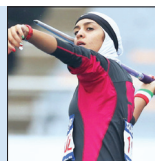




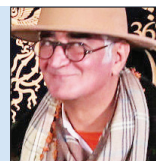
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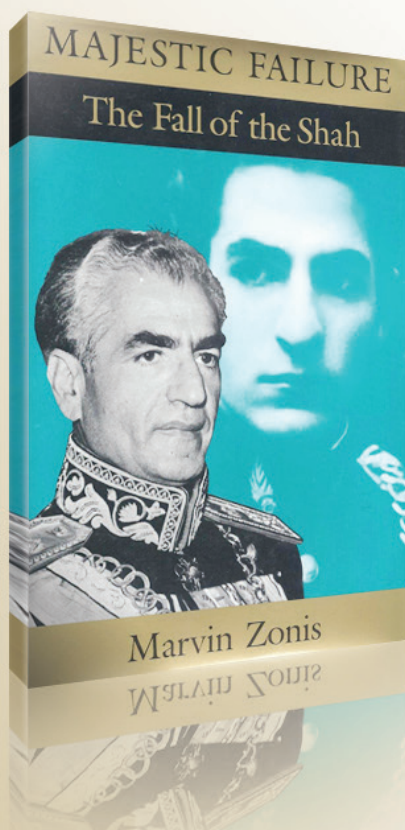
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Why the Shah fell



© Tehran Times/ Photo Illustration by Bahman Vakhshour

Qatar: Iran is our only lifeline to the world

Qatar’s defense minister has defended Do-ha’s ties with Iran, citing strategic concerns. “Iran is the only airspace we have,” Mohammad al-Attiyah said in an interview with the Washington Post published on Thursday.

Following is the summary of the defense minister’s interview with the Washington Post:

■ Didn’t the recent dispute between

Qatar, on one side, and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, on the other, begin when the UAE reportedly hacked into your country’s computers and put out a false report that your emir had made a pro-Iran statement?

A: The beginning was an ambush. The only thing is, I don’t think they calculated right. They thought they could strike hard and bend the Qatari people. **→2**

Iran to launch three satellites

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Information and Communications Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said on Saturday that Iran will launch three satellites into orbit.

“Three satellites are at the final stage of designing and construction and one of them which belongs to Sharif University of Technology is at the final stage of coordination to be launched,” he said in a ceremony held to mark National Day of Space Technology.

The minister said the satellites will be launched for the purpose of research.

Omid was Iran’s first domestically made satellite which is a data-processing satellite for research and telecommunications and was successfully launched on February 2, 2009. The launch was verified by NASA the following day as a success.

Iran marks the anniversary of launching Omid satellite as National Day of Space Technology.

In January 2013, Iran sent a monkey to an altitude of about 120km (75 miles) in a Pishgam (Pioneer) rocket for a sub-orbital flight before returning intact to Earth.

‘Reconstruction of heritage museums atop agenda’

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN — Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization has assigned a high priority to reconstruct its affiliated museums that are deemed as timeworn or vulnerable to massive quakes.

“Iran is a highly-earthquake-prone country so that we are seeking to found

such museums, which can withstand natural and other threats,” CHHTO Deputy Director Mohammad-Hassan Talebian said in an interview with the Tehran Times.

Currently, several “safe” heritage museums have been constructed and are operational across the country such as the ones in Khorasan Razavi and Golestan provinces, he said. **→10**

The unbounded future of autistic children

By Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

TEHRAN — In an unforgettable joyful moment, the newborn is handed to her mother at the hospital. The baby now means a world to her parents. Happy, they get back home, starting the tough challenge of raising the baby with all its nursing, burping and changing procedures. Everything seems normal till the baby’s first birthday.

Gradually, parents notice some peculiarities in the way their beloved child behaves which are not seen in her peers. The baby doesn’t make eye contact or respond to her name, she doesn’t point or wave goodbye and even doesn’t make noises to get the attention of others.

Deeply concerned, the parents visit the pediatrician hoping to wipe out their negative thoughts, however, they hear the dismal voice of the doctor announcing her diagnosis as “autism”.

■ **What is autism?**

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder

(ASD), refers to a wide range of conditions characterized by challenges with speech and nonverbal communication, repetitive behaviors and social skills. ASD is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is a “spectrum condition” that affects individuals differently and to varying degrees.

Lack of interest in peer relationships, lack of or delay in spoken language, lack of spontaneous or make-believe play and persistent fixation on parts of objects are among other signs of this disorder.

Autism spectrum is so wide that it can only be diagnosed by specialists, not parents. Although challenging and tough, early intervention can make a huge difference in the future of autistic kids.

■ **The case of three Iranian autistic adults**

Farid, Amin and Touraj are three autistic adults who, thanks to early treatment in their childhood, are now living a normal life.

24-year-old Farid is attending college and working at the Autism Society of Iran, a nongovernmental organization founded in 2013, as an IT expert. He also teaches how to use computer to autistic children in Iran.

He told Fars news agency that the full attention his parents devoted to him is one of the main reasons behind his success and recommends mothers of autistic children treat them patiently while they exhibit strange and aggressive behaviors.

Amin, another autistic adult, is now 23 years old and has studied software engineering. He is also a member of the Autism Society of Iran, and is working on developing the database of the center.

“Early diagnosis is a key and if my parents haven’t had provided the required instructions, I would have faced more serious problems now,” he said appreciating his parents’ efforts which led to his “normal life”. **→12**

Mattis: No evidence of sarin gas used in Syria

The United States Defense Secretary Jim Mattis says the United States has no evidence to confirm reports that the Syrian government used the chemical nerve agent of sarin against its civilians.

Mattis made the announcement on Friday, saying that Washington was “concerned” about the use of sarin in Syria but could not confirm reports from NGOs (Non-governmental organization) and militant groups regarding the issue.

“We are even more concerned about the possibility of sarin use... I don’t have the evidence, what I am saying is, that other groups on the ground ... have said that sarin has been used, so we are looking for evidence,” the Pentagon chief said.

Sarin is a colorless and tasteless toxin that can cause respiratory failure leading to death.

Accusing the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad of using chemical weapons against civilians, the U.S. launched several dozen Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian air base last April after a sarin gas attack on Khan Shaykhun in Idlib Province claimed at least 80 lives.

“We are on the record and you all have seen how we reacted to that, so they would be ill-advised to go back to violating the chemical (weapons) convention,” Mattis added.

Mattis made the remarks after senior U.S. officials claimed President Donald Trump

was set to launch a military action if necessary against the Syrian government which they say is possibly developing new types of chemical weapons.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that Syrian armed forces “evolved” their chemical weapons and made continued occasional use of them in smaller amounts since last April.

This is while the Syrian government has fiercely denied using or even possessing chemical weapons since the country’s compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention was certified by international observers in 2013.

(Source: Daily Star)



PERSPECTIVE

Javad Heirannia
political analyst

Bin Salman’s reforms in Saudi Arabia: Threats and chances

Samuel Huntington believes that phenomenon of revolution is related to the characteristics of new communities and product of the fast process of social – economic renovation beside of non – development of the political institutions in order to attract and participation of the new forces. He says: “Revolution is an aspect of renovation. Revolution happens mostly in those communities who have experienced some kind of social and economic change and their derivations of renovation and political changes have been lagged. Fast expansion of political awareness and fast move of new entered forced into the political sphere is the ink of revolution.”

According to this assumption, unbalanced development is one of the main causes for revolution. Unbalance of economic and political development is one of instances for unbalanced development where we are witnessed for existence of economic development without political one.

Dictators of the Arab states recognize grant of essential rights and freedom of their citizens illegitimate. They believe that the Arab states need such strong authorities who are able to fulfill social and political stability of their states in post-colonialism era.

They see the social and political stability more important rather political freedom and rights which are prevalent in West while the new Arab generation are most globalized and ask for having relations with abroad thanks to means of mass communication and social media. There is no doubt that Saudi Arabia needs some reforms in various aspects and the future this kingdom will be faced to serious threats without these reforms. Saudis and US as their supporter knows this fact very well.

Fall of oil price during past three years and vast deficits of Saudi Arabia demonstrated that those states that are relied on oil incomes will not be able to assume it as constant income. **→7**



ARTICLE

By Mahnaz Abdi

Head of the Economy Desk
of the TehranTimes

Companies management should be revised in privatization

Downsizing the government has been an economic agenda of the countries with a centrally planned economy in the recent century.

A centrally planned economy is an economic system in which the government makes economic decisions rather than the interaction between consumers and businesses.

In Iran, implementation of privatization plan aimed at more productivity, investment making, job creation, promotion of trade balance, more competition in domestic economy, and reducing financial and management burden on the government has been under the spotlight over the past decade.

The law on implementation of the general policies of the Article 44 of Iran’s Constitution on privatizing state-owned companies was declared in 2006 in a bid to downsize the government and promote the private sector’s role in the national economy.

The government envisioned a large privatization program in the Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan (2010-2015), aiming to privatize about 20 percent of the state-owned firms each year. Under the present interpretation of the Article 44, some state-owned companies have been privatized to reduce their financial burden on the country’s budget and also increase their productivity.

Downsizing the government is on the agenda, but a number of factors has been hindering privatization trend in the country, among them government’s high interference in the management of the transferred companies is a challenging one.

In a press conference on Wednesday, Head of Iranian Privatization Organization (IPO) Mir Ali Pouri-Hosseini announced that President Hassan Rouhani has ordered to transfer the rest shares of those companies that the government’s interference in their management is more than its shares. **→4**



© Tehran Times/ Ramin Saffari

“At Damascus Time” screened in Mashhad

Director Ebrahim Hatamikia (R) attends a screening of his latest movie “At Damascus Time” during the 36th Fajr Film Festival at Mashhad’s Atlas Cineplex on February 2, 2018.

The thespians who staged a performance before the screening are also seen in the photo.

The festival, which is underway in Tehran and several other Iranian cities, will run until February 11.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Judiciary:
25 judges could
be suspended for
corruption

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Abbas Jafari-Dolatabadi, the Tehran prosecutor general, said on Saturday that 25 judges could face suspension for corruption as their cases of have been handed to the State Employees' Court.

Pointing to Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani's concerns about corrupt judges, he said decent judges should be rewarded and corrupt ones punished, Fars reported.

The recent stance of the Judiciary chief shows that paying attention to the judges' conduct is of great importance because they are the ones tasked to protect the rights of the people, the prosecutor added.



Amad News
Telegram
channel spies on
Iran: general

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Civil Defense Organization said on Saturday that the Western-based Telegram channel Seday-e Mardom (formerly known as Amad News) is conducting espionage operations against national security.

"Based on our information Seday-e Mardom is affiliated to the intelligence service of a [Western] country and its managers are agents of that intelligence service," Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali said, Fars reported.

"We look at the channel as a spy network; a paid webpage that receives money from foreign states and acts against the Iranian people and security," he added.



U.S. accusations
just a 'ridiculous
show': MP

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A senior Iranian lawmaker says accusations by the U.S. that Iran provides Yemen's Houthi fighters with ballistic missiles are just a "political and ridiculous show".

"The U.S. move to display the missiles and attribute them to Iran is a political and ridiculous show... which seeks two purposes," Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, told IRNA on Friday.

He said U.S. President Donald Trump aims to undermine Tehran's missile capabilities and prepare the ground for involvement in the issue which "is definitely a red line for the Islamic Republic of Iran."



Cause of tanker
incident to be
announced in
2 months

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Mehdi Boroumandi, deputy chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said on Saturday that the cause of the oil tanker incident will be announced within two months.

On January 6, Iranian-owned tanker Sanchi, with a full natural-gas condensate cargo of 136,000 tons (960,000 barrels), sailing from Iran to South Korea, collided with the Hong Kong-flagged cargo ship CF Crystal 160 nautical miles (300 km) off Shanghai. 32 sailors lost their lives in the incident.

According to Mehr news agency, Boroumandi said the Chinese government was cooperative during the incident.



Intelligence
forces seize
ammunition in
southeast Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian security forces have seized a huge amount of ammunition and arms in the southeastern province of Kerman, authorities said.

Sajjad Afsharmanesh, the general prosecutor of Qaleh Ganj county, has said the arms depot was uncovered in a house in the county, Trend reported on Friday, citing Mizan news agency.

Several AK and G-3 automatic rifles as well as RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) and two-way radios were among the seized ammunition, he added.

Also on January 25, intelligence forces seized two large consignments of explosives and ammunition in two different operations in the eastern and western frontiers.



Ex-consultant to
Iran's UN mission
gets three months
prison

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A former consultant to Iran's mission to the United Nations was sentenced to three months in prison on Friday for evading taxes by concealing his income and helping family and friends make money transfers that violated U.S. sanctions against Iran, Reuters reported.

Ahmad Shakhzadeh, an Iran-born U.S. citizen, was defiant as he addressed the judge before he was sentenced, saying prosecutors had targeted him in order to pressure him to act as an informant from within the Iran mission.

Speaking to reporters after the hearing, he called the prison sentence "very unfair."

EU says to protect its firms if U.S. quits JCPOA



The European Union has said it will support the legitimate rights of its companies if the U.S. walks away from the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"We would not speculate about hypothetical situations. The EU always seeks to protect the legitimate interests of its economic operators," European media EURACTIV quoted an EU spokesperson as saying on Friday.

The spokesperson was commenting on the EU's position toward U.S. President Donald Trump's anti-JCPOA measures.

Meanwhile, Luisa Santos, director for international relations at Business Europe, which represents EU-based enterprises was quoted as saying that "the business community backs the nuclear deal."

"If one of the partners decides to consider putting into question that agreement, therefore deciding on additional sanctions on Iran that do not take into account what the other partners are doing, that creates a problem for us," Santos said.

"The problem lies in the extraterritorial nature of the U.S. sanctions, under which companies that are in any way involved with the U.S. might be affected even if the EU

maintains the current situation," she was quoted as saying.

"It's a factor of risk that we have to take into account," she insisted.

Trump, who had said his administration would decertify the 2015 nuclear deal with

Iran, decided on Jan 12 to extend the sanctions waiver against Iran for a third time as a part of the landmark nuclear deal. He said this is the "last time" that he certified the JCPOA unless the amendments that he had mentioned earlier be included to the deal.

U.S. swimming against the current: Iranian diplomat

The Iranian ambassador to France has said the U.S., as party to the multilateral July 2015 nuclear deal, has changed its way and "swims against the current".

Fortunately, the other sides including France have been committed to the deal and declared there is no way to change the JCPOA. Abolqasem Delfi said in an interview with France 3, the second largest television French channel.

The nuclear deal has been the basis for fulfilling economic agreements, Delfi said.

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that he will withdraw



from the deal if changes are not made to it. But top Iranian officials have repeatedly said that the nuclear agreement is nonnegotiable.

Tuning to Tehran-Paris ties, Delfi said Iran and France enjoy peaceful and growing relations that are based on mutual respect.

Also referring to the January 2016 visit of the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to France, Delfi said the visit prepared the ground for bilateral cooperation in political, cultural and economic areas.

Ex-diplomat calls Haley 'show person'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mansour Moazami, Iran's former

ambassador to Brazil, has said that Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, is a "professional show person".

"Nikki Haley is a professional show person in the strictest sense who tries to perform show through telling lies," he said in an interview with IRNA published on Saturday.

He said that Haley uses a "harsh" language and adopts "illogical" position.

Haley showed her Security Council colleagues on Monday what she called remnants of Iranian-supplied missiles shot from Yemen to Saudi Arabian territory.

The U.S. claims the debris displayed a "made in Iran" marking.

In a post on January 30, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif ridiculed American politicians for their naivety in fabricating the truth, saying Iran does not use put "made in Iran" marking on missile parts.

"ISIRI seal is a measure of quality for Iranian consumer goods. But sadly for Trump & Co, we don't put it on missile parts. Time for some to do a better job of fabricating," Zarif tweeted.

ISIRI stands for Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran.

Moazami also said that negotiation

on Iran's missile program has no place in Tehran's defense doctrine.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has announced for many times that it will not accept any talk on missile program. Unfounded claims that the U.S. announces have no place in Iran's military doctrine and are mostly pretenses and illogical and unwise behavior," he explained.

In recent months, calls for negotiations over Tehran's missile program have grown louder. Iran, however, says it will never hold talks on the issue, insisting that its missile program is purely defensive and its missiles are designed to carry nuclear warheads.



'National power' is dependent on 'unity': Expediency Council chief



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Chair-

man of Iran's Expediency Council Seyyed Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi on Saturday insisted on the importance of national unity, saying "national power" is dependent on "unity".

The top cleric made the remarks while visiting the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, founder of the Islamic revolution.

He advised against moves that would induce the opponents of the Islamic republic to sow discord between the people and officials.

"We should not do something that lead to the enemy's efforts to create division between the people and the officials," Hashemi Shahroudi said in an indirect reference to the recent unrest in the country.

In the unrest which lasted for a week, the U.S. president and the Zionist regime

as well as the MKO terrorist group and the son of the last shah of Iran provoked people to mutiny against the Islamic Republic.

Hashemi Shahroudi also said "Islamic awakening" and "revival of Islamic resistance against hegemonic system" were among the gifts of the Islamic Revolution.

President Hassan Rouhani also visited Imam Khomeini's mausoleum on Wednesday. Rouhani said, "All officials of the country should have a listening ear for people's demands and wishes."

"The previous regime thought it would rule forever, but lost everything because it didn't listen to people's criticism and advice," the president warned. "It only heard the voice of people's Revolution."

Iranians toppled the U.S.-backed Pahlavi regime 39 years ago, ending 2,500 years of monarchy in the country.

U.S. to lose international trust if it exits Iran deal: former ambassador



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — For-

mer U.S. Ambassador to Yemen Gerald M. Feierstein, says U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal would lead to a loss of international confidence in Washington.

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly warned that he would scrap the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Feierstein said if Trump tries to scrap the JCPOA, it is highly likely that his administration's top authorities would try to dissuade him and remind him that Washington's unilateral withdrawal from the pact would lead to America's isolation.

Western governments agree with Trump that there are flaws in the deal but all of them, except for the United States, emphasize that the deal has been fruitful, he said, adding that European countries want to preserve the deal.

The U.S. president must certify every 90 days that Tehran is meeting its obligations under the deal. Last month, Trump called on European countries to join with the United States in fixing what he called "significant flaws in the deal."

Iranian Foreign Ministry, however, insists that Tehran "will not accept any changes to the JCPOA neither now nor in the future." The ministry also says Iran will not allow linking the "JCPOA to any other issue".

Qatar: Iran is our only lifeline to the world

1 → But the people showed solidarity and became more resilient. We enhanced our bilateral relations all over the world. So, you may say that the plan failed. All their 13 demands.

■ The administration wants to contain Iran and fight ISIL [another name for the Islamic State]. Reportedly, they find this dispute a distraction.

A: This is exactly the picture. If you want to have a sincere dialogue with Iran where both parties lay down their concerns and try to come to an understanding of the region

... the best way is to sit and talk.

■ Isn't the administration concerned with Iran's military activities outside its borders?

A: Absolutely. But how do we address this issue? There is the hard way, which will be a disaster, and then there is engagement and dialogue, which we always encourage.

■ Your country shares a gas field with Iran. Do you have to have friendly relations with Tehran?

A: We have to have friendly relations with everyone. We

are responsible for the supply of [an enormous amount] of the world's energy. We have to have a smooth flow of energy, and that means we have to eliminate having enemies.

■ Because of the boycott against Qatar, you've had to import much of your country's food from other countries via Iran's airspace, right?

A: Yes. Iran is the only airspace we have — they blocked everything else. Iran gave us a sea line so we could get our food — some of it comes from Azerbaijan, Turkey or Europe.

UN thanks Russia, defends participation in Sochi talks

United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres has rejected criticism of the world body's participation at Syrian peace talks in the Russian resort city of Sochi, praising the outcome of the discussions.

Speaking at a press conference at the UN headquarters New York on Friday, Guterres said the presence of UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura "in Sochi was based on a common understanding between the United Nations and the Russian Federation on the nature and outcome of the meeting and its contribution to the [UN-mediated] Geneva process."

"The congress concluded with a statement fully in line with that common understanding," he added.

Russia, Iran, and Turkey have been organizing peace talks for Syria in the Kazakh capital of Astana since January 2017. Together, the three countries have been acting as guarantor states for the peace process.

Capitalizing on the achievements of Astana, Russia on January 29-30 convened a high-profile meeting on Syria — the Syrian Congress of National Dialog — in Sochi.

One Syrian opposition faction boycotted that meeting, and some non-political groups opposed to Damascus later accused the UN of "rewarding" Russia "upfront" by dispatching Special Envoy de Mistura to the event before securing concessions from Russia and the Syrian government.

Russia and Iran are Syrian government allies. Turkey is an ally of the Syrian opposition. The collective efforts of the three countries, including the brokering of agreements that have significantly reduced fighting in Syria, have made an impact on the ground in the country.



In contrast, a peace process held under the auspices of the UN — in Geneva — has achieved little. That has angered some Western and Arab governments opposed to the Syrian government and some groups of Syrian opposition backed by those governments. They insist that the Geneva process be given more importance despite its failure so far to make meaningful achievements.

Guterres appreciated Russia's engagement with the UN regarding the Syria talks.

He highlighted the key subjects of the 12-point final Sochi statement, saying that the document embraced a vision of Syria for all its citizens and underlined the need for the formation of a Constitutional Committee under UN auspices.

Around 1,600 delegates representing a wide range of Syrian political factions attended the Sochi talks. The event was boycotted by the High Negotiations Committee, which is based in and guided by Saudi Arabia.

Damascus welcomed the results of the event and stressed that its final statement affirmed that political progress in Syria cannot begin except under the Syrian leadership and without any foreign interference.

The Sochi conference took place just days after the ninth round of UN-led Syria talks failed to achieve tangible results. That round was exceptionally held in the Austrian capital, Vienna, instead of its usual venue of Geneva. (Source: Press TV)

Trump's new nuclear strategy draws blistering criticism from arms control experts

The United States arms control groups have condemned the new nuclear weapons strategy announced by administration of President Donald Trump, saying it could raise the risk of nuclear war. The latest policy was revealed on Friday in a Pentagon policy statement known as the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). The new policy, which came largely to counter Russia, effectively ends Obama-era efforts to reduce the size and scope of the U.S. arsenal and minimize the role of nuclear weapons in defense planning.

It also cast China as a potential nuclear adversary, saying the U.S. arsenal is tailored to "prevent Beijing from mistakenly concluding" that it could gain advantage by using its nuclear weapons in Asia, or that "any use of nuclear weapons, however limited, is acceptable."

The report drew blistering criticism from arms control groups, who said the strategy will reduce U.S. and global security.

"President Trump is embarking on a reckless path — one that will reduce U.S. security both now and in the longer term," said Lisbeth Gronlund, a senior scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

She said the Trump administration is blurring the line between nuclear and conventional war-fighting.

The science advocacy organization also said the new report misrepresents the status of China's nuclear forces.

"The gap between China and the United States is too wide to argue that the United States is lagging behind in any meaningful way. In fact, the exact opposite is true. By

any measure, the U.S. arsenal is far superior," the group said in a statement on its website.

"If the Trump administration were truly concerned about limiting the size and capability of China's nuclear forces," he added, "it would ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which China signed in 1996, and negotiate a fissile material control treaty, which China supports. Doing so would cap the size of China's nuclear arsenal."

Barry Blechman, co-founder of the Stimson Center, a nonpartisan anti-nuclear proliferation think tank in Washington, has warned that the U.S. is "on the cusp of a new era of nuclear proliferation."

"This is the great nuclear danger raised by the new" nuclear policy, Blechman added.

■ The U.S. & Russian threat

Meantime, Moscow's ambassador to Washington says the U.S. has launched a scaremongering campaign against Russia to find a pretext for pumping more dollars into its military industry and building up its nuclear stockpile.

Anatoly Antonov was responding to the newly unveiled U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, a new nuclear arms policy that aims to revamp the U.S. nuclear arsenal and develop new low-yield atomic weapons, the RT reported.

"The problem is that the Americans are again using the Russia scare to justify the rise in military spending and the nuclear buildup," Antonov said. "We realize this comes from their desire to inject more money into the military industry sector, we know the price tag is an enormous trillions of

dollars."

Dismissing the U.S. allegations that Moscow violated its obligations under the 1987 INF treaty (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces), the Russian senior diplomat said he was convinced the row over its implementation could be resolved by experts.

"I would like to state clearly that, as far as Russian obligations under any international treaties are concerned, we have been implementing them responsibly and accurately," Antonov said. "I want to say that this dialogue should be left to professionals, instead of mass media."

The brandishing of a "Russian threat" comes while North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states have significantly increased their military activities near Russia's western borders in recent years.

The U.S.-led military alliance has deployed around 4,000 troops, consisting of four battle groups, to Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland — all near Russian borders — in recent years.

Russia, realizing that security threat under its nose, has held several military drills to maintain preparedness. The NATO countries have then referred to those drills as signs that Russia has aggressive and not defensive intentions.

Moscow calls NATO's military buildup at its doorstep a threat to its national security and accuses the alliance of fear mongering to justify larger defense expenditure by its member states.

(Source: agencies)

Yemenis enter Saudi Arabia to conduct counter-strike

A newly-released video shows a group of Yemeni army soldiers and Ansarullah (Houthi) movement fighters crossing into Saudi Arabia's southwestern Asir region to conduct counter-strike.

Yemen's al-Masirah television network published footage on Friday showing the crossing operation that came following clashes between Yemeni fighters and the Saudi regime military forces.

Al-Masirah further released another video showing the Yemeni army targeting a military base run by the Saudi regime-allied troops from Sudan in Saudi Arabia's southwestern Jizan region.

The Ansarullah said the artillery and missile attacks destroyed two armored vehicles occupied by Sudanese mercenaries.

The House of Saud regime has been leading a number of its vassal states in a war on Yemen since March 2015.

The Saudi regime-led war was launched in an attempt to reinstall a former Yemeni government. That objective has failed to materialize. The Ansarullah movement has meanwhile been running state affairs.

The Saudi regime-led campaign, which is accompanied by a land, aerial and naval blockade of Yemen, has so far killed more than 13,600 people and led to a humanitarian crisis.

■ Saudi regime, allies killed 68 Yemeni children in 3 months

Elsewhere, the House of Saud regime and its allies killed 68 children in impoverished Yemen in the course of three months last year, a new report says.

According to a confidential document obtained by Al Jazeera news broadcaster, the Saudi regime-led military coalition killed 68 children and wounded 36 others in war-torn Yemen from July to September 2017.



The report said on Friday that the figures from excerpts it had obtained from a confidential report by the United Nations Office on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) was sent to the UN Security Council on January 19.

Furthermore, the document found that there were at least 20 Saudi regime-led coalition airstrikes on different localities in Yemen, some targeting schools and homes, on a daily basis. According to the UN children's aid agency, UNICEF (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund), more than 5,000 children have lost their lives or sustained injuries in the imposed war -- an average of five children a day -- since the Saudi regime war began some three years ago. It has also warned that over 11 million Yemeni children

are in need of humanitarian aid.

In early June 2016, the CAAC reported that the House of Saud regime coalition was responsible for 60 percent of child casualties in Yemen during the previous year, when it killed 510 children and injured 667 others. It added that the Saudi regime military conducted half of its aerial attacks against schools and medical facilities.

The appalling report prompted the UN to swiftly blacklist Riyadh for overwhelmingly violating children's rights in Yemen. However, then-UN Chief Ban Ki-moon removed the House of Saud regime from the list a few days later, acknowledging that he had been forced to do so after the regime and its allies threatened to cut off funding to many UN

programs.

Since March 2015, the Saudi regime, together with a coalition of its allies, has been heavily bombarding Yemen as part of a brutal campaign against its southern neighbor in an attempt to reinstall Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh.

The Saudi regime campaign has killed at least 13,600 people since its onset. Furthermore, much of the country's infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and factories, has been reduced to rubble in the Saudi war.

Famine and outbreaks of cholera and diphtheria are other results of the Saudi regime-led war.

(Source: agencies)

Trump administration targets Hezbollah with new sanctions

Israel plans vast offensive missile project against Hezbollah

By Staff & agencies

The United States administration of President Donald Trump slapped new sanctions on individuals and businesses suspected of links to Hezbollah, the Lebanese resistance group the White House is hoping to isolate in its bid to curtail Iran's influence across the Middle East.

The U.S. Treasury Department announced the measures against six people and seven businesses based in Lebanon, Iraq and West Africa, a move officials described as a first step in a wave of actions targeting the group's financial networks.

Meanwhile, the Israeli regime has decided to set up "a vast network" of offensive missile systems that would be targeted against the resistance movement of Hezbollah in Lebanon, Israeli media claim.

Israel's Yedioth Ahronoth paper said that the Israeli minister of military affairs, Avigdor Liberman, had assigned around 500 million shekels (145 million dollars) to setting up "a vast network of medium-range surface-to-surface missile systems" and "a dedicated corps" to run it in an attempt "to counter Hezbollah."

According to Yedioth Ahronoth, Liberman made the decision after a meeting with Israeli military officials on January 4.

The "initial aspects" of the project are reportedly to be completed by 2020.

Israeli media claim that Hezbollah is in possession of an "arsenal of more than 100,000 short- and medium-range rockets."

Israel waged two all-out wars against Lebanon — in 2000 and 2006 — but fell short of its military objectives in both cases in the face of strong resistance by Hezbollah and the Lebanese army.

On Wednesday, Liberman threatened the Lebanese state with another military invasion.

"Lebanon's army and Hezbollah are the same — they will all pay the full price in the event of an escalation," Liberman said. "If a conflict does break out in the north, 'boots on the ground' remains an option."

Lebanese Prime Minister Sa'ad al-Hariri on January 25 called Israel the greatest threat to Lebanon's stability.

"The only threat I see is Israel taking some kind of action against Lebanon, out of a miscalculation," Hariri told an audience at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, back then. "And this is the real threat, I believe. I think the other issues are challenges, yes ... But when Israel decides to launch a war against Lebanon, this is something that is unexplainable."

■ Joint drills with U.S.

Meanwhile, Israeli media outlets said on Thursday that the United States — Tel Aviv's main ally — had deployed military forces to Israel for biennial joint war games with the Israeli military.

The so-called Juniper Cobra military drills enlisted more than 3,000 forces from the two sides in its last edition in 2016.

The sources said the maneuvers would simulate engagement with the countries lying to the north and south of Israel, including Lebanon.

Shootings reported in Italian city of Macerata



A man opened fire on passersby in the central Italian city of Macerata on Saturday, injuring several African migrants, police said, in an attack that appeared to be racially motivated.

The shootings happened just days after the dismembered body of an 18-year-old Italian woman was discovered hidden in two suitcases near Macerata. A 29-year-old Nigerian migrant has been arrested in connection with her death.

Local media reported that at least six migrants including one woman were shot by a man driving around the city, located about 200 km east of Rome, and firing from his car window.

"Shots fired in Macerata. People injured. Police operation under way. Stay out of the way and avoid open places," the police said on Twitter. Shortly afterwards, police said one man had been arrested.

State television Rai said the suspect was a white Italian man who came from Macerata.

The website of newspaper Corriere della Sera said a man fired from a car window at two young African migrants shortly after 11 a.m. (1000 GMT) on Saturday, wounding one of them. A short while later two other migrants, including a woman, were shot.

It was not immediately clear how serious their injuries were. Right-wing politicians campaigning ahead of national elections on March 4 leapt on the gruesome death of the teenager Pamela Mastropietro to promote their anti-migrant message.

A preliminary postmortem on the teenager could not immediately identify her cause of death. The Nigerian suspect, who was denied asylum last year but has remained in Italy, has refused to talk to police.

"What was this worm still doing in Italy?" Matteo Salvini, head of the far-right League, wrote on Facebook, accusing the center-left government of responsibility for Mastropietro's death for allowing migrants to stay in the country.

"The left has blood on its hands," he wrote.

Magistrates say witnesses saw the Nigerian suspect carrying the suitcases that were later found to contain the teenager's body. They also found blood-stained clothes and knives in his possession.

(Source: Reuters)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	97718.8
IFX	1082.82

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	47,140 rials
EUR	59,500 rials
GBP	67,050 rials
AED	12, 990 rials

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$68.58/b
WTI	\$65.45/b
OPEC Basket	\$66.83/b
Gold	\$1,333.65/oz
Silver	\$16.63/oz
Platinum	\$995.60/oz

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



17 maritime, port projects to be inaugurated by Feb. 11

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of Iran plans to inaugurate 17 projects worth 4.305 trillion rials (about \$94.8 million) by February 11, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Conducting dredging works at the second phase of Shahid Rajaie Port (in south of the country) and overhauling the port's railway lines are two of the most important projects which are going to be inaugurated on the occasion of the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.



Do-Win Tech 2018 hosting 410 foreign, domestic companies

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 9h edition of Doors and Windows Technology International Exhibition (Do-Win Tech 2018) started operation on Friday with participation of 410 Iranian and foreign companies, IRNA reported.

Some 356 Iranian exhibitors alongside 54 foreign companies from Italy, China, Bulgaria, Spain, Turkey, Germany and the UAE are showcasing their latest equipment, products, and services in this event.

The four-day event is held at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.



Agriculture projects worth \$1.2b to become operational

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Some 3,511 new agriculture projects worth 54.4 trillion rials (about \$1.19 billion) are scheduled to be inaugurated across the country on the occasion of the victory of Islamic Revolution (on February 1-11), ILNA reported on Saturday.

The projects include 2,262 projects related to water and soil areas, 321 projects in livestock and veterinary sub-sectors, 272 industrial projects, 271 plant generation projects, 156 fisheries and aquaculture projects, 149 natural resource projects, and etc.



Intl. logistics, transportation expo slated for next week

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — International Exhibition of Logistics & Transportation (Marine, Land, Rail, Aerial, Combined) Related Equipment and Services will kick off in Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas next week, the exhibition's secretariat announced.

The event will be held at Bandar Abbas International Exhibition Center from February 12 to 15, according to the announcement.

The exhibition would be a proper stage for its participants to present the latest research achievements and technologies to the world and make new cooperation contracts with their foreign counterparts.



Parliament permits \$30b of foreign finance facilities as of Mar. 21

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — According to Iranian Parliament's latest approval, the government will be allowed to use up to \$30 billion of finance facilities during the next Iranian calendar year (starting March 21, 2018), ILNA reported.

On January 28, the parliament rejected the general outlines of the national budget bill for the next Iranian fiscal year and the presiding board held a meeting to discuss the process of putting the budget bill up to vote once again.

The MPs finally approved the outlines of the government's proposed budget for the next year on January 31 and started investigating the bill in detail on the same day.

Companies management should be revised in privatization

1 → “According to the general policies of Article 44, the government can hold at most 20 percent of the shares of the group 2 companies and based on the amount of its shares it can play some management role via the company's board of directors, but about some companies, for example some car manufacturing ones, it is said that most of the board members are from the government body”, the official lamented.

Expressing dissatisfaction with this matter, he said that when the issue was reported to the president he was really annoyed and ordered to transfer the rest shares of the company to the private sector in such cases when the government's interference is more than its share.

New supervision, supportive responsibilities for IPO

Economists believe that to tackle the privatization challenges, some new supervision and supportive duties and responsibilities should be defined for the IPO to conduct after privatizing the companies.

At present, there is the risk of returning to the government's body specially to the Industry Ministry in a number of transferred

units due to the weak performance of new management team.

Hamidreza Fouladgar, the chairman of Majlis (Iranian Parliament)'s Committee for Supporting Domestic Production and Supervising Implementation of Article 44, is of the opinion that the structures should be reformed; the government's role should be policy making and leading, and the real private sector, i.e. people, should come to the scene.

He says: “Up to now, privatization has been just transferring to the private sector, but for the precise implementation of Article 44, other potentials of this article should be materialized which needs complete implementation of all prerequisites.”

Also on January 25, Presidential Chief of Staff Mahmoud Vaezi said: “We should downsize the government as much as possible and on the other hand we should support and organize the real private sector for its more flourishing.”

Revising the management structure in transferred companies is now a real necessity as the privatization plan lags behind the schedule which has made IPO expedite



the process, as on the Wednesday press conference, Pouri-Hosseini announced that transfer of the state-run shares to the private sector during the two-month period ending on the last day of current Iranian calendar

year (March 20, 2018) will reach 5 trillion rials (about \$110.37 million).

He said the value of transferred shares during the two-month time will equal that of the ten-month period of this year.

Bank of England at forefront of global rates dilemma

The Bank of England will find itself facing a question next week that is set to trouble many other central banks this year - does an unexpectedly strong global economy mean it should press ahead with raising interest rates?

For the BoE - and its Indian, Australian and New Zealand counterparts - the answer over the next few days is likely to be no, as domestic uncertainties for now outweigh the inflationary pressure of a powerful global upswing.

But the odds of moves further away from the emergency level stimulus of the financial crisis are shortening. In government bond markets, yields on 10-year U.S., German and British debt have leapt by more than 30 basis points since the start of the year and two-year U.S. yields are their highest since 2008.

BoE Governor Mark Carney takes centre stage on Thursday, when he will set out the central bank's thinking on Britain's prospects, barely a year before the country is due to leave the European Union.

No economist thinks a BoE rate hike is coming next week, according to Reuters polls. But markets see a 50 percent chance that there will be another move in May, a

relatively quick follow-up to the BoE rate hike in November, the first for a decade.

UBS's chief economist, Arend Kapteyn, recently changed his mind to predict a May rate rise due to recent strength in the global economy - assuming that Prime Minister Theresa May can get a temporary Brexit deal before then.

“We think the data lines up for a brief window where they can hike,” he said.

Much later and there is a risk that the domestic economy may sour, as businesses hold off on investment and hiring in the months running up to Britain's departure from the EU.

Politics is also likely to exert its sway over the Reserve Bank of India's thinking next week, after an expansionary budget on Thursday which boosted rural spending and predicted that India would become the world's fastest-growing major economy.

A decision to jack up farmers' production subsidies was especially likely to intensify the RBI's worries about above-target inflation, economists said.

Going the other way is Brazil, which is likely to cut rates on Wednesday as the country slowly pulls out of more than two years of

economic malaise.

Services Smile

UBS has just upgraded its global growth forecasts to pencil in expansion of 4.1 percent for this year - which would be the fastest since 2011 - after 3.9 percent growth in 2017.

More evidence of the strength of the global recovery is likely to come on Monday, with a raft of services PMIs for advanced economies.

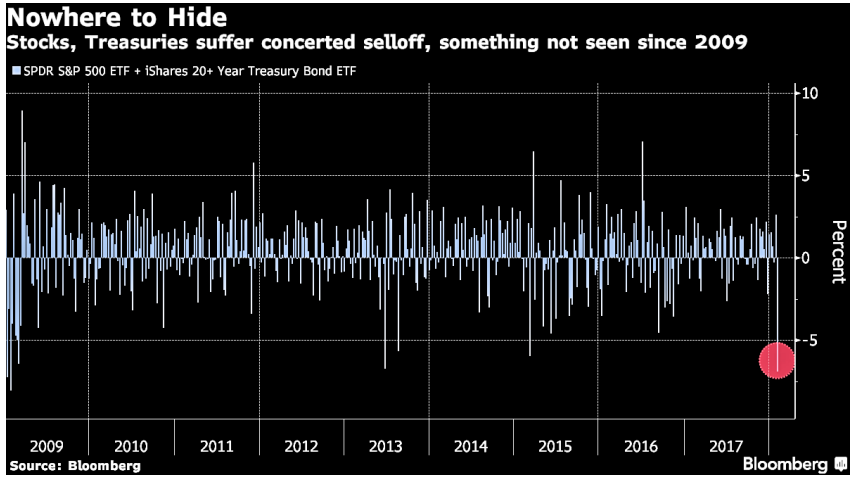
Manufacturing data previously showed factory activity hitting multi-year highs, and an early version of the services PMI for the euro zone rose to its highest since 2006.

U.S. data on Friday showed the biggest annual rise in hourly wages since 2009.

“The activity data at the beginning of next week should go some way to confirming that the world economy started 2018 on the right foot,” HSBC economist James Pomeroy said. Further confirmation was likely to come from Chinese trade data and German industrial orders, he added.

Overall, open economies such as Australia and New Zealand should not focus too much on current below-target inflation and prepare to raise rates in the second half of the year, he said.

Traders are asking if the bond and stock selloff is the start of something big



665.75 points to 25,520.96, bringing its total points lost over five days to 1,095.75. The Nasdaq 100 Index fell 3.7 percent for the week while the Choe Volatility Index surged 56 percent.

The most significant feature of this selloff has been its breadth. While past declines in the U.S. stock market have been notable for their narrowness -- when one industry fell, another rose -- this time there's been no cushion. All 11 industries in the S&P 500 declined in the last week, something that hasn't happened since the month of Donald Trump's election.

Selling has also been spread among asset classes. A simple comparison that adds up percentage losses in the SPDR S&P 500 ETF and iShares 20+ Year Treasury Bond ETF showed a concerted selloff that was the worst since January 2009.

The swoons are taking a toll on one of the most popular asset allocation strategies: those lumped together under the rubric of 60/40

mutual funds. Among 35 such funds that have at least \$1 billion in assets, all suffered losses during the week. Their decline averaged 1.2 percent, the most since September 2016, data compiled by Bloomberg show.

A big concern for investors is the timing of the rout -- the middle of earnings season, a calendar period that for the last six years has a nearly perfect record of boosting stocks. Bulls hoping for a broader celebration of brisk iPhone X demand at Apple or surging holiday sales Amazon.com were disappointed. Even the seventh straight weekly upgrades to S&P 500 earnings estimates was no help.

To be sure, even a decline such as this week's is barely notable in a stock chart that goes back more than a few months. The S&P 500 just had its best January since 1997, stocks from Nvidia to Boeing Co. to Vertex Pharmaceuticals all came close to doubling last year, and turbulence as measured by the average level of the VIX

was never lower than it was in 2017. Friday's downdraft came on a day the Labor Department said U.S. employers added 200,000 jobs and unemployment held at a 17-year low.

“The underlying strength of the economy is still healthy. The overall level of interest rates is still quite low. If anything, we're surprised that it took so long for us to get a 3, 5 percent correction in the market,” said Evan Brown, New York-based director of asset allocation on the investment solutions team at UBS Asset Management, which oversees \$776 billion. “This is a healthy repricing of bonds and equities, and not a signal of something dire.”

At the same time, a lot that looks straightforwardly good for investors could be framed as bad. Buying stocks when unemployment is this low and consumer confidence this high hasn't been a great bet: Four of the last five peaks in the S&P 500 came after the jobless rate fell to between 50 and 100 basis points below 4.5 percent, data compiled by Credit Suisse Group AG show.

The past year's rally has also attracted a category of investors whose enthusiasm isn't always welcome: individuals. Client activity at TD Ameritrade Holding Corp. hit a record as the number of daily trades surged almost 50 percent in the past year. At E*Trade Financial Corp., the number of trades from which a broker can generate revenue is the highest ever.

“The list of growing challenges have caught up to stocks,” said Jim Paulsen, chief investment strategist at Leuthold Weeden Capital Management LLC. “We probably need a valuation correction for both stocks and bonds to be more appropriately priced for an economy now growing at 3% real/5% nominal at full employment with rising labor costs and capital costs.”

(Source: Bloomberg)

Fed orders Wells Fargo to halt growth over compliance issues

Wells Fargo & Co detailed new regulatory restrictions imposed by the U.S. Federal Reserve on Friday that sent its shares down sharply in after-hours trading, as the third-largest U.S. bank continues to reel from a sales scandal that erupted in 2016.

Wells is not allowed to grow beyond the \$1.95 trillion in assets it had at the end of last year “until it sufficiently improves its governance and controls,” the Fed said in a statement.

Wells Fargo estimated that the cap will cut its annual profit by \$300 million to \$400 million this year, as it reduces some parts of its balance sheet, like corporate deposits and trading assets, in order to continue growing core businesses. That represents 1.5 to 1.9 percent of the profit Wells generated in 2017.

The bank will also replace three board members by April and a fourth board member by the end of the year, the Fed said, without naming who they should be.

Wells Fargo shares fell 6.1 percent to \$60.10 in after-hours trading.

The Fed's consent order will have a “manageable” impact on profits and should not affect the bank's plans to return capital to shareholders this year, Chief Executive Officer Tim Sloan said during a conference call with analysts on Friday evening.

“We are in a very competitive business whether we have a consent order or not,” said Sloan. “Our marching orders to our team are, go out and serve your customers, fulfill our vision, take deposits, make loans. We are open for business.”

While Sloan said he takes the matter seriously, he also characterized it as the latest step in a risk-management and corporate governance overhaul that Wells Fargo began some time ago, when it realized it had a serious problem with sales practices.

The bank reached a \$190 million settlement with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and a Los Angeles prosecutor in September 2016 over employees opening phony accounts in customers' names without their permission to artificially hit internal targets. The tally of fake accounts has since risen to as many as 3.5 million.

(Source: Reuters)

Exxon sees oil demand down 20% in 2040; or maybe it'll be up

If climate change curbs live up to their promise, oil demand may fall 20 percent by 2040, Exxon Mobil Corp. says in one forward-looking report. But a more likely scenario is it will grow by 20 percent, the company says in separate outlook.

The reports were both released Friday. Which one to believe?

The first comes in response to a shareholder vote last year that demanded Exxon publish the risks it faces if the world hits its carbon-emissions goal to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The second is what the Irving, Texas-based explorer uses "to help guide multibillion-dollar investment decisions," according to its preamble.

In both instances, the study authors say the world will still need trillions of dollars of investment in fossil fuels to meet its energy needs over the next two decades.

■ Guessing game

Exxon estimates oil demand with and without global temperature increase caps. The business outlook, as might be ex-



pected, is more hawkish. Its findings show oil and natural gas still supplying about 55 percent of the world's energy needs by 2040, with oil the biggest contributor. Coal is expected to fall to less than 30 percent

in 2040 from approximately 40 percent in 2016.

Electric and hybrid cars will approach 40 percent of light-vehicle sales by 2040, compared to three percent in 2016, it said.

■ Climate change

The climate change report says oil demand will drop to 78 million barrels a day by 2040 under a scenario whereby global temperatures do not rise by more than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by 2100.

Both reports show demand for natural gas rising strongly.

Darren Woods, Exxon's chief executive officer, says in that report the company needs "to meet society's growing need for energy while addressing the risks of climate change."

That's not enough to appease climate change campaigners.

"ExxonMobil's own analysis assumes the world will continue to burn through oil and gas to drive their profits and keep us on a path toward global temperatures well above the two degree Celsius target," said Kathy Mulvey, a campaign manager at the Union of Concerned Scientists, in an email.

"Nowhere do they foresee carbon emissions bending rapidly toward zero – as they must well before 2040," she wrote.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Canada's imperial oil misses profit estimate as expenses weigh



Canada's Imperial Oil Ltd reported a lower-than-expected adjusted quarterly profit on Friday, weighed down by higher costs in its downstream and upstream operations.

Shares of Imperial, majority owned by Exxon Mobil Corp., fell about 4 percent to C\$37.28.

Imperial, which posted a rise of about 22 percent in its total expenses in the fourth quarter, said its adjusted downstream net income increase was offset by higher maintenance activity.

Upstream operations were hurt by costs of about C\$150 million (\$121 million) related to its Syncrude and Kearn oil sand projects.

"In the context of the weakness we expect to persist in the heavy oil market, the company's upstream cost structure needs to see further improvement if Imperial is to continue delivering a robust and competitive free cash flow profile into 2018," Raymond James analysts said in a client note.

The company said refinery throughput averaged 391,000 barrels per day, lower

than 401,000 bpd in the year-ago quarter due to maintenance activities at the Nanticoke refinery in Ontario.

The Calgary-based company reported a net loss of C\$137 million, or 16 Canadian cents per share, for the quarter as it booked a charge of C\$566 million related to its Mackenzie joint venture and the development of its Horn River basin gas field in western Canada.

The company said in December that it was dissolving the JV as it was not "economically competitive". ConocoPhillips Canada, ExxonMobil Canada and the Aboriginal Pipeline Group were the other participants in the venture.

According to Thomson Reuters, Imperial earned 51 Canadian cents per share, excluding items, while analysts on average had expected a profit of 68 Canadian cents.

The company's production in the quarter remained unchanged at 399,000 gross oil-equivalent barrels per day from a year earlier.

(Source: Reuters)

Russia keeps January oil production below 11 million bpd



Russia's crude oil production in January was basically flat compared to December 2017, after rising production at foreign firm-led projects compensated for small declines at the two major Russian oil producers, Rosneft and Lukoil.

According to data by Russia's Energy Ministry, Russian oil production in January was 46.306 million tons, or 10.95 million bpd, just slightly less than 46.338 million tons in December 2017.

The January crude oil production is in line with Russia's pledge in the OPEC/non-OPEC deal is to shave off 300,000 bpd from its October 2016 level, which was the country's highest monthly production in almost 30 years—11.247 million bpd.

Russia's cut in its January production was 301,200 bpd, as part of the pact between OPEC and the Russia-led alliance of non-OPEC nations, Energy Minister Alexander Novak says.

Crude oil production from Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) projects last

month increased by more than 10 percent, while production at Rosneft and Lukoil fell by 0.2 percent and 0.5 percent, respectively, according to the energy ministry data quoted by Reuters.

The Sakhalin-1 project led by Exxon had plans to increase production in January to 250,000 bpd-260,000 bpd from 200,000 bpd last year and had a preliminary approval to do this. The Sakhalin-1 project will continue to operate under the 200,000-bpd quota until Russian authorities finish the approval of a new plan for production, a source close to the Energy Ministry told Reuters.

For the whole of 2017, Russia's total average daily crude oil production inched up again, to a 30-year-high of 10.98 million bpd.

Non-OPEC Russia, like Saudi Arabia and most of the other cartel members, entered the joint deal on January 1, 2017, at a very high level of production, which took much of the sting out of the cuts.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Venezuela skirts U.S. sanctions with Chinese oil-for-cash loans

Oil-for-loan deals between Beijing and Caracas are preventing American sanctions from having their full effect on Venezuela's economy, according to David Malpass, U.S. treasury under-secretary for international affairs.

"Most of the blame for Venezuela's economic collapse and humanitarian disaster falls squarely on Venezuela's rulers, but China has been by far Venezuela's largest lender, supporting poor governance," Malpass said at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Bloomberg reported. "The result will raise the ultimate cost to the international community once Venezuela returns to democracy and economic reforms."

Because China expects payment in barrels of oil, the dollar amount of the loans are difficult to ascertain.

"This has the effect of masking the exact amount of payments that China made to Venezuelan officials and that Venezuelans are expected to make to China in the future," Malpass added. "China offers the appearance to an attractive path to development, but in reality this often involves trading short-term gains for long-term dependency."

China also has an open invitation to join the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which the Asian giant could exploit for its One Belt, One Road initiative aiming to bring large developing countries together, economically.

Despite assistance from Beijing, Venezuela is still suffering economically. The ongoing crisis in Venezuela

has caused output to fall and reliable customers to find new supplies. Cuba recently signed a deal with Algeria to increase the amount of oil products it imports from the North African country because its main supplier, Venezuela, is struggling to stay afloat. The country sitting on the world's largest oil reserves saw its crude oil production drop by 649,000 bpd in 2017—a 29-percent annual plunge—and probably the worst loss of oil production in a single year in recent history.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) said in its monthly Oil Market Report last week that "Declines are accelerating in Venezuela, which posted the world's biggest unplanned output fall in 2017."

(Source: oilprice.com)

OPEC, Russia supply steady as Saudi masks Venezuelan drop

Crude production by OPEC and its main ally Russia held steady last month as increases in Saudi Arabia and Iran offset the ongoing deterioration of Venezuela's oil industry.

Output from the 14 members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries rose just 20,000 barrels a day to 32.4 million a day in January, according to a Bloomberg News survey of analysts, oil companies and ship-tracking data. Russia's production was little changed compared to December and totaled 10.95 million barrels a day, according to data emailed Friday by the Energy Ministry's statistical unit.

The cartel continues to restrict output even more than it pledged in an accord with Russia and other producers aimed at clearing a global glut. Russia kept its pledge even after its biggest producers said late last year that they were not changing their investment plans for this year.

Goldman Sachs Group Inc. said Thursday the deal between OPEC and its allies has al-

ready accomplished their goal of returning swollen inventories to normal levels. Overall compliance among OPEC's 12 members bound by the accord was 127 percent in January, the survey showed. Russia's compliance was close to 100 percent.

■ Venezuelan descent

Part of the reason for OPEC's over-compliance lies with Venezuela, where a chronic recession and under investment have taken their toll on the oil industry. The country's output dropped by 30,000 barrels a day to 1.67 million a day last month, the lowest since 1989, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

The survey also indicated that Venezuela's December production was lower than previously thought, showing an 110,000-barrel-a-day reduction from the previous estimate. In the months ahead, the nation's decline could accelerate as a result of crippling debt, failing infrastructure and U.S. sanctions, the International Energy Agency has warned.

■ Staying the course

Despite tumbling output in the Latin American country, Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih insisted last month that OPEC will keep production constrained at least until the end of the year to ensure the stockpile surplus is fully eliminated.

Saudi Arabia's output rose by 60,000 barrels a day in January to 10.01 million a day, the survey showed. That's still below the maximum it's permitted under the accord.

The next biggest increase was in Iran, where production expanded by 30,000 barrels a day to 3.83 million a day, slightly higher than its limit. The country is ramping up output at oil fields lying to the west of the Karoun River.

Production declined in the United Arab Emirates, by 40,000 barrels a day to 2.85 million a day, also still slightly above its agreed ceiling. Saudi Arabia's Al-Falih has vowed to put pressure on fellow members who aren't making all of the supply curbs they promised.

■ 'Domino effect'

Russia's biggest crude producers, the state-run Rosneft PJSC and Lukoil PJSC controlled by its billionaire executives, have said they are not changing their investment or upstream plans for 2018 even as the caps were extended through the year-end. Both commissioned high-capacity greenfield wells last month.

Russia will most likely maintain its compliance level close to 100 percent this year, "otherwise we may see a domino effect as other countries may also break the deal," said Dmitry Marinchenko, oil and gas director at Fitch Ratings Ltd. in London.

Yet, Russian oil producers "will be gradually getting tired of the obligation to keep a lid on their output," he said. If crude prices stay well above \$60 a barrel and global inventories continue shrinking, the companies may get an informal signal that the deal is nearing its end, and increase drilling activities, which may happen as soon as in April or May, he said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Record U.S. production makes a \$70 oil price target seem odd

The relentless uptick in U.S. oil production, in light of firmer oil prices and industry efficiency gains, made it all but inevitable that the country would cap the 10 million barrels per day (bpd) mark at some point in the first quarter of 2018.

However, as it transpires, the market did not even have to wait that long, for the said level was breached in November 2017, according to the latest U.S. Energy Information Administration data.

In its monthly assessment, the EIA said on Wednesday (January 31) that production rose by 384,000 bpd that month to 10.038 million bpd; just short of a record high of 10.044 million bpd recorded in November 1970.

More noticeably, in the period that the oil producers' cartel OPEC first mooted, and then eventually decided in concert with 10 non-OPEC producers, to keep a collective 1.8 million bpd output cut on the table for 2018, U.S. production rose quite steadily in tandem in anticipation of precisely such a move.

In barrel terms, that was nearly 850,000 bpd in the three months to November; a direct result of reassuring market rancor. Given this backdrop, I doubt the aforementioned November 1970 record is going to last much longer, for the metaphorical OPEC 'put option' is unquestionably helping U.S. producers as much as it is firming up the finances of the cartel's members.

By its very definition, in the wider commodities and securities world, a put option is an option contract giving the owner the right, but not the obligation, to sell a specified amount of an underlying asset class at a specified price within a specified time.

While OPEC and its partners do not openly comment on what price level they are comfortable with, over 2018 – their specified time – they would ideally want their specified selling price, using Brent as a benchmark, to be at least \$50 per barrel, and ideally \$60.

Under normal circumstances, it would be easy to adopt a bullish stance after an OPEC cut or a cut extension as we saw on 30 November. You can always count on money managers, especially hedge funds, to pile in to extend the rally; as the recent Brent front-month futures price jump to \$71 per barrel aptly demonstrates.

Wall Street will always do its bit. Goldman Sachs (who else), is now putting forward an outlandish 6-month price target of \$82.50 per barrel, and even JPMorgan's price target is now \$70 per barrel, nearly 50 percent more than what it forecast as recently as October 2017.

However, the oil market is undergoing a once-in-a-generation change in terms of supply fundamentals. The presence of U.S. producers – who lead the pack of non-OPEC producers with capacity – means OPEC's bid to put a price floor higher than \$60 remains under medium term, if not short term, threat.

Each time the price strengthens, there is a near immediate uptick in U.S. rig counts as recent data proves. The past few weeks aptly illustrate this. Both in the run up to the OPEC meeting on 30 November, as well as in the weeks after, U.S. rig counts have continued to rise over most weeks with the odd weekly decline.

By that token it is astonishing for Saudi Oil Minister Khalid Al-Falih to claim, as he recently did, that the impact of U.S. shale has been exaggerated. The changing tune of Wall Street forecasts is equally surprising.

In fact, OPEC and the wider oil market should expect more U.S. oil over the medium term, given the country's reserves position. Research and analysis outfit GlobalData has observed that the U.S. holds the top spot among the 10 countries with largest remaining crude and condensate reserves, with 91.1 billion barrels expected to be economically recovered in the country.

Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Russia follow with 77.4 billion barrels, 71.8 billion barrels and 70.6 billion barrels, respectively. Admittedly, there's a vast differential between breakeven prices stateside, thought to be between \$30-35 per barrel, and the Arabian peninsula, where they are often as low as \$3-5 per barrel.

But as long as the oil price does not fall below \$40, the Americans are fine. From a demand perspective, conservative to optimistic demand growth forecasts range from 1.2 to 1.5 million bpd. That's decent and would prevent a drop to \$40.

Meanwhile, global inventories have indeed fallen from their 2017 peak and the 5-year moving average is also converging with the actual level of inventories; a major aim of OPEC cuts. But the falls do not equate to the physical market becoming balanced in the longer-term, or OPEC would not have pushed to extend the cuts at its last meeting.

Big question is how long does the so-called 'OPEC put' stay in place? The OPEC and non-OPEC cuts plan doesn't seem to have an exit strategy. At some point the cuts have to end, and that would inevitably drag the oil price lower.

So I remain skeptical of a \$70 oil price target, let alone an \$82.50 one – whether we talking about Brent futures maintaining the said level, or WTI futures touching it and staying there. In fact, the way I see it, there's little to suggest oil would substantially overshoot \$60 or by the same token slump too far below it in 2018.

(Source: Forbes)

Tesla will sell its solar power products at 800 Home Depot stores

In an effort to make its solar power products more visible to mainstream customers, Tesla will be setting up a designated retail space inside Home Depot stores across the U.S. to promote and sell its solar panels and Powerwall batteries. The spaces will include 12-by-7-foot displays, and some shops will offer demonstrations of the products, Bloomberg reports.

Tesla will be building its retail spaces at 800 Home Depot locations (the home improvement chain has approximately 2,200 stores nationally), and the company will offer on-site sales representatives to explain the products to customers. The solar roof, which Tesla began taking preorders for last summer, will not yet be part of the mini-shops, but it may be added in the future, sources say.

Solar panel installations costs, on average, between \$10,000 and \$30,000, but that price is expected to rise after the Trump administration announced a 30 percent tariff on imported panels last month. For its part, Tesla plans to manufacture its panels within the U.S., which will make them exempt from the tariff, but the average cost to install a Tesla solar roof will obviously come at a premium. Consumer Reports estimates that a 3,000-square-foot Solar Roof will cost \$73,500.

Tesla's spaces at Home Depot have begun rolling out at stores in Southern California and will be added next to Las Vegas, Nevada, and Orlando, Florida, next week, reports USA Today. All 800 stores are expected to have the kiosks within the first half of the year.

Low's, another major home improvement brand in the United States, was reportedly also in discussions with Tesla for a similar sales experience, but told CNBC that it has no plans to carry Tesla products or include a branded retail space in its stores at this time.

(Source: therverg.com)

Trump says he wants to refill Guantanamo. Bad idea.

After boasting during his presidential campaign that he would “load” up the Guantanamo Bay prison with “bad dudes,” Trump refrained during his first year from sending terrorism suspects to the notorious facility in Cuba. He appeared, to his credit, to have absorbed the central lesson of Guantanamo’s history since early 2002: that holding and trying detainees there is far harder and more time-consuming than in the U.S. federal court system, even as it exposes the United States to damaging criticism from allies and easy propaganda victories for enemies.

Since Trump took office, at least two foreign terrorism suspects have been brought to the United States and charged in federal courts, including one militant accused in the 2012 attacks on the U.S. diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya. After first sug-



gesting that a suspect accused of a terrorist attack in New York last October would be sent to Guantanamo, Trump tweeted that he “would love to . . . but statistically that process takes much longer than going through the federal system.” Correct.

It was therefore disappointing to hear Trump renew his commitment to Guantanamo in his State of the Union address Tuesday. Reversing a 2009 order by President Barack Obama to close the facility — which was never implemented because of congressional opposition — Trump ordered Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to conduct a study of detention policies for terrorism suspects, “including policies governing the transfer of individuals to Guantanamo.”

Trump cast this as “keeping another promise” to his voters, which suggests he might have been striking a political pose. We hope so. If he is serious about sending prisoners to Guantanamo, the administration will not be simply making a mistake, but repeating one of the most conspicuous errors of the war on terrorism.

In dispatching more than 700 detainees to Guantanamo, President George W. Bush incited a storm of international criticism, handed a recruitment tool to al-Qaeda — and failed to bring the authors of the 9/11 attacks to justice. Five principals in the plot were charged in 2012, but their military commission trials are hopelessly bogged down and may not be completed for years. In contrast, federal prosecutors have obtained more than 600 convictions in terrorism cases since 2001, including, in November, that of Ahmed Abu Khattala, a leader of the Benghazi attacks.

The Bush administration, and the Obama administration after it, eventually released most of the Guantanamo inmates, having no case against them. Trump inaccurately complained that “hundreds and hundreds” had returned to terrorist activity, including Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who became the leader of the Islamic State (ISIS); in fact, the militant leader was never in Guantanamo.

The Trump administration is right to seek to detain terrorist leaders where possible, interrogate them and put them on trial. If it tries to do so at Guantanamo, it will quickly become mired in new legal problems, including whether it has the authority under U.S. law to detain Islamic State (ISIS) fighters there. Trump spoke vaguely of asking Congress for new legislation; if that means seeking explicit authorization for military action against the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere, it would be a step forward. But Congress should not facilitate a self-defeating return to detentions at Guantanamo.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Brexit politics goes from bad to worse

The split in Britain’s Conservative Party is doing enormous damage.

Political dysfunction is unquestionably aggravating the UK’s Brexit nightmare. But the resignation of Prime Minister Theresa May, as some in her own party are calling for, would only make matters worse.

The Tories will never agree about the European Union. What they need to do is get their divisions under some kind of control.

At the moment, the increasingly assertive anti-EU wing of the party is making the country ungovernable. When Philip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said the UK needed trading arrangements with the EU as close as possible to today’s — a goal that should be uncontroversial — the party’s euro-skeptics reacted with fury. They also denounce the idea of a transitional deal that leaves most of Britain’s obligations in place until a final agreement can be reached, claiming this would make Britain a “vassal state.”

This is nonsense. It’s true, of course, that a transitional deal that subjects the UK to EU rules while denying the country any say in what they are is a bad outcome — but it’s the temporary price to be paid for an orderly exit. More than anybody else, Brexit’s most committed supporters should be happy to pay that price. Militating for a disorderly exit, which is what their current stance amounts to, risks further economic damage and undermines their cause.

Indeed, those who regret the Brexit decision might be tempted to cheer the most reckless euro-skeptics on. This faction might think, not unreasonably, that if the Tory rebels make it impossible for May to reach agreement with the EU, the whole Brexit project might collapse.

If only. Bringing order out of anarchy isn’t so easy. The enormous further uncertainty of a leadership contest, perhaps a general election (leading to who knows what), and maybe even a second referendum (no more likely to establish consensus than the first) would only add to the crippling burden of uncertainty holding the UK economy back.

The sad truth is that a bitterly divided country, dealing with an increasingly exasperated EU, cannot make the problems it has created for itself go away by means of outright political breakdown.

May has failed to articulate and defend a vision of Britain’s post-Brexit future. Her political position is weak, thanks partly to the self-inflicted blow of last year’s botched general election. That said, any Tory leader would struggle with Brexit, with so much of the parliamentary Conservative party intent on failure.

Yes, May needs to get a grip — but above all her party needs to start acting with some parity of intelligence and self-control. If that doesn’t happen, Brexit and its collateral damage will be an even bigger disaster than its critics predict.

(Source: Bloomberg)

A Turkish war of America’s making

By Barak Barfi

The Trump administration’s muddled messaging to Turkey on U.S. efforts to uproot ISIS in Syria has inflamed tensions between two NATO allies. But while Trump’s actions have complicated a vital regional relationship, they are only the latest evidence of the incoherence that characterizes America’s Syria policy.

As Turkey intensifies its military campaign against Syrian Kurdish fighters, it is tempting to blame the violence on President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s strident jingoism and xenophobia. After all, Erdoğan has long warned that Turkey would never tolerate a Kurdish military presence on the country’s southern border; the recent offensive would seem to suggest that his words are being met with action.

And yet, while Erdoğan may have ordered “Operation Olive Branch,” the real culprit is the United States’ myopic focus on vanquishing regional terrorism. Bereft of a coherent Syria policy, successive U.S. administrations have obsessed over targeting the Islamic State (ISIS) without considering the full ramifications of their actions. Turkey’s incursion into northwestern Syria is just one consequence.

In July 2012, when the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) took over a string of Syrian border towns, Turkey was alarmed. The PYD is the Syrian branch of the Turkish Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which has been waging a guerrilla-style war against Turkey’s government since 1984.

Initially, the U.S. shared Erdoğan’s concerns. In August 2012, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that, “Syria must not become a haven for PKK terrorists.” But after ISIS captured large swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq, America found in the PYD a useful ally. Soon, the U.S. was providing weapons and training to the PYD’s armed wing.

Angered by these moves, Erdoğan sought assurances that American support for the Kurds would be temporary, and that Kurdish fighters would not cross the Euphrates River. But, after the Turks received the guarantees they wanted, the well-armed Kurds crossed the Euphrates anyway.

Then, in August 2016, Vice President Joseph Biden publicly admonished the PYD fighters, warning that they would lose U.S. support if they did not retreat. But the militants never fell back, and the U.S. continued to arm and train them. In April

By Hanna Anbar

If President Donald Trump massacred the Middle East peace plan — which was, in any case, always tailored to Israel’s advantage — Vice President Mike Pence has actually buried it.

And finally, after 70 years of the U.S. pretending to be an honest broker in the Middle East, its true face has now been revealed.

Even Israeli papers have expressed surprise bordering on disgust at the vice president’s speech to the Knesset in January 22, 2018.

“Mike Pence’s Zionist sermon at Knesset casts him as hero of Israel, horseman of Trumpacocalypse,” one Israeli headline read. A speech that “had everything but fire and brimstone,” read another.

With breathtaking audacity, Pence told the Knesset: “I am here to convey a simple message from the heart of the American people: America stands with Israel ... because your cause is our cause, your values are our values, and your fight is our fight.”

Yet it is telling that the very next day, a new survey

Give Trump more nuclear weapons and more ways to use them? Not a good idea

By Tom Z. Collina

Sixty percent of the American public already doesn’t trust President Donald Trump with nuclear weapons. That number could be about to rise.

On Friday, the Trump administration released its Nuclear Posture Review calling for new, more usable nuclear weapons and more ways to use them, including widening the rules on using them first. Donald Trump would get new nukes that his advisers claim are “low-yield,” and that Trump might be more inclined to actually launch. And he would have new excuses to use them, including against large-scale cyberattacks, that previous presidents have rejected.

If you were hoping that Trump’s bombastic words (“my nuclear button is bigger” and “fire and fury like the world has never seen”) were all bluster and that he didn’t have the policy or the firepower to back it up, think again. If you were looking for evidence that Trump and nukes are truly a dangerous combination, look no further.

Giving Trump new nukes AND new ways to use them is like giving matches and gasoline to Curious George [Curious George is a sweet African monkey who can’t help but run into trouble]. It will not end well. As 16 Democratic senators put it in a January 29 letter to Trump, the new policies “increase the risk of a nuclear arms race and raise the real possibility of nuclear conflict.”



Despite reportedly promising that U.S. weapons transfers would halt, President Donald Trump has not changed course, and American arms continue to flow to the Kurds. For these reasons, Turkey’s leaders have lost faith in anything the U.S. government says.

2017, an incensed Erdoğan declared that the Obama administration had “deceived” Turkey on the PKK. “I don’t believe the Trump administration will do the same,” he predicted.

But Erdoğan was misled once again. Despite reportedly promising that U.S. weapons transfers would halt, President Donald Trump has not changed course, and American arms continue to flow to the Kurds.

For these reasons, Turkey’s leaders have lost faith in anything the U.S. government says. The two countries cannot even agree on the contents of a presidential phone call, as their conflicting accounts of a conversation last month illustrates.

How did relations between two NATO allies reach such a low point?

Much of the answer can be traced to President Barack Obama’s refusal to deploy combat troops against ISIS, in favor of a light footprint using local forces aided by U.S. airstrikes and training. This approach was first tried in Iraq, but backfired when the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) seized territory. The consequences of that decision, which the U.S. has largely chosen

to ignore, will come to a head in April, when PMF commanders plan to run in Iraq’s parliamentary election.

In Syria, the Kurds have proved to be a more reliable proxy. But their allegiance to the U.S. has come at a cost. Obama was willing to overlook their fighters’ ties to the PKK, using subtle hairsplitting to differentiate between indistinguishable groups. Never truly appreciating Erdoğan’s apprehension, Obama chose to address Turkey’s concerns only superficially.

When Trump came to office, his lack of interest in details and inclination to grandstand exacerbated tensions. A key feature of Trump’s presidency has been his desire to ingratiate himself with guests by offering what he cannot deliver (as he did during a recent meeting with congressional Democrats on immigration). This penchant to please appears to have resulted in Trump making promises to Erdoğan that the Pentagon decision-makers guiding America’s Iraq and Syria policies never intended to keep.

But, unlike U.S. lawmakers, Erdoğan has an army that marches at his discre-

tion. And Turkey views the PKK as an existential threat, and regards the PYD as its Syrian lethal appendage. America’s muddled messaging, delivered by a president unskilled in policy nuance or diplomacy, has inflamed a critical relationship, and in turn, jeopardized the fight against ISIS. Despite Trump’s State of the Union claim that ISIS is nearly defeated, some 3,000 fighters remain in Syria, occasionally even capturing territory.

In short, America’s policy is self-defeating. It is also imperiling some 2,000 U.S. soldiers who are working with the Kurds in Syria.

Obama’s instincts were not wrong. Full-scale invasions rarely succeed in uprooting terrorist threats. But America’s subcontracting of its battles to local fighters in Syria has created new perils. If Trump is to break with the past and earn the credit he is claiming, the U.S. must find a new way to achieve its security goals without deploying entire divisions. At the moment, however, the U.S. is offering Turkey — and the region — only incoherence and more empty promises.

(Source: Project Syndicate)

Burying the peace plan



by leading U.S. public opinion research institute the Pew Research Center revealed that on Israel, the U.S. partisan divide is now “wider than at any point” in the last 40 years.

Along with the peace process, what Pence also buried in his speech were the values, principles and notions of justice that America has been preaching to this region

and beyond, for years.

Pence mixed facts with religious dogma, justifying the creation of Israel and making his own fake news by claiming an Israeli presence on the land of Palestine dating back 4,000 years.

No history book, no research — nobody — has been able to prove that the Jews were ever anything more than a small minority in the Holy Land, or in many cases, more than nomads who roamed the region between Mesopotamia and the south of Africa.

U.S. officials perhaps believe they are making history with their stance toward nations, particularly Palestine. But in fact, they remaining ignorant, or pretend to be, of Palestine’s history.

Centuries of oppressors like the United States and Israel have failed to force the Palestinian people into submission.

The history books will teach the U.S. officials — if they want to learn, that is — that it is the Palestinians who have always made history in this part of the world.

(Source: The Daily Star)

■ New nuclear missions

The Obama administration had sought to limit the role of nuclear weapons, so that the only use of the bomb would be to deter its use by others. As he left office, Vice President Joe Biden said, “President Obama and I are confident we can deter — and defend ourselves and our allies against — non-nuclear threats through other means.” Moreover, Biden said that, “it’s hard to envision a plausible scenario in which the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States would be necessary. Or make sense.”

President Trump is now taking us in the opposite, dangerous direction. The Trump administration wants to expand the role of nukes to respond to “nonnuclear strategic attacks,” including cyberattacks, and use them first in a crisis. As a result, we could have President Trump launching a first strike nuclear attack over a Russian or Chinese computer hack.

This is crazy. As bad as a major cyberattack could be, it would pale in comparison to a nuclear attack. Threatening nuclear attack against, say, Russia, in response to a cyber-attack, would just invite a massive nuclear attack against the United States. Millions would die, the world economy would collapse and civilization as we know it could come to

a screeching halt.

With the most powerful conventional and cyber military force in the world, the United States has no need to respond with nukes. But others might. Thus we should be working toward a global norm against nuclear use, not lowering the nuclear threshold. Moreover, cyberattacks are particularly hard to retaliate against, since it is difficult to definitively establish where the attack came from.

Even before the final NPR was released, the Pentagon was having trouble defending its policy. On January 31, Gen. Paul Selva, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, tried to explain that the United States would not respond to “any” cyberattack with nukes, but possibly to cyberattacks “with strategic consequences.” This just raises new questions. Who decides what constitutes strategic consequences?

■ New nuclear weapons

The Trump administration wants to build two new types of nuclear weapons that it suggests are more likely to be used. Both types, a ballistic missile and a cruise missile, would be deployed at sea and would have a lower explosive yield than some others, but that does not make them any less dangerous. In fact, the administration says it wants these

new weapons so it can make more credible nuclear threats.

On the defensive yet again, Selva said that having low-yield nuclear weapons does not “in and of itself lower the threshold for use of nuclear weapons.”

Former Secretary of State George Shultz disagrees. “A nuclear weapon is a nuclear weapon,” said Shultz, who served as President Ronald Reagan’s top diplomat. “You use a small one, then you go to a bigger one. I think nuclear weapons are nuclear weapons and we need to draw the line there.”

Shultz continued, “Your mind goes to the idea that, yes, nuclear weapons become usable. And then we’re really in trouble, because a big nuclear exchange can wipe out the world.”

Or, as one retired senior Army officer told The American Conservative, low-yield nukes provide Trump with “a kind of gateway drug for nuclear war.”

The public is right to distrust Trump with nuclear weapons, and we all need to speak up and oppose these new, dangerous policies. People don’t tend to think of nuclear war as a policy choice, but it is, just like health care or immigration. The Trump administration’s policies are increasing the risk of nuclear war.

Sure, you could build a bomb shelter and hide, but that does not lower the risk of war, and it is highly unlikely to save you. Instead, we need to prevent nuclear war in the first place by changing government policy.

Don’t duck and cover. Speak up.

(Source: CNN)

Giving Trump new nukes AND new ways to use them is like giving matches and gasoline to Curious George.

Bin Salman’s reforms in Saudi Arabia: Threats and chances

➡ Muhammad ben Salman, the son of the king, prince and minister of defense of Saudi Arabia tried to show his militaristic majesty by attacking Yemen. He tries to prepare required ground for those economic and cultural reforms which Saudi Arabia will face more economic and social problems without them.

Ben Salman’s Revealing and hidden attempts to control all key centers of decision making in Saudi Arabia after rise of his father as the new Saudi king demonstrates that he follows the two projects of reforms and integration at the same time.

He used his father power to dethrone the stated prince to get appointed as the prince deputy in the first step in order to get closed to achieve kingship. Then, he captured the major part of power in his hands and changed Prince Muhammad Ben Nayef as a useless element in the political structure of Saudi Arabia and finally enforced him to resign in order to announce himself as the new prince. His second serious competitor was Mutab Ben Abdullah who had been appointed as the commander of the National Guard after rise of King Abdullah. Ben Salman could sweep him from power also successfully.

He could prepare the required field for deposition of their other competitors one by one after his presidency on the committee for fight against corruption. He has the power to enforce the travel limitations or restraint against the other princes because of his post as the president of the Anti – Corruption Committee.

Financial disarmament of the heads, capitalists, Turki Ben Naser and Valid Ben Talal as the head of this pyramid has been because of preventing them to use their capitals against Ben Salman in future. Specially, some of them are opposed to full capture of power in his hands.

Ben Nayef and Motab both were dissatisfied to Yemen War and siege of Qatar. Therefore, Ben Salman has started these arrests in security aspect in order to integrate his policies in this sphere.

Ben Salman’s measures against the prominent figures of Saudi Arabia demonstrates that he wants to set the new rules of the power game for the future decades by his hands.

But these reforms include some risks and it backs to how he could manage and control these reforms? Will these reforms be expanded into the political field also? Will these reforms create serious and critical demands by people in the sense of political power?

The historical experiences of Perestroika in USSR and modernization process of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in Iran shows that development needs enough capacity, specially fast and commanding development in closed states which will end to eliminate political regime sometimes.

According to the 2030 Vision for Sustainable Development, Ben Salman follows decrease of Saudi dependence on producing and sale of oil to eliminate this dependency. Saudi Arabia is going to eliminate its dependence on the oil dollars as it’s only source of income till 2020 and wants to establish a governmental fund with 2 billion dollars save in order to fulfill the needs of its country by using the revenues of this deposit. Then he tries to change Saudi Arabia to a modern state and great financial power.

One of Ben Salman’s destinations was consolidation of his power in Saudi family who could expunge the opponents one by one. He could made control over oil, economic, defense and militaristic politics to expand the Saudi power in Middle East by establishment of the economic committees. He could put many of Saudi princes aside from power structure and consolidated his power using the policy of moderation and control.



There is no doubt that one of the main aims behind these measures is improvement of the Saudi Arabia’s face in international community that is damaged because of leading war against Yemen

But about the Ben Salman’s reforms, we have to ask what the reasons are behind these reforms and which areas are covered by these? The Saudi government granted the right to drive for women in social sphere and has promised to allow them to enter the sport stadiums. The Saudi officials also talk about construction of opera house and creating tourism related industries.

There is no doubt that one of the main aims behind these measures is improvement of the Saudi Arabia’s face in international community that is damaged because of leading war against Yemen, increase of global awareness about the role of the Wahhabi ideology in terrorist acts of ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

But this is the questions that will the “Moderate Islam” create political development and democracy? Will Saudi Arabia as the leader of suppression against the roots of those movements like Muslim Brotherhood, moves into more tolerance?

We have to pay attention that the current conditions of Saudi Arabia’s society is one of the implications for these reforms. In fact, these reforms are not avoidable and the Saudi community will be spoiled if their officials couldn’t find a treat for these conditions. More than 70 percent of Saudi community members are below 35 and they are among the most active users of Tweeter.

The old social contract which was affected by the high prices of oil under support of the Wahhabi clerics is going to be eliminated. Most of Saudi population asks for change this contract with the new one that is able to fulfill more jobs along political, social and cultural freedom. For example, making new decision

on cancelation of driving ban for women has not been faced to significant critics. The young defenders of reforms and even the opponents of patrimonial political regime are aware of this point that Ben Salman is the best choice for change of freedom agenda of Saudi Arabia.

That’s why Mohammad ben Salman is following introduction of a kind of “Moderate Islam” in Saudi Arabia as a new model opposed to the classic structure of the conservative Wahhabi clerics. In fact, Saudi Arabia’s high fear from Iran is one of the main causes of such decision. The assumption of “Moderate Islam” is a part of an ideological structure relating religious radicalism and the 1979 revolution of Iran while it declines the siege of Masjid Al- Haram in the same year by Wahhabis, existence of Salafi roots of thought in the ideologies of Al – Qaeda and ISIS beside of subversive actions like war of Yemen and support for extremists in Syria or interfere in Lebanon’s internal affairs. This is a dangerous gamble. Because Iran has fully demonstrated its retaliation capacity to defend its national interests when it is facing endanger.

Ben Salman says: the newly created religious extremist method in Saudi Arabia is result of the Iranian Revolution and siege of Masjid Al – Haram by extremists in Mecca. I’m young and about 70% of our citizens are young also. We never want to put our lives in such mire which have been lasted for 30 years back because of the Iranian Revolution. Now, we want to eliminate this era and focus on improvement of our community beside of keeping our religion and traditions safe. We don’t continue our lifestyle created after 1979. That era is finished!

It has to be attended that reforms could compose the most parts of modernists, youth and social castes as supporter forces for Ben Salman and his probable successor to make a modern face from him in media networks of the world and attract the world elites.

Beside of all, enforcement of these reforms could change the negative face of Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism into positive one and demonstrates Wahhabism as the symbol of moderate Islam that is responsible facing new needs of the communities.

We have to pay attention to this fact that changes in Saudi Arabia is enforced to execute from up to down and not vice – versa. Most of Saudi Arabian people are more conservative rather their rulers. The history of Saudi Arabia is full of cases for facing between Al – Saud family and the religious extremists. The Religious opposition to reform can lead to the polarization of the Saudi society and weakening of the value environment of Al – Saud regime. Those religious clerics who many of them have been linked to the generations of Muhammad Ben Abdul Wahhab compose a part of Saudi political regime. They had done some threatening revolutions.

One of the causes for these reforms is increase of Saudi attraction amount in eyes of other Islamic states. At the present time, there is no kind of theology or social system in Saudi Arabia to deliver a moderate interpretation of Islam like Turkey as its competitor. As the model of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy is sectarian one, it covers just some parts of the Muslims world and it is not attractive for Shiite Arab or non-Arab Muslims. Because at least the drawn short time image of Saudi Arabia is a Salafi sponsor regime that supports the extremist groups like Al – Qaeda or ISIS.

Reforms in Saudi Arabia is defined following reduce of dependence to oil. Saudis are aware that oil could not be a stable source of income to fulfill the economy of their country. That’s why attempts for getting independent form oil economy have begun from the era of Malik Abdullah. He tried to revive Islam as a moderate and scientific force which this assumption inspired the idea for establishment of Malek Abdullah Technology University. The attempts of Mohammad ben Salman are have been done in the same direction.

That’s why try for attraction of tourist in such regions like the new city of Neom that is located in seashores of the Red Sea is getting done as a more liberal area. But the fact is that having economic freedom in a conservative society and interest economy like Saudi Arabia is impossible. Because it is necessary to create some changes in cultural norms of Saudi society like what were happened in in the era of reform in evangelic Christian world in order to achieve these reforms.

There has been emphasized on economic and social development in 2030 Vision while there is no evidence of political one in this document. In addition, the personality and adopted approaches by be Salman shows putting many past political traditions aside like relative family consultation and keeping moderation and conservatism. Then, the political authoritarianism of Ben Salman in internal sphere and his offensive behavior in external sphere along economic and social reformism has changed him as a specific and creative person in the historical process of Saudi Arabia.

The highly attended point here is that social and Bureaucratic reforms will be led to political reforms finally. Because awareness and expects of the new strata of society will be increased. This fact that how much Ben Salman is able to manage the changes is a dangerous gamble.

Various political, economic, psychological factors led to Shah’s failure: Prof. Zonis

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Commenting on the reasons of Shah’s failure, author of the “Majestic Failure” Prof. Zonis says his grandiosity, his Persepolis celebration, his apparent disdain for the Iranian people, the absurd pretensions of monarchy, the inequality, the corruption of the court, the abuse of human rights all contributed to his failure.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 overthrew the Pahlavi dynasty under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was supported by the United States. The revolution was replacement of 2,500 years of continuous monarchy with an Islamic Republic under the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, supported by various Islamist movements and Iranian people.

On the occasion of the 39th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic republic of Iran we reached out to Marvin Zonis, Professor of international political economy and leadership in the University of Chicago. His studies also focus on Middle Eastern politics and history. “Majestic Failure: The Fall of the Shah” is a book authored by him on the failure of Mohammad Reza Shah.

Following is the full text of the interview with him:

■ In a psychological analysis in “Majestic Failure” about Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, you have talked about the reasons that led to the Islamic revolution of Iran. You have told that Mohammad Reza Pahlavi suffered from psychological problem so that he became dependent on others easily, generally whom he was dependent and who were those people? And why those people couldn’t help him?

A: I suggested that the late Shah was, in fact, a rather weak figure who was bolstered by others into greater strength and security which allowed him to function as the monarch. The most important of those individuals were his twin sister, Princess Ashraf, Assadollah Alam, the

U.S. and its ambassadors who served over the years, and the shah’s belief that he had been chosen by God to be the shah. By the time of the revolution, all those sources of psychological support had disappeared, in one way or the other.

Princess Ashraf was so unpopular in Iran that the Americans had long since urged the shah to sever his ties to her, which the shah did by sending her to the United Nations. When she did return to Iran during the revolution, the shah had lost faith in her.

Assadollah Alam, his boyhood friend and very tough ex-Prime Minister died on cancer in December 1978. U.S. ambassadors had always been a source of support and advice for the shah. But the “last” U.S. ambassador, William Sullivan, knew little of Iran and the Middle East.

He mistakenly though the Shah was a tough guy — like Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines where Sullivan had been the ambassador. The result was that he urged the shah to make his own decisions without advice and support from the Americans. That President Carter announced that he supported human rights everywhere and would cut arms sales to Iran helped convince the shah that he had lost any support from the U.S. Finally, the shah’s illness was a blow to the belief that he had been selected by the Lord.

■ If the people whom he trusted sided him during the revolution, could the revolution have another fate?

A: It is possible that had they been able to boost his depleted confidence in his own role, he might have acted more effectively and brought the revolution under control.

■ Isn’t your psychological analysis of the Shah’s characteristics and its role in Iranian revolution somehow “reduction-ism”? That the revolution was the result of internal tyranny and independent foreign policy?

A: I did not mean it to be reductionist in that Majestic Failure is really about the shah rather than about the millions

of Iranians who came to hate him and his rule. There are so many ways to analyze complex revolutions — political, economic, and others as well as psychological. But certainly the shah’s grandiosity, his Persepolis celebration, his apparent disdain for the Iranian people, the absurd pretensions of monarchy, the inequality, the corruption of the court, the abuse of human rights and on and on all contributed to the hatred which the Iranian people developed.

■ Had you ever seen Shah? If so, what was the most interesting thing in his characteristics that attracted your attention?


A: I had the opportunity to interview him privately on four occasions. I suppose his most startling quality to me then — as a young man — was his graciousness.

■ Shah was very afraid of the Soviet Union so that he had even asked Iranian envoys to many different countries to have an already prepared letter that in case of the Soviet Union attack on Iran they immediately let the Americans know. Why he was somehow under the US protectorate in his foreign policy? And why the US didn’t support him during the revolution in Iran?


A: I do not know anything about a letter to inform the Americans of a Soviet attack. The U.S. had listening stations on the border with the USSR and did not need to know by letter of a Soviet attack. In the early years of the shah’s reign, he depended on the support of the U.S. to stay in power and the events of 1953 further solidified the connection between the shah and the U.S. As the shah became more grandiose, his need for the U.S. diminished somewhat.

But President Carter’s emphasis on human rights everywhere and limits on foreign arms sales as well as Ambassador Sullivan’s misunderstanding of the shah all convinced that shah that he had lost the support of the United States and weakened his resolve and ability to be an effective leader.

First Announcement



N.I.O.C
1396.5146



National Iranian
Drilling Company

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

Two-Stage(Semi-pressed)

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
16,264	728,000,000	14,558,400,000	ROTARY SLIPS	3,150,207	Tender No. FP/17-96/077 Indent No:48-22-9422022	1

Brief discription of subject:

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The evaluation is based on article (J) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender doucments. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.

B) Preparation of tender documents:
Purchasing of documents:
In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.
Receiving of documents:
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date and participates in tenderswill be known as tenderer from tender committee.

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Foreign Procurement Dept
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The women we forget during Black History Month

By Keisha N. Blain

Black History Month is an opportunity to reflect on the historical contributions of black people in the United States. Too often, however, this history focuses on black men, sidelining black women and diminishing their accomplishments.

This is true in mainstream narratives of Black Nationalist movements in the United States. These narratives almost always highlight the experiences of a handful of Black Nationalist men, including Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan.

Contrary to popular conceptions, women were also instrumental to the spread and articulation of Black Nationalism — the political view that people of African descent constitute a separate group on the basis of their distinct culture, shared history and experiences.

As I demonstrate in my new book, *Set the World on Fire*, black nationalist movements would have

all but disappeared were it not for women. What's more, these women laid the groundwork for the generation of black activists who came of age during the civil rights-black power era. In the 1960s, many black activists — including Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Robert F. Williams, Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael — drew on these women's ideas and political strategies.

In 1914, when the Jamaican black nationalist Marcus Garvey launched the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Amy Ashwood — who later became his first wife — was the organization's first secretary and co-founder.

■ Influential Black organization

Her efforts were invaluable to the success of the association, which became the most influential Black Nationalist organization of the 20th century. The organization's earliest meetings were held at

the home of Ashwood's parents. When the organization's headquarters relocated from Jamaica to Harlem, Ashwood was actively engaged in its affairs.

In addition to serving as general secretary in the New York office, Ashwood helped to popularize the Negro World, the organization's official newspaper. She also contributed to the financial growth of the organization, relying on her parents' money to meet some of the growing expenses.

In 1922, months after Garvey's divorce from Amy Ashwood, Amy Jacques became Garvey's new wife — a position she used to leverage her involvement and leadership in the organization. During these years, she helped to popularize and preserve her husband's ideas. When her husband was imprisoned in 1925 and later deported — on trumped-up charges of mail fraud orchestrated by the FBI — Amy Jacques Garvey oversaw the

organization's day-to-day activities.

In the aftermath of Garvey's 1927 deportation, women helped to popularize Black Nationalist politics. With limited financial resources and resistance from the FBI, these women asserted their political power in various cities across the United States.

During the Great Depression, Chicago was one of the key cities where Black Nationalist women organized. In 1932, Mittie Maude Lena Gordon, a former member of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, established an organization called the Peace Movement of Ethiopia which became the largest Black Nationalist organization established by a woman in the United States. At its peak, the organization attracted an estimated 300,000 supporters in Chicago and across the country.

■ Widespread political networks

In 1933, Gordon initiated a nationwide emigra-

tion campaign, utilizing her widespread political networks in Chicago and across the Midwest. With the assistance of other Black Nationalist activists, she collected signatures for a pro-emigration petition. In August of that year, she mailed the petition to President Franklin D. Roosevelt with approximately 400,000 signatures of black Americans willing to leave the country. Drawing inspiration from FDR's New Deal programs, Gordon requested federal support for those who desired to relocate to West Africa in hopes of securing a better life.

Gordon's attempt to secure federal support failed. Yet she drew an even larger following of supporters who were inspired by her bold move. Many of these new members were women. Black women found in her organization a space of empowerment and opportunity. They occupied a number of visible leadership roles, working alongside the organization's female founder. ➔ 13

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Eating like an Iranian: A survey on Persian food

By Samira Mohebbali

part 5

In this series of articles you can trace cookery art in Iran during history up to present. The survey sheds light on different aspects of Iranian life, culture and civilization.

Safavid Era (1501– 1736)

Due to a variety of documents about Iranian cuisine, which can be found in travelogue written by foreign adventurers and cookbooks by Iranian authors, we can explore Iranian cooking in court and by ordinary people from this era on.

Several globe trotters including French traveler Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605 – 1689) and Italian explorer Pietro Della Valle (1586 –1652) travelled to the country during Safavid era and attended feasts held by the Safavid kings at the court.

Most of foreign explorers who travelled to Iran during that era, stressed on luxurious cookery at Safavid court from cooking to food manners and hosting.

Cooking in Iran enjoyed a wide range of variety during that era. According to documents, over 60 different kinds of Aash (Iranian soup), 55 kinds of rice cooking as well as different foods including kookoo (a kind of Persian frittata), dolmeh (a kind of Persian stuffed vegetable dish), kufteh (Persian meat-



Shah Abbas the II holding a banquet for foreign dignitaries. Detail from a ceiling fresco at the Chehel Sotoun Palace in Isfahan.

Due to a variety of documents about Iranian cuisine, which can be found in travelogue written by foreign adventurers and cookbooks by Iranian authors, we can explore Iranian cooking in court and by ordinary people from Safavid era on.

ball with rice) and borani (Persian appetizer made with yogurt and some type of vegetable) were cooked during Safavid dynasty.

At feasts held by courts, foods were served in covered big trays in a raw and different kinds of fruits, nuts, confectionaries and sherbets were also available in addition and the main course for the guests.

Using spoon was not still customary during that time and people ate food with their hands in a shared big tray. Servants provided guests with aftabeh-lagan (metal bowl and pitcher set) to wash their hands before and after their meal. Sherbets were also served with big wooden spoon during that era.

According to “Giro Del Mondo”, a travelogue written by the 17th century Italian adventurer Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, Iranian nation were “economical” in cooking. He said that their breakfast is in “Azari” manner, which is a combination of bread and yogurt sometimes accompanied with a fruit. Rice was mainly served in lunch and dinner. He called “dinner” as the main meal during Safavid era in Iranian families.

Rice, Yakhani or Ah Gusht (Iranian stew made with lamb, chickpeas, white beans, onion, potatoes, and tomatoes, and dried lime) and roasted meat or chicken were served as dinner.

During that time, foodstuff were available and offered in low-price except during draught and famine.

Avoid mommy burnout when you’re at home with kids all day

No one wants to admit that taking care of kids 24/7 can lead to burnout but it’s very easy to do to yourself, especially if you’re a stay-at-home mom. But you can prevent mommy burnout by taking a few extra steps that stop you from feeling like you’re a full-time daycare worker with no breaks or days off.

Find your support system

Just as you want to avoid the negative people as much as possible, you want to surround yourself with as many positive people as you can. If you currently don’t have a support system in place, create one.

Find mom friends through play dates, your children’s school or even standing in the line at the grocery store. Other moms are a wonderful resource because they’ve been there/done that and can relate to exactly what you’re going through now.

Put yourself first

Ask most moms who comes first in their house and they’ll say it’s the kids.

But if you’re not taking care of yourself, you can’t take care of everyone else.

Put yourself first. It doesn’t mean you’re not taking care of your family and doing what’s right for them. It simply means that you are the engine of the household and you have to be taken care of or the whole family suffers.

Spend time with your significant other

There’s a reason we call them “significant” others. Their role is significant as we go through the many stages of parenting together.

Connecting with your spouse every day makes a huge difference in your outlook for tomorrow.

Put dad to work

Your family is a team and your spouse can help you up off the field when you feel like you just got blitzed by your own players. Of course, Dad works hard all day and moms tend to think he shouldn’t be helping at home after work. Many dads want to help but we can make them feel like invaders because they’re not feeding the kids the way we do

or putting them in pajamas the way we would.

Watch your gadget time

A recent study says kids feel their parents are distracted by their gadgets. Not only do your kids see you with your gadgets in your face all the time but you’re also giving yourself unnecessary stress with all that tech time.

With all of those perfect parent Facebook posts you see in your timeline, you’re just putting unrealistic pressure on yourself to be that perfect parent like your Facebook friends. Remember, not everyone is going to be completely honest about their life as a parent.

Stop feeling like you’re failing

Moms seem to have an inner critic that never sleeps. This inner critic makes moms question just about everything, including their performance as parents.

That constant criticism isn’t good for anyone and makes you feel like you’re failing as a parent. Be bold and tell your inner critic to shut up! You’re doing a great job.

(Source: The Spruce)

28 simple and natural ways to detox your body



4. Drink far more water:

Even if you think that you are drinking enough water in a day, take your intake to a whole new level. If there is one thing that can easily and naturally help you to detox your body, it’s definitely water. We tend to think that we’re drinking enough when we really need to increase our intake dramatically.

Water can help to flush out your system naturally, and if you drink enough if it then this happens routinely. Proper water intake can contribute to clearer skin, properly functioning organs, and a more effective circulatory, respiratory, and digestive sys-

tem. So this one simple substance can offer great help to our entire body and the way that it functions.

Forget all the rules that you have heard through the years about how much water is enough. Eight glasses in the minimum, so it’s time to dramatically increase your intake if you want the best health benefits. Water should be your drink of choice and should be your choice with meals, as well as before and after. You will see some of the health benefits readily and enjoy some of the longer term ones down the line.

(Source: bembu.com)

How to make fresh food storage at your home?



Keep most vegetables and fruits in crisper drawers in fridge and tailor humidity and temperature to individual foods.

To keep fresh foods fresh, you need a variety of storage options. Leafy greens, broccoli, carrots, celery, asparagus, and berries need high humidity and low temperatures; green beans, peppers, summer squash, melons, and citrus need low humidity and high temperatures. Don’t store vegetables with fruit. Ethylene gas from fruits like apples and pears can cause green vegetables to turn yellow, asparagus to toughen, and carrots to taste bitter. Herbs stay fresh in fridge if you

snip stems and put them in water with plastic bag over top. Bananas, tomatoes, pineapple, garlic, and eggplant will ripen on countertop. Potatoes and winter squash need cool dry place. Take shelves out of cabinet and install slides and wire bins. Don’t store onions with potatoes; they give off gases that can cause potatoes to decay. Darkness inside cabinet will keep potatoes from turning green, a sign of solanine contamination, which can make you sick; never eat green potatoes.

Make drying rack for onions out of window screen.

(Source: diynetwork.com)

Sickening secrets of processed food revealed

How is chewing gum made?



Gum’s main ingredients: latex—as in latex rubber. It originally came from the sap of rubber trees, but most gums contain only 10 to 20 percent natural rubber. The rest are synthetic, with tasty names like butadiene-styrene rubber, polyethylene, and polyvinyl acetate. To make gum, the latex is ground, dried, and melted into a syrup. Then it’s filtered, and flavorings and softeners are added. The mixture is kneaded for several hours before it’s rolled out, cut into strips, and packaged. Chewing gum happens to be a good natural remedy for heartburn. Here are some other surprising natural heartburn remedies.

How is bologna made?



Supermarket bologna really earns its “mystery meat” reputation. The process begins with unused bits of beef, and sometimes poultry. Which bits? That’s the mystery. Whatever it is, it gets ground up and liquefied into a paste, and a blend of spices (also a secret) is added. The pasty concoction is extruded into a casing, then boiled or smoked, sliced, and packaged.

How are Pringles made?



Why do Pringles say “potato crisps” and not “potato chips”? Because to achieve the uniform, stackable shape, Pringles are made from pressed dough rather than sliced potatoes. Dried potato flakes, corn and rice flour, wheat starch, and oils are mixed together to make dough, and then it’s rolled out, cut, cooked in oil, and dried. The 42-percent potato crisps are then sprayed with flavoring and packed into the iconic tubes.

How is gelatin made?



Used as a thickener in foods like Jell-O and marshmallows, gelatin is essentially collagen, the protein found in connective tissue. But it’s not made from horns and hooves, as is often thought. Pig and cow bones and skin are broken down in hot water or acid and then dried, refined, and purified into gelatin. For use as a thickener, the gelatin is ground into granules or powder.

How are rice cakes made?



Moistened rice is placed in a mold that gets heated and then pressurized in a vacuum. After 8 to 10 seconds, the rice explodes like popcorn. Once it’s popped, flavors are sprayed on and dried before the cakes are packaged. (Ever have a rice cake with an unappetizing texture? It either had too much air, not enough rice, or too much moisture when it was popped.) (By the way, here are some things fast food workers will never tell you.)

How are jawbreakers made?

The main ingredient: granulated sugar. It’s poured into a round kettle that rotates over heat. The second ingredient: liquid sugar. A worker called a “panner” pours it into the kettle; it sticks to the granulated sugar, and balls start to form. The panner continues to add liquid sugar off and on for 14 to 19 days, pouring as many as 100 coats into the rotating kettle. When the jawbreakers are nearly full size, color and flavor are added. Finally, the sugar balls are spun in polishing pan with a food-grade wax, separated into batches, and bagged. (You’d never guess these things your restaurant server won’t tell you.)

(Source: Reader’s Digest)



101 ITEMS FOR YOUR BUCKET LIST!

33. Go stargazing

Today most city skies are free of stars. About 80 percent of North Americans live under light-polluted skies, not dark enough to see the Milky Way. But a growing number of preserved dark sky places and an emerging astrotourism industry are helping to reclaim the starry nights.

High, dry, dark, and accessible sites are ideal. The areas of major astronomical observatories or places designated by the International Dark-Sky Association as dark sky parks or reserves are great examples.

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



A boy walks in a snowy day at Masouleh village, Gilan Province, northern Iran (Instagram/@persianland.ir)

‘Reconstruction of heritage museums atop agenda’

1 → Back in November, a powerful 7.3-magnitude earthquake which struck western Iran caused damages to some historical sites including a Safavid-era caravanserai, and a Sassanid-era fortress in Qasr-e Shirin, Sarpol-e Zahab and Dalahu.



CHHTO Deputy Director Mohammad-Hassan Talebian in an undated photo

“Our priority is to complete museum-structures that have been abandoned due to budget deficit such as the ones in Tabriz, Kermanshah, Ahvaz, and Pasargadae,” he added.

“We have also broke the ground on a new museum in Jiroft, Kerman province, which will be replaced with the Jiroft Archaeological Museum, once completed.”

Meanwhile, the official pointed to vast potential of the private businesses and sponsors, saying “We welcome private sector assuming more supporting roles in renovation of museums.”

Iran to host Louvre collection

Elsewhere in his remarks, Talebian said that the National Museum of Iran is preparing to hold an exhibition of historical objects to be loaned from the Louvre.

“The collection will contain some 35 select of pieces associated with various cultures such as Greece, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. It will embrace several ancient Iranian objects as well,” he said.

The official said that the exhibit will open its doors in March. In return, Iran will exhibit works related to the Qajar era (1789-1925) at a Louvre’s satellite museum in Lens, northern France.

During President Hassan Rouhani’s visit to France in January 2016, the Louvre signed an agreement with Iran that cleared the way for improved bilateral cultural and scientific cooperation.

Thailand bans smoking and littering on tourist beaches

Thailand has issued a ban on smoking and littering at 24 popular tourist beaches to tackle environmental concerns.

The law, instated by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, comes into force on Thursday 1 February.

“Starting today, smoking and cigarette-butt littering are prohibited on beach areas,” Bannaruk Sermthong, a director at the Office of Marine and Coastal Resources Management, told Reuters.

“Anyone who wants to smoke must do so in designated smoking areas, not on the beaches.”

The move comes after the ban was trialed on 20 beaches in the provinces of Phuket, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Chon Buri and Songkhla, including Koh Samui and Pattaya. The pilot launched in October 2017 after Jatuporn Buruspat, head of Thailand’s Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR), reported his team had collected up to 138,000 cigarette butts on a 2.5km stretch of Patong beach in Phuket.

According to the DMCR, cigarette butts accounted for a third of all beach waste.

Designated areas for smokers located further inland were created at beaches with the ban, with containers provided to drop butts into.

(Source: Independent)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Australian Convict Sites

The UNESCO-registered Australian Convict Sites consist of eleven complementary sites. It constitutes an outstanding and large-scale example of the forced migration of convicts, who were condemned to transportation to distant colonies of the British Empire; the same method was also used by other colonial states.

The sites illustrate the different types of convict settlement organized to serve the colonial development project by means of buildings, ports, infrastructure, the extraction of resources, etc. They illustrate the living conditions of the convicts, who were condemned to transportation far from their homes, deprived of freedom, and subjected to forced labor.



View of Port Arthur, Tasmania, one of the Australian Convict Sites

This transportation and associated forced labor was implemented on a large scale, both for criminals and for people convicted for relatively minor offences, as well as for expressing certain opinions or being political opponents. The penalty of transportation to Australia also applied to women and children from the age of nine. The convict stations are testimony to a legal form of punishment that dominated in the 18th and 19th centuries in the large European colonial states, at the same time as and after the abolition of slavery.

The property shows the various forms that the convict settlements took, closely reflecting the discussions and beliefs about the punishment of crime in 18th and 19th century Europe, both in terms of its exemplarity and the harshness of the punishment used as a deterrent, and of the aim of social rehabilitation through labor and discipline. They influenced the emergence of a penal model in Europe and America.

(Source: UNESCO)

Ali Qapu to regain former glory after extensive restoration

HERITAGE

TEHRAN – A long-lasting rehabilitating project on Ali Qapu Palace has entered its final stage as scaffoldings are to be removed from the façade of 16th-century monument in Isfahan, central Iran.

For the first time over the past decade, people can visit the historical palace with no scaffolding poles as of the beginning of the next Iranian calendar year (March 21), Tasnim quoted Fereydown Allahyari, Isfahan province’s tourism chief, as saying on Friday.

“Travelers to ‘the Half of the World’ will see a different face of the palace by Noruz, [the Iranian New Year].”

Iranians have long termed Isfahan “Nesf-e Jahan”, which literary means “Half of the World”.

The massive project entailed several phases including rehabilitation of the palace’s wooden columns and flooring, he said, adding “The most intricate part was repairing a 30-meter-high decorated ceiling of its terrace, standing on 400-year-old columns.”

Throughout the project a layer of decorated wall was brought to light when restorers and archeologists were working on portions that connect the terrace to the main hall.

“Senior cultural heritage experts believe that the palace would be needless to any restoration work up to the next 50 years,” the official added.

Built at the very end of the 16th century as a residence for Shah Abbas I, a Safavid king, the six-storey palace overlooks the UNESCO-registered Imam Square.

Profusion of tree-lined boulevards, Persian gardens and important Islamic



An exterior view of Ali Qapu Palace in Isfahan

buildings give Isfahan a highly touristic appeal that is unmatched by many other

Iranian cities. In addition, the city is home to many versatile artisans who underpin

its reputation as a living museum of traditional culture.

“Senior cultural heritage experts believe that the palace would be needless to any restoration work up to the next 50 years.”

Legendary Pir-e Shaliar warmly remembered in western Iran

HERITAGE

TEHRAN – Like every year, Pir-e Shaliar, a legendary figure for Iranian Kurds, was warmly remembered during a vast ceremony held in Uraman Takht rural district.

Flocks of people from all walks of life attended the three-day event which commenced from January 31 in western Kordestan province.

Narratives say that Pir-e Shaliar had magical healing qualities and a mojo power to populate the land with livestock and crops in times of trouble. He is associated with the pre-Islamic, Zoroastrian times.

The legend says that Pir-e Shaliar magically cured ‘Shah-Bahar Khatoun’ the beloved daughter of king of Bukhara so that he was rewarded with getting married with the girl.

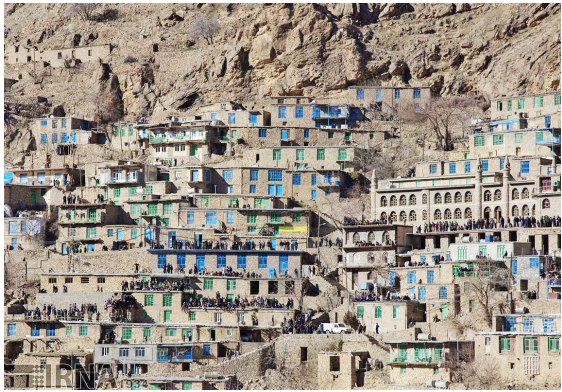
Participants from neighboring villages and areas usually make their way through the snow to Uraman Takht where festivities and prayers to God continue over a few days.

The festival usually starts before dawn with children distributing walnuts as gifts, knocking on the villagers’ doors and getting sweets from them in return.

Sheep and goats are slaughtered as the day breaks. Then several hours are spent for cooking a special soup called ‘Veloshin’; meanwhile people celebrate the event by blessings and prayers. The soup will be ultimately distributed amongst all villagers.

People come out from their terraced houses, which roof of one is courtyard of another, to witness the ritual. Daf, a local drum, is played and the dervishes of the region gather to chant and dance, while swaying their long hair through the air.

Prior to the night, men meet in the house of Pir-e Shaliar and continue their ritual of chanting prayers and playing the dafs to pay their ultimate tribute to the legendary figure of the region. (PHOTO: Seyyed Mosleh Pir-Khazranian/IRNA)



Cape Town’s water crisis hitting tourism: officials

CAPE TOWN (Reuters) — A chronic drought that could leave South Africa’s Cape Town without water within weeks is hurting visitor numbers and knocking a rare economic bright spot, officials said on Friday.

With experts predicting Cape Town will run out of water in mid-April, residents have been told to limit usage to 50 liters per person per day. An average bath holds 80 liters of water.

Hotels have asked guests not to use baths and to limit showers to two minutes or less, while some restaurants are switching to disposable cups and ditching table linen.

Around 10 million tourists visited Cape Town last year, drawn by iconic sights like Table Mountain, its long sandy beaches and clutch of nearby wine farms.

Tourism accounted for an estimated 9 percent of South Africa’s economic output last year, or 412 billion rand (\$35 billion).

Though visitors are sympathetic to Cape Town’s plight, there are fears that people may stay away due to the inconvenience of water restrictions or because they don’t want

to add to demand.

“There’s no doubt that the knock-on effect of the water conservation crossroads we find ourselves in has had an impact on tourism,” said Enver Duminy, chief executive officer at Cape Town Tourism.

There is no official data available yet to quantify the impact water shortages are having on numbers but Duminy said there had already been cancellations.

The Global Sourcing Association, a large London-based non-profit, said on Friday it

was postponing a major March conference in Cape Town to later in the year when it hopes the drought situation “will be alleviated”.

In a bid to limit the economic damage, which could spell jobs losses in a country with 25 percent unemployment, SA Tourism, a government agency, will soon embark on a global roadshow to reassure potential visitors.

“We are a tough country, a resilient country and I am quite confident we will find our way around this,” said Sisa Ntshona, SA Tourism’s chief executive.

The next time you order room service, it may come by robot

Hotels around the country are introducing robots to handle repetitive tasks like room service deliveries, entertaining guests, and even giving directions.

Hotels across the U.S. are rushing to introduce robots with the promise of enhancing the guest experience and increasing efficiency. The automated companions can do everything from make and pick up deliveries to help guests find their way around.

Aloft Cupertino in the Silicon Valley (rates from \$150) was the first hotel in the United States to debut Savioke’s Relay robot in 2014. The three foot tall autonomous robot, nicknamed Botlr, weighs 90 pounds and makes deliveries throughout the hotel using multiple sensors, 3D cameras and Wi-Fi to operate the elevators. Marriott has since begun mobile robot service at four other Aloft properties.

“Botlr’s most popular guest deliveries are forgotten toiletry items, bottled water, microwave popcorn and coloring books for kids — all complimentary, of course,” said Andy Evers, Aloft Cupertino’s general manager.

Other hotels are following suit. H Hotel Los Angeles’s Relay robot, named Hannah, made 610 front desk deliveries and 42 room service deliveries, traveling a total of 50 miles, in the first three months since the hotel opened last October (rates from \$249). “It’s a great timesaver for our team because no one has to leave their station



Pepper, the Softbank Robotics humanoid robot at the Mandarin Oriental in Las Vegas. (Credit: Leinani Shak Photography)

to make a delivery,” said Tiffany Jassel, a manager. The robot cruises at a speed of 1.7 miles per hour and has a two-cubic-foot bin to carry items, which guests unlock by typing in a code on its 7-inch touch-screen. When a delivery is complete, the robot celebrates with a swivel

dance and chirpy sounds.

The Sheraton Los Angeles San Gabriel Hotel (rates from \$149), opening February 2018, will be equipped with eight Tug robots developed by Aethon. One robot will escort guests to destinations on the first floor, while the remaining seven multiuse robots will use the service elevators to deliver in-room items to guests, like their luggage, room service meals and fresh linens.

In Nevada, the Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas (rates from \$259) employs Pepper, a humanoid robot from SoftBank Robotics. Located in the Sky Lobby, Pepper supports staff by handling repetitive tasks like greeting visitors, providing directions and answering property-specific questions using technology similar to Amazon’s Alexa. The four-foot robot has large eyes, lifelike gestures and facial recognition technology that allows it to discern a guest’s gender, approximate age and mood, and respond in intuitive ways to entertain guests by telling jokes and posing for selfies.

Royal Sonesta Boston (rates from \$189) has a robot from Double Robotics that offers site tours and attends meetings for clients who can’t be there in person by allowing them to log in remotely using an app. They’re able to control the robot’s movements, see through its wide-angle lens cameras and communicate via a tablet screen.

(Source: The New York Times)

Cell phone radiation tied to rare tumor in rats, study says

A comprehensive study of exposure to the radiation emitted by mobile phones found an increased risk of a rare tumor in some rodents, although the scientist in charge cautioned against drawing conclusions about the impact on humans. Male rats developed heart tumors when exposed to high levels of a type of radiation used by the wireless telephone industry, according to the draft studies released Friday. Female rats and mice didn't get the same tumors, the studies showed. Results were posted online.

The 10-year, \$25 million toxicological studies are the most comprehensive assessments to date of health effects and exposure to radio frequency radiation in rats and mice, according to the online notice from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, a unit of the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. medical research agency. The toxicology program is headquartered at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

Higher levels of radiation
The findings shouldn't be extrapolated to humans because the rats were exposed to higher levels of radiation than people take in, even with heavy mobile phone use, said John Bucher, a senior scientist with the National Toxicology Program. The rats received radiation over their entire bodies for nine hours a day for two years. However, in an emailed release, Bucher said the tumors observed in the studies "are similar to tumors previously reported in some



studies of frequent cellphone users." Asked if that points toward hazard for humans, he said phone providers are "moving more and more toward lower power exposures to humans" as new generations of mobile service come become

available. Some studies have found limited evidence of an increased risk of cancer from mobile phone use, according to the online notice from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

Some studies have found limited evidence of an increased risk of cancer from mobile phone use, according to the online notice from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

And two years on, the heart tumors were the "only positive finding that we've been really able to have confidence in," Bucher told reporters. The "reports don't go much further than what we have reported earlier."

CTIA, the trade association for wireless carriers including AT&T Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc., said it follows expert guidance on health effects.

Scientific evidence
"International and U.S. organizations and health experts have maintained their longstanding conclusion that the scientific evidence shows no known health risk due to the RF energy emitted by cellphones," said Justin Cole, a spokesman for the trade group.

The study found an increased risk of cardiac schwannoma, a tumor type that typically originates from cells found in neurons. It's so unusual in the heart that doctors often write up their findings for medical journals when the tumors are found in cardiac tissue.

Separately, the Federal Communications Commission in 2013 asked for comments on whether U.S. standards need to be updated to protect people from mobile-phone radiation, and it hasn't acted. The agency last reviewed standards in 1996, when fewer such phones were in use. Its guidelines set maximum radiation exposure levels based on the amount of heat emitted by mobile phones.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Birds can tell us a lot about human language, new research says



Language, the ability to learn words and combine them into meaningful sentences, is at the heart of what it means to be human. We start our lives like our great ape cousins (e.g. chimpanzees), able to do little more than cry. But quickly, we learn to copy the words of our parents and peers. This ability to mimic sounds, called vocal learning, is surprisingly rare. Other great apes can't do it. Neither can dogs or cats. In fact, the only mammals that have been shown to learn their vocalizations are cetaceans (dolphins and whales), pinnipeds (seals and sea lions), elephants, and bats.

Since our closest relatives can't modify their sounds, our last common ancestors probably couldn't either. What is different about humans that caused us to evolve our linguistic powers? How did the brains of our ancestors change to enable us to speak?

These questions motivate my research, but are difficult to answer. Scientists can't study the vocalizations of our hominin ancestors (e.g. ancient Homo sapiens) because spoken language doesn't fossilize like bones do (though our descendants millions of years from now will have it easier when they dig up our YouTube videos and podcasts).

Homo habilis' structures
Brains decay very quickly so we can't look at the neural structures of Homo habilis or Homo erectus.

So, where can researchers like me look for answers? One word: birds. Vocal learning is widespread in songbirds, parrots, and hummingbirds, with abilities ranging from songbirds (e.g. zebra finches) that can learn only one song to parrots (e.g. African greys) that can mimic hundreds of human words.

And even though birds and humans are separated by over 300 million years of evolution, the brain areas in birds controlling vocal learning are strikingly similar to language regions in the human brain. That means birds and humans have converged on similar neural mechanisms for mimicking sounds.

In my work, I study how vocal learning birds perceive patterns of sounds. Patterns can be thought of as sequences of basic units, whether they are words, bird sounds, or geometric shapes.

With this framework, we can look at language and birdsong on the same plane. But since I don't speak bird, I ask the birds to tell me what patterns they can hear. I train them to perform the equivalent of a human hearing test: instead of raising their hand when they hear a sound, they peck a key.

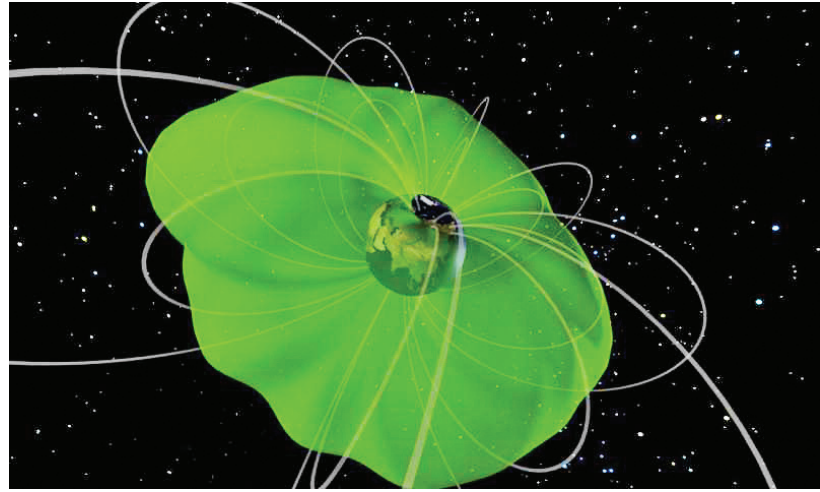
Parakeets can hear
Using this approach, our lab (the Avian Behavioral Neuroscience lab at University of Maryland) has shown that parakeets can hear when a single element of their long rambling song is played out of order, meaning they know grammar-like rules about how their song should be arranged.

And I am just one of many scientists worldwide exploring the cognitive abilities of vocal learning birds. Exciting research using these feathered linguists is pushing us closer than ever to understanding how a brain without language could evolve into one with it.

Scientists from the University of Texas Southwestern and Duke University recently discovered a new pathway in the songbird brain by making firing neurons glow.

(Source: Scientific American)

NASA's newly rediscovered IMAGE mission provided key aurora research



On January 20, 2018, amateur astronomer Scott Tilley detected an unexpected signal coming from what he later postulated was NASA's long-lost IMAGE satellite, which had not been in contact since 2005.

On Jan. 30, NASA — along with help from a community of IMAGE scientists and engineers — confirmed that the signal was indeed from the IMAGE spacecraft. Whatever the next steps for IMAGE may be, the mission's nearly six years in operation provided robust research about the space around Earth that continue to guide science to this day.

On March 25, 2000, NASA launched the Imager for Magnetopause-to-Aurora Global Exploration, or IMAGE, mission. It was the first mission to use neutral atom, photon and radio imaging techniques to produce large-scale, simultaneous measurements of the charged particles that exist in near-Earth space — namely in our magnetosphere, the magnetic fields that surround our planet, and its inner bubble of cold material called the plasmasphere.

Earth's environment
"IMAGE was a discovery machine and a seminal mission that gave us a broader perspective on Earth's environment and its ever-changing magnetosphere," said Jim Green, director of planetary science at NASA Headquarters in Washington, who worked as a co-investigator and deputy project scientist for IMAGE. "Much of my career as a magnetospheric physicist was with IMAGE, and the science was transformative."

Originally designed as a two-year mis-

sion, IMAGE was approved twice to continue its operations. But when the spacecraft unexpectedly failed to make contact on a routine pass on Dec. 18, 2005, its promising tenure seemed to be cut short.

Investigations into possible causes of failure suggested that the transmitter controller power source was tripped, possibly by an incoming high-energy cosmic ray or radiation belt particle.

It was hypothesized that passing through a dramatic change in energy — such as what happens when a spacecraft experiences total darkness during an eclipse — could potentially reset the spacecraft. But after a 2007 eclipse failed to induce a reboot, the mission was declared over.

Before that, however, IMAGE was a powerhouse. The data collected during its nearly five years of operation led to some 40 new discoveries about Earth's magnetosphere and plasmasphere.

Energetic neutral atom
Many of these discoveries had their basis in energetic neutral atom, or ENA, imaging, a novel technique pioneered by IMAGE to render the invisible visible.

The technique makes use of some fundamental space physics. Particles with an electric charge — like the ions that make up much of the plasma in the magnetosphere — are bound to Earth's magnetic field lines, spinning around them like a yo-yo on a string.

But when they crash into neutral particles, the charged particles can steal the neutral's electrons in a process called charge exchange, becoming neutral themselves.

(Source: phys.org)

Doctor believes standing at work can help shed pounds

We all know exercise is crucial to health and wellness, but less clear is how to fit physical activity into a busy work day.

Many office jobs require long hours of sitting behind a desk, but a sedentary lifestyle has long been linked to multiple health problems, including weight gain and obesity.

A new study finds getting up and standing for six hours a day burns an extra 54 calories. Doesn't sound like much, but if you do the math, it translates into a five and a half pound weight loss after a year and 22 pounds over 4 years.

Study author, Dr. Francisco Lopez-Jimenez of the Mayo Clinic, takes it a step further by turning his work space into a mini-gym.

Experts say even minimal activity throughout the day, compared to just sitting, doing nothing, can help prevent heart attacks and stroke.

"We spend 10 hours of our lives every day at work, way more than we spend at home, so I think it makes sense to make our office one of our main settings for physical activity," said Lopez-Jimenez. (Source: WTHR)

For the first time in humans, Zika syndrome susceptibility linked to genetic background

Neural progenitor cells (NPC) derived from congenital Zika syndrome (CZS) affected and non-affected twins show different rates of virus infection and different RNA expression of genes associated to neural development. The expression imbalance happens even before the infection with the Zika virus in vitro.

These results confirm the hypothesis of a genetic or epigenetic influence on susceptibility to CZS and microcephaly. The findings were published in Nature Communications on Friday, 2 February 2018.

The researchers, led by Dr. Mayana Zatz and Maria Rita Passos-Bueno - geneticists from the Human Genome and Stem Cell Research Center from the University of São Paulo (USP) -, also concluded that a single gene cannot explain the cases of CSZ development nor the brain resistance to Zika virus.

About 6% to 12% of the babies born from mothers infected with the Zika virus during pregnancy will have the CZS. Why not all of them are affected by the syndrome is yet to be explained. This study shed lights on the genetic components associated to it.

"If the baby has these genetic susceptibility factors, we believe he will not have microcephaly unless he is infected by the Zika virus. Maybe we can identify these people and prioritize them in a future vaccine strategy", says Dr. Mayana Zatz.

Environmental or genetic cause
Twins provide unique information to answer whether a certain condition has an environmental or a genetic cause. If genetic factors are determinant to a congenital disease, there must be more concordance between the pair of identical (monozygotic) twin babies than between the non-identical or dizygotic twins. Identical siblings should be more often both affected, than dizygotic twins that will be more likely "discordant" (one affected and one non-affected).

If the environment leads to the condition, the pattern observed in the two siblings of non-identical will be the same as observed in identical twins. It means that either none of the siblings will be affected, or both, or just one of them, independently of being monozygotic or dizygotic.

The study started in 2016, during Zika epidemics in Brazil. Mayana Zatz and her team looked for twins in which at least one baby had microcephaly. They accomplished to get in touch with families from 9 pairs of twins from 6 Brazilian states.

Two pairs were identical twins, with both affected; one pair was non-identical but also had both affected; and 6 pairs were non-identical and discordant - one affected and one unaffected.

This first scenario contributed to the hypothesis of genetic influence on Zika infection during fetal development.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

New material efficiently generates hydrogen from water

The use of hydrogen as a fuel and energy storage medium as interested scientists for decades, but physics isn't on our side. Generating hydrogen from water requires a lot of power and expensive materials, but researchers from Washington State University may have developed a method that could make it a viable way to store energy cheaply and efficiently.



Many of the technologies we look toward as part of a renewable energy economy are less consistent than traditional means. For example, solar power produces a lot of energy during the day and none at night. It's the same story with wind power — it might provide more power than needed when it's gusty out, but none on a calm day.

You need some way to store excess energy for later use, and battery technology comes with its own complications. If you can generate hydrogen, it's an extremely efficient way to store energy. Just pump it into a fuel cell, and you get water and energy. In addition to industrial storage, some vehicles could also be powered by hydrogen fuel cells.

The issue with using hydrogen is that you need a lot of power to split a water molecule (the most common source of hydrogen atoms), and the catalysts needed are expensive. Most methods use either platinum or ruthenium, and they must be replaced frequently as they degrade.

As described in a newly published study, the Washington State team used cheap and plentiful nickel and iron to make a water-splitting catalyst.

The team calls its material a "porous nanofoam." It's a bit like a metallic sponge with microscopic holes and tunnels that give it a very large total surface area.

The team calls its material a "porous nanofoam." It's a bit like a metallic sponge with microscopic holes and tunnels that give it a very large total surface area. (Source: extremetech.com)

Here's why naps are really good for you, according to science

You may be familiar with that feeling of overwhelming sleepiness during the mid-afternoon.

It's common, occurs whether you've eaten lunch or not, and is caused by a natural dip in alertness from about 1 to 3pm. So, if you find yourself fighting off sleep in the middle of the day and you're somewhere where you can have a nap, then do it.

Taking the time for a brief nap will relieve the sleepiness almost immediately and improve alertness for several hours after waking. And there are many other benefits too.

Napping rates are greater in countries like Greece, Brazil and Mexico that have a culture of siesta, which incorporate "quiet time" in the early afternoon for people to go home for a nap. In such countries, up to 72

percent of people will nap as often as four times per week.

Naps are not only beneficial because they make us feel less sleepy and more alert, but because they improve our cognitive functioning, reaction times, short-term memory and even our mood.

Our research (not yet published) has found those who regularly nap report feeling more

alert after a brief nap in the afternoon when compared to those who only nap occasionally.

Another research group found that motor learning, which is where brain pathways change in response to learning a new skill, was significantly greater following a brief afternoon nap for regular nappers when compared to non-nappers.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

BSI's Deposits Fund, a Safe and Modern Service Observing Intl. Standards

Bank Saderart Iran (BSI) is home to over 45,000 safe deposit funds in its branches across the country that keep the most precious assets and belongings of customers observing the world's highest standards, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

This leading bank in the country has provided suitable condition observing requirements of international standards with the aim of creating a safe and secured place in

different sizes to protect assets and precious belongings of its clients and customers in the best form possible.

The bank also offers the abovementioned services to its dear customers according to the equal tariff to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the report added.

Equipped with vast potentials in the field of deposit boxes with the ownership option, network of branches of Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) in the following provinces has

provided safe and secured banking services to customers: Tehran, Fars, Ardebil, Kermanshah, Yazd, Isfahan, Qazvin, Gilan, Bushehr, Hamedan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Hormozgan, Qom, Markazi, Zanjan, East and West Azarbaijan, Chaharmahal-o Bakhtiari, Ilam, Kordestan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyerahmad, North and South Khorasan, Lorestan and Mazandaran, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.

Some 1,400 schools in Tehran to be renovated in 10 years

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The organization for development, renovation, and equipping of school of Tehran, affiliated with Education Ministry, will retrofit and reconstruct 1,400 dilapidated schools in the province over the course of 10 years, ISNA reported on Saturday.



Dariush Varnaseri, director general for Tehran province organization for development, renovation, and equipping of school, has explained that all schools in the capital have up-to-date cooling and heating systems and that the main problems are old school buildings situated in rundown areas which are not earthquake resistance.

“Such schools age over 40 years which amount to 1,400,” Varnaseri said, stating, “we are not worried that these buildings would collapse out of the blue, what we are worried about is that such schools cannot resist an earthquake.”

There are 6,000 schools in Tehran, 2,500 of which are newly constructed, he noted. “Some 2,200 schools have also undergone renovation.”

“We are planning on renovating the current dilapidated schools in a 10-year period,” he highlighted.

Wastage, unhealthy diet, safety hazards threatening Iran’s food sector

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Food wastage, unhealthy diet and food-safety hazards are the three main challenges threatening the food sector in Iran, the deputy agriculture minister said on Saturday.



The food wastage in Iran is enough to feed some 15 million people annually, Eskandar Zand regretted.

Moreover, Zand added, the food high in salt, fat and hydrocarbons are endangering public health.

The pesticides and in general chemicals which are released to the ecosystem have seriously affected food quality in the country, he highlighted, adding, this has given rise to food-safety risks.

LEARN ENGLISH

Pizza Delivery

A: Good evening, Pizza House. This is Marty speaking. May I take your order?

B: Um yes... I'd like a **medium** pizza with **pepperoni,olive**, and extra cheese.

A: We have a **two-for-one** special on large pizzas. Would you like a large pizza **instead**?

B: Sure, that **sounds good**.

A: Great! Would you like your second pizza to be the same as the first?

B: No, make the second one with ham, pineapple and green peppers. Oh, and make it thin **crust**.

A: Okay, thin crust. Your **total** is \$21.50 and your order will arrive in thirty minutes or it's free!

B: Perfect. Thank you. Bye.

A: Sir, wait!! I need your address!

■ Key vocabulary

medium: an average size, not too big or small

pepperoni: a spicy sausage usually on pizza

olive: a small, egg-shaped black or green fruit that is used as food or for making oil

two-for-one: pay for one and get another one free

instead: in replacement of

sounds good: seems or appears to be okay, I agree

crust: the border of a pizza, or bread

total: complete amount you must pay

■ Supplementary vocabulary

total: sum of everything

fast food: food that is quickly made and convenient if you are in a hurry

delivery: transported or taken to your house

dough: a mix of flour and water that is used to make the base of a pizza

take-out: food you take away from the restaurant to eat

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Be kind to me!

The unbounded future of autistic children

1 → He considers the lack of insurance coverage for their drugs as the main problem of families with autistic children saying “The drugs are costly and many families cannot afford them.”

Touraj, is a pianist and also works as a typists at the Autism Society of Iran. “The capabilities of autistic children should not be underestimated,” he said, adding that the public should not reject these kids.

■ Autism in Iran

One of the important measures adopted in Iran is the autism screening programs developed by the country’s Welfare Organization in recent years. The program screens all the children between 2 to 5 years old in special centers nationwide.

On the other hand, public relation officer of Autism Society of Iran criticizes the inappropriate conditions of medical centers for autistic children and lack of true support for the involved families.

Families who cannot afford their autistic child’s treatment costs, hospitalize them in centers which are not specialized in treating autistic children which occasionally lead to aggravating the child’s conditions, said Fatemeh Rostampur.

She went on to say that treatment costs of autistic children grow 30 percent year on year and the government’s lack of financial support in this regard places an extra pressure on the involved families.

■ Autism + genius

Autism is linked to intense focus, a hawk eye for details, and excellent pattern recognition and even to genius.

One of the prominent artists who is suffering from autism spectrum is Stephen Wiltshire. Surely it’s impossible not to become surprise by his jaw-dropping drawings.

Also, some believe that many famous and influential figures in science and art including Albert Einstein, Amadeus Mozart, Sir Isaac Newton and Michelangelo were autistic.



“Able autistic individuals can rise to eminent positions and perform with such outstanding success that one may even conclude that only such people are capable of certain achievements.”

As Dr. Hans Asperger, one of the scientists often credited with identifying autism in the 1940s, once wrote: “Able autistic individuals can rise to eminent positions and perform with such outstanding success that one may even conclude that only such people are capable of certain achievements.”

Surely, nothing is more important than early intervention in autism. As those three guys demonstrated, proper treatment and rehabilitation programs help autistic children to lead a normal life, and can even turn them to geniuses if their talent is timely discovered.

Iran to adopt document on improving accessibility for the disabled

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A strategic document outlining producers to improve the country’s accessibility for physically challenged people will be adopted by February 19, YJC reported on Friday.

It took two years to prepare the document, Ebrahim Kazemi and official with Iran’s Welfare Organization said, adding, the document will focus on making cities disability friendly for people suffering different kinds of physical disabilities.

As Kazemi has explained as per the document ministries of transport and urban development, interior, as well as industry, mine and trade are tasked with implementing the necessary infrastructure for making cities accessible for the people who are facing some kind of limitations moving.



The five-year plan will be assessed every year by the experts, he noted.

Getting things done while having some sort of mobility restrictions is one of the challenges people with disabilities are dealing with in Iran. Narrow sidewalks, inaccessible public transportation, having difficulty accessing public buildings, stores, shopping centers and even some hotels are just some of the features that make cities in Iran hard to live for this group of people.

Majlis (the Iranian parliament) approved both general outlines and details of a bill on rights of persons with disabilities last month. With more than 1.3 million people living with disabilities in the country it is of utmost important to address the issue in no time soon.

Astronaut Thomas Pesquet: ‘Earth is just a big spaceship with a crew. It needs looking after’

As divisions between them widen on Earth, space must be where countries show they can work together for a common good, France’s best-known astronaut has said in a powerful plea for international cooperation beyond the final frontier.

“From up there, the Earth seems so small, so tiny, so ... the same,” said Thomas Pesquet, who spent 196 days, 17 hours and 49 minutes in space on the 50th and 51st expeditions to the International Space Station (ISS), returning in June last year.

“There are no borders. Even your own country – it’s impossible to make out where France ends, and Germany begins. You just realize, very strongly, how much we all share the same problems, how much we are, all of us, almost identical.”

Pesquet, who arrived on the ISS six months after his friend, Britain’s Tim Peake, left it, said the joint project between the US, Russian, Japanese, Canadian and European space agencies was a potent symbol of how countries can cooperate above the Earth even as below, interests diverge and tensions mount.

“Today no single country can go into space on its own,” he said. “The days when even the US could do that are long gone. And of course, up there, it’s very clear: you can only work together. You may have different views, but you have to get along. You have to make it work, every day, because you’re on the same spaceship.”

Pesquet, 39, said his spell in space – which made him so famous in France that a semi-serious campaign was launched for him to enter the presidential race – had brought home to him the urgent need for more, not less, international cooperation in the face of the planet’s “extraordinary fragility.”

Known as the overview effect, the experience of observing from 250 miles up the reality of Earth in the vastness of space has long been known to produce a cognitive shift in some astronauts. It transformed Pesquet into a militant environmentalist.

“I was already concerned about climate change and global warming,” he said, “but in a general way, like everyone else. But it’s happening on such a vast scale that from close up, it’s hard for us to grasp. In space, you take this huge step back. You experience it, fully. That really changes something.”

Throughout his entire half-year stay, Pesquet said, he had been unable to take a clear picture of Beijing. “You see the air pollution: it’s right there,” he said. “You see the river and sea pollution. You see the clear-cutting in the Amazon. You see how much smaller South America’s glaciers are than they were a few years ago.”

Viewed from orbit, what Pesquet called our “tiny, fragile planet, this delicate band of atmosphere that holds all of life, with nothing else all around it for billions of light years”

prompted an obvious if startling comparison.

“The Earth is actually just a big spaceship, with a very, very big crew,” he said. “It really has to travel sensibly, be maintained and looked after properly, or its voyage is going to come to an end. That’s how it felt to me. That was my experience.”

The obvious need for international cooperation – despite “frictions” created,


for example, by Britain’s vote to leave the EU, Russia’s annexation of Crimea and Donald Trump’s decision to pull the US out of the Paris accords, which Pesquet has publicly dubbed irresponsible – has made high-profile projects in which countries “work visibly together” all the more important, Pesquet said.

While he regrets the Brexit vote, Pesquet,


who was in London to take part in an embassy event marking France’s Night of Ideas, said he did not necessarily expect it to have a major impact on the Britain’s space programme beyond UK involvement in EU-run projects such as the Galileo GPS program (whose back-up security monitoring center, it was announced this month, is to be relocated to Spain).

(Source: The Guardian))

First Announcement



N.I.O.C
1396.5125



National Iranian
Drilling Company

Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender (Seconed Publish)

Two Stage (Semi-Compressive)

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE	DESCRIPTION	Tenders Portal Reg. No. On http://iets.mporg.ir	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial	(Rial)				
5,960	265,000,000	5,290,776,000	Computerize Torque/Turn/Time Monitoring System	3/150/111	Indent No: 43-22-9603748013 TenderNo.: CGP/25-96/021	1

Brief discriptionof subject:
National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) address pasdaran Blv., Airport Sqare,Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through Two-stage public tender (semi-pressed) upon following terms and conditions:
A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:
The evaluation is based on article (j) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender documents. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.
B) Preparation of tender documents:
Purchasing of documents:
In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.
Receiving of documents:
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum 10 days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Sector Tenders, Foreign Procurement of Capital Goods dept., end of the workshop No. 8, Karoon Industrial Area, Ahwaz, IRAN.
Tel No.: 061-34142387
Notices:
1- Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date will be known as tenderer from tender committee.
C) Delivery of call quality evaluating:
Tenderers shall submit the completed documents including qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD/DVD and documentary within 14 days from last day of document recived deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National IranianDrilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel No.: 061-34148205-6
D) Tender Guarantee:
Type of guarantee:
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that haveactivites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid toNational Iranain Drilling Company.
Duration of credit guarantee:quotation
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. WWW.NIDC.IR
NIDC Telegram Channal: @nide_pr
National Iranian Drilling Company
Foreign Procurement of Capital Goods

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۱۵/۱۱/۹۶نوبت دوم ۱۶/۱۱/۹۶

Iraq combing Anbar for remaining ISIL terrorists

The Iraqi army is reportedly combing through the expansive western Anbar Province for possible pockets of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, which the country defeated territorially last December.

Kurdish Rudaw television network reported on Saturday that the Iraqi army was carrying out an inclusive operation covering Anbar's desert areas right up to the province's border with Saudi Arabia to hunt down any remaining ISIL terrorists.

It cited Mahmood Falahi, the commander of Anbar Operations Command, as saying that the operation had started earlier in the day.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared victory over the ISIL terrorist outfit on December 9, 2017 after the army and its allies retook the last urban areas in western Iraq from the Takfiri terrorists. Ever since, the army has been rooting out small ISIL cells in Anbar and in the vicinity of the north-central Iraqi Saladin Province (Salah ad Din Governorate).

Meanwhile, Iraq's Joint Operations Command said that the forces were conducting an operation based on "accurate intelligence about the presence of a terrorist leader, Karim Afat Ali al-Samirmd, in one of houses in [Anbar's] al-Baghdadi District to meet with a terrorist cell."

■ A new mass grave

Elsewhere, Iraqi security forces have



found a mass grave in the northern province of Nineveh, which contains the bodies of dozen members of the Izadi minority group believed to have been executed by ISIL Takfiri terrorists when they were in control of an area there.

A security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Arabic-language al-Etejah television network on Saturday that federal

police forces had made the discovery in the town of Qahtaniyah, located about 100 kilometers from Mosul, and that the mass grave contained the bodies of 70 people.

He added that security forces had handed over all the bodies to the forensic department in Mosul to be identified and returned to their relatives.

Iraqi legislator Haji Kendor told Ara-

bic-language al-Ghad Press news agency on December 29, 2017 that search teams had found a mass grave that contained the bodies of 80 elderly and disabled women near the town of Sinjar, situated over 400 kilometers northwest of the capital Baghdad.

Kendor added that some of the victims had been buried alive, noting that ISIL terrorists had buried the women from the Izadi minority group in a fish farm, and the grisly discovery was made by local search teams.

Back in August 2014, ISIL terrorists overran the town of Sinjar, killing, raping, and enslaving large numbers of Izadi Kurds.

The region was recaptured in November 2015, during an operation by Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Izadi fighters.

The Office of Kidnapped Affairs in the northern Iraqi city of Dohuk said last year that around 3,500 Izadi Kurds were still being held captive by ISIL, adding that a large proportion of the abductees were women and children.

The Endowments and Religious Affairs Ministry of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government announced last August that ISIL's genocide against Izadis had forced nearly 360,000 members of the minority to flee their hometowns, and another 90,000 to leave Iraq and take refuge in others countries.

(Source: agencies)

Germany's potential coalition partners seek to overcome health, labor disputes

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives and the Social Democrats (SPD) battled on Saturday to find solutions to disputes on healthcare and labor rules as they discuss forming a government more than four months after an election.

The two parties aim to seal a deal on renewing the "grand coalition" that has governed Europe's largest economy since 2013 by the end of Sunday. But some politicians say talks on forging the unnatural partnership could run into Monday or Tuesday.

Arriving for negotiations, SPD deputy Manuela Schwesig urged the conservatives to compromise on two areas crucial to her party - abolishing fixed-term contracts for workers and reforming Germany's dual public-private healthcare system.

"I don't think Mrs. Merkel can explain why there can't be any movement there," she said.

The SPD wants to prove to its members that it would be able to push through those core policies in the role of junior partner to Merkel's conservatives to make another "grand coalition" more appealing to skeptical grassroots members.

Many of the SPD's 443,000 members - who will get the chance to vote on any coalition deal - would prefer their party to revamp itself in opposition rather than signing up to another alliance with Merkel after the SPD suffered its worst postwar election result in September.

The two camps made some progress on labor policy on

Friday by agreeing that employees in companies with more than 45 employees should have the right to move seamlessly back and forth between full- and part-time work.

Healthcare is a big stumbling block and party sources said Merkel and her Bavarian ally Horst Seehofer discussed the issue together on Saturday morning before meeting with the SPD.

The conservatives reject replacing the current system with a "citizen's insurance" as called for by the SPD and talks are now expected to focus on improving the position of those with public healthcare such as by changing billing rules for doctors, who earn more by treating private patients and so often favor them.

In a full day of negotiations on Saturday, the parties were also hoping to tick off issues including finances, rents and real estate prices, agriculture and municipalities.

They reached a deal on migration on Friday, agreeing to stick to wording of January's coalition blueprint that said the parties did not expect annual migration to exceed 220,000 per year.

But the two parties were still arguing over its meaning on Saturday, with Joachim Herrmann - a member of Merkel's CSU Bavarian allies who have called for an upper limit to migration - telling Rheinische Post newspaper he believed his party had secured a migrant camp in the negotiations.



Meanwhile SPD deputy Ralf Stegner insists the number is merely a prediction, writing on Twitter: "The fact remains that the SPD has not agreed to any upper limit and will not do so."

Migration is a sensitive issue given the influx of more than a million migrants since mid-2015 and the subsequent loss of support the conservatives suffered to the anti-migrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) in September's national election.

(Source: AP)

Afghan president leaves open possibility of talks with some Taliban

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani left open on Saturday the possibility for talks with militants who accept peace but said the door was closed to those who cause tragedies like recent attacks in the capital, Kabul.

An attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul on Jan. 20 and a suicide bombing on a crowded city street a week later have stoked public anger and stepped up pressure on Ghani's Western-backed government to improve security.

The attacks, which killed more than 130 people and were claimed by the Taliban, have also raised fresh doubt about long-running efforts to initiate talks with the insurgents.

The president's office said on Tuesday the militants had crossed a "red line" and peace would have to be won on the battle field.

But Ghani raised the possibility of reconciliation with some militants in a speech to Islamic clerics in Kabul.

"Those who are responsible for this tragedy and do not want peace, the door of peace is closed to them," Ghani said.

"Those who accept peace, they will witness that the nation will embrace them. But there is a clear difference, our commitment



to bringing peace does not mean we will sit quietly and won't retaliate."

"We will dig them out from any hiding holes."

Afghanistan's government has made such vows for years but the insurgency appears ever more resilient. Peace efforts have been made in fits and starts but without progress.

The United States President Donald Trump appeared to dash any hope for peace

efforts on Monday when he condemned the Taliban for the Kabul violence and rejected the idea of talks.

Trump last year ordered an increase in the U.S. troops, air strikes and other assistance to Afghan forces, to force the Taliban to negotiate.

But his comments on Monday suggested he saw a military victory over the Taliban, an outcome that U.S. military and diplomatic officials said could not be achieved with the

resources and manpower he had authorized.

The U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan said in Kabul on Tuesday the U.S. strategy had not changed and the aim was still to press the Taliban militarily to convince them that they had to negotiate.

The Taliban are fighting to drive out foreign troops and re-establish their form of strict Islamic law.

Afghanistan has long accused neighboring Pakistan of failing to act against Taliban plotting violence from safe havens on the Pakistani side of the border.

On Friday, Ghani accused Pakistan of being the "Taliban center" and said he was waiting for Pakistani action.

Pakistan denies helping the Taliban and a Pakistani delegation led by Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua visited Kabul on Saturday with the aim of fostering cooperation. Janjua called for both sides to stop the "blame game", Pakistani media reported.

The United States said last month it would cut security aid to Pakistan, complaining it was not doing enough to fight militants sheltering there.

(Source: AFP)

Defense minister: Saudi regime, UAE intended to invade Qatar

Qatar's defense minister says the House of Saud regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had planned a military invasion of his country at the beginning of a diplomatic crisis that erupted last year when several states cut off diplomatic relations with Doha.

In an interview with The Washington Post on Friday, Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah said Riyadh and Abu Dhabi had "tried everything" to destabilize Qatar, but "we have diffused this intention."

"They have intentions to intervene militarily," said Attiyah.

"They tried to provoke the tribes. They used mosques against us. Then they tried to get some puppets to bring in and replace our leaders," he added.

Attiyah, who traveled to the United States last week and held talks with his U.S. counterpart Jim Mattis, described the beginning of the crisis by the Saudi regime-led bloc as an "ambush" that was "miscalculated."

Asked about Qatar's relations with Iran, Attiyah said that Qatar maintained "friendly relations with everyone."

The Qatari defense minister said that the Saudi regime-led bloc had "failed" in its attempt to replace Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani with a new leader.

"They put their puppet, [Sheikh Abdullah bin Ali Al



Thani, a relative of a former Qatari emir], on TV," he said.

"They can't do anything. The Qatari people love their emir," he noted.

Back in June, the House of Saud regime, Egypt, Bahrain, and the UAE imposed a trade and diplomatic embargo on Qatar, accusing it of supporting terrorism, an allegation strongly denied by Doha.

The Saudi regime-led quartet presented Qatar with a

list of demands and gave it an ultimatum to comply with them or face consequences.

The demands included closing the Al Jazeera broadcaster, removing Turkish troops from Qatar's soil, scaling back ties with Iran, and ending relations with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood movement.

Doha, however, refused to meet the demands and denounced them as unreasonable.

Amid the diplomatic crisis, Abu Dhabi has taken an especially tough line towards Doha.

Qatar's former deputy PM has told the Spanish daily ABC that the UAE had hired a "Blackwater-linked" private security contractor to train the mercenaries.

The Qatari former deputy prime minister, Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah, told Spanish daily ABC last October that the UAE had planned a military invasion of Qatar with thousands of the U.S.-trained mercenaries, but it failed to secure the support of Washington.

A series of leaked documents revealed in November 2017 that the UAE had a stunning detailed plot to launch an economic war on Qatar.

Dubai security chief Dhahi Khalfan also once called on the Saudi regime-led coalition involved in a deadly military campaign against Yemen to bomb Al Jazeera.

(Source: Press TV)

HRW urges Turkey to end 'lethal force' against fleeing Syrians

Human Rights Watch called on Ankara on Saturday to stop using "lethal force" against Syrians trying to cross into Turkey, urging it to open its border to those seeking asylum.

A major offensive waged by the fighting sides in the foreign instigated violence in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib has displaced more than 270,000 people since mid-December, according to the United Nations.

Many have tried to flee into Turkey, but border guards have been "indiscriminately shooting at and summarily returning Syrian asylum seekers," HRW said.

Turkey, which hosts an estimated 3.5 million Syrian refugees, has tried to push back anyone trying to enter across its southern border since August 2015.

Some Syrians have managed to cross by resorting to the services of smugglers, including more than a dozen who crossed between May and December 2017 and shared their accounts with HRW.

"Syrians fleeing to the Turkish border seeking safety and asylum are being forced back with bullets and abuse," HRW's deputy Middle East director Lama Fakih said.

Others described being detained, beaten and prevented from seeking medical attention, and said at least 10 people, including a child, were killed by fire from Turkish border guards.

"The Turkish government should issue standard instructions to the border guards at all crossing points that lethal force must not be used against asylum seekers and no asylum seeker is to be mistreated, but should be given access to medical aid when required," HRW said.

"It should ensure that all crossing points comply with these core legal obligations, as well as the ban on refoulement," the return of refugees to a country where they could be persecuted.

Public debate on the return of Syrian refugees has been growing in Turkey, as well as in Lebanon and Jordan, which also host large numbers.

But HRW warned that Syria remained too dangerous for civilians to be sent back, particularly after Turkey opened up a new front in the conflict last month with a cross-border assault on Kurdish militia in the Afrin enclave.

"Conditions in Syria are not safe for refugee returns," Fakih said.

"With hostilities in Afrin contributing to the growing displacement crisis in the country, Turkey should allow the thousands of desperate Syrians seeking refuge to cross the border."

(Source: AFP)

Trudeau threatens to leave NAFTA rather than 'take any old deal'

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made some of his most aggressive comments to date on dealing with the United States demands to rework the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), adding he still thinks he can get the right deal for his country.

"We aren't going to take any old deal," Trudeau said on Friday at a town hall in Nanaimo, British Columbia. "Canada is willing to walk away from NAFTA if the United States proposes a bad deal. We won't be pushed around."

His comments come days after the U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to get tough on trade, though he didn't single out NAFTA, in his State of the Union address. The latest round of NAFTA talks wrapped up in Montreal on Monday, with all sides saying there had been progress, while acknowledging significant gaps remain on some issues.

Trudeau said the 24-year-old pact has been good for both Canada and the U.S. and a reworked deal could still be reached. "Canceling it would be extremely harmful and disruptive to people in the United States," Trudeau said.

"We are going to keep negotiating in good faith," he added. "We are confident we are going to be able to get to the right deal for Canada, not just any deal."

■ Growing Tension

While Trump said last year he was seeking to just tweak trade ties with Canada -- and Mexico looked like the main target of a revamp -- the positions have shifted. Growing tensions were evident at the close of round-six of NAFTA talks this week in Montreal when the U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer lashed out at Canada for filing a sweeping trade case against America at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in January.

Lighthizer also revived a debate between the two countries over trade-gap statistics and called Canada's ideas for new auto-content requirements in NAFTA as too vague and rowing in the opposite direction of the U.S.'s needs.

Trudeau's comments on Friday could ratchet up pressures and remind the U.S. that Canada -- America's largest export market -- is thinking about life after NAFTA if the negotiations collapse.

The Canadian dollar fell as much as 1.4 percent against the greenback shortly after Trudeau's comments and traded 1.3 percent weaker at C\$1.2423 at 4:34 p.m. in Toronto. It is up 1.2 percent against the U.S. dollar this year.

(Source: Bloomberg)

The women we forget during Black History Month

8→ Celia Jane Allen, a black woman from Mississippi who had relocated to Chicago, was one of these women. In the mid-1930s, she became an active member of the Peace Movement of Ethiopia. Embracing Gordon's vision for unifying black people in the U.S. and abroad, Allen took on a leadership role in the organization.

In 1937, she became one of the national organizers. From the late 1930s to the mid-1940s, Allen traveled extensively throughout the South, visiting local homes and churches to recruit new members and advocate the relocation to West Africa. By the end of World War II, she was successful in getting thousands of black southerners to join the movement and embrace Black Nationalist ideas.

Today, these women's stories are largely absent in popular accounts of Black Nationalism. More often than not, the assumption is that men exclusively established and led Black Nationalist organizations. This could not be farther from the truth. As these few examples reveal, women were key players in Black Nationalist movements, and their efforts helped to keep Black Nationalist ideas alive in U.S. politics.

(Source: Newsweek)

Novak Djokovic has further procedure on elbow injury after Australian loss

Novak Djokovic says he has had a “small medical intervention” on a persistent elbow injury and is “on the good road now to full recovery”.

The former world number one returned after six months out when he played at the Australian Open in January.

He lost to unseeded South Korean Chung Hyeon in the last 16 and had treatment on his right elbow during the match.

“It’s quite a journey this one, I have to say. I’m learning a lot and for that I’m grateful,” said Djokovic, 30.

“I’ve always taken care of my body and looked for the most natural ways to heal, and my body has rewarded me with some incredible years on tour.

“I am super positive and excited to follow my recovery through so I can come back to the place I love the most. The court.”

Before Melbourne, the Serb, a 12-time Grand Slam champion, had not played since retiring against Tomas Berdych in the quarter-finals of Wimbledon last July.

“I’ve been carrying this injury for the past two years, and during this time I’ve been seeing many doctors,” said Djokovic.

“I took six months off last season hoping to come back fully recovered, but unfortunately I still felt pain.

“I agreed with my team that I would try different methods after I finished in Australia and a few days ago I accepted a small medical intervention on my elbow.

“It seems like I am on the good road now to full recovery.”
(Source: BBC)

Manchester City draw with Burnley after late goal

Pep Guardiola’s prediction of a “complicated” trip to Burnley proved to be correct, as the Clarets made the most of Manchester City’s wastefulness to snatch a 1-1 draw on Saturday.

Despite their profligacy, City had looked on course for a battling win, until Johann Gudmundsson popped up in the 83rd minute to snatch a point.

City boss Guardiola was forced to shrug off claims from Manchester United counterpart Jose Mourinho that the destination of the Premier League title is already certain, with the leaders enjoying a 15-point cushion at the top.

That advantage was 16 points by the full-time whistle at Turf Moor, and City are just eight wins away from securing a third title, although they were reminded of the league’s many hazards by Sean Dyche’s obdurate outfit.

The Burnley backline could do nothing to stop Danilo’s long-distance rocket midway through the first half, but City’s failure to add to their tally left the game on a knife-edge, with Raheem Sterling guilty of two shocking close-range misses.

After Aaron Lennon’s fierce shot was tipped onto the post by Ederson, Burnley kept at it and Gudmundsson kept his cool to deny them a win.

(Source: Soccerway)

Gattuso: ‘Milan aren’t Brad Pitt’

Gennaro Gattuso admires Udinese and warns Milan not to get caught up in their own hype. “We’re not Brad Pitt, we’re as ugly as me and my beard.”

This is the first time that two members of the 2006 World Cup squad will face off as opposition Coaches.

“I shared so much with Massimo Oddo. He’s an intelligent and funny guy whose success speaks for him. He got a few slaps in the face from me for his pranks, as we had very different ideas on how to prepare for a game,” laughed Gattuso in his Press conference.

“We need an excellent performance tomorrow to get a result. Udinese are physically strong, they force teams back, but also counter very quickly. We mustn’t get anything wrong, as at the moment only Napoli and Juventus are on better form.”

The January transfer window closed with Gabriel Paletta’s contract terminated by mutual consent and Gustavo Gomez still in talks with Boca Juniors.

“I didn’t want any new buys because I firmly believe in this squad. The club asked if I needed anything, but I always said we were fine as we were. “I know my ideas and the hard work of my staff. I keep my feet on the ground and try not to read too much that is said about me, because I know there’s a long way to go.

“We mustn’t forget what people were saying about us only six weeks ago, otherwise we’ll regress. We’re not Brad Pitt now, we’ve got to continue being as ugly as me and my beard, with dark circles under our eyes.

“I hear talk of a Champions League place, but we’re not even in the Europa League spots now.”

(Source: Football Italia)

I’m no risk-taker – Valverde rules Dembele out of Espanyol game

Ousmane Dembele is back in training with Barcelona but will not take part in Sunday’s derby against Espanyol, as Ernesto Valverde insists he will be “careful” bringing the Frenchman back from injury.

The 20-year-old winger has endured a miserable start to life in Catalonia with respect to injuries, tearing his hamstring in just his second LaLiga outing, ruling him out until January.

He then suffered another hamstring problem against Real Sociedad on January 16, in his second match since returning to fitness, and was expected to be out for a further four weeks.

Dembele appears to be ahead of schedule in his recovery, having taken part in full training on Saturday, but Valverde has urged people not to get too carried away, adamant the attacker is not going to be risked on Sunday.

“Dembele is not here to play,” Valverde told reporters.

“We’ll try to be careful with him; he’s part of the [training] group. We’ll see when he’s going in. I’m not a risk-taker.”

(Source: Goal)

No flags, but the third biggest team: When is a Russian not a Russian?



What was the point of banning Russia from the Winter Olympics when 169 of their athletes are still being allowed to compete as neutrals?

Despite International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach’s condemnation of Russia’s “unprecedented attack on the integrity of the Olympics”, the neutral competitors cleared to take part will be the third biggest group at the Games in Pyeongchang - behind only Canada and the United States.

And on Thursday a court overturned life-time Olympic bans on 28 Russian competitors.

So how did we get here? What exactly will this Russian team look like? And what about the future fight against doping?

■ **Will they be bigger than other countries?**

The biggest team will be the United States - they will have 242 athletes competing, while Canada has a team of 225.

Germany, predicted to finish top of the medal table, have named a squad of 153 athletes - 16 fewer than the Russian contingent - host nation South Korea will have 146, and Great Britain 59 - its largest ever team for a Winter Olympics.

There were 232 Russians competing at Sochi, when the host nation topped the medal table. Since then, 13 of those Russian medals - including four golds - have been stripped from the athletes because of doping.

However, Thursday’s Court of Arbitration for Sport decision to overturn doping bans given to 28 Russian athletes means these may end up being given back - and Russia could once again sit top of the 2014 standings. Confused? So is the IOC. But more on that later...

■ **How will we recognize them?**

The Russian athletes who have been cleared to compete as neutrals will be known as ‘Olympic athletes from Russia’.

The IOC has proposed a design for the logo these athletes will wear - and has specified that “no national identification design ele-

ments should be featured on the uniforms”.

They will compete under the Olympic flag, and the Olympic anthem will be played at any medal ceremonies they are involved in. So, no Russian flag and no Russian anthem.

The athletes are also expected to “refrain from any public form of publicity, activity and communication associated with the national flag, anthem, emblem and symbols” at any Olympic site.

This includes a ban on sharing or posting any such images or messages on social media.

However, the IOC has said there will be one exception to this - athletes will be allowed to display the Russian flag in their bedrooms,

so long as it is not publicly visible.

Will they win more medals than most teams?

Before the final list of 169 athletes was confirmed in January, Sports data analyst Gracenote was predicting 18 medals for the Olympic Athletes from Russia - including five golds. That was expected to be enough for 10th place in the medal table, but Gracenote now thinks they will win eight - three golds, three silver and two bronze.

That’s because several athletes who it expected to win medals were not given clearance to compete by the IOC.

Denis Yuskov and Pavel Kulzhnikov were

fancied to perform well in the speed skating, cross country skier Sergey Ustiugov is absent, and speed skater Olga Graf is boycotting the Games. Graf won two bronze medals at Sochi but rejected an IOC invitation to compete in South Korea, because “sport has become a bargaining chip in dirty political games”.

The revised predicted total of eight medals would be enough for 14th in the rankings, seven places above Great Britain.

Gracenote is forecasting five medals for Britain - two silver and three bronze - and Germany are expected to finish top of the table on 40 medals, including 14 gold medals.

(Source: BBC)

Klopp hopes home advantage can help in Tottenham ‘six-pointer’



Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp has termed Sunday’s Premier League meeting with Tottenham Hotspur as a ‘six-point’ clash but believes his team hold the advantage with the game being played at Anfield.

In-form Liverpool are unbeaten in 14 league games but face a tough challenge against a Tottenham team high on confidence after their dominant 2-0 win over second-placed Manchester United in mid-week. “These are ‘six-point’ games and the only advantage one team can have in a situation like this is to play at home, at Anfield in this case,” Klopp said.

“That’s really good and I’m looking forward to it.”

Liverpool are third in the league with 50 points and ahead of champions Chelsea on goal difference while Tottenham are two points behind as they target a Champions League spot.

“With the situation in the table, our targets and what we want to do and where we want to finish the season, it is clear it is

a very important game,” Klopp said.

Asked about winger Sadio Mane, who has scored two goals in his last four league games but missed chances in the 3-0 victory over Huddersfield Town, Klopp said, “Even if Sadio is not at his best, he is still a threat for the other team.

“Mane had the two biggest chances in Huddersfield and didn’t score. No problem when you win 3-0. You need to carry on.

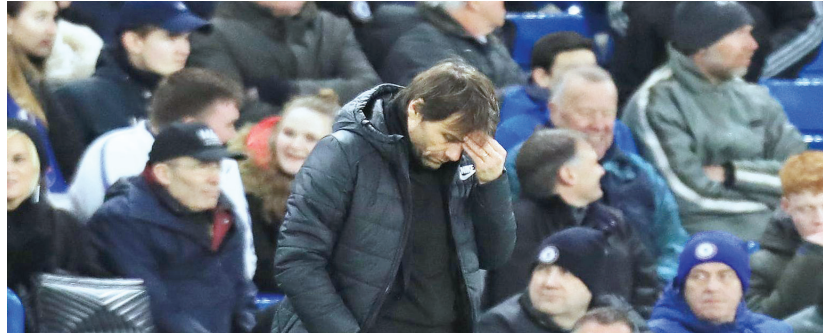
“You have to go through. You have to build on the good things and work on the not-so-good things. Sadio on an average day is still a fantastic player, that’s the good news.”

Klopp said he was pleased with new signing Virgil van Dijk’s progress in his first month at Merseyside.

“We will all see Van Dijk at his best after the summer but we don’t have the time to wait until then, why should we? He can bring a lot of things in already and that’s good.”

(Source: Mirror)

Antonio Conte keen to see out his Chelsea contract



Antonio Conte dismissed speculation surrounding his future at Premier League champions Chelsea, saying that he plans to see out his contract and is focused on his job.

Conte, who guided Chelsea to the league title in his first season, has struggled to extract the same level of ruthlessness from the London club in his second campaign in charge.

Chelsea are fourth in the table with 50 points, 18 points behind leaders Manchester City, and the Italian manager admitted the club were in danger of missing out on a Champions League place next season after a 3-0 defeat by Bournemouth in midweek.

“The only thing I can tell you now is that I have 18 months left on my contract at Chelsea and my will and my desire is to stay here and continue my work,” Conte said ahead of Monday’s league clash at 11th-placed Watford.

The Italian has suggested this season that his squad is too small to be playing

Premier League, Cup and Champions League competitions and that he has little control over signing new players in the transfer window.

British media reports have said Conte’s relationship with team owner Roman Abramovich has become strained, particularly over reinforcements to the squad but the manager said he was not interested in talk of him being sacked.

“From the start of the season, and since the defeat against Bournemouth, there’s been a lot of speculation about me being sacked,” Conte added.

“But I’m not interested in this. I’m only focused on working with my team and trying my best for the team.

“I trust in my work. This is the only way I work and that brought me to be one of the best coaches. Only trusting in my work and in my job. I continue in this way, because I think this has made me become one of the best.”

(Source: Reuters)

Father of molested girls lunges at disgraced USA Gymnastics doctor in court

The enraged father of three daughters who were sexually abused by Larry Nassar lunged at the former USA Gymnastics national team doctor and tried to attack him during a sentencing hearing in a Michigan courtroom on Friday.

The father, Randall Margraves, was nearly within striking distance of Nassar before officers tackled him to the floor in front of shocked spectators including his daughters. The judge later accepted Margraves’ explanation that he “lost control” of his emotions and said she would not punish him.

The chaotic scene began minutes after sisters Lauren and Madison Margraves had concluded tearful victim statements on the second day of a sentencing hearing in Eaton County, following similar presentations by scores of other women through previous court sessions.

Nassar has already been sentenced to up to 175 years in prison for his guilty plea in neighboring Ingham County to molesting young women under the guise of medical treatment. He is scheduled to receive an additional sentence on Monday for his guilty plea to related charges in Eaton County.

At a news conference with his family and attorney hours after the outburst, Margraves apologized for his behavior, saying he was “remorseful” and “embarrassed” for losing his composure.

“I am no hero. My daughters are heroes, and all the victims and survivors of this terrible atrocity,” he said, adding that he became enraged when “I had to hear what was said in those (victim) statements, and I had to look over at Larry Nassar shaking his head.”



Margraves said he had never heard the explicit details of what his daughters endured at the hands of Nassar until he listened to their accounts in court.

A tall, burly man with thick gray hair, Margraves said his relationship with his daughters had long been “strained, distant and difficult. Now I know the main reason. The reason was Larry Nassar.”

“Now I have to deal with the fact that I failed to protect my daughters,” he added.

The courtroom disturbance came after Margraves, standing alongside his daughters and wife, asked if Judge Janice Cunningham, as part of sentencing, would “grant me five minutes in a locked room” with Nassar.

The judge replied that was not an option and rebuked

Margraves for his vulgar language in calling Nassar “a son of a bitch” in court. Margraves then asked for one minute alone instead. The judge demurred again as some in the courtroom laughed uncomfortably.

The father then bolted towards Nassar, seated in an orange jump suit behind a nearby table. Margraves’ daughters’ hands flew to their mouths, and one of Nassar’s lawyers moved to shield his client.

■ **‘What if this happened to you?’**

Gasps, cries and shouts filled the courtroom as Margraves was wrestled to the floor, knocking items off a desk on the way down before he was handcuffed, while Nassar was whisked to safety.

“One minute!” Margraves demanded repeatedly, his head pinned down. As uniformed officers pulled him from the courtroom, he implored them, “What if this happened to you guys?”

The judge then ordered a recess.

The attempted attack underscored the anguish Nassar’s abuse has caused his victims’ parents, some of whom were present in the doctor’s exam room even as Nassar, unbeknownst to them, was molesting their children. Several have spoken in court about the guilt they feel for exposing their children to a sexual predator.

“I failed my own daughter,” Lynn Erickson said tearfully in court on Friday, as her daughter Ashley, one of Nassar’s victims, wiped away tears.

(Source: Reuters)

Athlete Sepideh Tavakoli targets Asian Games medal

S P O R T S Iranian woman athlete Sepideh Tavakoli says she will do her best efforts to win a medal in the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Tavakoli won the gold medal in the Long Jump Pentathlon in the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships. Uzbekistan's Aleksandra Yurkevskaya finished in second place and bronze medal went to Lrina Velihanova of Turkmenistan.

Tavakoli had already won a silver medal in the women's high jump with 1.80 meters in the first day of the competition.

"First, I have to say I am very happy to win the gold medal in my own soil Iran. I could better my record as well as winning the gold and it's very outstanding," Tavakoli said.

"I dedicate the medal to my husband, my family and my dear nation," she added.

"I am going to win a medal in the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta. After a short rest, I will prepare myself for the Games," Tavakoli concluded.

The eighth edition of the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships are being held at the Aftab-e Enqelab Sports Complex in Tehran, Iran.

Iran are competing in the event with 39 athletes.

The event is seen as key to athletes' preparations for the IAAF World Indoor Championships, due to take place in Birmingham between March 1 and 4.



Pouralifard re-elected as Iran Bodybuilding Federation President



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Nasser Pouralifard has been re-elected as President of Iran Bodybuilding Federation on Saturday.

Pouralifard will serve for another four years as President after securing 22 out of 42 votes available in the elections held in Iran's Olympic Academy, located in Tehran.

Shahrokh Shahnazi, Iran National Olympic Committee Secretary General,

attended the elections.

Abdolmehdi Nassirzadeh and Mansour Abdi came second and third with 19 votes and one vote, respectively.

Iran are powerhouse in the sport as the Persian ranked first at the 7th IFBB Men's World Amateur Bodybuilding Championships & 12th World Amateur Classic Bodybuilding Championships & IFBB International Congress in Spain in November.

Iran beach soccer remain third in global rankings



S P O R T S The Persian Beach Soccer Cup winners remained in third place in the global rankings published on Friday.

Iran are Movers of the Month for January, having claimed the Persian Beach Soccer Cup in Bushehr late in the month, beachsoccer.com reported.

Marco Octavio's men remained third in the global rankings - behind Brazil and Portugal respectively - having seen

off Spain, Ukraine and Azerbaijan to successfully defend their Persian title on home sand.

The world's top 14 remained unchanged, although Ukraine jumped above Oman into 15th as a result of their third-place finish in Bushehr this week.

The Azeris also move up after their efforts in Iran, moving four places to 33rd, while the USA and Chile swap places inside the top 30.

German Feuring lauds high level eight-ball foreign diplomats' cup

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Representative of German Embassy in Tehran Erik Feuring says that the level of the eight-ball foreign diplomats' cup underway in Tehran is high.

The event has brought together diplomats from Armenian, British, Bulgarian, Egyptian, German, Greek, Indian and Tajik embassies and missions at the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Cultural Institute in the Iranian capital city of Tehran.

The diplomats' cup started on Feb. 1, and will wrap up on February 4.

"I am so glad to participate in the competition. I think the level of the tournament is satisfying and Iran successfully



hosts the competition," Feuring told the Bowling & Billiard Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran website.

"Unfortunately, I cannot participate in the competition next year because I will have to leave Iran but I will surely recommend this event to my friends," he added.

Eight-ball (often spelled 8-ball and sometimes called solids and stripes) is a pool game popular in much of the world.

Standard eight-ball is the second most competitive professional pool game, after nine-ball.

The ultimate object of the game is to legally pocket the eight ball in a called pocket, which can only be done after all of the balls from a player's assigned group have been cleared from the table.

Gardiner: Football has the power to improve children's lives

The Grassroots Festival in Colombia had just come to an end when the mother of one of the kids taking part went up to the instructors and coaches. There was no little emotion in her voice as she told them about how much her son had enjoyed the course. He too had been moved by the occasion, describing it quite simply as the best day of his life.

FIFA Grassroots expert Stanley Gardiner's eyes lit up as he told this very special story at the FIFA Technical Experts' Workshop in Doha. "This is precisely why I love my job," he said. "It opens up the possibility for me to really drive and change things, and that gives you a feeling of immense satisfaction."

The joy that Gardiner feels when working with youngsters came to the fore in Qatar, where around a hundred football-crazy children got to showcase their ball-skills at a Grassroots Festival, which was also an opportunity for eight FIFA experts to train

local coaches in how to deal with kids, in the practical part of the workshop after the theory of the morning.

The focus was not just on having fun, but also on encouraging the values of respect and fair play. Football is a sport that is open to everyone, regardless of age, gender, religion and ethnic and social background, and can be played anywhere. It is a veritable school of life, and one that throws up something new every day for Gardiner. "The children make you strive to be a better person," he said, "because they look up to you as a role model."

Gardiner has been working as a FIFA grassroots expert for nine years now, teaching grassroots instructors who go on to train the grassroots coaches in the various national associations. The instructors and coaches are a source of inspiration for him. "Their experience helps me to design a balanced course that children from all around the world can benefit from," he explained.

A Grassroots Festival is four-to-six months in the making. It requires administrative work such as defining the location, booking accommodation and sending out equipment, as well as defining the programmes, which have to be tailored to the footballing level of the children who will be taking part.

For the national associations, financing is the biggest challenge. "Some countries have less in the way of resources than others, but I am convinced that the FIFA Forward programme will help to get the money to the places where it is needed most," said Gardiner.

He is certainly in his element in Doha, sprinting around the pitch, encouraging the kids and fetching balls for them, dribbling around cones, playing one-tvos and making sure the ball finds the back of the net. And if the various moves fail to come off, no matter. Off he goes again, clapping his hands in encouragement, with a broad

smile right across his face.

"The children give you so much back. They absolutely love playing and show you that you should never stop having fun – even when life takes a turn for the worse," he explained. "Many of those taking part in Grassroots Festivals have to deal with tough situations in their everyday lives, and football gives them the chance to leave that behind and set themselves new goals. Football has the power to improve these children's lives."

After coming together for a final huddle and pledging allegiance to their team, the children run off the pitch to tell their parents all about what they had been up to. Gardiner meanwhile, in the company of his colleagues, watches them leave before summing up the experience. "It doesn't matter if you are in Qatar or Colombia. On days like these you realise how important the courses are for the children. And that's what we need to focus on – every time."

(Source: FIFA)

Mexican powerlifter Jesus Castillo has been chosen as Americas 'Athlete of the Year for 2017' after receiving 58 per cent of the public vote.

The 33-year-old won a dramatic world title in the men's up to 107kg at Mexico City 2017 thanks to a 236kg lift in his final attempt. Castillo was in third position after two rounds, but his home crowd gave him the strength to produce an epic comeback.

"Winning this award means a lot not just for me, but for the Paralympic Movement in Mexico," he said. "Already being among the finalists represents all the hard work we

have done over the last years. It is a reward for me and for all the people that has supported me since the beginning of my career.

"Winning medals in front of the Mexican crowd is an amazing feeling. I did it at the Guadalajara 2011 Parapan American Games and again at Mexico City 2017. It is something I would like to repeat as many times as possible."

Canadian alpine skier Mac Marcoux, who claimed four golds at the World Championships in Tarvisio, Italy, ended second with 34 per cent of the votes. Colombia's five-time

swimming world champion Carlos Serrano (six per cent) completed the top three.

USA's Tatyana McFadden and Oksana Masters, Brazil's Petrucio Ferreira, Argentina's Gustavo Fernandez, Canada's Brent Lakatos, Mexico's Amalia Perez and Trinidad and Tobago's Akeem Stewart were the other seven nominees.

The nominations were compiled from submissions by National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) from across the continent.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

New Lewis Hamilton contract 'a matter of time'

Mercedes chief Toto Wolff believes securing Lewis Hamilton's services beyond 2018 is a formality, insisting a new agreement is "just a matter of time".

Hamilton has spent his entire racing career affiliated with Mercedes, and joined the team from McLaren in 2013, before signing a new three-year contract extension mid-2015.

Hamilton has claimed three titles, in 2014, 2015 and 2017, and 41 Grand Prix victories since switching to Mercedes, but is entering the final year of his contract.

Wolff, though, expects to wrap up a new deal with Hamilton, believing ongoing discussions are developing in a positive manner.

"Lewis has become such an important pillar within the team," Wolff commented.

"It is a no-brainer that we continue with each other. The discussions are ongoing and with a very positive mind-set.

"It is just a matter of time, when we seal it and put the signature to the document."

Alongside Hamilton and team-mate Valtteri Bottas, Mercedes also has a handful of junior drivers under contract.

Esteban Ocon is entering his second full season in Formula 1 with Force India, while GP3 champion George Russell will step up to Formula 2, with Formula 1 test/practice outings also mooted.

Pascal Wehrlein, meanwhile, is poised to retain a Mercedes role, despite missing out on a 2018 seat after Sauber opted to sign Charles Leclerc to partner Marcus Ericsson.

Wolff added that Mercedes has "a completely open mind-set" regarding its programme as it ensures it has a plan in place for when Hamilton retires.

"We are trying to keep our eyes open to identify the next Lewis Hamilton for in five, six or seven years, when Lewis eventually decides he has had enough of Formula 1," Wolff said.

"We are approaching this with a completely open mind-set.

We are even looking at karting. We are supporting a young Italian boy who is barely 12 years old. We enjoy doing that.

"It is just about identifying the talent, no matter where they are at the moment."

(Source: motorsportweek.com)

'Making my Olympic debut is a dream'

Alpine skier Marta Bassino has opened up on the joy and shredded nerves of qualifying for a first Winter Olympics, as well as her lofty ambitions in South Korea in February.

The 21-year-old Sky Sports Scholar had to overcome nerves and the testing slopes in Italy and Switzerland last week to secure her spot on the Italian team.

It means a debut Games for Bassino, unveiled as one of 12 Scholars from around Europe three months ago, and is an amazing turnaround having stuttered at times during the current World Cup campaign.



"Taking part in my first Olympic games is like a dream and I can't wait to be there and do my best," Bassino said.

"It's as if I've taken a burden from my heart. It was the main goal of the season and my unhappy beginning had given me so many doubts.

"I am happy to have found myself, my skiing and to have earned this qualification despite losing many of my finger nails!"

Bassino, also known as the Snow Princess, will compete in the Giant Slalom on February 12 and the Super Combined on February 23 in PyeongChang.

Qualifying was an incredible achievement with a fourth spot at the World Cup Giant Slalom in Kronplatz and her best ever result - second at the World Cup Super Combined in Lenzerheide.

"I was very nervous in those races because I knew they would be decisive for my Olympic qualification," she added.

"At the same time though I felt confident and aware of my possibilities again so it was just great to get those two fantastic results."

Having first skied aged two with the help of ski instructor dad, her career continues to blossom. She made her World Cup debut in 2014 at the age of 18, before her first World Cup podium in Giant Slalom at Sölden two years ago.

(Source: Skysports)

Argentine coach quits after benched player pulls gun

A coach in the lower divisions of Argentine football quit after being threatened at gunpoint by a benched player.

Coach Cristian Neira of the Escuela Presidente Roca club, in one of the regional lower divisions in the Cordoba province north of Buenos Aires, quit after midfielder Cesar Pagani pulled a gun during training and demanded to be included in the starting lineup on Thursday, said president of the Cordoba Football League Emeterio Farias.

"The coach quit," Farias said in an interview with Radio Suquia on Friday. "The player threatened him with a gun during training. There's another kid who is playing [in the starting lineup] and the coach thinks he is better, and he has the right to decide who plays."

Farias said Neira decided not to press charges out of fear, but said he reported the incident to the police.

"I hope the authorities do something. A guy like this cannot be free," Farias said. "We can't allow the violent [people] to push us around."

Escuela President Roca plays in the Federal C category of Argentina professional football, one of the many lower-level regional tournaments below the first division.

(Source: Soccer.net)

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“Starless Dreams” shines at Budapest festival

A R T TEHRAN – Iranian filmmaker Mehrdad Oskui’s acclaimed documentary “Starless Dreams” has won one of the two awards in the They’re Innocent section at the Budapest International Documentary Festival. “Communion” by Anna Zamecka from Poland was another winner in the category, the organizers announced last week.



“Starless Dreams” follows a group of under-18-year-old girls taken into care for a variety of reasons ranging from drug dealing and trafficking to pick-pocketing and manslaughter. As the New Year approaches they all hope to celebrate it with their families. Documentaries from different countries competed in different categories of the festival running from January 23 to 28.

Iranian movie centers on sexual assault, culture of silence

A R T TEHRAN – Manijeh Hekmat narrates a story about sexual assault and the culture of silence in Iran in her latest movie “The Abandoned Road”.



The film premiered in the official competition of the 36th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran on Friday. The film is about a woman employee who is kidnapped and raped on the way back to her home. “The main storyline revolves around the culture of silence that is aged as long as Iranian history, but this issue is more harmful in modern society,” Hekmat said in a press conference after the premiere of her film. “The second issue of the film is rape and it would result in a rape tsunami if all Iranian women didn’t break their silence and not publicize the issue,” she added. Hekmat and her film’s stars, wearing black the press conference, associated what had occurred at the Golden Globes red carpet in solidarity with the Time’s Up campaign to fight sexual harassment in the workplace. However, she refused to comment about the resemblance and said that they will have a surprise for people in the special programs arranged for the public screening of the movie. A poster for “The Abandoned Road”, which was published last week, bears #MeToo inscriptions in various sizes.

Dennis Edwards, a former lead singer of The Temptations, dies at 74

CHICAGO (Reuters) — Grammy-winner Dennis Edwards, who performed lead vocals for some of the chart-topping Motown singles recorded by The Temptations in the 1960s and 1970s, has died at age 74, his manager said on Friday. Edwards died at a hospital in Chicago on Thursday night or Friday morning of complications from an unspecified illness, his manager Toby Ludwig said by phone. The singer, who lived outside St. Louis, would have celebrated his 75th birthday on Saturday. The Alabama-born Edwards replaced David Ruffin as lead singer of The Temptations in 1968. Edwards sang lead on some of the vocal group’s most memorable hits, including “Papa Was a Rollin’ Stone”, a 1972 release that earned Edwards and the group two Grammy Awards, and “I Can’t Get Next To You”, which topped the pop charts in 1969. Edwards left The Temptations around the time the group left Motown to sign with Atlantic Records in 1977. He rejoined and left multiple times in the 1980s, when the group enjoyed far less success on the pop charts than in the previous two decades.

“Truck” carrying story on Yazidi refugee arrives at Fajr

A R T TEHRAN – Kambuzia Partovi, director of the acclaimed drama “Café Transit”, is competing in the 36th Fajr Film Festival with his latest movies “Truck” that recounts the story of a Yazidi woman who becomes homeless after the Iraqi ethnic and religious minority is attacked by Daesh forces in the summer of 2014. “By this film, I intend to say that we could be good supporters for each other during hard times and giving the refugees shelter could be viewed as a practice of humanity,” he said in a press conference after a screening of his movie on Friday. “We still witness everyday people who are losing their lives across the world as they are fleeing their homes under the fire of wars to take refuge in other countries,” he added. Partovi planned to shoot the film in Turkey a few years ago after he failed to receive the then cultural officials’ permission to make it in Iran. The plan was not fulfilled after he could not cover the cost of production. Composer Milad Movahhedi used a woman singer of Kormanj, a group of Kurdish nomads mostly living in Khorasan Razavi Province and North Khorasan Province, to perform a song for the film. “This song should have an orchestral ambience to feature the depth of the grief suffered by the people in the region,” Movahhedi said at the press conference, but the singer was not named. “I asked the Kurdish singer to improvise about loneliness and homelessness... and



Director Kambuzia Partovi (R) and cast members Nasrin Moradi (C) and Saeid Aqakhani pose during a photocall for “Truck” at the Fajr Film Festival in Tehran on February 2, 2018. (Mehr/Mohammadreza Abbasi)

the major part of the theme music begins when the Yazidi woman and her family join a trucker on a journey,” he added. “This song has frequently been redone by many Kurdish singers and is about a woman who is searching everywhere for her missing husband,” he stated and said, “This story is similar to the one that is narrated in the film.”

Director’s piracy fear halts Fajr screening of “At Damascus Time”



A R T TEHRAN – Director Ebrahim Hatamikia prevented a screening of his latest film “At Damascus Time” at a theater in Mashhad on Friday after seeing a number people furtively recording his movie on their mobile phones. He attended the screening arranged for the 36th Fajr Film Festival at Mashhad’s Atlas Cineplex, but stepped on the stage, asking the organizers to stop screening. He also asked the organizers to have stricter control over the theaters premiering movies from the festival. The filmgoers’ cellphones were confiscated by the organizers following the comments. “At Damascus Time”, which portrays an Iranian pilot and his son as copilot seized by Daesh forces in Syria, is in the official competition at the 36th Fajr Film Festival.

Ankara exhibition showcases works by Iranian artists



A R T TEHRAN – An exhibition underway at the Ankara Chamber of Industry is hanging a collection of artworks by a group of young Iranian expatriates living in Turkey. About 90 paintings, illuminations, drawings, photos and graphic designs by 18 artists have been selected for the exhibit, the organizers have announced. The opening ceremony on Friday was attended by chamber director Nurettin Ozdebir, Iran’s cultural attaché Hossein Safarkhani and the participating artists. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Ozdebir stated that every individual knows that Iran has succeeded in fine arts. Ozdebir hoped the exhibition would help introduce Iranian culture and art to art lovers in Ankara. The exhibit will run until February 9.

Actor Robert Wagner named ‘person of interest’ in wife Natalie Wood’s drowning: CBS

HOLLYWOOD (Reuters) — Los Angeles County homicide detectives have named actor Robert Wagner a “person of interest” in the probe of the unexplained 1981 drowning of his wife, actress Natalie Wood, saying he was the last person with her before she vanished off Southern California. The latest twist in the mystery surrounding Woods’ death came in on-camera interviews of two investigators from the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department by CBS News for a segment of the program “48 Hours”, aired on Saturday. Excerpts of the interviews were released by the CBS network on Thursday ahead of the broadcast. “Person of interest” is a term used by U.S. law enforcement in referring to someone believed to possess information that would help investigators but has not been arrested or formally charged with a crime, and is not necessarily a suspect. Reuters was referred by Wagner’s publicist to his lawyer, who did not reply to requests for comment. Wood’s body was found floating in a Santa Catalina Island cove on the morning of Nov. 29, 1981, after a night of dining and drinking on the island and on a yacht with her husband Wagner, fellow actor Christopher Walken, and the boat’s captain. Wood who was 43 and said to have had a lifelong fear of drowning and dark water, was found dressed for bed in a long nightgown and socks, but wearing a red down jacket over her nightclothes.



Actor Robert Wagner arrives at the world premiere of the 40th anniversary restoration of the film “Cabaret” during the opening night gala of the 2012 TCM Classic Film Festival in Hollywood, California April 12, 2012. (Reuters/Fred Prouser)

The coroner originally ruled the death of the Oscar-nominated actress, who starred in “West Side Story” and “Splendor in the Grass,” as an accidental drowning. In 2012, her death certificate was amended to list the

cause of her demise as “drowning and other undetermined factors.” Months earlier, the sheriff’s department had officially reopened its investigation, though detectives said then that Wagner, now 87, was not a suspect. In his CBS interview, Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Lieutenant John Corina said attention has now fallen more heavily on Wagner. “As we’ve investigated the case over the last six years, I think he’s more of a person of interest now,” Corina said. “I mean, we know now that he was the last person to be with Natalie before she disappeared.” Corina also said Wagner’s story has shifted over the years “and his version of events just don’t add up,” Corina said. A new coroner’s report from 2012 revealed that bruising was found on Wood’s arms and wrists and scratches on her neck, suggesting she was injured before hitting the water. “She looked like a victim of an assault,” Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department detective Ralph Hernandez told CBS. Still, Hernandez acknowledged that investigators still lack enough information to prove Wood died by accident or foul play. “The ultimate problem is we don’t know how she ended up in the water,” he said. The County Sheriff’s Office had no comment on the CBS interview.

Helen Mirren delves into the haunted mystery of “Winchester”

MARSHSIDE, England (Reuters) — Whether celebrating or mourning Britain’s exit from the European Union, you can now do it to music, thanks to a British composer who has set dry EU legal-speak to jazz as part of a project to explore Brexit through art. The Brexit Big Band project is the brainchild of experimental musician Matthew Herbert, and consists of a series of concerts and workshops in Britain and across Europe, as well as an album which people from around the world can contribute to by uploading short sound samples to a website. Herbert, who describes the decision to quit the bloc after four decades as “a shock”, began the project on March 29, 2017 - the day British Prime Minister Theresa May

triggered the Brexit process - and will culminate two years later, when the country is due to break away from the EU. “I wanted to do something that celebrated the things that I thought were great about collaboration, celebrating things that I thought were great about being part of Europe,” Herbert told Reuters. The works produced so far include the spoken text of Article 50, the legislative clause that Britain used to initiate the Brexit divorce proceedings, set to a piece of jazz music. Herbert says the project is not anti-Brexit, but rather a way of bringing people together. In November last year, he was given a grant for the project by the British government’s Department for International Trade.



British musician performs “Brexit Big Band” musical project at Flagey concert hall in Brussels, Belgium, January 20, 2018. (Reuters/Francois Lenoir)