Baked potato soup

"Thick and creamy. Uses leftover baked potatoes."

Ingredients:



12 slices beef
2/3 cup margarine
2/3 cup all-purpose flour
7 cups milk
4 large baked potatoes, peeled and cubed
4 green onions, chopped
1 1/4 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
1 cup sour cream
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper

Directions:

Place beef in a large, deep skillet. Cook over medium heat until browned. Drain, crumble, and set aside.

In a stock pot or Dutch oven, melt the margarine over medium heat. Whisk in flour until smooth. Gradually stir in milk, whisking constantly until thickened. Stir in potatoes and onions. Bring to a boil, stirring frequently.

Reduce heat, and simmer 10 minutes. Mix in beef, cheese, sour cream, salt, and pepper. Continue cooking, stirring frequently, until cheese is melted.

LEARN ENGLISH

Junk Food

A: I'm hungry, let's **grab a bite to eat**.

B: Sure! **How about** we go home and prepare a couple of sandwiches?

A: Nah! Let's go get a burger and fries.

B: **All you ever do** is have unhealthy fast food Pizza, fries, burgers and hot dogs! You have to start eating better!

A: What are you talking about? I have salads sometimes.

B: Yeah right! I'm serious! You should also **cut down** on your sugar intake as well. You drink **carbonated drinks** that are high in fructose syrup! It's really not healthy!

A: Fine! I'll start drinking and having home cooked meals that are low in fat. Are you happy now?

B: It's a start, but I'll be happy when I see you **stick to** your promise!

Key vocabulary

grab a bite: get food that can be eaten quickly

how about: what do you think

all you ever do: something frequently done

cut down: reduce the amount taken or used

carbonated drink: carbonated drinks contain small bubbles

stick to: continue doing (something)

Supplementary vocabulary

calorie: a unit of energy

saturated fat: a fat that consists of triglycerides containing only saturated fatty acid radicals

fiber: an indigestible portion of plant foods having two main components

serving: a specific amount or portion of food or liquids

obese: condition of having excess body fat, to the extent that it may have an adverse effect on health, leading to reduced life

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Iran, Switzerland call for women's empowerment co-op

W O M E N d e s k TEHRAN — Iran and Switzerland discussed ways to expand mutual ties in areas related to women's empowerment through launching joint projects.

Masoumeh Ebtekar, the Iranian vice president for women's and family affairs, met in Tehran on Sunday with the Swiss ambassador to Iran, Marcos Lightner.

"Fortunately, Iranian women and girls have an outstanding presence in universities and managerial posts. Therefore, the two countries can develop joint projects in different fields," IRNA quoted Ebtekar as saying.

Iran and Switzerland can develop international cooperation regarding women's role in preserving the environment and improving women's awareness, she noted.

The two countries will study the activities of non-governmental organizations and the private sectors in the field of women, family and children as well as resolving the problems the breadwinner women are facing, she added.

The bill on removing violence against



women and girls is now being finalized and the balance between men and women's roles and responsibilities in work and

family are highly concerned, said Ebtekar in her meeting with Lightner.

Explaining about the government's plan

Conference studies life challenges of housewives

W O M E N d e s k TEHRAN — A one-day scientific conference on life challenges of housewives was held in the eastern city of Birjand on Sunday.

The congress aimed at paving the way for experts to speak about depression and learning how to deal with its related problems and situations.

No one can help a woman but herself, Mehr quoted Bibi Aghdas Asghari, a psychologist and one of the lecturers of the conference.

Currently about 15 million of Iranian women are housewives and it is estimated that a housewife helps save her family's income by about 15-20 million rials (\$375-\$500) per month [by doing household chores].

Women entered the economy and market after the World War II and it changed the societies' expectation from females,



she explained.

The housewives suffer the most pains and receive the least rewards, Asghari stressed.

In the developing countries, the changes in the attitude toward women were created along with the development of mass media, whereas, expectations from women did not changed, she clarified, adding, today housewives suffer emotional loneliness, because a housewife finds her happiness in other's happiness.

"Social loneliness is another kind of loneliness housewives are facing and they also are economically dependent," she explained. "Although housewives are helping the family financially, they have no privacy," she said, concluding "Sometimes, housewives do not think they deserve to have privacy and it undermines their self-confidence."

Private equity firms hope flying nannies will help retain women

Private equity groups are introducing new policies to try to retain female staff — from flying nannies to offering to freeze eggs for free — in a sector that has the lowest proportion of women in senior positions.

In Europe, Apax has in recent months started offering to pay for au pairs to fly with women who are back from maternity leave, for the first 18 months after the child is born. It has also extended paternity leave beyond two weeks and introduced payments for emergency child care if a nanny or other carer is off sick.

In the U.S., KKR started offering coverage for women looking to freeze their eggs last year. It also pays for breast milk shipping during business trips.

Many of the initiatives to try to attract and retain female staff have been launched in the past few years and some private equity firms have only recently started to track the proportion of women in the workforce.

Pressure is growing on employers in the financial services industry to hire more women and reduce the pay gap between male and female workers, as investors seek more diversity of views in the hope that this will boost returns.

Some parts of the industry, such as banks, have done better in developing family friendly

policies: Goldman Sachs introduced a childcare center in 2003, Deutsche Bank in London offers emergency childcare cover and has had a company creche for at least a decade. HSBC also offers nursery places.

Of private equity firms, Bev Shah, a campaigner and former Aviva and HSBC employee, said: "Some of these policies come a bit too late?..?But if you don't have many women to begin with then you lack champions."

Recent research by data company Preqin found only 9 percent of women reach the top echelons in private equity, making it the industry with the lowest representation of

female staff at senior levels, despite evidence that this helps boost returns.

The generally poor work-life balance is partly to blame, industry observers say. But others say perceptions are also a problem. "An industry that has an image of being male dominated does struggle to attract women," said Jeryl Andrew, chief executive of Level 20, a group launched in 2015 to help attract and retain women in the sector.

Some of the largest private equity groups, such as Blackstone, which became the first of its peers to extend maternity leave to 16 weeks, say they are trying to change this. (Source: *Financial Times*)

‘Trump’s lawyer took care of a hundred women during the presidential campaign’



Former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon alleged that one of President Donald Trump's attorneys "took care" of 100 women during the presidential campaign.

Bannon made this claim in journalist Michael Wolff's recently published tell-all book about the Trump White House.

The comment may take on new significance after The Wall Street Journal reported that another Trump attorney paid a porn star \$130,000 to prevent her from discussing an alleged 2006 sexual encounter with Trump.

Steve Bannon, President Donald Trump's former top strategist, alleged in journalist Michael Wolff's tell-all book about the Trump White House that the president's longtime attorney, Marc Kasowitz, "took care" of 100 women during the presidential campaign.

"Look, Kasowitz has known [Trump] for twenty-five years. Kasowitz has gotten him out of all kinds of jams," Bannon reportedly said. "Kasowitz on the campaign — what did we have, a hundred women? Kasowitz took care of all of them."

This apparently off-hand remark may take on new significance after The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday that another lawyer for the president, Michael Cohen, sent \$130,000 to a porn star just weeks before the 2016 presidential election to keep her silent about an alleged 2006 sexual encounter with Trump.

The Journal reported that Cohen, who was the Trump Organization's top attorney

for about a decade, arranged for the payment to Stephanie Clifford, whose stage name is Stormy Daniels, in October 2016 after a negotiation between her lawyer and Cohen on a nondisclosure agreement.

Clifford has said privately that the encounter happened at a July 2006 celebrity golf tournament in Lake Tahoe, the newspaper reported.

Trump married his third wife, Melania Trump, in 2005.

Cohen said in a statement to The Journal that Trump "once again vehemently denies any such occurrence as has Ms. Daniels." Cohen also did not address any payment.

Bannon made the remark about the 100 women as part of a larger discussion about the president's top advisors, some of whom he disparaged at length in Wolff's controversial book, "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House," which the president has condemned as "full of lies, misrepresentations and sources that don't exist."

A spokesman for Kasowitz told Business Insider that Bannon's claim concerning the 100 women is false.

"The statements attributed to Stephen Bannon about Marc Kasowitz in Michael Wolff's book are pure fiction," he said.

New York Times columnist Michelle Goldberg drew attention to Bannon's comment in a tweet on Friday afternoon, shortly after the publication of the Journal report.

(Source: businessinsider.com)

Scientists confirm what women always knew: men really are the weaker sex



In Zanzibar, Tanzania, 88-year-old Ernestina Felix makes orange juice to sell to neighbors

Women are more likely than men to survive in times of famine and epidemics, research has found.

While it has long been known that women have a higher life expectancy than men in general, analysis of historical records stretching back 250 years shows that women have, for example, outlived men on slave plantations in Trinidad, during famines in Sweden and through various measles outbreaks in Iceland.

Even when mortality was very high for both sexes, women still outlived men, on average, by six months to four years, according to the report (pdf) by Duke University in North Carolina.

The datasets included seven groups of people for whom life expectancy was 20 years or under for one or both sexes. Among them were working and former slaves in Trinidad and the U.S. in the early 1800s; people experiencing famine in Sweden, Ireland and the Ukraine in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries; and Icelanders affected by the 1846 and 1882 measles epidemics.

Lead researcher Virginia Zarulli, from the University of Southern Denmark's Institute of Public Health, attributed the life expectancy gender gap to biological factors such as genetics and hormones, with the simple conclusion that "newborn girls are harder than newborn boys".

Girls born during the 1933 famine in Ukraine, for example, lived to the age of 10.85, while boys lived, on average, to 7.3. Girls also fared better in west Africa

in the 1800s. Freed American slaves who relocated to Liberia between 1820 and 1843 experienced the highest mortality rates ever recorded, with as many as 43% dying within a year of their arrival. Life expectancy was an incredibly low 1.68 years for boys, but 2.23 years for girls.

"To find the female advantage so marked and consistent among all the populations was surprising," said Zarulli. "Even more surprising was to find that the biggest part of the sex difference in life expectancy during these crises was determined by striking differences in survival among infants. This is the most interesting result."

Zarulli pointed to the double X chromosome present in females, as well as the hormone oestrogen, as plausible explanations for women outliving men, regardless of factors such as violence or risk-taking. "In simple words, it is easy to see that if by chance a bad mutation takes place on the X chromosome, women have another X that can partly — or totally — compensate for it, while men don't have this possibility."

Zarulli said that the most prominent female hormones, oestrogens, protect blood vessels and defend against a range of diseases. "Testosterone, the most prominent male hormone, increases the risk of several fatal conditions — besides being the cause of reckless behaviors, more typical of men, that increase the risk of accidental and violent deaths."

(Source: *The Guardian*)

New U.S.-backed 'border force' in Syria infuriates Ankara, Damascus

1→ “We don’t see the efforts to help resolve the conflict as soon as possible, but rather to help those who would like to make practical steps to change the government in Syrian Arab Republic,” Lavrov added.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

■ Moscow vows to react to U.S. border force

Lavrov’s remarks came a day after Chairman of the Defense Committee of Russia’s State Duma Vladimir Shamanov vowed to take measures in reaction to Washington’s decision to deploy the so-called “Border Security Force”.

Shamanov said the U.S. plan “stands in direct confrontation” with Russia’s interests. “We and our colleagues will certainly undertake certain measures on stabilization of the situation in Syria,” he said.



■ Turkey says U.S. ‘playing with fire’
The U.S. move has also angered Ankara with

Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdag saying on Monday that Washington is “playing with fire”.

Turkey is already angry over strong U.S. support for Kurdish forces in Syria. Ankara views SDF and its affiliates as the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which has been fighting Turkey since 1984.

The U.S. launched its military campaign in Syria in 2014 under the pretext of fighting Daesh terrorists. Syria and Russia as well as other regional countries have cast doubt on the United States’ true intentions, saying American troops have mostly tried to hamper government operations against Takfiri terrorists and harmed the country’s infrastructure.

Syria calls the “coalition” led by the U.S. “an illegal occupation force” which has entered the country without its permission or a UN mandate. It also views Washington’s SDF allies as “traitors”.

Foreign Minister Lavrov last month said the presence of American troops in Syria was unlawful, urging them to completely leave the Syrian soil.

Senator Flake compares Trump’s criticism of media to Stalin’s

Republican Senator from Arizona Jeff Flake has slammed U.S. President Donald Trump’s declaration that media is “the enemy of the people,” saying it is borrowed from Soviet revolutionary leader Joseph Stalin.

“I’m saying he borrowed that phrase,” Flake told MSNBC on Sunday of Trump’s choice of words. “It was popularized by Joseph Stalin, used by Mao as well — enemy of the people. It should be noted that Nikita Khrushchev who followed Stalin, forbade its use, saying that was too loaded and that it maligned a whole group or class of people, and it shouldn’t be done.”

“I don’t think that we should be using a phrase that’s been rejected as too loaded by a Soviet dictator,” he stated.

Trump has often condemned mainstream American news media, particularly those networks and newspapers which viciously opposed him and supported his Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton, during the 2016 presidential election.

Flake, who announced in October last year that he would

not seek reelection to his Senate seat in 2018, has rebuked Trump for his “reckless, outrageous, and undignified behavior.”

Trump has said that the Arizona senator is not running again for the Senate because he “is unelectable.”

Flake will return to the Senate floor on Wednesday and make a speech in which he is scheduled to criticize President Trump for his treatment of the press, ahead of Trump’s planned “fake news” awards.

On January 17, Trump is hosting a made-up “fake news” awards show as top late night TV figures race to push for winning the award. The president said that the awards would be given to the “losers”.

“We can’t just retreat into camps like we’re doing,” Flake will say at the Senate floor, according to excerpts of his speech. “People need to stand up and say this is not right. This is not normal.”

Flake will say that 2017 was “a year which saw the truth — objective, empirical, evidence-based truth — more

battered and abused than any other in the history of our country, at the hands of the most powerful figure in our government.”

He will further say that the Trump is engaged in an “unrelenting daily assault on the constitutionally protected free press was launched by that same White House, an assault that is as unprecedented as it is unwarranted.”

In the run-up to the November 2016 presidential election, Trump repeatedly accused the mainstream media of bias for not covering “a large-scale voter fraud” underway during early voting across the country. In addition, he called the election process rigged, and said the media was colluding with Clinton in order to beat him.

Last month, Trump again blasted the mainstream U.S. media, saying its work is “a stain on America” after a string of errors in reporting on his presidency had emerged.

(Source: agencies)

Philippines’ president made call on China’s sea research

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte personally made a decision to let China conduct scientific research off the Philippines’ Pacific coast, his spokesman said on Monday, despite concern among critics about threats to maritime sovereignty.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said that as chief architect of foreign policy, Duterte allowed China to work with the University of the Philippines in Benham Rise, an area

roughly the size of Greece and believed by some scientists to be rich in biodiversity and tuna.

The United Nations declared Benham Rise, off the Pacific coast, part of the continental shelf of the Philippines in 2012. Manila last year renamed it the “Philippine Rise”.

Though China does not lay claim to the area, the lingering presence of its vessels for several months in late 2016 triggered

concern about its intentions.

The Philippines granting of the permission to China was not announced and was revealed a few days ago by a lawmaker who has been fiercely critical of Duterte’s close ties with Beijing.

The Philippines and China have a long history of maritime squabbles over sovereignty in the South China Sea, but there has been no disagreement about waters off Manila’s Pacific coast.

Roque said anyone opposed to the joint research project should go to Congress and raise the issue there.

“If this is not a wise move of the president, then a law could be enacted to prohibit it,” he said.

The Philippines would grant permission to any other country that might show interest in conducting maritime research at Benham Rise, he added.

(Source: AFP)

Corbyn: U.S. not UK’s most important relationship

British Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn has rejected the so-called “special relationship” between the U.S. and the UK, saying that Washington is not the most important ally of London.

Corbyn said Britain had many important relationships around the world, including with nations such as China and India, and distanced himself from the historic ties with the U.S. that began after World War II.

During an interview with ITV on Sunday, Corbyn was asked whether the UK’s relationship with the U.S. was the most important. “No. I think there are many important relationships,” he replied.

“The U.S. one is obviously culturally and economically significant and important” he added. “Also the trading relationships we have around the world with obviously the EU, but also with India and China and the rest of the world are very important.” “Also our relationship with international institutions such as the United Nations is very important.”

Corbybn acknowledged that having close ties with and

influence over the US was important because of America’s “huge military and economic power around the world,” but said one has ever “succeeded in defining what the special relationship meant.”

His comments come after U.S. President Donald Trump cancelled a planned visit to London in February following warnings of mass protests. Trump said Thursday he was postponing next month’s trip to open the new US embassy because he did not like the location and cost of the building.

But British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson suggested the decision to cancel the trip was prompted by the strong public and political opposition to Trump in Britain, warning that critics “seem determined to put this crucial relationship at risk.”

The prospect of mass protests was raised last month after Corbyn urged his followers to turn out in force if Trump visited the UK.

Prime Minister Theresa May offered Trump a state visit to Britain one year ago, when she became the first foreign



leader to visit the White House after his inauguration.

Last month, Trump also provoked a wave of anger and disgust from UK politicians for re-tweeting incendiary anti-Muslim videos posted by Jayda Fransen, deputy leader of the far-right group Britain First.

(Source: agencies)

Bloodshed in Baghdad: Twin bombings kill over 3 dozens

1→ Tayyaran Square is a bustling center of commerce. Day laborers also gather there in the early morning, waiting for jobs. It has been targeted in deadly attacks in the past.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the Monday bombings.

On Saturday, a bomb attack in northern Baghdad killed

eight people.

But the Iraqi capital has experienced relative security in the weeks after the defeat of the Takfiri terrorist group of Daesh in early December last year.

Daesh began a terrorist offensive in Iraq in 2014, overrunning territory and brutalizing people there. The Iraqi

army and volunteer forces soon launched operations to retake occupied territory and eliminate Daesh.

Victory in those operations was declared on December 9, 2017. But pockets of Daesh terrorists and potential sleeper cells continue to have a presence in Iraq.

(Source: Press TV)

Defense diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran

1→ Iran’s defense guidelines are value-oriented and in accordance with the power of “universal civil defense”. The foundations of this paper are “Religious Beliefs and Beliefs”, “The Supreme Command and Controls of the Total Power”, “The Soul of Independence, Self Esteem and Self-Recognition”, “Modern Technologies”, “The Climatic, Geopolitical, and Geostrategic Conditions of the Country”, “Defense Experience” “Sacred “, world experiences “, the ideas and theories of the defense and security elites “and” the idea of a future war “. Its basic principles are “preserving the values of the Islamic Revolution”, “preventing any armed conflict”, and “preparing the state to defend itself by using the armed forces to defend vital interests.”

As mentioned previously, Iran employs a combination of hard and soft technology in its defense strategy. Hence, in the hardware approach, the Ministry of Defense produces military supplies and power tools

to promote Iran’s defense capabilities. Another part of the threat management tool is the software approach. In this regard, the development of soft technology and the movement of defense diplomacy can be considered necessary to achieve soft deterrence, because both soft and hard deterrents have a complementary role. Regarding these issues, establishing a link between “military industries”, “service industries” and “defense diplomacy” has provided the ground for promoting the maximum national defense capability.

The activation of defense diplomacy in Iran is an important feature of the defense sector in the process of reconstruction of the defense base of the country. This reconstruction has two basic infrastructure and superstructure. In the infrastructure sector, structural changes and increasing the function of defense industry along with hardware upgrades can be named. This has led to the pride and glory of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the superstructure, investments can be made

in the field of research and development of defense studies and the activation of defense diplomacy. In the past, the role of Ministry of Defense, as armed forces was recognized only in two areas of military-defense and welfare. In fact its third role in supporting the diplomacy of the armed forces and the significant role of the country’s defense and security policy was neglected. The year 2001 was the beginning of the attention and action of the Defense Ministry in the field of defense diplomacy.

On the other hand, the ultimate goal of the armed forces in the next? Twenty years of the country is “deterrence.” The main function of defense diplomacy can be seen in the realization and implementation of the deterrence strategy and its application in the interaction of the political unit along with others in the international system. In addition, deterrence strategy is considered the most important principle in defining the scope of defense diplomacy, and strategy. Defense diplomacy, with an emphasis on

the prevention element, provides conditions that prior to any political confrontation and bloodshed can achieve its own interests and goals and best of all, divides power in various fields.

Generally speaking, defense diplomacy, as one of the policy areas of any state, has an important role in achieving the objectives of the armed forces. It creates favorable political climate for the preservation and development of national values against enemies. Rapid and ongoing progress in the social, economic, political, and military spheres require the planner to identify and validate the variables that can affect the system and its sub-systems in the future in any possible way.

Planning, if successful, should have a long look into the future. A prospect of defense diplomacy makes it possible for Iran to assess current situation with future demands. It also allows the country to plan accordingly to achieve the desired regional and strategic objectives for the future.

Trump and riddle of JCPOA

1→ Our country’s Foreign Minister, “Mohammad Javad Zarif” wrote in a Twitter message: Trump’s policy & today’s announcement amount to desperate attempts to undermine a solid multilateral agreement, maliciously violating its paras 26, 28 & 29. JCPOA is not renegotiable: rather than repeating tired rhetoric, US must bring itself into full compliance -just like Iran.

The U.S. Treasury Department has also added 14 Iranian personalities, including the head of the judiciary of Iran, to its list of sanctions on the grounds of human rights abuses. Not long ago, the U.S. Treasury Secretary, “Steven Mnuchin” stated that he expects new sanctions to be imposed on Iran.

Iran’s foreign ministry, while condemning U.S. threats and rejecting the addition of new people to the sanctions list, has issued a statement on the U.S. administration’s extension of waivers of Iran nuclear sanctions and imposition of a series of new sanctions on certain Iranian companies and individuals. Part of the statement reads:

The Islamic Republic of Iran, together with other parties to the JCPOA and the international community, has repeatedly emphasized that the nuclear deal is a credible international document and cannot be renegotiated in any way.

The Islamic Republic of Iran explicitly stresses that it will not carry out anything beyond its obligations in the JCPOA, and will not accept any changes in this agreement now or in the future. Moreover, it will not allow the nuclear accord to be tied to any other issues. The U.S. government, like other parties to the deal, is obliged to fulfill all its obligations, and if it fails to do so under false pretexts, it should be fully held accountable for the consequences.

Over the course of two years after the signing of the deal, the U.S. government has always been violating various parts of the agreement by breaking its pledges through procrastination and hostile policies. Trump’s past-year policy and Friday’s announcement violate the deal’s paragraphs 26, 28, and 29, and the Islamic Republic of Iran will follow up this blatant violation and report it to the JCPOA Joint Commission.

It’s emphasized in this statement that: “The hostile and illegal move by the Trump regime in placing the name of Iran’s Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani in the so-called new US sanctions list shows that Washington has crossed all the red lines of conduct in the international community. It is a violation of international law and a breach of bilateral and international obligations of the United States, which will surely face the strong reaction of the Islamic Republic, and the US will be responsible for all the consequences of this hostile move.”

The Statement continues to read:

Referring to the lofty concept of human rights to boycott Iranian authorities and citizens by a regime, whose most important allies are the worst violators of human rights and humanitarian law in the contemporary history, is a disgrace to civilized nations and a shame for modern rule, especially when they are imposed by a person obsessed with racist and anti-foreigner mentality whose recent indecent racist remarks against various nations has stirred hatred in the international community and among the American people; a person who has sold billions of dollars in weapons to massacre innocent people in the Middle East and considers provocation of violence and chaos as his honor.”

Over the past decades, the U.S. has always had the world’s worst record in suppressing liberal nations and supporting repressive regimes, including unconditional support for the oppressive regime of Shah and the coup against the democratically-elected government of the Iranian people. It is also supporting the occupying, aggressive and repressive regimes, such as the Zionist regime and its regional allies, from the occupied Palestinian territories to Bahrain and Yemen. On the one hand, Washington sheds crocodile tears and claims to be advocating the human rights of the Iranian people using empty slogans and false allegations and, on the other hand, by imposing cruel sanctions, banning the entry of Iranian citizens into that country and other insulting behaviors, calls the civilized Iranian nation “terrorists”.

In a nutshell, Donald Trump’s remarks regarding the JCPOA are an obvious deception. What is certain is that Iran will never renegotiate with the P1 + 5 members over the nuclear deal.

Why are Tunisians protesting?

8→ The finance law was, furthermore, a blow to many Nidaa Tounes voters’ expectations. During the 2014 electoral campaign, Nidaa Tounes rallied its supporters with the promise not only to counter the Islamist Ennahdha, but also to strengthen the state. Its followers saw in this promise the comeback of the strong state as it was under Tunisia’s nationalist leader Habib Bourguiba (in power 1956-1987). They imagined an idealized past, where the state would provide jobs, subsidies, social security and so on, coming back.

■ Distribution of wealth

Likewise, expectations were high among those who voted for Ennahdha; many were expecting better distribution of wealth, social welfare and more social projects. In reality, however, the Nidaa-Tounes-Ennahdha government gradually applied austerity measures, decreased subsidies and limited public-sector employment.

This situation has been repeating since 2011. Economic problems lead to popular anger. Popular anger leads to popular revolt. Political parties exploit that anger to gain power by means of false promises, and then fail to alleviate the economic problems. It is a vicious circle.

Solving the current crisis will not be easy. The angry citizens will hardly accept another series of promises. Suspending the finance law may help calm the streets, but it will slow down the economy even more. The government might be sacked and Caid Essebsi and Ghannouchi might agree on appointing another prime minister, but that would mean perpetuating the vicious cycle.

Moreover, this dead-end may bring back the old practices from the dictatorship era and trigger the rebuilding of the police state. The UN OHCHR and Amnesty International have recently warned the Tunisian governments against such attempts.

There is, therefore, an urgency to find a solution, perhaps by forming a government of technocrats similar to the one that led the country to its 2014 elections in order to organize the May 2018 local elections and the late 2019 legislative and presidential elections.

The country’s hope is that these elections will bring in fresh blood and different, more representative and able politicians.

(Source: Aljazeera)

North Korean orchestra could be music to the ears of Olympic organizers in South

South Korea is expecting a large North Korean delegation at next month's Winter Olympics, likely including the country's main symphony orchestra, the governor for the Games' host province said on Monday, as relations appear to start hitting the right note.

Choi Moon-soon, governor of Gangwon province, told Reuters the orchestra may hold a joint concert with South Korean musicians during the Games, which open in Pyeongchang, just 80 km (50 miles) from the world's most heavily fortified border, on Feb. 9.

North Korea, still technically at war with the South, is pursuing missile and nuclear programs in defiance of U.N. Security Council sanctions and regularly threatens to destroy the United States and its two key Asian allies, South Korea and Japan.

But a bellicose war of words with the United States has eased in recent days with talk of the North taking part in the Olympics.

The two Koreas met on Monday to discuss North Korea sending artists to the Olympics after Pyongyang said it would send athletes, cheerleaders, performers and others to the Games during its first formal dialogue with the South in more than two years.

"At the moment, I think North Korea's orchestra is most likely to come and I heard the North has proposed (to send) their orchestra," the governor said.

"That would be about 140 people, and we may have to change the concert hall... Things are progressing faster and larger than we thought," he said, without elaborating on the venue.

Choi met North Korean sports officials last month in China on the sidelines of a youth soccer tournament and proposed the North's delegation travel to South Korea via a cruise, sparking concerns such move would violate the U.N. Security Council resolutions. "I think there would be no problem," he said. "Our interpretation is that matters related to Olympics are not subject to sanctions."

(Source: Reuters)

French referee provisionally suspended for kicking out at player



Referee Tony Chapron has been provisionally suspended after he appeared to kick out at Nantes player Diego Carlos in Sunday's French Ligue 1 game against Paris St Germain.

During stoppage-time, Chapron bumped into Carlos and fell over with TV footage showing him swinging his leg towards the running defender's shins.

"The technical direction of refereeing and the federal commission of refereeing have decided on the withdrawal of Tony Chapron, who had been appointed for Wednesday's Ligue 1 game between Angers and Troyes, until further notice," the French federation said in a statement on Monday.

Chapron will also be summoned before the league's disciplinary committee. A few seconds after the incident, Chapron gave Carlos a yellow card, which resulted in the player being sent off as he had also been booked in the first half.

"I know that refereeing is tough, but the referee sometimes need to put himself into question," Nantes forward Valentin Rongier said.

"If we do something like this, we get a 10-game suspension." Nantes president Waldemar Kita told L'Equipe: "It's a joke. I got 20 SMS from all over the world telling me that this referee is a joke. What do you want me to tell you? If I talk too much, I'll be summoned by an ethics committee."

(Source: Mirror)

Ryan Giggs named Wales manager on four-year contract

Ryan Giggs has been unveiled as the new Wales boss on a four-year deal that takes in Euro 2020 and the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Giggs, who earned 64 caps for Wales during his playing career between 1991 and 2007, succeeds Chris Coleman as the Wales manager. Coleman left the role to take charge of Sunderland following the failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

The role is Giggs' first role in management after three years as assistant manager at Manchester United -- including four matches in caretaker charge after David Moyes's sacking towards the end of the 2014 season.

Craig Bellamy, Osian Roberts and Mark Bowen were also interviewed for the role by the FAW last week, but Giggs was given the job, with the terms of his deal to take over tied up over the weekend. In a statement, Giggs said: "I am so proud to have been given the honour of managing the national team.

"The challenges that we have ahead of us with the Nations League and qualification for UEFA Euro 2020 excite me a great deal. "I can't wait to start working with the players as we prepare for those crucial games later in the year."

FAW chief executive Jonathan Ford added: "With his vast amount of experience having played, coached and managed the biggest club in the world, we are confident of a successful future for our national team."

Giggs' first match in charge of the national side is against China when Wales take on the hosts of the China Cup in the semifinals of the tournament -- with a second game against either Uruguay or Czech Republic four days later.

(Source: ESPN)

Cristiano Ronaldo 'feels cheated by Real Madrid and wants to rejoin Man United'

Cristiano Ronaldo 'feels cheated' by Real Madrid and wants to rejoin Manchester United, according to reports in Spain.

AS report that the Portuguese superstar feels that Real president Florentino Perez hasn't kept promises about his long-term future at the Santiago Bernabeu and he has now run out of patience.

They say Ronaldo has already told a number of his team-mates that he wants to return to Old Trafford, where he played with distinction between 2003 and 2009.

After scoring twice in Real's 4-1 Champions League final win over Juventus back in May, Perez promised Ronaldo a lucrative upgrade to his contract.

But no action has been taken and, despite Ronaldo's public insistence that he wants to stay in Madrid, he is privately keen to get back to the Premier League.

The 32-year-old has struggled with fluctuating form this season, managing just four goals in La Liga but scoring nine in six Champions League outings.

He nonetheless won the Ballon d'Or award for the world's best player off the back of Real's La Liga and Champions League successes in 2017.

At United, Ronaldo won three Premier League titles, the FA Cup, two League Cups and the Champions League, scoring 118 goals in 292 matches before departing for a world-record fee of £80million.

His achievements in Spain have been even more phenomenal, with 422 goals in 418 matches for Real.

This has translated into two league titles, two Spanish cups and the Champions League crown in 2014, 2016 and 2017.

He has also won three of the last four Ballon d'Or awards, bringing him level with Lionel Messi of Barcelona on five wins each.

Although Ronaldo earns in the region of



£365,000 per week at Real, he trails the likes of Messi at Barcelona and Neymar at Paris Saint-Germain by some distance.

Manchester United would rather sign two Real Madrid players than Cristiano Ronaldo, according to reports.

Manchester United are again being linked with Ronaldo, who is supposedly keen to quit

Real Madrid for Old Trafford.

The 32-year-old is unhappy at the Bernabeu because he feels club president Florentino Perez has 'betrayed' him over a new contract.

Typically, United are mentioned as his preferred destination despite Cristiano Ronaldo turning down the chance to return in

both 2013 and 2015 respectively.

And Spanish outlet Don Balon has confirmed that Jose Mourinho is not interested in bringing the Portugal international back.

Instead, Mourinho would rather sign his two Real team-mates Marco Asensio and Raphael Varane.

(Staff & Agency)

Williams and Stephens main casualties from America's 'Blue Monday'



Fifteen Americans went into battle here today on the first day of the Australian Open but only three of them progressed to the second round. On one of the worst days for American tennis in recent years at a Grand Slam tournament, Venus Williams, Sloane Stephens, Coco Vandeweghe, Jack Sock and John Isner were among the 12 who fell at the first hurdle.

The tone for the day was set by the first match in Margaret Court Arena, which is the second show court at Melbourne Park. Stephens, who won her first Grand Slam title at the US Open four months ago, was beaten 2-6, 7-6, 6-2 by China's Zhang Shuai, despite having served for the match in the second set.

Zhang, who as the world No 34 is the highest-ranked player in the women's field not to be seeded, beat Simona Halep here two years ago and eventually lost to Johanna Konta in the quarter-finals.

Stephens has lost all eight matches she has played since beating Madison Keys in the final at Flushing Meadows last year. "Tennis is definitely a roller coaster," Stephens said. "But I have learned to just not panic. It will be OK."

(Source: Independent)

Remarkably, three of the four women's semi-finalists from New York went out on the first day here. Williams was beaten 6-3, 7-5 by Switzerland's Belinda Bencic, while Vandeweghe lost a bad-tempered contest against Hungary's Tímea Babos 7-6, 6-2.

Williams had won all four of her previous meetings with 20-year-old Bencic, but the world No 5 could not match her opponent's consistent ball-striking.

"I don't think I played a bad match," Williams said afterwards. "She just played above and beyond. I just have to give her credit for that."

This was Williams' 18th Australian Open, the 37-year-old American having made her debut in 1998, when Bencic was just 10 months old. Williams reached the final here last year before losing to her sister Serena and was also runner-up at Wimbledon later in the summer.

"I think I had a little bit too much respect, played a little bit careful and safe," Bencic said of her previous meetings with Williams. "This time I really tried to come out and hit it big."

(Source: Independent)

Nadal happy with rollicking start at Melbourne Park



A ruthless Rafa Nadal preserved his creaky knees for tougher tests down the road by routing Dominican journeyman Victor Estrella Burgos 6-1 6-1 6-1 to sail into the second round of the Australian Open on Monday.

Playing his first competitive match since pulling out of the ATP Tour Finals with knee trouble in November, the world number one showed no signs of early season rust as he tore through the evening match at Rod Laver Arena in one hour and 34 minutes.

"Happy for the start, of course," Nadal, who lost last year's final in a five-set classic to Roger Federer, told reporters.

"It's a positive start with a good result. If I do months without playing an official match, it's always a little bit more difficult."

"But I started with positive feelings. That's the most important thing for me now. Of course, there are things to improve."

"But the thing that I need to improve, the matches will give me those things, no? Victories are the most important thing now."

Victory never appeared in doubt against 37-year-old Estrella Burgos who was thrilled just to win three games against the ener-

getic Spaniard.

Nadal mowed through the first set in 23 minutes and appeared determined to keep the points short as he charged forward to win 21 of 24 points at the net.

The 31-year-old raised three match points with a huge serve and completed the rout with another that Estrella Burgos could only send long in return.

The 2009 champion's bid for a second Australian Open title and 17th grand slam win will continue with a step up in class against 52nd-ranked Argentine Leonardo Mayer, who gave him a four-set test in the U.S. Open second round on the way to winning the trophy.

Having warmly embraced Estrella Burgos after sealing the one-sided win, Nadal said he could not afford to underestimate any opponent.

"I believe that the doubts are good because when you have doubts, it's because you aren't too arrogant, because you have respect for your opponent, because you have respect for the game and because you don't consider yourself unbelievably good," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

Louis van Gaal reveals he turned down Belgium to keep Man United payoff



Gaal was dismissed.

It followed months of speculation the Portuguese coach could take the reins and Van Gaal, 66, did not like the way he was treated by the club.

"The way Manchester United have treated me was terrible," he said. They have been mean and low. In contrast, the way president [Joep Luus] Nunez of Barcelona treated

me was fantastic. That proves that the world of football is not full of false people. There are also straight and warm people among those people."

Van Gaal was sacked after winning the FA Cup in his final game in charge, but fourth- and fifth-place finishes in the Premier League sealed his fate.

There were also questions about his style of play, and Van Gaal has accused former United players of a campaign of criticism that he says eventually reached the dressing room.

Paul Scholes was one ex-United star to voice his unhappiness, at one point describing the the Dutchman's football as "shambolic."

"The former players of United started to have a go, saying that I was giving the fans boring football," Van Gaal said. "That struck me. It was directed, organized. After a while, I started to think I'm losing my authority this way towards the players. So I had to make concessions in my approach of the players."

"That was tough, because I've always had my own way of coaching."

(Source: ESPN)

Alexander Nouri a candidate for Tractor Sazi job

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian-German coach Alexander Nouri is a nominee to replace Yayha Golmohammadi in Iranian top-flight team Tractor Sazi.

It seems Tractor Sazi are now seriously considering parting company with Golmohammadi as soon as possible.

Tractor Sazi will represent Iran in the 2018 AFC Champions League and are aiming to progress to the knockout stages for the first time.

The Tabriz-based team are 11th in Iran Professional League, 23 points behind Persepolis at the top of the table.

They have reportedly negotiated with former Galatasaray coach Mustafa Denizli and the Turkish coach has confirmed he is interested in coaching the Iranian team.

Now, a strong contender comes to the stage.

Alexander Nouri parted company with Werder Bremen in late October after failing to win any of their opening 10 Bundesliga matches.

He was appointed as the head coach of Werder Bremen in September 2016. Under the helm of Nouri, Bremen escaped the relegation battle and went in contention for European football.

He played professionally for 14 years with Werder Bremen, Seattle Sounders Uerdingen 05, VfL Osnabrück, Holstein Kiel and VfB Oldenburg.



Salehi Amiri elected unopposed as president of Iran's NOC

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Reza Salehi Amiri has been elected unopposed as the 11th President of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In the elections which was attended by Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Masoud Soltanifar in Tehran's Olympic Academy on Monday, Salehi Amiri takes over from Kioomars Hashemi.

He was the only candidate running for the post.

Tahereh Taherian and Fazlollah Bagherzadeh were appointed as Salehi Amiri's deputies, replacing Robab Shahrian and Alireza Dabir.

Following two rounds of votes, Shahrokh Shahnaz was re-elected as the NOC's Secretary General.

Salehi Amiri is an Iranian politician, academic and the former Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance and President of National Library of Iran. He was previously served as acting Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports from August to October 2013.

Iran has competed at every summer Olympic Games since London 1948, except for the Moscow 1980 and Los Angeles 1984 Games which it boycotted.

The country has been traditionally strong in the sports of weightlifting and wrestling.

Arsenal keen to add midfielder Malcom despite Bordeaux's reluctance to sell

Bordeaux are determined to fend off bids from Arsenal for their Brazilian starlet Malcom with the French club standing firm on their policy of not selling any players this January.

Arsene Wenger said on Sunday "there is nothing concrete" regarding Arsenal's interest in Malcom, who has been tipped for a €50 million move to the Premier League side should Alexis Sanchez -- as expected -- leave the Emirates Stadium during the winter transfer window.

Bordeaux, however, are ready to reject any move for their top scorer, who has seven league goals this season.

"Malcom won't leave," Nicolas de Tavernost, head of M6, the TV channel that owns the Ligue 1 outfit, told L'Equipe on Sunday.



His comments echo those recently made by Stephane Martin, the Bordeaux president, who told L'Equipe that they "are not talking to anyone" and had laid down a "no departures" policy for the current transfer window.

Despite Bordeaux curbing speculation, Malcom's agent appeared to suggest his client would in fact be leaving for north London.

In an Instagram post that showed him with his arm around the Bordeaux forward at Saturday's game at Troyes, Luis Fernando Menezes Garcia "liked" one of the comments received from a follower that stated: "Arsenal player? Like if he is."

Malcom has scored 15 league goals in 68 games since joining Bordeaux from Corinthians in January 2016.

(Source: ESPN)

Paralympic footballer claims running 25 MILES a week helps him control his Parkinson

A semi-professional footballer claims running 25 miles a week helps him control his Parkinson's disease - sparked after an accidental head injury during a game.

Matt Dimbylow, now 47, from Cheshire, sustained a whiplash-type injury after he and another player knocked heads during a game in 2003.

He began to experience strange symptoms like tiredness, muscle aches and spasms almost immediately after.

Doctors were baffled and assumed it was Lyme disease because he lives so close to a forest full of tick-ridden deer - but tests proved nothing.

It wasn't until 2007, when he was 36, that Mr Dimbylow was told he had a variant of Parkinson's called extrapyramidal syndrome.

His medication for the degenerative disease led to him suffering from side effects, including mood swings and confusion.

But now he is in 'control' of his condition and doesn't suffer any of the symptoms after he began running 18 months ago.

Mr Dimbylow, who has since represented Great Britain twice at the Paralympics, was playing semi-pro at the time of his injury.

He is speaking out to raise awareness of Parkinson's at a time when former England footballer Alan Shearer has turned the focus on head injuries in sport.

Speaking about his ordeal for the first time, the father-of-two said: 'No one expected it [the diagnosis], because I was so young.

'But, by the time of the diagnosis, I knew it was something to do with my brain.

'It was really difficult. I was a dad to two girls - Lauren, now 16, and Ella, now 14 and I was still very young.

'But continuing to exercise has kept me strong and now my intensive regime has meant I have been able to avoid the side effects and I feel like I am in control of the condition.'



His teacher wife Emma, 47, admits she had always thought of Parkinson's as an old person's condition.

She added: 'I think when we got the diagnosis, it didn't sink in straight away. I had always thought of Parkinson's as an older person's disease.

'We were upset at the time, but we had two young children and life had to go on. We had to throw ourselves back into that.'

Mr Dimbylow was started on medication almost immediately, to try to control his symptoms and prevent further degeneration.

He said: 'Initially, the medication worked really well for me and I was on quite a low dose.

'But we found out that the longer I was on it, the more it started to disagree with me and I was having to take stronger and stronger doses.'

In 2008, Mr Dimbylow - desperate to get back to the game he loved - became involved in Paralympic sport.

He was honored to represent the Great Britain at the 2008 and 2012 Paralympics, as part of the seven-a-side team for athletes with acquired brain trauma.

Mr Dimbylow said: 'I quickly learnt how beneficial keeping up exercise was. It helped my body stay fit and 10 years on, doctors were amazed at how well I was doing.

'I had been told that within the first decade, my quality of life would be severely affected, but I am doing so much better than anyone expected.

'I started to discuss with my consultant how I could continue to use exercise to reduce my medication but I knew I needed to do it in a controlled way.'

Then, 18 months ago, Mr Dimbylow suggested to his consultant that an intensive exercise regime could be used as an alternative to his medication for Parkinson's.

The disease, which is incurable, affects 145,000 people in the UK and more than one million adults in the US.

He explained: 'I suffered from a short temper and struggled to concentrate, because of the medication.

'I felt quite guilty about my moods. I knew they were caused by the medication, but it was hard.

'If I got something in my head, I had to go and do it right then, no matter what I was doing. That was really hard to live with.'

Mr Dimbylow now runs at least 25 miles a week, spread over at least four days, and has noticed a massive change.

He said: 'Physically, not taking the medication has had a bit of an effect.

'I can't run quite as fast, or as far, and I have to time things, so I do them when I'm feeling well enough. The biggest benefit is the change in the cognitive side of things.'

(Source: Daily Mail)

Iran edge past Belarus in friendly

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The Iranian national futsal team edged past Belarus 2-1 in a friendly match on Monday.

Mohammad Nazemalsharieh's team had defeated the European team 5-0 on Sunday.

Ahmad Esmailpour and Asghar Hassanzadeh scored for Iran in the match held at the Handball Federation Hall in Tehran.

Team Melli are preparing for The 2018 AFC Futsal Championship which will take place in Taiwan (referred to as Chinese Taipei by the AFC) between 1 and 11 February 2018.

Iran are in Group C along with Iraq, China, and Myanmar.

The 2018 AFC Futsal Championship will be the 15th edition of the AFC Futsal Championship, the biennial international futsal championship organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for the men's national teams of Asia.

A total of 16 teams are divided into four groups of four teams with the top two in each section will advance to the knockout phase. Iran claimed the title of the last edition in 2016, where they defeated the host, Uzbekistan, 1-2 in the final match.



Saman Ghoddos to be sold in summer: Official

Ostersunds chairman Daniel Kindberg has told the Swedish media Saman Ghoddos will be sold, but only in the summer.

The forward was linked with a move to Queens Park Rangers in the last window, after they table a bid for the Iran international.

Speaking to Fotboll Direkt, Kindberg was asked if Ghoddos and Ken Sema are likely to leave OFK in this transfer window: "No, and I'll explain why. They do not want January moves. Both want to be sold and will be sold in a summer window."

Ghoddos was linked with a move to QPR in the last window after the Championship side tabled a bid for the player, which was rejected by the Swedish side.

At the time, the OFK hierarchy said if the right bid came in for the forward they would have considered selling him, but QPR didn't come back in with an improved offer.

However, with the Swedish side set to face Arsenal in the next stage of the Europa League it seems Ghoddos will remain at the club until the end of the season, meaning QPR would have to wait until the summer.

(Source: Sports Witness)

Iran clinches five medals in Armenian Open Ski Championships

Press TV — Iranian skiers have exhibited fine performances at the Armenian Open Ski Championships, and collected five medals, including two silver ones.

On the third day of the international tournament in the northwestern Armenian city of Ashotsk, Iranian skier Samaneh Beirami Baher got a silver medal at the end of women's cross-country skiing races.

The achievement came a day after Seyyed Sattar Seid participated in the 10-kilometer race for men, and finished in the third place overall to pocket the bronze medal.

Beirami Baher also received a bronze medal in the women's 5-kilometer race.

Seid had bagged a silver medal in the men's 10-kilometer race, and Beirami Baher had got a bronze in the women's 5-kilometer event on Friday.

The Armenian Open Ski Championships opened on January 12, 2018, and has brought together dozens of skiers from Armenia, Chile, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mexico and Tonga.

Esteghlal target Bekamenga prefers to stay at Chinese Super League

TASNIM — Christian Bekamenga prefers a move to a Chinese team not Iran's Esteghlal.

Bekamenga is a Cameroonian international footballer who last played as a central striker for Liaoning Whowin.

He is a striker, renowned for his heading prowess. His swift and speedy skills are an advantage.

Bekamenga was expected to travel to Iran to negotiate with Esteghlal but he has changed his mind and wants to join a team in the Chinese Super League.

Esteghlal has already linked with Ostersunds Nigerian footballer Salisu Abdullahi "Alhaji" Gero.

Zanjan to host Iran Fajr International Challenge

IRNA — The Badminton Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (BFIRI) says the northwestern Iranian city of Zanjan is going to host the next edition of Iran Fajr International Challenge.

The BFIRI announced in a statement on Saturday that the 27th edition of the tournament will start in the city, located 298 kilometers (185 miles) northwest of the capital Tehran, on February 5, and will finish on February 8, 2018.

The Iranian federation added that male and female badminton players from Australia, Azerbaijan, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mexico, Myanmar, Portugal, Syria, Turkey and Vietnam will take part in the upcoming event.

The athlete winning the title will be awarded \$25,000.

Badminton Asia's coach and Development Officer Muhammad Andy Ardiansyah will attend the opening ceremony.

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Austrian-Iranian Symphonic Orchestra performs at Vahdat Hall

TEHRAN — The Austrian-Iranian Symphonic Orchestra (AISO) under the baton of Maziar Yunesi gave a concert at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on Sunday.



The Austrian-Iranian Symphonic Orchestra performs at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on January 14, 2018. (Mehr/Shahab Qayyumi)

The AIOS performed some famous pieces including Viola Concerto by Georg Philipp Telemann, Concertino for Clarinet by Giuseppe Tartini and Flute Concerto by Antonio Vivaldi. The performance was organized as part of a program for the 33rd Fajr International Music Festival. All of last night’s performances at Fajr began with a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the Sanchi oil tanker accident. The AISO was established in 2006 at the Austrian Cultural Forum in Tehran. The members are mostly young Iranian musicians and its artistic director is Christian Schulz of the Vienna Mozart Academy. The orchestra performed concerts at Vahdat Hall in April 2017, and Tehran’s Rudaki Hall in July 2016.

Male models say top fashion photographers harassed them

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Male models and assistants who worked with high-powered fashion photographers Bruce Weber and Mario Testino say they were subjected by them to harassment, The New York Times reported on Saturday.

In patterns that went on for years, the young men, including some who were given anonymity, said the photographers put them in uncomfortable situations that they felt pressured to accept out of fear of upending their careers, The Times said. Lawyers for both photographers denied the allegations and said that the pair was surprised and dismayed by them. Neither Weber, Testino nor their accusers could immediately be reached for further comment.

“We never had anything, but a lot of things happened,” the Times quoted model Robyn Sinclair as saying of Weber.



Bruce Weber, winner of the Isabella Blow Award for Fashion Creator poses for photographers at the Fashion Awards 2016 in London, Britain December 5, 2016. (Reuters/Neil Hall)

Sinclair was among 15 current and former male models whom the newspaper said described harassment by Weber, 71, whose fashion clients have included Calvin Klein and Abercrombie & Fitch. Through his lawyers, Weber denied the accusations in a statement to The Times, saying: “I’m completely shocked and saddened by the outrageous claims being made against me, which I absolutely deny.”

Testino’s law firm, Lavelly & Singer, challenged the credibility of his accusers and said it had spoken to former employees of Testino who said they were shocked by the allegations and could not confirm any of them, The Times said. Allegations against Testino, 63, who has worked for fashion brands including Michael Kors, Burberry and Dolce & Gabbana, were made by 13 male assistants and models in accounts going back to the mid-1990s, the newspaper said.

Multiple accusations of misconduct against male actors, filmmakers and agents have roiled Hollywood since October 2017. The scandal has also engulfed men in U.S. politics, business and the workplace, inspiring a widespread #MeToo social movement by victims of harassment or abuse.

Following The Times’ report, Conde Nast artistic director Anna Wintour said the magazine company had suspended any future work with the two photographers, whom she described as personal friends. “I believe strongly in the value of remorse and forgiveness, but I take the allegations very seriously, and we at Conde Nast have decided to put our working relationship with both photographers on hold for the foreseeable future,” Wintour, who is also editor in chief of Vogue magazine, said in a statement.

Intl. sports film festival opens in Tehran

TEHRAN — Dozens of sports films are competing in the 11th Tehran International FICTS Festival that opened at Felestin Cinema on Monday. A lineup of feature-length, short and documentary films from around the world will go on screen during the 4-day event.

“One Day One Child” by Sinan Sertel from Turkey, “Ola Bola” by Chiu Keng Guan from Malaysia, “Requited” by Nerissa Picadizo from the Philippines and “Sultan” by Ali Abbas Zafar from India are among the films. Also included are Iranian films “Spare” by Borzu Niknejad, “Captain Amir” by Saeid Chari, “I Am Iranian” by Seyyed Ahmad Najafi and “The Good Sense of Life” by Farzaneh Amini.

The documentary films also include “Sachin: A Billion Dreams” by James Erskine from the UK, “17” by Widad Shafakoj from Jordan, “The Red Green” by Ersin Kana and “Variations of Attack from the Third Zone” by Sedat Sahin from Turkey.

Documentaries by Iranian filmmakers, including “Advantage” by Mohammad Kart, “Zero to Platform” by Sahar Mosayyebi, “Super Marathon” by Saeid Keshavarz, “Mr. Special” by Mehdi Bargenil and “Farshad, the Top Scorer” by Jafar Sadeqi, have also been selected for the festival.

In addition, a collection of sports photos by photographers from around the world have been showcased in the exhibit, which opened on the sidelines of the festival.

Seventy works by 54 photographers have been put on view at Felestin Cinema.

Susan Buckland and Tim Downton from England, Baris Barlas from Turkey, Andrej Tarfila from Slovenia, Javier Pedro Ferraz from Spain, Sudipto Das from India and Thiago Corazza from Brazil are among those whose works are on display at the exhibition.

The exhibition will also hang works by Iranian photographers, including Afshin Azari, Amin Dehqan, Hojjatollah Atai, Javad Hassanpur, Hamed Nazari and Shahrzad Esmaili.

Ali Qalamsiah, Ali Samei, Abolfazl Amanollah and Farshad Abbas, all from Iran, along with a French photographer have selected the photos for the exhibition. This group will also judge the works to select winners.

Lian, Chinese drummers to reunite for TV program



Lian performs a concert with the China Drum House at Tehran’s Niavaran Cultural Center on January 12, 2018. (Mehr/Mohammad Moheimani)

TEHRAN — The Iranian band Lian and musicians from the China Drum House will be collaborating on a television program for six Chinese channels in the near future. Over 600 million people will watch the program on the channels, the Persian service of Tasnim reported on Monday, quoting China Drum House publicist Hossein Khalifi.

Last Friday, Lian led by its neyanban virtuoso Mohsen Sharifian performed a concert with musicians from the China Drum House at Tehran’s Niavaran Cultural Center.

The performance was organized as a part of a program for the 33rd Fajr International Music Festival, which is currently underway in Tehran. It will be running until January 20.

Lian has performed numerous concerts around the world, featuring the rhythmic Bushehri music of southern Iran.

Trenton festival to screen movies from Iran

TEHRAN — The Trenton Film Festival that is scheduled to be organized in the United States from March 22 to 25 will screen seven films by Iranian directors.

“Kupal” by Kazem Mollai will be screened in the official competition of the event. It is about Ahmed Kupal, a hunter and taxidermist who finds himself faced with an unexpected challenge on the eve of Noruz, the Iranian New Year.

“Lunch Time” by Alireza Qasemi about a 16-year-old girl who is forced to deal with the harsh bureaucracy and the responsibility of identifying the body of her mother will be competing in the short film category.

This section will also screen director Hossein Rabiei’s “The Guy Came on Horseback”. The story of the film is set in an Iranian village where a father must figure out what to do

at 3,090 sites is fourth and Fox’s fourth weekend of “The Greatest Showman” with \$14.5 million at 2,938 screens takes fifth place at the holiday box office. Warner Bros.’ launch of family comedy “Paddington 2” was battling for sixth place with Universal’s second weekend of “Insidious: The Last Chapter” with about \$14.1 million each. Sony’s launch of action-thriller “Proud Mary” came in eighth with \$12 million at 2,125 sites followed by Universal’s fourth weekend of “Pitch Perfect” with \$6.7 million at 2,505 sites and Focus Features’ eighth weekend of “Darkest Hour” with \$5.7 million at 1,693 venues.

LOS ANGELES (Variety) — Sony’s “Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle” is dominating the North American box office to easily win the four-day Martin Luther King Jr. weekend with about \$33.4 million at 3,849 sites, estimates showed Sunday. Fox’s “The Post” is leading the rest of the pack handily and topped forecasts with \$22.2 million at 2,819 locations for Friday-Monday after expanding from 36 sites. The opening of Lionsgate’s Liam Neeson’s thriller “The Commuter” also topped expectations in third place with \$16 million at 2,892 venues. The fifth weekend of Disney-Lucasfilm’s “Star Wars: The Last Jedi” with \$14.7 million

Works by Iranian art elites on display at Tehran gallery



Art enthusiasts visit an exhibition of works by a group of Iranian art elites at Tehran’s Farda Gallery on January 12, 2018.

TEHRAN — Tehran’s Farda Gallery is showcasing a collection of works by a large number of Iranian art elites in an exhibition, which opened last Friday. The collection contains 28 paintings and a sculpture from the masters who have taught at the Tehran University of Art, curator Majid Ahmadi told the Persian service of MNA on Monday.

Works by Mohammad Ehsai, Hani-bal Alkhas, Bahman Borujeni, Faramarz

Pilaram, Hushang Seyhun, Nasrollah Moslemian, Manuchehr Motabar and a dozen other artists have been selected for the exhibition entitled “The Sunshine”. Several works are being showcased at the exhibition for the first time, Ahmadi said.

The exhibit also is displaying Alkhas’s three paintings inspired by the Vietnam War.

The exhibition will run until January 18 at the gallery located at 2 Araabi Alley, Hosseini St., off Karim Khan Ave.

when he realizes his disabled son has fallen in love with their neighbor’s daughter.

“Pale Mirrors” by Salem Salavati will be screened in this category. In the short movie, Shawbo finds herself with only 24 hours to become pregnant. Grasping at her last opportunity to be a mother, she visits the city prison.

Directed by Sadeq Jafari, “Weavers of Imagination”, a documentary about a number of visually impaired men and women in Iran who weave intricately patterned carpets by using Braille, has been selected for the festival.

The animated films “Light Sight” by Seyyed Moslem Tabatabai and “Blows with the Wind” by Hajir Asadi will also compete in the festival.

Last year, “Owsia” (“Darkened Water”) by Alireza Dehqan was picked as best short documentary at the Trenton Film Festival.



A scene from “Lunch Time” by Alireza Qasemi

“Jumanji” dominates MLK weekend, “The Post” leads newcomers

Overall business was solid rather than spectacular with a four-day total in the \$190 million range, according to comScore. “Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle”, which will finish the holiday with nearly \$290 million in 29 days, now ranks as the eighth highest grosser released in 2017. “Jumanji” has in essence hit the reset button and is now behaving more like a film in its second weekend rather than its fourth,” said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst with comScore. “In the wake of a startling late run ascension to the number one spot, ‘Jumanji’ continues to energize the early 2018 box office marketplace while this weekend taking on a

host of wide release newcomers.” Disney noted Sunday that “Star Wars: The Last Jedi” had reached a worldwide total of \$1.264 billion, topping Disney’s “Beauty and the Beast” (\$1.263 billion) and Universal’s “The Fate of the Furious” (\$1.236 billion) to become the top global release of 2017 and the tenth-highest global release of all time. “Jumanji”, starring Dwayne Johnson and Kevin Hart, provided the most substantive challenge to “The Last Jedi” after opening Dec. 20. It’s the most successful title for Sony since “Spider-Man: Homecoming”, which pulled in \$337 million domestically during the summer.