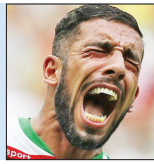




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# Civilizational relationship



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**Agreements signed to boost economic, agricultural, development co-op** **→4**

## Trade between Iran, EU grows 53% in 2017

**ECONOMY** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran-European Union trade in 2017 increased by 53 percent in comparison with the year before, according to European Union's statistics agency Eurostat. Eurostat announced that the value of trade between Iran and the European Union member states in 2017 stood at €21 billion, Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday. Europe's imports from Iran stood at €10.2 billion in the said time, registering

85 percent increase in comparison with the preceding year when Europeans imported €5.5 billion of Iranian goods. Iran's imports from Europe in 2017 augmented 31 percent and reached €10.8 billion, from its previous €8.2 billion in 2016. Iran-European Union trade balance in 2017 was €600 million in favor of Europe. Trade between Iran and European Union was €13.7 billion in 2016, showing 78 percent rise from that in 2015.

## Iran health minister appointed WHO commissioner on NCDs

**SOCIETY** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi has recently been appointed as the World Health Organization's commissioner for Independent Global High-level Commission on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

According to the WHO official website, the first ever WHO Independent Global High-level Commission on NCDs, aiming to propose practical ways to fight the world leading causes of death and illnesses was announced in 2017, by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO and will run until October 2019. **→12**

## NATO, Germany back Iran nuclear deal

**POLITICS** **d e s k** At the high-profile Munich Security Conference, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel have supported the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. According to Deutsche Welle, Gabriel,

who was delivering a speech at the MSC conference on Saturday, said the United States should respect its commitments to the nuclear deal.

Speaking at the opening session of the security conference on Friday, Stoltenberg also said NATO prioritizes the full implementation of the nuclear agreement. **→2**

## Zarif: Rouhani's India visit cements 'centuries-old friendship'

**POLITICS** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that President Hassan Rouhani's visit to India cemented "centuries-old friendship" between the two countries.

"President Hassan Rouhani State visit to India resulted in many agreements on trade and cooperation, but more importantly, firmly cemented centuries-old friendship between our two nations," Zarif tweeted on Saturday.

Rouhani started his three-day tour of India on Thursday by first arriving in the southern city of Hyderabad and then in New Delhi on Friday night.

He took the visit at the invitation of Prime



Minister Narendra Modi. He was accompanied by Foreign Minister Zarif, Vice President for

Economic Affairs Mohammad Nahavandian, Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zangeneh, Transport and Urban Development Minister Abbas Akhundi, Industry and Commerce Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari and Presidential Chief of Staff Mahmoud Vaezi.

Rouhani met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday.

During the visit, Iran and India signed 9 documents to boost cooperation in key areas of security, trade and energy.

In a meeting with religious scholars and leaders of the Islamic community of Hyderabad, Rouhani said that he bears the message of friendship and brotherhood to the people of India.

## Sheikh Tamim: Qatar blockade 'futile'

An ongoing blockade of Qatar by a House of Saud regime-led group of states is "futile", the Qatari emir has said, warning that the months-long crisis is undermining the region's security and economic outlook.

The House of Saud regime, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic ties with Qatar on June 5, 2017 and imposed a land, sea and air embargo, accusing it of supporting "terrorism". Doha has repeatedly denied the allegation.

"It has been a futile crisis, manufactured by our neighbors," Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani told a major security conference held in Germany.

"By defusing the impact of the illegal and aggressive measures imposed on our people, Qatar has preserved its sovereignty," he said.

"Those aggressive actors wish to use smaller states as pawns within their power games and sectarian conflicts."

Despite the measures against it, Qatar has developed new international trade routes and accelerated economic diversity, Sheikh Tamim added.

On June 22, 2017, the quartet issued a 13-point list of demands, including the shutdown of Qatar-based media network Al Jazeera, limiting ties with Iran and expelling Turkish troops stationed in the country as a prerequisite to lifting the blockade.

Qatar rejected all the demands, denouncing them as attempts to infringe its sovereignty.

"It is vital to the interests of the people of the Middle East to guarantee the sovereignty of states

like Qatar," Sheikh Tamim said in his Munich Security Conference address.

"Preserving the sovereignty and the independent decision making of countries like Qatar ensures accelerated development - development like free media and free speech that the blockading countries insist we surrender."

### ■ Middle East security

Sheikh Tamim also called for a comprehensive security settlement in the Middle East, saying the region must be brought back from the brink of disaster.

"I believe it is time for wider regional security in the Middle East ... for all nations of the region to forget the past and agree on basic security principles and rules of governance," he said, adding that a future governance model for the region ought to be based on the European Union. **→13**



## ARTICLE

**By Hanif Ghaffari**  
Political analyst

## From Davos to Munich

The remarks made by European officials at the Munich Security Conference show that they are worried about the future of Europe (given America's policies). Undoubtedly, Donald Trump's presence at the top of the political and executive equations of the United States has exacerbated this concern. An overview of the views and attitudes of European officials during the Davos and Munich Conference and their comparison with each other suggests that the security, economic, and political concerns of European countries have not only not diminished but are increasing.

During the World Economic Summit in Davos, the Chancellor of Germany and the President of France both gave a significant warning about the return of nationalism and populism to Europe. This warning has been sent in a time when Far-Right movements in Europe have been able to gain unbelievable power and even seek to conquer a majority of parliaments and form governments.

In her speech, Angela Merkel emphasized that the twentieth century's mistake shouldn't be repeated. By this, the German Chancellor meant the tendency of European countries to nationalism. Although the German Chancellor warning was serious and necessary, the warning seems to be a little late. Perhaps it would have been better if the warning was forwarded after the European Parliamentary elections in 2014, and subsequently, more practical and deterrent measures were designed. However, Merkel and other European leaders ignored the representation of over a hundred right-wing extremist in the European Parliament in 2014 and merely saw it as a kind of social excitement.

This social excitement has now become a "political demand" in the West. The dissatisfaction of European citizens with their governments has caused them to explicitly demand the return to the twentieth century and the time before the formation of the United Europe. The recent victories of right wing extremists in Austria, Germany and ... isn't merely the result of the nationalist movement success in introducing its principles and manifestos. But it is also a result of the failure of the "European moderation" policy to resolve social, security and economic problems in the Eurozone and the European Union. **→7**



## ARTICLE

**By Sajad Abedi**  
Political analyst

## Modern management and requirements in the age of information

Undoubtedly, the creation of compatibility in different aspects of the organization with environmental changes and the use of tools that are increasingly available to managers with the advancement of technology is not only necessary, but the life of organizations in today's volatile and turbulent environments depends on this. Managers may pursue new organizational designs with different motivations.

Different ages have different fundamentals. Information and communication technology is one of the important features of the information age that allows the design of new organizational forms, new control systems, the re-engineering of organizational processes, and so on. The signs of the information age are seen everywhere. Personal computers, interactive media, global communications networks, e-publications, digital libraries, and the like are an expression of the information age. The amount of information generated in the past two decades alone is greater than all information produced in the last millennium. The role of information professionals in the new age has become important because they are aware of how organizations organize, manage and exploit the information assets of organizations and can reveal the strategic value of information for all organizations.

The economy that are wealthy knowledge and information workers produce often well-known for information-based economies. In such economies, GDP is generated through the creation, processing, and transfer of information. An economy based on information economy, the vast majority of its activities include information work, employing knowledge and information workers, and the wealth of its information economy depends on the productivity of the knowledgeable employees. Information-based economies are dependent on the creation and use of information and information systems. **→7**



© IRNA/ Gholamreza Rezaei

## A heaven for migratory birds

Flocks of migratory geese are shown at a wetland habitat situated in Iran's northern Mazandaran province, February 16, 2018. Captured by Gholamreza Rezaei and released by IRNA, the picture belongs to a photo collection that depicts various wildlife refuges dotted along the south Caspian Sea region.

The wetlands will remain dominated by its northerly guests until about mid-May when the migration season comes to an end. They host hundreds of birdwatchers, backpackers, and bird buffs as well.

The mid-winter population of the migratory birds is estimated to exceed over a million in the whole sandy shorelines that add up to 700km.



## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

### Zarif in Germany for Munich Security Conference



**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is scheduled to visit Germany on Saturday night to participate in the 54th edition of the Munich Security Conference (MSC), Foreign Ministry said on Saturday.

The foreign minister will deliver a speech at the MSC on Sunday about the most important regional and international security issues.

Zarif also plans to hold talks with top officials of other countries participating in the MSC.

From Friday until Sunday, over 30 heads of state and government and over 100 cabinet ministers from across the globe come together at the MSC to discuss major international security challenges.



### Backing Assad was Iran's best decision: advisor

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian parliament speaker, has said that helping Bashar Assad's government in Syria was the best decision that Iran could make to repel threats.

In an interview with Mehr news agency published on Saturday, Amir Abdollahian said if Iran had not helped Syria and its allies, terrorists would have poured into Iran.

He also said, "If the U.S. does not interfere and allows the political talks in Astana and Sochi to reach a conclusion, a political solution can be found and the refugees will return to their country."



### Officials have promised to end house arrest by March 20: Motahari

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Deputy Majlis Speaker Ali Motahari said on Saturday that judiciary and security officials have promised to end the house arrest against opposition leaders by the end of the current calendar year, which ends on March 20.

Speaking to reporters, Motahari said certain measures have been taken in recent months in this regard. "We are waiting to see if they deliver what they promised," Motahari said, according to ISNA.

Mehdi Karroubi, Mir Hossein Mousavi and his wife, Zahra Rahnavard, were placed under house arrest after they insisted on their claims of vote rigging and called for protests.



### Russia, U.S. compete in Syria: military advisor

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Yahya Rahim Safavi, a top military adviser to the Leader, said on Saturday that Syria and Iraq have been the scene of geostrategic competitions between the U.S. and Russia.

In a conference on the Syrian conflict, Rahim Safavi, the former IRGC chief, said western Asia is undergoing geopolitical transition, noting that the region will be a place of competition for big powers.

According to ISNA, he further said regional powers, including Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are in competition over influence in Syria and Iraq.

He also predicted that China and India would also enter the fray.



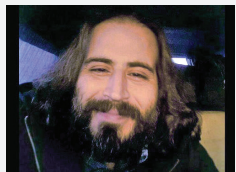
### Iran, Germany ink nuclear safety deal

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Officials from Iran and Germany on Sunday signed an agreement to promote cooperation between the two countries in the field of nuclear safety.

The cooperation deal was inked in Tehran by chief of the Iranian Nuclear Regulatory Authority Hojjatollah Salehi and the chairman of German company "Gesellschaft für Anlagen- und Reaktorsicherheit (GRS)", Tasnim reported.

The signing ceremony was attended by German Ambassador to Tehran Michael Klor-Berchthold.

In October, a delegation from the European Union (EU) and a team from the Iranian Nuclear Regulatory Authority held meetings to discuss the second cooperation project in the field of nuclear safety.



### Mohammad Tavakkoli dies at 34

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Tavakkoli, son of former senior MP Ahmad Tavakkoli, passed away on Friday night after suffering for three years from liver disease.

Mohammad Tavakkoli, 34, was a photographer, designer and graphic artist. He had a son and a daughter.

Tavakkoli's funeral procession is scheduled to be held on Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

In separate messages, Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi, Tehran Mayor Mohammad Ali Najafi, MPs Mohammad Reza Aref and Massoud Pezeshkian, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi, and many other top officials offered their condolences to Ahmad Tavakkoli.

# Civilizational relationship

Iran, India ink many deals, vow to strengthen ties

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

NEW DELHI — Reiterating their commitment to strengthen bilateral ties and take their 'civilizational relationship' to the next level, President Hassan Rouhani and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held wide-ranging talks on cooperation in the areas of trade and investment, energy, connectivity, defense and security and regional issues in New Delhi on Saturday.

Rouhani, who was on his first visit to India since assuming office in 2013, flew to New Delhi from the southern Indian city of Hyderabad on Saturday morning. He was accompanied by a high-level 21-member delegation, including Foreign Minister Javad Zarif.

Before the bilateral talks, Rouhani was given a state reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's house) where he also met President Ram Nath Kovind. He said the people of Iran and India have had "friendly relations with each other" since many centuries and this century belongs to Asia in which the two neighboring countries have a key role to play.

Following the bilateral talks, the two leaders issued a joint statement, outlining their vision for the future of India-Iran ties. Modi said the two countries want to enhance cooperation in various areas and deepen bilateral ties. He lauded Rouhani's vision of giving access for trade with landlocked Afghanistan through Chabahar Port and hoped the bond between the people of India and Iran will grow stronger with easier visa norms and educational ties.

Modi said the enhanced cooperation between India and Iran will hugely benefit their immediate neighbor — Afghanistan, and said the two countries share same vision for peace and prosperity in the region.

Rouhani, in his brief talk, said the two countries have reached good understanding on the Chabahar Port and cooperation in the areas of energy, petroleum and gas will also improve significantly.

The two sides signed nine agreements, with strong focus on the strategically important Chabahar Port in southeastern Iran. The agreements signed include double taxation avoidance agreement, MOU on exemption of visa requirements for diplomatic passport holders, exchange of instrument of ratification of extradition treaty, lease contract for Shahid Beheshti Port — Phase 1 of Chabahar Port between PMO and IPLG, MOU on cooperation in the field of traditional systems of medicine, MOU on the establishment of an expert group on trade remedy measures to promote cooperation in areas of mutual interest, MOU on cooperation in the field of agriculture and allied sectors, MOU on cooperation in the field of health and medicine, MOU on postal cooperation.

On the sidelines of the visit, some other MOUs between trade bodies were also signed, most notably MOU between EEPIC India and Trade Promotion Organization of Iran, MOU between FICCI India and ICCIMA Iran, MOU between ASSOCHAM India and ICCIMA Iran, MOU between PHDCCI India and ICCIMA Iran.

Rouhani had earlier expressed his



## Prime Minister Modi says the enhanced cooperation between India and Iran will hugely benefit their immediate neighbor — Afghanistan. Modi also notes Iran and India share the same vision for peace and prosperity in the region.

country's willingness to share its vast oil and natural gas resources with India and offered to simplify visa norms for hassle-free people-to-people ties. The two sides also agreed on 'rupee-rial mechanism' to evade banking problems caused by the draconian Western sanctions.

In a warm gesture, following the talks and signing of agreements, Rouhani gifted an animated version of Kalila Wa Demna (Persian translation of Panchatantra) and a copy of the Mahabharat in Persian to Modi.

Rouhani kicked off his three-day visit to India on Thursday from Hyderabad, a city designed on the pattern of Iran's Isfahan by legendary Iranian architect Mir Momin Ashtarabadi. He visited the historic Qutub Shahi tombs, built in Persian architecture by Qutub Shahi dynasty rulers who had Iranian ancestry. He also visited Salar Jung Museum, Golconda Fort and held a series of interactions with students and religious scholars.

Addressing a gathering of Muslim leaders and scholars in Hyderabad, Rouhani hailed India as a "living example of peaceful co-existence", and called for Shia-Sunni unity while warning of plots and conspiracies being hatched in the West to divide Muslims. He said Iran wants cordial relations with all countries in the region, and reiterated his country's commitment to strengthen ties with India.

On Friday, he joined worshippers at Hyderabad's historic Makkah Masjid to offer joint Shia-Sunni congregational prayers. He also became the first head of a state to deliver address at the 17th century mosque. In his brief but beautiful speech, President Rouhani, who is also a distinguished scholar of Islam, emphasized the importance of upholding the banner of unity and bridging the growing chasm between Shias and Sunnis.

The enthusiastic audience, which included Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali and highly influential Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, latched on to every word he had to say about Muslim unity, peaceful co-existence, Western imperialism and Indo-Iran historic ties.

This is perhaps for the first time a foreign leader from a Muslim country has started his India visit from a historic mosque and made Muslim unity and brotherhood his main talking point. It is significant and timely considering the problems Muslims are facing in India and across the world with growing specter of Islamophobia and hate crimes. In such an environment, unity becomes indispensable.

Muslim unity is also crucial to counter the despicable project of sectarianism and takfirism that is being promoted by certain powers to sow seeds of discord among Muslims. Unlike leaders in the Arab world,

## India and Iran agree on 'rupee-rial mechanism' to evade banking problems caused by the draconian Western sanctions.

## NATO, Germany back Iran nuclear deal

**1 →** "We attach great importance to the Iran Nuclear Deal and it is important that it is fully implemented," the NATO website quoted Stoltenberg as saying.

Though the entire world insists on the need to respect the nuclear deal, President Donald Trump has been making the harshest attacks on the international agreement. In a statement on January 12, Trump gave Europeans only 120 days to agree to an overhaul of the nuclear agreement and said if the text of the deal is not revised he would unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from it.

It is the first time that NATO, a Western military alliance which the United States is also a member, is openly expressing full support for the nuclear agreement.

In remarks in December 217, Stoltenberg also said the



## Velayati: U.S. trying to create 'new Middle East' to break up nations

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The United States has been seeking to broaden division among Islamic states and create a "new Middle East" in order to break up regional states, says Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Velayati made the remarks during a conference on Islamic unity in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, on Saturday. He was referring to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's recent Middle East tour and its consequences for the region.

The veteran politician said the Americans were seeking to establish bases for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with the help of certain Muslim states to prevent unity among these countries.

"The Americans and Zionists should know that as they were defeated in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, their illusions won't materialize. The resistance front in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon will push them out of the eastern Euphrates," Press TV quoted the advisor as saying.

Much of northeast Syria to the east of the Euphrates is controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which is dominated by rebels from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and is backed by the U.S.

Last month, Washington announced that it would work with the SDF to set up a new 30,000-strong "border security" force along the Turkish border with Iraq and within Syria along the Euphrates River.

Velayati said the Americans and the West are trying to create "a new Middle

East, whose reality will be marked by the disintegration of Muslim societies." He added that Washington was seeking to split Syria through its presence in the eastern Euphrates.

On Friday, Velayati met with Iraq's Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari in Baghdad, where he said the U.S. is the major problem for the region.

He said Tillerson's Middle East tour took place following Washington's failures in many areas.

Pointing to Washington's policies toward the region, the advisor said the Islamic Republic is keeping an eye on the U.S. actions in the region.

The top adviser also said Iran, Iraq, and Syria will not let the U.S. exert its influence on the Kurdish areas.

Ibrahim al-Jaafari, for his turn, voiced

Iranian leaders, especially Supreme Leader Sayed Ali Khamenei and President Rouhani, have been very vocal and powerful advocates of Muslim unity.

Rouhani's visit to India comes a month after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's first official trip to India and days after Modi's whirlwind four-nation tour of West Asia and the Persian Gulf region. The growing proximity between New Delhi and Tel Aviv in recent years has raised many eyebrows in India and abroad. Regional observers believe the Modi government is playing with fire by mollycoddling a 'Frankenstein monster', which can prove counterproductive to India's global ambitions. Pertinently, Netanyahu was greeted with street protests across India, while President Rouhani was accorded warm reception in both Hyderabad and New Delhi.

Iran and India have shared age-old historical, commercial and cultural ties. Iran has been the main supplier of crude oil to India even at the peak of Western sanctions between 2012 and 2016. Although the volume of business was affected by the crippling sanctions, the partnership only became stronger. Since Modi's visit to Iran in May 2016, when New Delhi and Tehran renewed many key business deals and signed a trilateral agreement on transit and transport between India, Iran and Afghanistan, the two countries have significantly enhanced their bilateral ties. The trade volume was estimated to be \$12.89 billion dollar in 2017-2018, according to figures provided by India's Foreign Ministry.

The export of crude oil has substantially increased in last one year, making Iran the third largest oil exporter for India. According to energy experts, India is slated to become world's second-largest consumer of hydrocarbons in three decades so future appears bright for Indo-Iran energy partnership.

While the ambitious deal on India's investment in Farzad B offshore gas field, with gas reserve of 21.7 tcf, has failed to make headway, all eyes are now on Chabahar Port in Sistan-Baluchistan province, which was inaugurated in December last year, shortly after the first consignment of wheat was sent from India to Afghanistan. India has committed to invest \$500 million in the project, besides an additional \$16 billion investment in Chabahar free trade zone. The port connects India with Afghanistan and opens a new strategic transit route to many Central Asian countries, bypassing Pakistan.

According to sources, the development of Farzad B gas field by Indian companies figured prominently in talks between the two sides on Saturday. Iran had some reservations and sought new terms of the deal.

Rouhani's first visit to India marks an important turnaround in Indo-Iran relations at a time when the Zionist regime is sucking up to New Delhi and some Western powers are trying hard to throw a spanner in their ties. Although the U.S. has said it would not come in the way of India-Iran trade matters, regional watchers believe the devil can never be trusted.

nuclear deal should remain intact.

Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the U.S., UK, France, Russia, and China - Germany and the European Union struck the nuclear deal on July 14, 2015. Immediately after the forging of the nuclear agreement, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution turning the deal into an international law.

Since the JCPOA went into force in January 2016 the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency has issued nine reports each time confirming Tehran's complete compliance with the multilateral agreement.

According to the agreement, Iran is obliged to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of nuclear-related sanctions.

his gratitude to Iran on behalf of the Iraqi government and nation, saying Iran plays a major role in supporting the resistance front in the region.

During his visit to Iraq, Velayati also met on Friday with Ammar al-Hakim, the head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), to exchange views about the latest political developments in the region and ways to boost Tehran-Baghdad relations in all areas.

During the meeting, Hakim praised Tehran's support for Baghdad in the fight against terrorist groups and said the Arab country is willing to boost its relations with its neighbors, especially Iran.

Iran stood alongside Iraq firmly during the fight against Daesh (ISIL), he said, adding that the sectarianism is fading away in favor of an Iraqi national identity.



# Russia: U.S. plans to keep forces inside Syria forever

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has censured the “illegal” military presence of the United States on the ground in Syria, saying Washington plans to keep its forces in the country “forever.”

Lavrov told multilingual news media service Euronews that U.S. Special Forces had been operating on the ground in Syria in the past few years without the Syrian government’s consent and a United Nations (UN)’s mandate.

“They have been there consistently for two or three years — almost for the whole period that the Washington-led coalition has worked in Syria, and all this time, the U.S. Special Forces and other units are in Syria on the ground, illegally, without any invitation from Damascus, or without any mandate of the UN Security Council,” he said.

The U.S. has been leading a number of countries in an aerial bombardment campaign against purported Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) positions in Syria and Iraq since 2014. But the U.S. has also stationed a number of Special Forces on the ground in Syrian territory.

Lavrov warned that “the international presence of the U.S. doesn’t decrease, but rather grows.”

“It is clear that the U.S. probably has such a strategy to settle in Syria forever, with its armed forces, just as they want to do in Iraq and Afghanistan, despite all promises made,” he said.

He warned that the U.S. was attempting to create a “quasi-local authority” with the help of Syrian Kurds.

“And so when they settle forever in Syria, which they are already doing now, and despite all promises, they isolate a huge piece of the Syrian territory, in infringement of the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic, and create there some kind of quasi-local authority, and in every possible way try to create there an autonomous unit with the support of the Kurds,” he said.

The U.S. announced last month that it would work with the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) — a U.S.-backed group of Kurd and Arab militants — to set up a new 30,000-strong “border security” force along the Turkish border with Iraq and within Syria along the Euphrates River.

The announcement infuriated Turkey, which soon launched a military incursion in Syria’s Afrin region in a declared bid to eliminate the Kurdish militants on its borders.



Lavrov said that the Americans have been consistently arming the Kurdish troops while ignoring Ankara’s “repeated warnings” against such a policy.

“From the very beginning of its actions in Syria, Americans bet on the Kurds and ignored Turkey’s discontent,” he said.

Russia and Turkey, along with Iran, have been brokering a peace process between Syrian warring parties in the Kazakh capital of Astana. Russia and Iran are Syrian government allies, and Turkey is an ally of the anti-Damascus militants.

Russia has also been conducting an aerial bombardment campaign of its own in Syria on a request from the Syrian government since September 2015.

Recently, a U.S. airstrike in Syria was said to have killed a number of Russian nationals. Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova said “five people, presumably Russian citizens” were killed, adding that the incident and the nationalities of the victims were still being investigated.

(Source: Euronews)

## U.S. charges Russians with 2016 U.S. election tampering to boost Trump

### Reports on U.S. election interference ‘just blather’: Lavrov

The office of the United States Special Counsel Robert Mueller charged 13 Russians and three Russian companies, including St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency known for its trolling on social media. The official who oversees Mueller’s work said the investigation was not finished.

The court document said those accused “had a strategic goal to sow discord in the U.S. political system, including the 2016 U.S. presidential election.”

The indictment said Russians adopted false online personas to push divisive messages; traveled to the United States to collect intelligence, visiting 10 states; and staged political rallies while posing as Americans. In one case, it said, the Russians paid an unidentified person to build a cage aboard a flatbed truck and another to wear a costume “portraying Clinton in a prison uniform.”

The surprise 37-page indictment could alter the divisive U.S. domestic debate over Russia’s meddling, undercutting some Republicans who, along with Trump, have attacked Mueller’s investigation.

“These Russians engaged in a sinister and systematic attack on our political system. It was a conspiracy to subvert the process, and take aim at democracy itself,” said Paul Ryan, Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The indictment is silent on the question of whether the Trump campaign colluded with the Kremlin, which Mueller is investigating.

In a tweet on Friday, Trump gave his most direct acknowledgement that Russia



had meddled in the election, which he has frequently disputed.

“Russia started their anti-U.S. campaign in 2014, long before I announced that I would run for President. The results of the election were not impacted. The Trump campaign did nothing wrong - no collusion!” Trump wrote.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova denounced the allegations as “absurd” and ridiculed the notion that so few Russian nationals could undermine the U.S. democracy.

“13 against the billions’ budgets of the

secret services?” she asked in a Facebook post.

The accused Russians are unlikely to be arrested or to appear in a U.S. court on the charges, which include conspiracy to defraud the United States, wire fraud, bank fraud and identity theft. There is no extradition treaty between the United States and Russia.

■ **Echoes of intelligence report**

The indictment broadly echoes the conclusions of a January 2017 U.S. intelligence assessment, which found that Russia had meddled in the election, and that its goals eventually included aiding Trump. In No-

vember 2016, Trump won a surprise victory over Democratic Party candidate Clinton.

Mueller’s indictment did not tie the meddling effort to the Russian government. But the earlier U.S. intelligence assessment said Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a campaign to influence the U.S. election.

Trump has never unequivocally accepted the U.S. intelligence report and has denounced Mueller’s probe as a “witch hunt.”

Some of those charged, posing as Americans, “communicated with unwitting individuals associated with the Trump campaign,” the indictment said.

Last year, Mueller charged Trump’s former campaign manager and his deputy with money-laundering and other crimes, and accepted guilty pleas from two former foreign policy aides for lying to the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation).

■ **Blather**

Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov declined to comment on Saturday on the U.S. indictments of 13 Russians and three Russian companies in what Washington sees as a criminal and espionage conspiracy to tamper with the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Russia has repeatedly denied any effort to influence the U.S. election.

Lavrov echoed that tone, telling participants at the annual Munich Security Conference that even the U.S. Vice President Michael Pence and others had raised questions about the U.S. investigation. “So until we see the facts, everything else is just blather,” he said.

(Source: agencies)

## Pakistan lawmakers rap government plan to send troops to Saudi Arabia

Pakistani lawmakers have blasted a recent government decision to deploy troops to Saudi Arabia, saying the move may violate a parliamentary resolution that urges neutrality in the war on Yemen.

The Pakistani army said that it was sending forces to Saudi Arabia, stressing, however, that the new deployment and nearly 1,000 Pakistani “troops already there will not be employed outside KSA (the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia).”

“In continuation of ongoing Pak-KSA bilateral security cooperation, a Pakistan Army contingent is being sent to KSA on [a] training and advice mission,” the army’s Inter-Services Public Relations said in a statement.

A resolution was unanimously passed at the Pakistani parliament in April 2015, stipulating that the Asian country had to stay neutral in the conflict in Yemen “so as to be able to play a proactive diplomatic role to end the crisis.”

The resolution came in response to the House of Saud regime’s request from Pakistan to provide ships, aircraft, and troops for the Riyadh-led war on Yemen.

On Friday, Pakistani lawmakers criticized the government for potentially bypassing the parliamentary resolution and “making unilateral decisions to the detriment” of the country. Senator Farhatullah Babar warned of “grave consequences”



for Pakistan regarding the troop deployment to Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, Pakistani Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani summoned the country’s foreign minister to explain the reasons for the deployment of the troops to Saudi Arabia.

Shireen Mazari, a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan, also slammed the government decision and

sought clarifications to make sure that the initiative would not “contravene” the country’s neutrality outlined in the parliamentary resolution.

“Mr. Speaker, as you know, Saudis themselves are embroiled in the war and it is not reaching any conclusion,” she said, demanding the government explain the terms of the security pact with the Saudis and the type of missions Pakistani troops will undertake in the kingdom.

“How and on what grounds the government took the decision, or was this decision not taken by the government as such but it was just part of a routine that the military decided to send more troops?” she asked.

The House of Saud regime war was launched in March 2015 in support of Yemen’s former Riyadh-friendly government and against the Ansarullah (Houthi) movement, which has been running state affairs since the former regime resigned.

The offensive has, however, achieved neither of its goals despite the spending of billions of petrodollars and the enlisting of the cooperation of the Saudi regime’s regional and Western allies.

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.

(Source: Press TV)

## Kurdish doctors report suspected Turkish gas attack in Syria

Six civilians suffered breathing difficulties and other symptoms indicative of poison gas inhalation after an attack launched by Turkey on the Kurdish-controlled enclave of Afrin, local doctors and Syria’s state-run news agency reported on Saturday.

Jiwan Mohammad, a doctor at Afrin’s main hospital, said the facility was treating six people who had been poisoned who arrived Friday night from the village of Arandi after it was attacked by Turkish troops. Another doctor, Nouri Qenber, said the victims suffered shortness of breath, vomiting and skin rashes. One of the victims had dilated pupils, he said, quoting one of the rescuers. Both spoke to The Associated Press via messaging service.

State-run news agency SANA and the Britain-based so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) monitoring group also quoted local doctors in their reports.

The claims could not be independently confirmed, and videos released from the hospital showed people being fitted with oxygen masks who did not otherwise show symptoms of gas attack inhalation such as twitching, foaming at the mouth or vomiting.

SANA on Saturday said Turkey fired several shells containing “toxic substances” on a village in Afrin Friday night, causing six civilians to suffer suffocation symptoms.

The Turkish military repeated in a weekly statement published Saturday that it does not use internationally “banned ammunition” in its Afrin operation and said, “the Turkish Armed Forces does not keep such ammunition in its inventory.”

The army also said it is careful to not harm civilians and only targets “terrorists” and their positions in the Afrin region.

The Turkish military launched an aerial and ground offensive on Afrin, in northwestern Syria, on Jan. 20. It says the aim of the operation is to push out the Kurdish militia known as the People’s Protection Units, (YPG/Yekineyen Parastina Gel), from the enclave. Turkey considers the group to be a terrorist group and an extension of the Kurdish insurgents it fights inside Turkey.

SANA, as well as Kurdish news outlets including Kurdistan 24, quoted third doctor, Khalil Sabri, at the Afrin hospital as saying the attack occurred on the village of Aranda and that victims suffered shortness of breath, skin rashes, vomiting and low blood pressure.

(Source: AP)

## Israeli protesters call for Netanyahu’s resignation over bribery

Thousands of people have staged a demonstration in the occupied Palestinian territories to demand the resignation of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after police recommended he be charged with bribery in connection with illegal gifts he received from a number of wealthy businessmen.

Between 1,000 and 2,000 protesters rallied in a Tel Aviv square, some with signs saying “crooks go home” and “crime minister”.

Israeli police investigators have been grilling Netanyahu for corruption over his involvement in cases 1000 and 2000.

Police said on Tuesday enough evidence had been found for the 68-year-old Chairman of the Likud party to be charged.

Case 1000 revolves around alleged illicit gifts given to Netanyahu and his family by different businessmen, most notably the Israeli-born Hollywood producer Arnon Milchan.

The Israeli prime minister and his wife, Sara, have denied wrongdoing in the case, claiming that the value of the items was significantly lower than reported, and that they were only “trifles” exchanged between close friends.

Case 2000 focuses on an alleged clandestine deal made between Netanyahu and Yedioth Ahronoth publisher and owner Arnon “Noni” Mozes, in which the 68-year-old chairman of the Likud party promised Mozes he would support a bill to reduce the circulation of Yedioth’s main commercial rival, the Hebrew-language freebie Israel Hayom, in exchange for favorable coverage of himself in Yedioth.

Reports emerged earlier this year that the president of the World Jewish Congress and Netanyahu’s long-time ally, Ronald Lauder, had given the premier and his son gifts, including expensive suits. The accounts prompted Israeli police to interrogate the prime minister. Netanyahu is currently under probe over suspicions that he accepted 1 million euros (about \$1.1 million) from accused French fraudster Arnaud Mimran for campaign funds during the 2009 elections.

There are also calls for Netanyahu to be investigated for his role in a billion-dollar deal to purchase three submarines from German shipbuilder ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems GmbH.

Netanyahu’s personal lawyer and one of his closest confidants, David Shimron, reportedly represented the German company behind the submarine contract.

The Israeli prime minister, in an apparently unrelated case, is also subjected to accusations that he and his spouse misappropriated public funds to pay for private expenses, ranging from laundry to ice cream.

(Source: agencies)

## Mexican helicopter crash kills 2, minister survives

A military helicopter carrying Mexico’s interior minister and the governor of the southern state of Oaxaca crashed on Friday killing two people during a tour of damage from an earthquake earlier in the day, but the senior officials survived.

Interior Minister Navarete told TV network Televisa that he and Oaxaca Governor Alejandro Murat were not seriously harmed in the accident that happened as the helicopter was attempting to land.

The ministry issued a statement on Twitter saying two people on the ground were killed when the helicopter came down.

The officials were surveying the aftermath of a 7.2 magnitude earthquake that rocked the rural state and Mexico City on Friday evening.

The quake did not directly cause fatalities, but damaged dozens of buildings and knocked out power for a million people, authorities said.

(Source: Reuters)



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	98429.7
IFX	1101.63

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	46,580 rials
EUR	60,000 rials
GBP	68,900 rials
AED	13,360 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	61.55/b
Brent	64.84/b
OPEC Basket	62.09/b
Gold	\$1,348.40/oz
Silver	\$16.69/oz
Platinum	\$1,009.00/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Over \$146m of state-owned shares divested since last Mar.

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Privatization Organization (IPO) has transferred 6.849 trillion rials (about \$146.06 million) worth of the state-run shares to the private sector since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2017), Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday.

Of the mentioned figure, 6.745 trillion rials (about \$143.8 million) has been divested through holding bids and 104 billion rials (about \$2.2 million) via stock exchange market.

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 of Iran's constitution, 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 have 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 January 31, IPO Head 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.

Iranian light oil price at \$63.14 in a week

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's light crude oil price fell \$3.18 in the week ended on February 9 to settle at \$63.14 per barrel, Shana reported on Saturday.

The country's light oil price was reported \$67.27 on average since the beginning of 2018 until February 9.



Iran's heavy crude oil also experienced a \$3.3 fall in the said week to settle at \$62.80 per barrel.

The country has sold heavy crude at \$65.33 on average since the beginning of 2018 until the mentioned date.

During the said week, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)'s basket price stood at \$63.81 per barrel with \$3.06 decrease compared to the preceding week.

Oil fell in the mentioned week as the U.S. dollar rose to its highest in more than a week in the wake of a sharp sell-off early that week on Wall Street and other stock markets, Reuters reported.

With OPEC-led supply cuts supporting prices, but rising U.S. production capping crude, many analysts see markets balanced in 2018 and 2019, with Brent in a \$50-\$60 range.

IMF chief says ‘Why not?’ to European Monetary Fund plan

International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde has no objection to plans to turn the euro zone's bailout fund into a European Monetary Fund, she said in comments published on Saturday.

The European Commission has suggested transforming the role of the government-controlled European Stability Mechanism (ESM) into a full-blown European Monetary Fund under parliamentary control and anchored in European Union law, which would also become a backstop for the euro zone's bank resolution fund.

The plan is backed by countries including France and Germany. "Why not?" Lagarde said in an interview with Swiss newspaper Tages-Anzeiger.

"The crisis the euro zone went through showed that it needs a crisis management system that is independent, able to act quickly and that works according to strict rules. What that mechanism is called is secondary. If one wants to call it European Monetary Fund, then please."

She also brushed aside the suggestion that the IMF's role was being usurped in a region where it has been involved in bailing out Portugal, Ireland, Cyprus and Greece in recent years - often in exchange for oversight and painful reforms.

"We do not serve a region but 189 countries. That also includes euro zone countries. And if together they decide that other crisis mechanisms like the ESM are involved, that is in order," she was quoted as saying. (Source: Reuters)

Iran, India sign co-op agreements on economy, agriculture, development

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran and India inked several cooperation agreements on economy, agriculture, and development in New Delhi and in the presence of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, Iranian presidential website reported.

The penned agreements included: a double taxation avoidance agreement, an MOU on agricultural cooperation, an MOU on anti-dumping, an MOU on transient management of the first phase of Iran's southeastern Chabahar Port, an MOU between Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), an MOU between ICCIMA and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), and an MOU between ICCIMA and PHD Chamber Of Commerce and Industry.

During their Saturday meeting,

Rouhani and Modi referred to energy and transportation sectors as the major fields of cooperation between the two sides.

Underlining that Iran can supply India's need for energy under long-term agreements, Rouhani said that "such long-term agreements on fields of energy and transportation will make the two countries safe partners."

Iranian president started his three-day trip to India on Thursday. As reported, in addition to four Iranian ministers, Rouhani was accompanied by a delegation from Iranian private sector entrepreneurs led by ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie.

Iran-India Business Forum was also held on the third day of Iranian presidents' visit to India. The Forum was attended by Iranian Finance Minister Masoud Karbasian, Head of Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran Mohammad Khazaei, Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mojtaba Khosrotaj, and President of FICCI Rashesh Shah.



Iranian Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi (L) and Indian Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources Nitin Gadkari after signing co-op agreement in New Delhi on Saturday

Russia's Zarubezhneft inks MOU in Iran on oilfield development

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Russian oil company Zarubezhneft signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Gostaresh Iranian Oil and Gas Industries Development Company (also known as IDRO Oil) for cooperation on the development of Sousangerd oil field in southwest Iran.

Based on the MOU, a joint technical committee will be formed and in case of reaching a final agreement, the two companies will proceed with the main contract with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).



IDRO Oil is a subsidiary of the Industrial Development and Revolution Organization (IDRO) of Iran.

China warns it may retaliate if U.S. imposes metal tariffs

China said proposed U.S. tariffs on imported steel and aluminum products are groundless and that it reserves the right to retaliate if they are imposed.

The U.S. recommendations, unveiled by the Commerce Department on Friday, aren't consistent with the facts, Wang Hejun, chief of the trade remedy and investigation bureau at China's Ministry of Commerce, said in a statement posted on its website.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said the U.S. may impose quotas on imports of aluminum and steel, including a tariff of at least 24 percent on steel imports from all countries. While it's the strongest indication yet that President Donald Trump's administration is ready to take action on its protectionist agenda, Ross said "it wouldn't surprise us" if the measures were challenged. The U.S. already has excessive protections on domestic iron and steel products, according to Wang. "If the final decision impacts China's in-

terests, China will certainly take necessary measures to protect its own rights," Wang said.

American steel companies and steelworker unions have been pushing Trump to follow through on his promise to protect the industry. China's trade partners have complained for years that its industry unfairly benefits from state subsidies, and dumps its products at below-market prices. While China only accounts for about 1 percent of U.S. steel imports, it could challenge U.S. action at the World Trade Organization, a process that could take years.

China has long been at the epicenter of global over-production of steel. But the trade dynamics are shifting as aluminum exports take center stage. In January, China boosted its shipments of the lightweight metal for a third month, as domestic supplies spill overseas, while steel cargoes shrank to the lowest in nearly five years as strong domestic growth mops up production and environmental curbs



stood at 1.520 million tons, with 11 percent increase from the figure of the same month in the past year.

trim capacity.

Rather than tariffs on all imports, Trump may opt for a more "surgical" approach, Ross suggested at a meeting with lawmakers this week. On steel, for example, the president could go with the recommended option that would levy a tariff of 53 percent on imports from 12 countries — a list that includes China, Russia, India and South Korea — but allow exemptions for allies such as Japan, Germany and Canada.

Japan is viewing this as more of a security issue, said Yasuji Komiyama, director of the metal industries division at Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. The Commerce Department may invoke a seldom-used section of the 1962 Trade Act, which allows the president to impose tariffs without congressional approval.

Komiyama said steel and aluminum shipped to the U.S. from Japan don't pose any threats to American security. "This an issue within

the U.S. government. Nothing has been decided and therefore the Japanese government doesn't have any further comment," he said.

Still, Kobe Steel Ltd. warned there could be ramifications. "We need to look more closely into this, but if these measures are enacted, it would be difficult for the industry to avoid any impact," an official for the steelmaker said. JFE Holdings Inc., Japan's second-biggest steelmaker, said it will discuss a response with related parties after looking more closely at the U.S. announcement.

India's steel industry, which vies with Japan as the world's No. 2 after China, probably won't be hurt, according to K. K. Pahuja, president of the Indian Stainless Steel Development Association, in a report in the Business Standard. Stainless steel "is not a big-ticket item, since the quantity is not very high," Pahuja told the newspaper. India itself imposes extensive trade barriers on Chinese steel. (Source: Reuters)

What shaped the stock market's \$3t trauma

Want a neat narrative? There isn't one. Stocks buckled, \$3 trillion was lost, then just as quickly, roughly half of it came back. Nothing quite explains every little twist and turn. Much of it remains a blur. But there are clues to be gleaned from the behavior of buyers and sellers.

Several key facts stand out. One: a very large sum of money was plowed into equities amid January's euphoria. Two: even more was yanked out as shares plunged. Three: corporate buyers showed up in force at the bottom.

Combined, the flows are a framework for understanding -- not a grand theory of everything, but an account of how money moved during the most tumultuous stretch in two years. They show how fast things change during a late-stage bull market, a rally that got back on track with this week's 4.3 percent rebound.

"There was a technical correction but we saw some fear and some panic and some investors getting burned," said Andrew Adams, a strategist at Raymond James Financial Inc. "By no means did anyone expect that this selloff would be of this swiftness and magnitude."

Whatever the role of computers and

automated traders as markets bucked and recovered, the events had a recognizable human ring. Investors -- many of them of them newly christened, going by account data at discount brokerages -- sent \$16.4 billion to U.S. stock mutual funds and ETFs between Jan. 2 and the market peak of Jan. 26, EPFR data show.

It was a decision they quickly reconsidered. Spooked by signs of inflation, shocked by the sight of traders unwinding bets against volatility, clients pulled almost \$27 billion from the same set of funds in the next nine sessions. One security, the SPDR S&P 500 ETF Trust, saw \$23.6 billion withdrawn in one week, separate data compiled by Bloomberg show.

What made the selloff stop is anyone's guess. It happened at a chart level, the S&P 500's average price over the last 200 days, that half the world was watching a week ago Friday. But who the buyers were is less of a mystery. The Goldman Sachs Group Inc. unit that executes share repurchases for clients saw 4.5 times its average daily volume last week, its busiest ever.

"Retail investors were fearful immediately after the selloff, but not the companies," said Aidan Garrib, macro strategist at Pavilion



Global Markets. "Companies have buyback policies that get reconsidered every quarter, so if you told shareholders that you're going to buy back stock, and then a market blow-up that had no impact on your fundamentals made the price fall more than expected, maybe it's not a bad thing to step in."

Tracing fund flows is the easy part. Tracing what drove all the decisions is trickier. This week's rebound was accompanied by all the things that fueled January's rally. Earnings stayed strong -- consensus estimates for S&P 500 earnings in 2018 and 2019 rose as companies from Cisco Systems to Deere & Co. climbed on profit optimism. Housing starts and consumer confidence were up. Throughout the last 16 days, investors have been reacting to a rotating assortment of signals, among them the Choe Volatility Index, inflation data and bond yields. The latter has provided a particularly confusing roadmap for equities.

When anxiety first cropped up in the stock market two Fridays ago, yields on 10-year Treasuries had just jumped to 2.84 percent, up almost 40 basis points from the start of the year. It's a level they more or less held for the next five days, as the S&P 500 tumbled 5.2 percent. Then the signal went mute. Shares recovered even as yields were topping out

at 2.94 percent on Thursday.

Chalk it up to emotions, says Jurrien Timmer, director of global macro at Fidelity Investments. The fear of missing out meets the fear of going broke.

"On the way down, it just becomes that much more violent," Timmer said. "But on the way up the bounce is just that much stronger as well. It's the nature of the beast."

What happens now? The S&P 500 just rallied for six straight days, retracing 54 percent of its 292-point loss. The convulsion was painful, particularly compared with the previous year and a half, in which the index never fell as much as 3 percent from a previous high. At the same time, a year like 1999 was riddled with quick drops and recoveries, en route to a 20 percent advance. Will this be like that -- a rougher road to higher highs?

"For now, we would now have to say, it is indeed another time when buying the dip worked. Will it work forever? No," John Stoltzfus, chief investment strategist of Oppenheimer & Co., said. "Going forward, concerns about deficit growth and how the Fed will move forward in the process of normalization -- those are both key areas that we believe invariably will cause periods of volatility."

(Source: Bloomberg)



# OPEC considers moving the goalposts, here's where they might go

After a year of production cuts, OPEC and Russia are finally near their goal of shrinking the world's swollen oil inventories. So why are they planning to change their target?

The answer lies somewhere between the murky and incomplete nature of oil data and the competing interests within the producers' group.

The 24-country alliance wants to reduce oil stockpiles to their five-year average, a goal that is almost at hand according to figures from the International Energy Agency. Yet Saudi Arabia and Russia now say that metric is flawed -- distorted by years of excessively high supplies and patchy data outside developed economies.

Choosing a different measure of success could further reinforce the need for supply curbs to continue for the whole of 2018 -- something Saudi Arabia is keen to ensure as it prepares the historic initial public offering of its state oil company. Other methods might indicate the rebalancing of the market is already complete, potentially allowing some producers to end their self-imposed restraint.

Here are some of the possible options:

## Take cover

Saudi Arabia Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih has said that, rather than just comparing inventory levels to their average, OPEC should consider how quickly they're likely to be consumed. This gauge, known as forward demand cover, measures inventories in terms



of the number of days they will last.

There are good reasons for considering that measure -- it better reflects how consumption has grown over the past few years -- but wouldn't necessarily back Al-Falih's insistence that producers stick with the cuts all year. Inventories in developed economies equated to about 60.6 days worth of demand in December, according to IEA data, which is

already back in line with the five-year average.

## A global picture

OPEC hasn't said it's exclusively targeting inventories in the developed world, but in reality there's little reliable data for anywhere outside the 34 countries that make up the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Those stockpiles were 52 million barrels above the five-year average in

December, according to the IEA.

It's harder, but possible, to compile a global picture. Could data from major consumers like China and India tell a different story?

According to Citigroup Inc., a global measure actually shows OPEC's mission is already accomplished. Adding non-OECD countries including Saudi Arabia and Brazil, as well as the crude stored at sea on tankers, to the mix shows inventories are already at their five-year mean, the bank said.

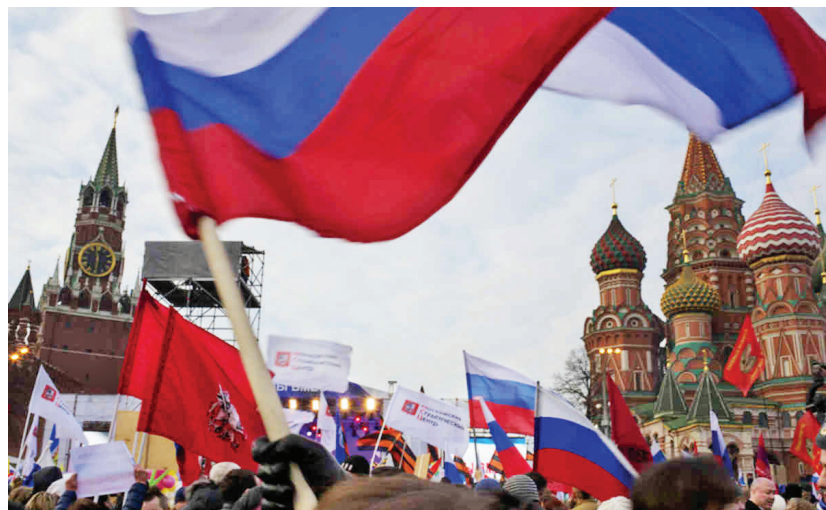
## Turn back the clock

The oil market is emerging from a long period of oversupply that drove prices to 12-year lows and lifted U.S. crude inventories to the highest level in decades. That means any calculation of a five-year average "is overly weighted by three years of excessive inventory," according to Saudi Arabia's Al-Falih.

The average has been rising steadily throughout the price slump. For January, when the period included in the calculation switches from 2012-2016 to 2013-2017, the number will jump by so much that it almost converges with current stockpile levels -- a rather hollow victory in OPEC's quest to eliminate the glut.

Some of that excess would be filtered out by comparing inventories to an earlier period before the surplus emerged. Using 2011-2015 would indeed justify Al-Falih's argument that OPEC has some way to go before the job is done. (Source: Bloomberg)

## Russia may feel pinch from oil cut deal this year



Russia's economy may come to feel a negative impact from the OPEC-led oil production cut deal, the central bank warned, adding that it expected GDP growth during the first quarter of the year to stand at 0.4 percent on a quarterly basis and rise to 0.5 percent quarter-on-quarter in April-June.

Russia agreed to cut 300,000 bpd from its post-Soviet record-high oil production of over 11.2 million bpd in November 2016, to aid efforts by OPEC and several smaller producers to relieve a global glut that sank prices to less than US\$40 a barrel.

"We assume that the OPEC+ deal... along with weaker demand for natural gas from abroad will temporary curb a growth in (Russian) production which may have a negative impact on economic growth in general," the bank said.

Gazprom reported 10 percent lower non-CIS gas exports for January this year resulting from the unusually soft winter in Europe, its biggest customer.

Higher oil prices last year helped Rus-

sia swing into the black earlier than most analysts projected, but some observers have noted that too high prices are not good for its export-oriented economy, either. Higher oil prices make the ruble more expensive, which Moscow doesn't want as it reduces the competitiveness of export goods. That's why the central bank embarked on a dollar-buying spree to keep the ruble depressed.

Oil companies have complained that the continued production cuts interfered with their growth plans, which led to speculation that Moscow could try to push OPEC for an earlier end to the deal. For now, however, Moscow is toeing the line, and the Energy Ministry is sticking to its original oil price forecast for the year, at US\$50-60 a barrel.

Earlier this year, Economy Minister Maxim Oreshkin said that prices of US\$70 per barrel of Brent were unsustainable and added that over the medium term, prices will most likely stay around US\$60 a barrel.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## China flooded U.S. with solar panels before Trump's tariffs



Chinese suppliers flooded the U.S. solar market with panels at the end of last year, as customers sought to avoid paying President Donald Trump's 30 percent import tariff.

Fourth-quarter deliveries from China were almost 11 times higher than in the first nine months of 2017, according to a report Friday by Bloomberg New Energy Finance. Manufacturers also hauled panels and cells across the border from Mexico, Canada and other countries to beat the import duties that were announced last month.

The tariffs don't apply to the first 2.5 gigawatts of imports this year, and there's as much as 5 gigawatts of solar equipment already stashed in warehouses and ports around the country. That's enough to supply U.S. developers for about six months, said Hugh Bromley, a solar analyst at New Energy Finance, undermining the impact of the protectionist policies on manufacturers. Shipments from exempt suppliers including First Solar Inc. may extend that period to nine months.

"The slow pace of D.C. bureaucracy has allowed the solar industry to insulate itself from the full impact of the tariffs," Bromley said in an interview. "They won't be as damaging as some in the industry have warned."

The tariffs announced in January came in response to a trade suit filed in April 2017 by a bankrupt U.S. solar manufacturer that argued it had been harmed by a wave of cheap imports, mostly from Asia. The U.S. International Trade Commission agreed in October, paving the way for Trump's decision.

SunPower Corp., the second-biggest U.S. solar supplier, manufacturers most of its products in Mexico and Asia, and rushed to bring them into the country at the end of last year. The stockpiled inventory will help the San Jose, California-based company buy time as it pursues a request to be excluded from the duties because it uses a technology that's different from standard photovoltaic panels.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Is this the future for OPEC?

By Nick Cunningham

OPEC and Russia, along with other countries participating in the oil production cuts aimed at balancing the market, are looking to create a "super group of oil producing countries," according to a report from The National.

The move would institutionalize the framework that has been in place since late 2016, when OPEC, plus a group of non-OPEC oil-producing countries led by Russia, cut output by a combined 1.8 million barrels per day (mb/d). The trick has been keeping everyone on board with the limits for an extended period of time, with multiple extensions, while also trying to figure out what to do when the oil market reaches the long-sought after "balance."

The fear has been that all participants would return to producing flat out, ramping up production in a short period of time, a specter that threatened to crash oil prices all over again. Up until now, OPEC has maintained a shockingly high level of compliance, although that has been aided by the involuntary cuts (i.e. collapse) of output in Venezuela. Still, OPEC and its coalition partners have been cagey about what they plan on doing at the end of this year, offering soothing but vague comments about a "gradual" exit.

But, according to The National, the "super group" led by Saudi Arabia and Russia would offer an institutional framework to manage the oil market post-2018. They hope to create a draft proposal before the end of the year. The goal is "together with the secretary general [of OPEC, Mohammad Barkindo], to put together a draft agreement for this group [of 24] to stay together for a longer time," UAE's Oil Minister Suhail Al Mazrouei, who currently holds the OPEC presidency, told The National in Abu Dhabi.

In an optimistic scenario, Al Mazrouei said, the draft



would be signed by all 24 participants by the end of 2018. The report comes just days after OPEC Secretary-General had hinted that the "building blocks" for a permanent OPEC/non-OPEC arrangement were forming.

The significance of this, if it comes to pass, is profound. OPEC has been around for a long time, cutting output when the market gets oversupplied and ramping up when prices spike. Market management from the cartel has proven to reduce price volatility, although it often translates into higher prices. The period between 2014 and 2016, when OPEC eschewed intervention and let the market sort things out on its own, was characterized by wild price swings, volatility and uncertainty.

A return to management at the end of 2016 brought back stability to a large degree, while also raising prices. And the cuts, both in absolute terms as well as the psychological impact on the market, were augmented by the participation of Russia and the other non-OPEC producers.

## Price rally spells fleeting relief for Canadian oil producers

Canadian heavy crude rallied to a two-month high relative to U.S. crude this week, offering some relief to oil producers in Alberta struggling with thin margins amid plentiful supply.

The rally was likely to be short-lived, traders and analysts said, because output continues to grow without a corresponding increase in transportation capacity.

Canada's crude typically trades at a discount to U.S. benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) light oil, reflecting transportation costs to U.S. refineries and additional processing requirements.

The discount expanded since a November leak in TransCanada Corp's Keystone pipeline, which led to a temporary shutdown and a buildup in supplies.

TransCanada is now operating the line at reduced pressure. Canadian producers have been unable to boost volumes by rail much, as railways are reluctant to take more oil business when they are busy shipping grain.

The bottlenecks come as oil sands production expands with Suncor Energy Inc's new Fort Hills mine.

Western Canada Select oil traded \$20.50 per barrel below WTI on Tuesday, the smallest since Dec. 7, and well off a four-year high of \$32 on Jan. 31, according to Shorcan Energy Brokers.

But the correction looks temporary, and the discount has started to expand again, said Tudor Pickering Holt & Co analyst Matt Murphy.

The price rally was connected to monthly apportionments by Enbridge Inc, which operates the biggest Canadian oil pipeline system and rations space when capacity is tight, Murphy said. Oil companies typically request more capacity than they need to ensure they get enough, resulting in some needing to buy additional barrels on the market, he said.

The start up of Alberta's Sturgeon Refinery has also increased heavy oil demand, said a Calgary-based trader, who was not authorized to speak publicly.

Enbridge on Thursday said it was rationing space as much as 51 percent on some Mainline pipelines for March, more than the previous month, reflecting tight capacity.

Little has changed fundamentally, said GMP Energy analyst Michael Dunn.

"Structurally, with Keystone restricted and the growing (heavy oil) output, and inventories being full, there doesn't seem to be a physical relief valve that's being blown yet," Dunn said.

Cenovus Energy sees prices strengthening once TransCanada restores pressure on Keystone and railway volumes increase, said CEO Alex Pourbaix.

"In the short term, we have an acute challenge that is largely to do with what we suspect is a fairly small imbalance in supply and takeaway capacity," Pourbaix said on a Thursday conference call.

(Source: Reuters)

## China outstrips South Korea as world's No. 2 LNG importer

On the back of a massive government push toward cleaner-burning fuel to combat air pollution, China last year surpassed South Korea to become the world's second-largest importer of liquefied natural gas for the first time.

China imported 38.1 million tons of LNG in 2017, up about 50 percent from the previous year and slightly above South Korea's 37.6 million. While Japan was still the biggest importer at 83.6 million tons, China is widely expected to become the No. 1 importer in the 2020s or by 2030. And if the East Asian nation continues its "explosive" purchases of the fuel, neighboring countries may be forced to pay higher import prices.

Back in 2011, China imported 12 million tons of LNG, roughly one-third as much as South Korea. But it has tripled imports over the past six years as Beijing has stepped up clean-air measures in line with the "regain the blue sky" slogan adopted under President Xi Jinping.

Specifically, the government is urging manufacturing plants primarily in Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei and Henan provinces to replace coal with natural gas to operate boilers. Thermal power generation plants are also being pushed to switch to LNG. But some regions are facing an acute shortage of natural gas due to the faster-than-planned energy shift.

China's soaring LNG imports have greatly impacted prices, with spot prices in Asia temporarily skyrocketing this winter.

As a result, investment in LNG-related facilities may be rekindled. China currently relies on coal for some 60 percent of its primary energy consumption, while the ratio of natural gas is only 6 percent by 2030, the government plans to raise the proportion of natural gas to 15 percent and lower that of coal to 49 percent or less. And according to Chinese media reports, the number of bases accepting LNG is expected to more than double from the current 17. Research firm Bloomberg New Energy Finance predicts that China will become the world's largest LNG importer in that same timespan.

China currently buys the cleaner-burning fuel from Australia and Qatar, while it has expressed interest in an LNG project in Alaska.

The global supply capacity of LNG is currently outpacing demand, and major natural resources companies have procrastinated on investment in large LNG plants due to the drop in resource prices since 2014.

But Kosho Tamura of Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corp. said, "supply will fail to keep with demand in 2022, or one year earlier than forecast, because of, among other factors, China's strong demand." If the pace of LNG imports by China further accelerates, resources majors may resume investment.

One example of that possibility is an LNG plant project in Canada involving British-Dutch oil and gas company Royal Dutch Shell, Mitsubishi Corp. of Japan and PetroChina. A final decision on investment was delayed from the initially expected 2016. Bidding from plant builders was reopened at the end of last year, resulting in competition between two groups including Japan's JGC.

Surging LNG imports by China will greatly impact procurement by Japan and other neighboring countries. Long-term purchase contracts totaling more than 10 million tons per year between Japanese companies -- especially gas and electric power firms -- and resources developers are due to expire between 2019 and 2022. Although buyers can currently procure LNG under favorable terms, sellers may take a strong position around 2020, because of China's burgeoning demand.

Japanese buyers have been able to buy LNG at discount prices under long-term bulk contracts, but they may see procurement prices jump as a result of aggressive imports by China.

(Source: Nikkei)



## Italian elections and the crisis of European democracy

By Lorenzo Marsili

“Perhaps only a war can wake our country from slumber and give direction to our politics.” Most people would be surprised to hear a young progressive utter these words in a cafe in Rome. But I have heard them more than once. And only a few weeks before the national elections on March 4, the question haunting Italy is familiar to many across the world: can democracy still bring about real change?

The global success of Babylon Berlin, the German TV series portraying life under the fragile Weimar republic, signals a rising European fascination for the tumultuous inter-war period. Comparing the situation today to the 1930s has become something of a political cliché on the continent. The sense of dancing on the verge of the abyss seems real enough: exploding inequalities, threats of ecological catastrophe, disruptive technological change and rising extremism. Psychological distress seems to have crossed all class barriers, with the ultra-rich hoarding cash, preparing for the apocalypse, and purchasing foreign passports.



Former Italian Prime Ministers Silvio Berlusconi

Yet, in this very European obsession with historical repetition, one element seems too easily forgotten: the power of individuals to effect political change.

If an Italian citizen of the 1930s were tele-transported to the 1950s she would scarcely believe her eyes. Where the poor were left to die of curable illnesses, she would find a universal national health service. Where fascism ruled she would find a vibrant democracy. Where protectionist empires collided, she would find booming international trade. In the short span of 20 years a new world had emerged.

Today, as we stand at yet another crossroads, is politics still able to provide such transformative potential – peacefully? Dramatically, the upcoming Italian elections bring a response in the negative.

The economic background is bleak. The country remains below its pre-crisis output, while the little economic growth there is concentrates at the top of the pyramid. Unemployment may be nominally decreasing, but only due to the spread of precarious, underpaid jobs. And while the national debate focuses on the effects of rising immigration, the number of Italians leaving their country each year often exceeds the number of migrants coming in.

The political response to the grave state of affairs has been little more than feeble attempts to muddle through and petty squabbles. The incumbent Democratic Party of Matteo Renzi and its stitched-up coalition try to tout the economic “success” achieved in the last five years and promise more of the same. On the other side of the spectrum, a coalition led by former prime minister and convicted tax-fraudster Silvio Berlusconi puts together neo-fascists, nationalists, and old centrists in an incoherent alliance promising everything, and its opposite. Between the two, comedian Beppe Grillo’s Five Star Movement seems willing to say anything its marketing experts recommend on any given day: tellingly, the party is both in favor and against Italian membership of the Euro, the EU’s single currency.

Silvio Berlusconi’s coalition is leading the polls, but none of the contenders in the upcoming election seems to have a chance of securing an absolute majority in Parliament, leaving horse-trading, a grand-coalition, or a technocratic government as the most realistic options.

But regardless of the swinging electoral arithmetic, the upcoming elections bring further proof of the crisis of European democracy. At a moment when Italy and Europe need ambition, leadership and a clear vision for change, politics is turning parochial and short-sighted. Where the extraordinary economic, ecological and geopolitical challenges of our time would call for a battle of ideas and for competing world views, the electoral debate is solidly buried in the sands of insignificance. The sad truth is that China’s long-term planning increasingly appears as a captivating alternative to Europe’s petty bickering.

The outcome of this political abdication is a contradictory mix of apathy and extremism. In the upcoming Italian elections, abstention is expected to reach 50 percent among younger people, an all-time high. A sense of gloom and powerlessness prevails: “We need to hit rock bottom before anything can begin to change” is another refrain very commonly heard in the country. At the same time the debate becomes even more polarized, with increasingly toxic media coverage and openly racist claims from leading politicians encouraging a climate of fear, xenophobia, and even far-right terrorism. Recently, a drive-by shooting targeted migrants in Northern Italy.

As the Irish poet W. B. Yeats sung in 1919, these appear to be times when: “The best lack all conviction, while the worst Are full of passionate intensity”

Despondency grows all across European democracies. And during the 2017 French presidential elections I have heard many young people thinking that a victory for Marine Le Pen’s far-right party, however disastrous, might at least have provided a much needed wake up call. In the meantime, the far-right has entered government in Austria, Poland and Hungary, while in Germany it has become nearly as popular as the Social Democratic party.

Apathy and extremism are the bitter fruits of a failing economy and a political system that has renounced any vision or passion for the future. Ultimately, Italian elections will mean almost nothing. And this is precisely the problem.

Yeats ended his poem with a terrifying vision: “And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?”

It was the beast of war. History rarely repeats itself. But a feeling of political impotence coupled with material suffering has always been the premise of all catastrophe. Keeping the monsters at bay will require the courage of political renewal and transformation. But a tired and provincial European political class appears tragically unfit for the task.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

# How the U.S. can ‘get to yes’ with Turkey



**Granting Turkey’s demands would make Syria more unstable and prolong the threat of terrorism there.**

The Turks simply don’t have enough disciplined, reliable military power to stabilize the areas the SDF now controls. The U.S. would create a free-for-all that would make Lebanon look tidy by comparison.

Here’s a catalogue of the craziness in the Syrian battlespace over the past month: Al-Qaida has shot down a Russian jet, using a Chinese-made missile; Kurdish forces have shot down a Turkish helicopter, Israel has bombed twelve sites across Syria in retaliation.

Syria is now riven by “converging forces with diverging interests,” warns a senior Pentagon official. Staffan de Mistura, the UN special envoy, said Wednesday that it is as “violent, worrying and dangerous” a moment as any

since he took the job four years ago.

What’s the answer to this toxic mix? Not empowering Turkey’s deeper meddling, surely. The path out is a steady, patient advance of the faltering Geneva negotiations to extend the power and authority of a reformed Syrian state and military. For the U.S., that means biting the bullet and working with Russia and the Syrian government -- two essential partners.

Russia actually took a step forward this month by drafting a new Syrian constitution that would grant limited autonomy for Kurdish regions in a newly decentralized Syrian state. The Russian draft would reconcile Kurdish and Arab demands, and some U.S. officials see it as a basis for serious talks. What

President Trump favors is anybody’s guess.

The core problem in this latest phase of the Syria mess is similar to what got us here: The U.S. has the strongest military force, but doesn’t know what it wants, politically. Turkey fulminates and demands American support, but lacks the power to stabilize areas it seeks to control.

Here’s a thought experiment: Should the Kurdish-led SDF be disbanded, as Turkey wants? No! That would create a power void and more instability. Instead, the SDF should become part of a new Syrian national army -- working with Damascus, Washington, Moscow, and yes, even Ankara.

(Source: The Daily Star)

## Merkel is May’s new best friend – but how long will it last?



By John Rentoul

Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, sounded very different from Michel Barnier, the EU negotiator, in her news conference with Theresa May yesterday afternoon. Where Barnier had a week ago insisted that Britain must either be subject to all EU laws or be treated like any other country in the world, Merkel sounded more open to some kind of half-way status between full EU membership and the outer darkness.

She was asked if what the British wanted was “cherry picking” and rejected the phrase. She accepted May’s argument that Britain would be different from other countries after we leave because we start from a situation of being so closely aligned with the EU.

The relationship would not be as close it is now, Merkel said, but “I think we can find” that compromise position. Of course, these are just words, but if they are any guide to how the negotiations will go they suggest a willingness “to find common ground”, as Merkel put it, which was rather different from Barnier’s take-it-or-leave-it language.

Merkel did repeat, more gently, some of Barnier’s pre-negotiation attempt to play games with the other side’s psychology. Asked if she were frustrated by the British Government’s failure to be clear about what it wants and the continued divisions in the Cabinet, she said: “I’m not frustrated, I’m just curious.” Both sides were in a process of learning, and “we sometimes don’t know how our opposite number is seeing things”. That is the politest way yet of expressing the common German view that we British must be out of our minds.

But it was the willingness to do a deal that was the most important theme of a news conference that was otherwise devoted to the repetition of platitudes. They were so dull that we had to occupy ourselves by noting the new variations on “deep and special” to describe the partnership with the EU that Theresa May is seeking. Today she wanted a “bold and ambitious” partnership and then a “comprehensive and ambitious” one.

Almost the only color in a careful and brief session, which Merkel tried to bring to a close forgetting that she hadn’t taken a second question from the German media, was provided by Theresa May’s Wikipedia reference to the “proud history” of Anglo-German trade in the form of the 12th-century Hanseatic League.

We hoped for more but instead were straight into what May insisted on calling the “time-limited implementation period” – what everyone else calls the transition period – that will follow Brexit and about which talks will begin on Monday.

After the talks on the transition period comes the most important part of the negotiation, about the terms of the future partnership. Merkel said there was more than a “single bone of contention” between the UK and the EU on that; “it is a very complex matter”.

But she sounded as if she wanted to do a deal. The trouble is that David Cameron thought she was an ally in renegotiating the terms of our EU membership before the referendum, and she turned out to be less flexible – or more committed to the European ideal, to put it more politely – than he had hoped.

(Source: Independent)

## Foreign ISIL fighters must be seen to face justice



Ever since young Muslims began leaving European cities for the battlefields of Syria, governments have been worrying about what to do when they came home. Now the question is pressing. As the U.S.-led coalition drives ISIL out from its last strongholds, hundreds of foreign fighters, and their families, are being held by Kurdish and other rebel groups that do not have the capacity either to keep them in secure detention or to put them on trial.

As Jim Mattis, the U.S. defense secretary, remarks: “Doing nothing is not an option.” No one wants these people back. At least some ISIL recruits who returned home at an earlier stage may have been penitent, shocked by what they saw.

This group will include trained, battle-hardened diehards who pose a long-term security threat. There is a clear risk some could carry out attacks on home soil, yet it may be difficult to present the evidence needed to convict them. Even those who were convicted could add to the problem of radicalization in jails – and would need monitoring after serving their sentence. Repatriating young children – a clear moral imperative – is also challenging. Many will suffer from trauma and those over the age of six will have been taught radical ideology, with weapons training from the age of nine. Yet none of this justifies the unseemly scramble by European governments to wash their hands of the problem. Several countries – the UK, France and Netherlands included – had openly stated their preference for foreign fighters to be killed in action. But now that large numbers are in captivity, in Syria and Iraq, they cannot be allowed to disappear – whether through summary execution, or an escape to other theatres of conflict. They must be seen to face justice. Several countries want them to stand trial where they are, despite the likelihood of summary trial and death sentences in Iraq,

and the lack of any clear judicial process in Syria. Others look to the U.S., but officials there are reluctant to use Guantánamo Bay or any process that could jeopardize future extraditions from Europe. Talk of using the International Criminal Court is futile, since the U.S. does not recognize it. Britain has been especially flagrant in denying responsibility for two of the most high profile detainees – members of the so-called Beatles cell that allegedly beheaded victims, and featured in ISIL propaganda. Gavin Williamson, defense secretary, has said “justice should be done locally” and that they are no longer part of Britain.

He can make this claim because the UK government has in recent years awarded itself unusually broad powers to revoke the citizenship of a dual national or of a naturalized citizen when it is “conducive to the public good”, even if the latter is left stateless. But its adoption and use of these powers is highly questionable.

It fits a popular narrative in which citizenship is not a secure legal status, but a privilege that must be earned, and can be forfeited – for anyone who was not born British. This is a dangerous path to go down: it creates two classes of citizen and must surely fuel disaffection. More to the point, Britain cannot simply disown its nationals when they present a threat to the rest of the world.

The UK and other European governments must press on with efforts to detain and prosecute ISIL members swiftly, prevent them proselytizing in jails and help them reintegrate. Some will not face charges, whether for lack of evidence or because they are innocent of terrorist intent. There will be a need for costly surveillance. To manage this process, and justify it to voters, is a daunting task, but western governments must step up to the challenge.

(Source: FT)



# Would French President visit to Tehran take place in the near future?

By Majid Ghahremani

**TEHRAN** — Emmanuel Macron, at the age of 39, became the youngest President in the history of France on May 7, 2017 and has tried to be a different president. Macron was a relative newcomer to foreign policy when he became president, but his appetite for it has been large.

In his first major foreign policy speech on Aug 29, 2017 he called on his ambassadors to convey the message of a “stronger, more unified and more open” France. He said he backs the landmark 2015 Iran nuclear deal or JCPOA and “there is no alternative to the non-proliferation agenda”. He later on said that it would be an error to scrap this deal.

Macron in a meeting with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (age 69) on the sidelines of the 72nd session of the UNGA in New York said initially that Paris planned to support the current nuclear deal and adding that any negotiation of the agreement would be “meaningless.”

Just one day after Donald Trump speech later, Macron’s assessment appeared to change. While he still said that he would prefer that President Trump dial back the rhetoric — and even offered to mediate between Iran and the United States — Macron said that the current deal was clearly “not enough”! He said he wanted to discuss possible sanctions over Iran’s ballistic missile program, open negotiations immediately on what happens after the limitations to the accord begin to be lifted in 2025 and hold a discussion on the role of Iran in the region. The French leader said he believed he had managed to at least convince Trump to allow France and the United Nations to play a mediation role between Tehran and Washington with regard to the situation in Syria.

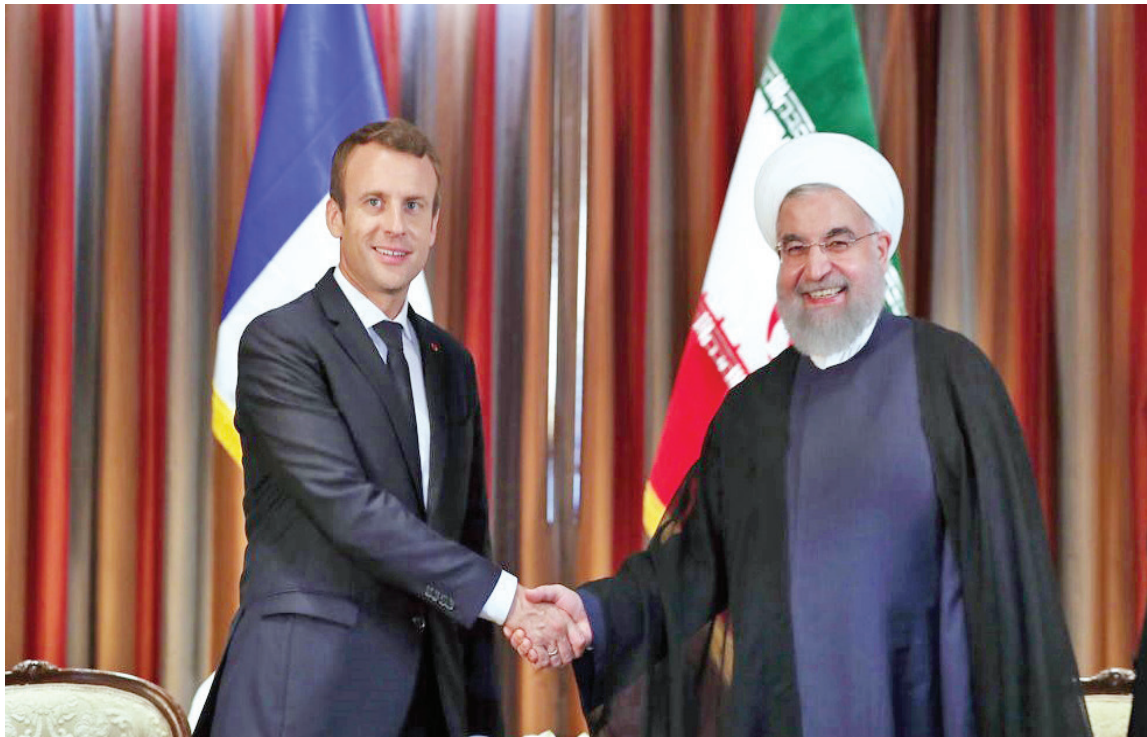
President Trump in his first address to the United Nations General Assembly signaled he is close to ditching the Iran nuclear agreement struck by former President Barack Obama, by saying the deal is an “embarrassment to the United States”.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani ripped President Trump’s speech to the United Nations General Assembly as “ignorant, absurd and hateful,” charging that “It will be a great pity if this agreement were to be destroyed by rogue newcomers to the world of politics”. “The world will have lost a great opportunity, but such unfortunate behavior will never impede Iran’s course of progress,” Rouhani said.

Trump’s tough talks opened the door for Macron’s diplomacy and suddenly Macron hardly tried to mediate a meeting between Trump and President Rouhani. But Iranian President turned down a meeting with President Trump and rejected a request from the Americans side.

“Is this agreement enough? No. It is not, given the evolution of the regional situation Macron told reporters in New York. “Let’s be honest, the tensions are on the rise. We need a clear framework to be able to reassure regional countries and the United States,” Macron said, adding that he was ready to mediate between,” the United States and Iran. Thereafter, France put the steps further and French foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian suggested to reporters that there could be talks to strengthen the Pact for the post-2025 period but that allowing it to collapse could lead Iran’s neighbors to seek atomic weapons. France’s Ambassador to the U.S. Gerard Araud also said, under a French idea, sanctions would be reinstated automatically in the event of non-compliance, avoiding the threat of a veto.

In fact, what French President and other officials were



doing was not only for Iran, the U.S. or the Region, they wanted France remain the forefront, most significant and ambitious foreign policy actor in the EU and in absence of UK after Brexit. At the same time Macron is trying to make an unwritten deal with Mr Trump between Paris climate accord and with the 2015 nuclear deal or JCPOA.

To pave the way for this possible deal, Macron worked hard to be close to Trump. Despite Trump’s staggering unpopularity in France — not to mention the outrage over Macron’s decision to invite his American counterpart to this country’s signature national holiday — the newly minted French president appeared to make a daring gamble. With the United States increasingly isolated on the global stage, Macron sought to position himself as Trump’s principal interlocutor in a region that has shown the White House little but disdain. Later Trump said that “France is America’s first and oldest ally and a lot of people don’t know that”.

Despite the historic “special relationship” between the United States and Britain, Trump has shown little interest in British affairs since his inauguration, further delaying a traditional visit to that country. And although German Chancellor Angela Merkel recently tried to patch things up with Trump at the Group of 20 Summit in Hamburg, she has done little to hide her distaste.

Paris has been very active in recent months in several important Middle East crises and in fact, Macron and Trump speak by phone at least once a week. The two have several things in common which make this connection a natural one: Both came from outside the traditional party system, both like to boast that they plan to keep their promises and, as some Parisians say, the fact that Macron is a man gives him an edge in dealing with today’s Washington.

Macron’s continuous improvement behavior regard-

ing the U.S. and Paris advocated for stronger and more sanctions against Iran specially in his new year address to foreign diplomats at the Elysee Palace in Paris (Jan.4,2018) was criticized by a top adviser to Iran’s supreme leader. Ali Akbar Velayati said: “To sustain its international credibility, France should not blindly follow the Americans.”

After these critical words, Macron and Rouhani had a phone call and “a trip to Iran by the president, at the invitation of President Rouhani, has been considered,” the Elysee said.

On 11 January 2018 and 48 hours before the so called ultimatum by U.S. President, Donald Trump said the U.S. could “conceivably” return to the 2015 Paris climate accord if an agreement treated America more fairly. Two days later and on Friday Trump announced his decision to disavow the Iran nuclear agreement and has given European Allies 120 days to agree to a new deal or said the U.S. will pull out. He also used some French prior requests like- not just for ten years, but forever.

Jean-Yves Le Drian is set to travel to the Islamic Republic of Iran in the next few weeks (5th of March) and some should expect him possibly to prepare for President Macron’s state visit to Tehran. Macron’s visit to Iran would be the first by a French head of state or government since 1971.

In this regard it is necessary to say openly that if Macron is supposed to visit Tehran in context of U.S. president’s frustrated words and so-called ultimatum and conditions, we should say “he is not welcomed”, and better to do this visit after 10th of May (when so-called 120 days finishes) or his first year of his Presidency at Elysee. But if he wants to visit Tehran in the context of the EU and especially French independence policies, the Iranian officials are ready to receive him warmly and talk with him about many things and especially about French foreign policy contradictions.

## From Davos to Munich



**1 →** In such a situation, European citizens find that the solutions offered by the moderate left parties didn’t work in removing the existing crises in Europe. Obviously, in this situation «crossing the traditional parties» would become a general demand in the West. Under such circumstances, Merkel’s and other European leaders’ warnings about the return to the twentieth century and the time before the formation of the United Europe simply means the inability of the Eurozone authorities in preventing the Right-extremism in the West.

These concerns remain at the Munich Security Conference. As Reuters reported, The defense ministers of Germany and France pledged to redouble their military and foreign policy cooperation efforts on Friday, inviting other European countries to participate if they felt ready to do so.

In a speech to the Munich Security Conference, German defense minister Ursula von der Leyen said Europe’s countries would not be able to respond nimbly enough to global challenges if they were stymied by the need to decide joint foreign policy approaches unanimously. “Europe has to up its pace in the face of global challenges from terrorism, poverty and climate change,” she said. “Those who want to must be able to advance without being blocked by individual countries.”

Her French counterpart Florence Parly said any such deepened cooperation would be complementary to the NATO alliance, which itself was based on the principle that members contributed differently depending on their capacities.

“The reality has always been that some countries are by choice more integrated and more able to act than others,” she said.

The push comes as Germany’s political class reluctantly concedes it must play a larger security role to match its economic pre-eminence in Europe, amid concerns that the European Union is unable to respond effectively to security concerns beyond its eastern and southern borders.

But in their deal for another four years of a “grand coalition” government, Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservatives and the Social Democrats have agreed to boost spending on the armed forces after years of post-Cold War decline.

The deal, which must still be ratified by the Social Democrat membership, comes as Germany reluctantly takes on the role of the continent’s pre-eminent political power-broker, a role generations of post-war politicians have shied away from.

Days after U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis reiterated President Donald Trump’s demand that European countries spend more on their militaries, Von der Leyen pledged to spend more on its military and the United Nations, but called in return for other countries not to turn away from multilateralism.

The pledges come as the EU seeks a new basis on which to cooperate with Britain, traditionally one of the continent’s leading security players, after its vote to leave the EU.

Earlier on Friday, the leaders of the three countries’ security services said close security cooperation in areas like terrorism, illegal migration, proliferation and cyber attacks, must continue after Britain’s departure. “Cooperation between European intelligence agencies combined with the values of liberal democracy is indispensable, especially against a background of diverse foreign and security challenges,” they said.

## Modern management and requirements in the age of information

**1 →** Different epochs have no definite starting points, they gradually appear and subtle. First, they are aware that a fundamental thing is happening, and then they will present a new worldview. Hesitation about the common worldview usually begins with the emergence of dilemmas. The dilemma is an issue or question that cannot be resolved or responded to with the common worldview. Therefore, there is doubt about it.

The age of information has started with this dilemma, making decisions in turbulent environments, without ever reaching the relevant information, is practically confusing. The mindset of managers and scientists is obvious to management information systems. In fact, the vast majority of these systems are a source of concern for all management issues. The passion for these systems is understandable. These systems make use of the most exciting tools of the time, computers between dreamers and information system designers. Although such passion is understandable, some exaggerations cannot be justified. In addition, the use of information requires changes in the organization, without which the managers’ expectations will not actually be realized.

One of the real shortcomings of managers in work activities is lack of information. Of course, this does not mean that they would have performed better if they had all the relevant information as well. Experience has shown that the performance of many managers is not due to the fact that they first suffer from redundancy of information, and secondly, they have not designed their organization to match the changes in the information age.

The challenges of the information age are not limited to one part, but all sectors of society are under its influence. Organizations are not excluded from this rule. The main sources of an organization are not just traditional sources of human resources, finance, organization,



and technology; organizations are now focusing more on their information assets and knowledge. Managing information and knowledge resources is a strategic necessity in the life of organizations and doing work activities.

In the information age, most data and data managers receive information that they cannot attract even if they spend all their time. They suffer from overload of information.

Therefore, we need to look for mechanisms to meet the information needs of our users. Designing and deploying appropriate information systems are one of these mechanisms. It can be said that the most important task of information systems is to clear and clear information. In other words, the first and perhaps most important step in designing organizations appropriate to the information age is the design of appropriate information systems.


It is usually said that more information about the work of other managers and their units makes it easier for managers to coordinate their activities. This is not necessarily true. Competition between the managers of a unit of an organization is often intense and immoral, and if the coordination systems are not properly implemented, more information may be used in a destructive way. Therefore, for

the effective use of information, the improvement of coordination mechanisms in the organization is also very necessary.


Human beings in the third millennium, having left behind the «age of communication» and entering the «information age», entered into a space in which the entire world is a part of a network of countries and institutions and nations. In this space, new threats and opportunities have emerged and all the issues and issues of our environment have become global. In this space, the boundaries have become glass, from which everything is seen. We must admit that the explosion of information and globalization summed up the world in a small city, which controls and observes the eye of a rotating turret in its entirety.

The information society is a community in which everyone can create, access, use, and respect information and knowledge. People who want to rule themselves must equip themselves with the power of consciousness. A government without popular information and means of obtaining it equals tragedy or comedy, or both. The realization of the notion of citizenship is in the information society, the right to and free access to information. We must see the principle of a basic intelligence community, such as the right to know, the right to be a citizen and a citizen.

**Second Announcement**



**N.I.O.C**  
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**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)				
18,208	815,000,000	16,285,824,000	Casing Running Tool (CRT)	3,151,546	Indent No: 43-22-9603748014 TenderNo.: CGP/25-96/022	1

**Brief discriptionof subject:**  
National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) address pasdaran Biv., 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 (G) 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.

**Reciving 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 or Room #431, coordination office of NIDC, NIOC No. 8 center Building, Yaghma alley, Jomhoori St., Tehran, IRAN, Tel No.: 021-66700249.

**Notice:**  
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

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# Morgan Tsvangirai: From a nickel miner to an icon

By Alex Magaisa

It's a dark moment for Zimbabwe. Iconic opposition leader and former Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai has died after a two-year battle against colon cancer.

His death will remain as one of the rare moments that has united Zimbabwean politicians from across the political divide. His loyal supporters are inconsolable at the loss of their icon, but perhaps the greatest tribute is that those from the ruling elite, who have opposed and ridiculed him as a politician, have shown him respect.

Tsvangirai has, without doubt, been one of the greatest and most influential political figures in Zimbabwean history. He has always fought for the underdog, starting his activism as a trade unionist while working in a nickel mine.

His early years as a miner must have prepared him well for the rigors of his political life. In his

speeches, he liked to draw from the "at the coal face" language of his early life in the mine tunnels.

It was his courage that stood out throughout his career. He challenged the regime of President Robert Mugabe at a time when many believed it was suicidal to do so. In 1989, Mugabe imprisoned him when he expressed solidarity with the student movement, which was protesting against corruption. He immediately became a target and there was an attempt to assassinate him.

As secretary general of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, Tsvangirai honed his motivational and organizational skills. In 1998, he was the face of the large-scale protests against price hikes and taxes that the government was imposing to fund the profligacy of the political elite. Pioneering activists recognized his leadership skills and selected him to chair the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), a group that was campaigning

for constitutional reforms.

## ■ Mugabe regime frightened

As his civic work grew beyond the traditional domain of trade unionism, the Mugabe regime felt threatened. The president dared him and his comrades in the unions to join politics if that was what they wanted. They obliged and formed the Movement of Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999, with Tsvangirai as its first leader. That would mark the beginning of his remarkable political career.

As leader of the new party, Tsvangirai worked with civic organizations, including the NCA, to defeat Mugabe's proposed new constitution in 2000. The battle between the sides was over the process. Tsvangirai and the activists believed the process should be broad-based and more inclusive, while Mugabe had handpicked a commission chaired by a judge to write a constitution favoring his regime.

The defeat of Mugabe's constitutional proposal

was a seminal moment for a number of reasons. It showed that Mugabe could be defeated - it was the first time that he had lost a plebiscite. However, it was also a double-edged sword, which awakened Mugabe and his party, ZANU-PF, from their slumber.

Realizing that the MDC and civic society were a potent force, Mugabe unleashed the might of the repressive state machinery upon his opponents. ZANU-PF won the general election in June 2000 by a small margin, and, had the regime not used violence, the ruling party would probably have lost.

Tsvangirai contested three presidential elections, and many believe he would have won, had he not been cheated by the regime. The most glaring of this election manipulation and rigging was in 2008.

For the first time, Tsvangirai defeated Mugabe in March that year. However, after a delay of six weeks, the electoral commission announced that Tsvangirai did not have enough votes to claim

absolute majority. Many believe those results were manipulated.

This necessitated a second round of election between him and Mugabe. As it happened, the campaign for the runoff election was marred by egregious violence by state-sponsored groups, who terrorized mainly rural voters who were believed to have voted for Tsvangirai. Human rights groups say more than 200 people were killed, thousands were injured and many more lost their homes and property.

The violence against his supporters was so bad that Tsvangirai was forced to withdraw from the race a few days before the runoff election. This led to a sham runoff election in which Mugabe effectively ran alone. The African Union and the South African Development Community had to intervene, and this led to the formation of an Inclusive Government, a coalition between the MDC and ZANU-PF. ➔13

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# Tehran city council approves child-friendly urban planning

**L I F E** Two proposals on child-friendly urban planning were approved by Tehran City Council on Wednesday. The proposals on smart pedestrian crossing management includes installation of smart traffic lights and putting crosswalk in streets where schools and preschools are located, Khabaronline reported.

“We emphasize the need for improving safety of students and children in crossing streets and try our best to enhance their movements across the city,” council member Elham Fakhari said.

Urban planning regarding young people encourages safe movement and social interaction. The better design of urban environment not only helps these children thrive and become healthier, but also such planning is beneficial for vulnerable groups including disabled and the elderly.

Considering children in urban design provides a place for them to be safe and happy to explore different aspects of the environment



they live in, although it is a time consuming task, it is a valuable project, which should start with little change.

According the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Tehran, Iran is progressing towards democracy. The steps at times may look slow but the will of the people is towards the creation of a society with the rule of law and freedom for all. The idea of a child-friendly city plays well into this process of the evolution of a society, since it is in the realm of public participation. It is a learning experience for the people as well as officials to see the result and the process of a decision-making that includes people both to set the criteria and participate in the final say.

Urban design is a process of communal decision-making. Eventually this process shall result in guidelines. Sometimes these laws are sufficient to give us the desirable environment. To make sure of success in achieving such an environment, people must share their opinions.

## Household items you had no idea were reusable

### ■ Re-steep your tea bags

One teabag can make two cups of tea—possibly even three or four. To get the most bang for your brew, continuously steep your tea in a teapot on the stove. If you only drink one cup in the morning, place your used teabag in the refrigerator and re-purpose it later in the day to relax your eyes. Cool teabags do wonders for eye puffiness and irritation.

### ■ Bake cookies with minimal cleanup

Got a birthday party coming up? Bake multiple batches of cookies on the same piece of parchment paper. Most brands are oven safe up to 450 degrees—and as long as there’s nothing stuck to the paper that could easily burn, it’s safe to reuse.

### ■ Clean Swiffer dusters

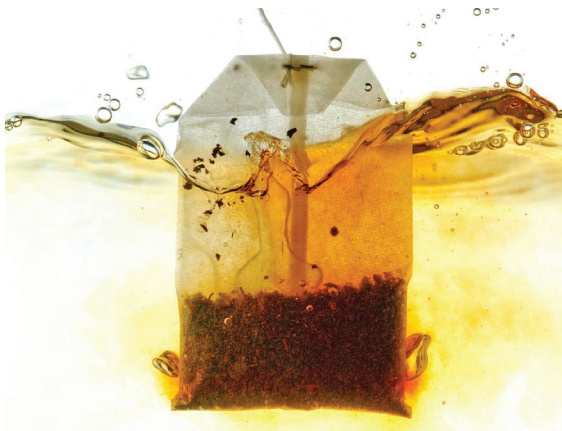
The pads that attach to the bottom of your Swiffer don’t have to go in the trash when you finish your chores. Fill your sink with warm water and soap, and swish the duster around to ready it for a second use. Roll the pad into a power towel to eliminate any extra moisture. Allow to air dry. These are the “disposable” items you need to stop buying.

### ■ Give dryer sheets a second life

Dryer sheets are just as effective when cut in half and can be reused at least once. That’s four loads of laundry for the price of one!

### ■ Use coffee filters more than once

Most coffee filters can be reused at least four or five times before they stop working effectively, according to ground-toground.org. Try one of these extraordinary uses for the coffee grounds (or just discard them), rinse off the filter,



allow it to dry, and reuse.

### ■ Fix a yucky shower curtain

Just because it’s plastic doesn’t mean it has to be disposable. Instead of tossing a soap-scum laden curtain, try this. Remove the curtain from its hooks and put it in your washing machine, along with regular detergent and a cup of baking soda. Rehang the shower curtain to dry.

### ■ Repurpose old towels

As your bath towels fade and accumulate holes, don’t immediately throw them in the trash. Cut them up and use them as washable cleaning rags to take care of dirty floors,

cars, pets, and more. If you’re feeling creative, you can even turn them into DIY creations like bath mats and soft dog toys. Check out these 16 cleaning hacks you’ll want to steal from professional house cleaners.

### ■ Get a head start on next year’s garden

Your flowers and vegetables have uses beyond just their harvesting season. Let a few of your plants go to seed (if you don’t harvest them, they will stop growing and eventually produce seeds), you can keep those seeds and use them for next year’s crops. Howtosaveseds.com explains the seed saving instructions for each plant.

### ■ Empty box from under the eggs

Egg cartons are designed to keep small, fragile items safe. Who says eggs should be the only things to get that protection? Use empty (and clean!) cartons to store small Christmas ornaments and lightbulbs, or turn them into organizing trays for screws and bolts. Here are 50 more organizing tips you’ll wish you knew all along.

### ■ Roll out the paper rolls

When expert crafters see paper towel or toilet paper rolls, they see endless crafting possibilities. But you don’t need to have an artistic vision to reuse cardboard tubes. Slip them over wrapped cables and extension cords to keep them from tangling. Cut and re-tape tubes over the bottom of hangers to keep pants from creasing. Stuff them with the many plastic bags laying around the house. The options are endless. Don’t miss these other extraordinary uses for household staples you already own.

(Source: Reader’s Digest)

## 28 simple and natural ways to detox your body



### # 9. Try fasting for a day or two:

You don’t have to go to extreme measures as so many cleansing programs will tell you to do. Simply fasting for a day or two and replacing foods with natural juices made from fresh fruits and vegetables can really help. You don’t have to do this often, but you should make it a priority in your life.

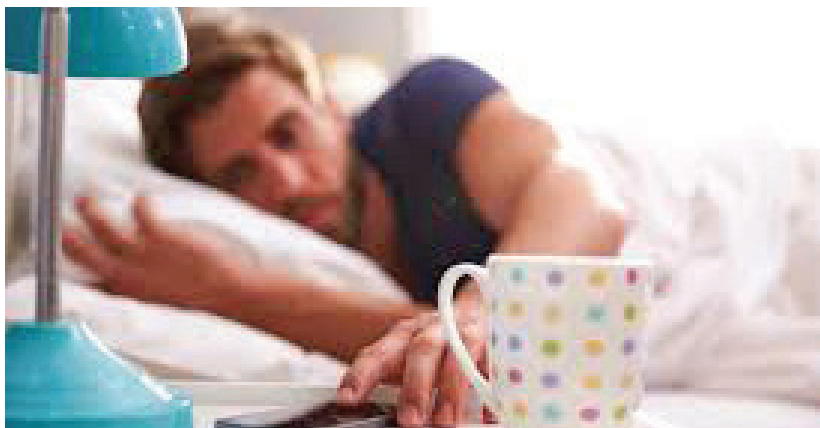
When you give your body a chance to rest in this capacity, then it has time to recuperate and rejuvenate. The organs don’t have to be focused on digestion and breaking down food and potential toxins. So

as they rest they have a chance to recharge, and that means that you are going to come back from this with natural energy and a more effective digestive system.

Perform a fast like this when you have some time at home and can be away from any food temptations. Try to perform this on a weekend where it’s much easier for you to fast and to let the body rest and recharge. You will be surprised at how much natural energy you feel and how much better you feel afterwards.

(Source: bembu.com)

## How to manipulate your body to wake up when tired?



■ For the coffee addicts: When you feel like your coffee isn’t giving you the jolt you need, try reducing the amount of milk and sugar that you put in it.

■ Grab a few minutes of direct sunlight, outside: It doesn’t matter if you’ve got a corner office that gets sun all day, light passing through windows just isn’t the same as the real deal.

■ Pull your hair: This one sounds bad but it really isn’t; slowly and gently tug at your hair to get blood flowing to your head in a new and refreshing way.

■ Splash cold water on your face: This

one’s an oldie but a goodie, and it actually does work. Just don’t go overboard and come out of the office bathroom looking like you fell in.

■ Use your computer as an alarm clock!: The basic idea is to make you actually pay attention to your alarm, instead of just going back to sleep. This way, your “alarm clock” is sitting across the room, so you have to get out of bed.

■ Stretch your back/neck/legs: Don’t just sit up straight and yawn, but get out of your chair and stretch like you’re about to go running.

(Source: lifehacker.com)

## Vegetarian foods that are loaded with iron



### ■ Legumes

Legumes, including beans, peas and lentils, are great sources of iron.

● Tofu, tempeh, natto and soybeans

Soybeans and foods derived from soybeans are packed with iron. In fact, soybeans contain around 8.8 mg of it per cup, or 49% of the RDI. The same portion of natto, a fermented soybean product, offers 15 mg, or 83% of the RDI. In addition to iron, these soy products contain between 10–19 grams of protein per portion and are also a good source of calcium, phosphorus and magnesium.

● Lentils

Lentils contain a significant amount of protein, complex carbs, fiber, folate and manganese as well. One cup of cooked lentils contains 18 grams of protein and covers around 50% of your recommended daily fiber intake.

Beans, peas and lentils are rich in iron. These legumes also contain good amounts of protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals and beneficial plant compounds that may reduce your risk of various diseases.

### ■ Nuts and seeds

Those who wish to increase their total daily iron intake should add the following varieties to their diet, as they contain the highest amounts.

● Pumpkin, sesame, hemp and flaxseeds

Pumpkin, sesame, hemp and flaxseeds are the seeds richest in iron, containing around 1.2–4.2 mg per two tablespoons, or 7–23% of the RDI.

Products derived from these seeds are also worth considering. For instance, two tablespoons of tahini, a paste made from sesame seeds, contain 2.6 mg of iron — which is 14% of the RDI.

They’re also a great source of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. Hemp seeds, in particular, seem to contain these two fats in the ratio considered optimal for human health.

● Cashews, pine nuts and other nuts

This is especially true for almonds, cashews, pine nuts and macadamia nuts, which contain between 1–1.6 mg of iron per ounce, or around 6–9% of the RDI.

Nuts and seeds are good sources of non-heme iron, as well as an array of other vitamins, minerals, fiber, healthy fats and beneficial plant compounds. Add a small portion to your menu each day.

### ■ Vegetables

Gram per gram, vegetables often have a higher iron content than foods typically associated with high iron, such as meat and eggs.

● Leafy greens

Leafy greens, such as spinach, kale, swiss chard, collard and beet greens contain between 2.5–6.4 mg of iron per cooked cup, or 14–36% of the RDI.

For example, 100 grams of spinach contains 1.1 times more iron than the same amount of red meat and 2.2 times more than 100 grams of salmon.

Other iron-rich veggies that fit in this category include broccoli, cabbage and Brussels sprouts, which contain between 1 and 1.8 mg per cooked cup, or around 6–10% of the RDI (30, 31, 32).

● Tomato Paste

At 0.5 mg per cup, raw tomatoes contain very little iron. However, when dried or concentrated, they offer a much greater amount.

For instance, half a cup (118 ml) of tomato paste offers 3.9 mg of iron, or 22% of the RDI, whereas 1 cup (237 ml) of tomato sauce offers 1.9 mg, or 11% of the RDI.

Sun-dried tomatoes are another iron-rich source, providing you with 1.3–2.5 mg per half cup, or up to 14% of the RDI.

Tomatoes are also a great source of vitamin C, which helps increase iron absorption. Moreover, they’re a great source of lycopene, an antioxidant linked to a reduced risk of sunburn.

● Potatoes

Potatoes contain significant amounts of iron, mostly concentrated in their skins.

Potatoes are also a great source of fiber. Additionally, one portion can cover up to 46% of your daily vitamin C, B6 and potassium requirements.

● Mushrooms

For instance, one cooked cup of white mushrooms contains around 2.7 mg, or 15% of the RDI.

Oyster mushrooms may offer up to twice as much iron, whereas portobello and shiitake mushrooms contain very little.

● Palm hearts

Palm hearts are a tropical vegetable rich in fiber, potassium, manganese, vitamin C and folate.

A lesser-known fact about palm hearts is that they also contain a fair amount of iron — an impressive 4.6 mg per cup, or 26% of the RDI.

### ■ Fruit

Fruit is not commonly the food group that individuals turn to when wanting to increase the iron content of their diet.

● Prune juice

Prune juice, in particular, offers about 3 mg of iron per cup (237 ml). That’s around 17% of the RDI and is twice as much iron than the same quantity of prunes.

Prune juice is rich in fiber, potassium, vitamin C, vitamin B6 and manganese, too.

● Olives

Olives are technically a fruit, and one with a good iron content at that.

Olives also contain a variety of beneficial plant compounds thought to provide several health benefits, including a lower risk of heart disease.

● Mulberries

Mulberries are a type of fruit with a particularly impressive nutritional value.

Not only do they offer around 2.6 mg of iron per cup — 14% of the RDI — but this quantity of mulberries also meets 85% of the RDI for vitamin C.

Mulberries are a great source of antioxidants as well, which may offer protection against heart disease, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

(Source: healthline.com)



## 101 ITEMS FOR YOUR BUCKET LIST!

### #37. Do public speaking in front of 1,000 people (or more)

Public speaking is often said to be the greatest fear of people, ranked even higher than dying, and it’s understandable why.

Not only does addressing a large crowd help to train you in your communication and body language, you also get the opportunity to share a message you care about to a large crowd of people, hence getting the opportunity to impact their lives. While I’ve spoken to countless audiences — ranging from dozens, to hundreds, to almost a thousand — each experience is always exciting and never dull.

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

Two little girls in traditional dress walks in an alley in Pasa Bandar village, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, south-eastern Iran (Instagram/ morii.hd)





## Turkish Airlines starts advertising for Iranian destinations

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Turkish Airlines has commenced advertising for several Iranian cities based on a previous agreement signed with Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, a deputy at the CHHTO said on Friday.



“Promotion of Iran’s tourist attractions, their infrastructure as well as culture and history of its people and their famed hospitality can help attract more foreign tourists,” CHTN quoted Mohammad Moheb-Khodaie as saying.

Based on the plans, people who visit Iran via Turkish Airlines will be offered with some bonuses, the official said without providing more details.

For the time being, hotspots of Tabriz, Yazd, Ahvaz, Hamedan and Kerman appear on the airlines’ in-seat video screens as well as its publicity network, while yet to be started on its associated magazine, he added.

In August 2017, the CHHTO announced that every single foreign tourist visiting Iran spends an average of \$1,200, bringing in income as much as exporting 30 barrels of oil.

## Dubai opens world’s tallest hotel

The world’s tallest hotel has officially opened its doors in Dubai -- scaling the clouds and towering above the city below.

The Gevora Hotel is a new offering in the UAE hotspot’s financial district -- topping out at an incredible 356 meters high (1,168 feet).

Travelers with a head for heights will know already that Gevora’s tower just barely trounces another Dubai sleeping spot -- the JW Marriott Marquis, which is just a meter shorter and was formerly the world’s tallest hotel.

The luxurious Gevora is decked out in gold and includes a health club, sauna, pool and five glitzy restaurants.

The Art Deco-style design accommodates 528 rooms -- with accommodation falling into three categories: Deluxe Room (46 square meters), One-Bedroom Deluxe (62 square meters) and Two-Bedroom Suite (85 square meters).

The four-star Gevora is designed to cater to business and leisure needs -- there’s a pool with a view and a cafe and bake shop -- but also a business center and boardroom.

There are plenty of culinary delights too -- Gevora Kitchen will offer all-day dining, whilst Highest View Restaurant promises panoramic views from the hotel rooftop.

Despite the dizzy heights at Gevora -- the building isn’t the world’s highest hotel.

That honor goes to The Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong -- a five-star hotel which sits way up on the 102nd to 118th floors of the 488-meter International Commerce Centre.

The Gevora Hotel has been officially recognized by the Guinness World Records as the world’s tallest hotel -- and with that honor in hand, it’s open for bookings. *(Source: CNN)*



### ROUND THE GLOBE

#### Manu National Park

Manu National Park is a globally renowned haven of terrestrial biodiversity at the meeting point of the Tropical Andes and the Amazon Basin in Southwestern Peru.

As a vast, geographically and economically isolated watershed, the still roadless property has been spared from most human impacts and is difficult to access to this day.

The originally inscribed area was extended to 1,716,295 hectares in 2009, spanning the complete altitudinal gradient of the Eastern slope of the Andes from around 350 to above 4,000 m.a.s.l.



A view of Manu National Park in Peru

The in some places precipitous transition includes high Andean Puna grasslands, mountain cloud forests, Yunga forests and lowland rainforest.

Fed from numerous whitewater creeks in the mountains, the Manu River meanders through the lowland forests, before it joins the mighty Madre de Dios River at the Southern edge of the property. As evidenced by Incan and Pre-Incan ruins and petroglyphs, there is a long history of indigenous occupation.

The local legend of Paititi, according to which the “Lost City of the Incas” is located within what is today the property, has lured researchers and adventurers alike.

Today, various indigenous peoples are the only permanent inhabitants. Some of them are sedentary and in regular contact with the “modern world”, while others maintain a semi-nomadic lifestyle as hunter-gatherers in so-called “voluntary isolation” or “initial contact”, respectively.

The immense variety of Manu National Park in terms of altitude, microclimate, soils and other ecological conditions results in a complex mosaic of habitats and niches.

*(Source: UNESCO)*

# CHHTO to arrange special package tours

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization is designing a range of promotional cheap package tours, which will be offered to Azerbaijan, Iraq and Turkey nationals in the span of March 16 to April 4.

The excursions will cover expenses of air flight tickets, airport transfers and hotel accommodations and also include free-of-charge medical checkups for Iraqi travelers, ISNA reported on Friday.

The low-cost packages are to be designed between \$350 to \$440 for seven- to-eight-day tours to Tehran, Karaj, Hamedan or Tabriz.

The tours will be conducted concurrent with Noruz, the Iranian New Year holidays, when major Iranian cities including Tehran are generally felt less populated.

Empty-leg flights and hotel vacancies will be taken into account for the project to get off the ground in collaboration with Iran Civil Aviation Organization and several hotels and tour operators.

“I consider this scheme as a useful and effective tool for prosperity of the country’s tourism industry, believing it to be welcomed by tourism agencies if implemented properly, particularly in the service sector,” ISNA quoted Manila Mohajer, a member of Iranian Tour Operators Association, as saying.

Over the past year Iran has seen a slow decline in the number of its inbound arrivals in particular from Middle East and Arab states, the report said.

Experts say despite having vast tourism potentials, Iran’s international tourism market has partly hampered by its neighbors which are offering rather less expensive tours and travels.



A view of Tehran with the towering snow-capped mountains in the background

Embracing 22 World Heritage sites, Iran is a hot travel destination in terms of its rich history, picturesque sceneries,

traditions, cuisine and hospitable people. The country’s ultimate goal is to attract 20 million foreign tourists annually by

2025. However, with only eight years to go, according to some experts, the target seems to be somewhat unachievable.

**The low-cost packages are to be designed between \$350 to \$440 for seven- to-eight-day tours to Tehran, Karaj, Hamedan or Tabriz.**

## Iran automobile club to hold rally from Mashhad to Karbala

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — On February 23, the Touring and Automobile Club of Iran will kick-start a family car rally, which its detailed itinerary spans some 2,000 kilometers from Mashhad, northeast Iran, to Karbala, central Iraq.

“This rally will take place along a major pilgrimage route that is starched from the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) to the holy shrine of Imam Hossein (AS),” CHTN quoted the club’s director, Ramin Afshari, as saying.

The rally pursues a goal of promoting a safe motoring culture which demands patience and endurance both for drivers and passengers and it also aims to take a closer look into natural, historical and religious attractions, Af-

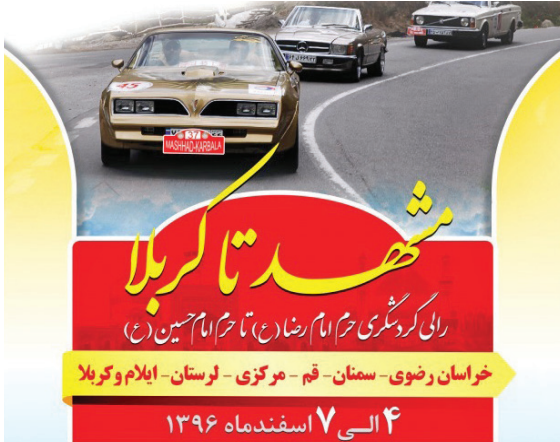
shari added.

A total of 50 cars are scheduled to compete in the three-day rally, which is named “From Shrine to Shrine.”

Their itinerary will include Semnan, Boroujerd, Ilam, and the border city of Mehran, he explained.

On Thursday and Friday, the Touring and Automobile Club organized another rally during which 31 vintage cars vied from Tehran to Abyaneh village in Isfahan.

Filled from corner to corner with ancient bazaars, museums, mosques, monuments, gardens, historical sites, rich natural and rural landscapes, Iran hosts some of the world’s oldest cultural monuments, including 22 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



A poster of Mashhad-to-Karbala car rally

## 6.5 million Chinese tourists to travel abroad this Lunar New Year

China’s outbound tourism during the holiday is expected to rise by 5.7 percent over 2017.

Chinese people are breaking with tradition as celebrations get under way this Lunar New Year. Family reunions are increasingly being replaced by outings and trips to scenic spots, or places of interest in neighboring provinces.

Xie Zhiwei, 44, a middle manager at a state-owned home builder in Shanghai, said deciding to take his family to Taiwan during the Lunar New Year holiday, which starts on Thursday, was “a big leap of faith”.

“In my dictionary, outings during the Spring Festival are something akin to a taboo,” he said. “During the most important festival in China, all we need to do is stay with the parents and relatives at home, to enjoy a family reunion. We are not supposed to do anything else.”

Xie is among 6.5 million mainland Chinese tourists who will travel abroad in the week-

long holiday that runs through February 20.

According to a report published jointly by Ctrip, the mainland’s largest online travel agency, and China Tourism Academy, a research institution under the China National Tourism Administration, the number of outbound tourists during the Lunar New Year holiday is expected to rise by 5.7 percent from 2017 to hit an all-time high of 6.5 million this year.

Just a decade ago, Lunar New Year – a festival steeped in tradition – represented high season for businesses such as restaurants, shops, garment makers and food processors.

“Those days are now history,” said Xie. “Economic growth and rising incomes have played a vital role in reshaping the festival.”

Chinese millennials give luxury brands a boost as they earn and spend it all

In the 1980s, the Lunar New Year was synonymous with good food and fireworks

for people such as Xie.

“Great meals were rarely available to people in those days,” he said. “Dinners prepared for family gatherings during the festival were no less than a feast, and children like me could get a taste of delicacies such as roast duck.”

The tourism industry has emerged as the top beneficiary of the “Golden Week”, the seven-day public holiday during Lunar New Year, over the past decade. According to the joint report, 344 million mainland Chinese travelled domestically during the Lunar New Year holiday last year, with per capita spending hitting 3,500 yuan (US\$560).

“The Spring Festival used to be low season for travel agencies, but business started booming three years ago, prompting us to design more products to cater to customers,” said Annie Ren, a manager with Shanghai Jinjiang International Travel, one of the largest tourist companies operating in the

city. “Short trips to tourist destinations in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces are well received by people.”

Last year, revenue generated by the tourism sector during Lunar New Year topped 423 billion yuan nationwide, according to the China National Tourism Administration.

The change in how Chinese people celebrate festivals, particularly those in urban areas, not only underscores a profound shift in traditional Chinese events such as Lunar New Year, but also depicts a new picture of business in the world’s second-biggest economy.

China’s service sector accounted for 51.6 percent of its gross domestic product in 2017, up from about 30 percent in the early 1980s.

In Shanghai, the mainland’s most developed metropolis, the service sector represented about 70 percent of the city’s GDP last year.

*(Source: South China Morning Post)*

## The right way to order room service at a hotel

Room service has a reputation for being overpriced and under-seasoned. Here are a few techniques to make sure your room service meals are worth your money and appetite.

Room service is often the last refuge of business travelers, and an overpriced, under-seasoned option for travelers without many options. According to Martyn Nail, the executive chef of Claridge’s hotel in London and author of the recently released “Claridge’s: The Cookbook,” “the food you get isn’t necessarily a reflection of who prepared it,” he said. “There’s an art to ordering room service.” He has a few tried and tested ways to make sure every room service meal is a good one.

### ■ Order course-by-course

If Mr. Nail isn’t in a rush, he requests that his meal is delivered in courses because the food tastes fresher and the dining experience feels more special and leisurely. Surprisingly, most hotel kitchens have no problem fulfilling this request. “I don’t like the idea of my entree getting cold while I have my starter, and if I’m having ice cream for dessert, it’s going to be melted by the time I get to it,” he said.

### ■ Choose the right dishes

Consider how well a dish will travel before you order it. Many hotel kitchens are in the basement while your room might be on a high floor, which means that your meal could take up to 10 minutes to reach you after it leaves the kitchen, and that’s not including any other room service deliveries along the way.



While hot items are usually delivered in a hot box, they can still arrive lukewarm. Soups are the exception and tend to stay hot. Also, if you see a soufflé on the menu, don’t

bother ordering it. Mr. Nail said that it will be a pancake by the time it reaches you. Club sandwiches and Caesar salads, on the other hand, travel especially well.

If there’s a regional dish or specialty on the menu, however, go for it. Mr. Nail said that these local specialties have been some of his best meals on the road.

### ■ Go off-menu

Don’t be afraid to order off the menu, Mr. Nail said. “Hotel kitchens tend to have a wide variety of ingredients on hand, and if the chefs have time, they are happy to make you what you want,” he said. Just be reasonable and ask politely, and you’ll have great results.

If you’re craving a specific dish, such as chicken potpie or meatloaf, ask for it but with a caveat: give advance notice, preferably 12 hours, if you want a labor-intensive dish or something particularly special.

### ■ Always order through a live person

Pick up the phone and speak to someone to place your order, even if you have the option to do it electronically through a tablet, app or your in-room television.

Mr. Nail said that your order taker is your guide through the menu and can share suggestions such as side dishes to pair with your entree that you may not have thought of. Some of those options may be upsells, but talking to a real person is the only way to hear the daily specials, or ask about options that may not be included in the menu.

*(Source: The New York Times)*



# Stem-cell vaccine helps protect mice against numerous cancers, finds study

A new study published in the journal Cell Stem Cell, conducted by scientists from Stanford University, revealed that when the lab mice were injected with inactivated induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), there was a powerful immune response against lung, breast, and skin cancers. The vaccine also prevented animals with removed tumors from relapsing.

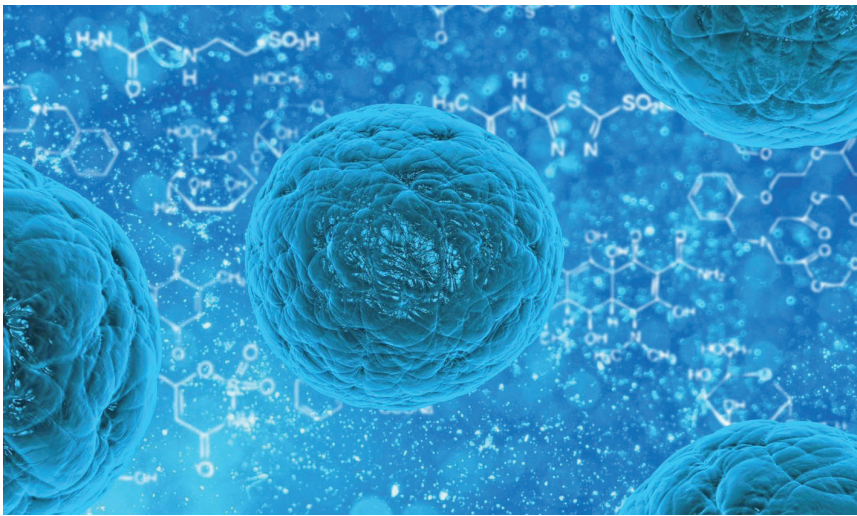
iPSCs can be obtained directly from adult cells, which are genetically reprogrammed to imitate the ability of embryonic stem cells to develop into any type of cell in the body.

The current study involved 75 mice with different versions of iPSC vaccine obtained from inactivated iPSCs by irradiation. In a period of 4 weeks, 70% of the iPSC vaccinated mice completely rejected the newly injected breast cancer cells, whereas 30% had considerably smaller tumors. The influence of the iPSC vaccine was also validated for skin and lung cancers.

■ Cancer cells

Joseph C. Wu, the lead author at Stanford's Cardiovascular Institute and Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine established that a large number of antigens found on iPSCs are also found on cancer cells.

When iPSC vaccine is injected into lab mice, their immune systems develop an immune response to the iPSCs' antigens. Due to the similar characteristics of cancer cells and iPSCs, the animals instantaneously develop an immune response against cancer. The



iPSCs' immune system is the key to remove tumor cells.

The effectiveness of anti-cancer vaccines is high only when one or more antigens are

**The effectiveness of anti-cancer vaccines is high only when one or more antigens are introduced into the body to activate T-helper cells or to produce antibodies being able to identify and bind the antigens on the surfaces of cancer cells.**

introduced into the body to activate T-helper cells or to produce antibodies being able to identify and bind the antigens on the surfaces of cancer cells.

What surprised us most was the effectiveness of the iPSC vaccine in re-activating the immune system to target cancer. This approach may have clinical potential to prevent tumor recurrence or target distant metastases."

■ Immune system

There are a very few number of antigens that can be introduced at a specific time to the immune system which is one of the biggest challenges of cancer immunotherapies. The current study utilizes cells of an animal to generate an iPSC-based cancer vaccine that simultaneously targets the multiple antigens of a tumor. The need to find the most ideal antigen to target in a specific type of tumor is prevented by using whole iPSCs.

The current study is less exposed to immune evasion by cancer cells with the help of large amount of tumor antigens present in iPSCs. The investigators also introduced iPSCs with an immunity booster—a particle of bacterial DNA called CpG that has been considered to be safe in human trials.

In the future, a patient's blood cells or the skin may be re-programmed into iPSCs and executed as an anti-cancer vaccine or as consecutive booster after surgery, radiation therapy, or chemotherapy.

(Source: news-medical.net)

## Martian crater has a weirdly Earth-like secret: new research

NASA's Mars rover Opportunity was exploring an uncharted Martian valley last month when it encountered a shockingly familiar sight: Streams of rocks and gravel stretched down the hillside of Perseverance Valley — a roughly 600-foot (183 meters) drop down the inner slope of a crater — in seemingly organized rows.

The patterns closely resemble so-called "rock stripes" seen on certain mountains on Earth, NASA said in a statement. These formations usually result when wet soil freezes and thaws repeatedly over many years, NASA said. Perseverance Valley is thought to have been carved hundreds of thousands of years ago by a combination of water, ice and wind — already making the spot unusual by Martian standards, NASA wrote.

The presence of these newly discovered stripes further adds to the region's mystery, researchers said.

■ Mars rover

"Perseverance Valley is a special place," Opportunity Deputy Principal Investigator Ray Arvidson of Washington University in St. Louis said in the statement. "We already knew it was unlike any place any Mars rover has seen before, even if we don't yet know how it formed, and now we're seeing surfaces that look like stone stripes. It's mysterious. It's exciting. I think the set of observations we'll get will enable us to understand it."

In particular, the rock stripes of Perseverance Valley closely resemble stripes seen inside the cone of Hawaii's Mauna Kea

volcano, according to NASA. There, stripes form when fine-grain soil freezes overnight and expands, pushing up larger chunks of rock on either side. After the soil thaws in the morning, wind and gravity gradually move these larger stones downslope from the moist, fine-grain segments of soil.

When repeated hundreds of thousands of times, these alternating regions of fine and heavy rocks create a distinct striped pattern.

Researchers don't yet know how these patterns came to appear in a Martian crater, but the scientists have a few hypotheses.

■ The planet's obliquity

One leading explanation involves the planet's obliquity — or the tilt of Mars' equator relative to its orbit — which is thought to alter significantly over hundreds of thousands of years. If the planet's obliquity were to change enough, water currently frozen at the poles could vaporize into the atmosphere and turn to snow or frost closer to the equator, NASA said.

"One possible explanation of these stripes is that they are relics from a time of greater obliquity, when snow packs on the rim (of the valley) seasonally melted enough to moisten the soil, and then freeze-thaw cycles organized the small rocks into stripes," Arvidson said.

Further study of the region will be required — and, for now, the Opportunity rover seems up to the task. The golf-cart-size rover landed on Mars in January 2004 to begin what was supposed to be a 90-day mission hunting for clues about Martian water.

(Source: Live Science)

## At last, butterflies get a bigger, better evolutionary tree

For hundreds of years, butterfly collecting has often inspired a special kind of fanaticism, spurring lengthy expeditions, sparking rivalries and prompting some collectors to risk their fortunes and skins in their quest for the next elusive specimen.

The result is a treasure trove of scientific information stored in the form of millions of butterfly specimens, offering insights into community ecology, how species originate and evolve, climate change and interactions between plants and insects.

Lepidopterists Akito Kawahara and Marianne Espeland led a team effort to produce a bigger, better butterfly evolutionary tree with a 35-fold increase in genetic data and three times as many taxa - classification units of organisms - as previous studies. They then calibrated the tree based on the fossil record, assigning dates to certain developmental milestones.

■ Butterfly evolution

"We still have a long way to go, but this is the first comprehensive map of butterfly evolution," said Kawahara, associate professor and curator at the Florida Museum of Natural History's McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity on the University of Florida campus. "Lots of previous studies cover butterfly evolution on smaller scales - by locality or taxon - but surprisingly few have reached across the breadth of butterfly diversity."

The team analyzed a dataset of 352 genetic markers from 207 butterfly species representing 98 percent of tribes, which are a rank above genus but below family and

subfamily. Their findings paint a detailed picture of relationships between butterflies and point to some name changes.

The data confirm that swallowtails are a sister group to all other butterflies, meaning they were the first family on the butterfly family tree to branch off. But while previous literature groups swallowtails, birdwings, zebra swallowtails and swordtails together, this study shows they do not share a common ancestor, a finding supported by the fact that these butterflies feed on different host plants.

"That tells us that butterflies and plants may have evolved together," Kawahara said.

A finding that surprised Espeland, the study's lead author, is that the blues are nested within the hairstreaks.

■ Substantial rearrangement

"Both of these groups have remained quite stable through time, but our study shows that a substantial rearrangement of the classification is necessary," said Espeland, who started the project as a postdoctoral researcher at the Florida Museum and is now curator and head of the Lepidoptera section at the Zoological Research Museum Alexander Koenig in Germany.

Most blues and hairstreaks and some metalmarks have mutually beneficial relationships with ants: Butterfly larvae provide sugary nectar in exchange for the ants' protection from predators. The researchers found this association evolved once in blues and hairstreaks and twice in metalmarks.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

## ICT Minister Says Easier Facilities to Be Provided for Business Marketing

Minister of Communications and Information Technology (ICT) Eng. Azari Jahromi said: "By defining temporal and geographical domains such as Nowruz and Pars, easier facilities will be provided for new and old business marketing."

Speaking on the sidelines of his visit to Iran Web and Mobile Exhibition in PARDIS MIZBAN Pavilion, exclusive broker for selling suffice of domains including Nowruz and Pars in Iran), he stated, "Naturally, easier amenities and facilities will be created for old and new business marketing with the definition of specific and temporal domains and also geographical domains such as Nowruz and Pars."

Managers of PARDIS MIZBAN Company in a news

conference announced: "We, in Iran, are seeking to be present in the international area, so that Nowruz and Pars suffices, as a Iran's national identity, can help us enter this arena successfully."

For her part, Dr. Neda Soleimani senior marketer of PARDIS MIZBAN Advertising Company said: "It is for some years that the number of internet extension has been increased by ICON Institute. After that, these licenses were given to a number of applicant companies, so that many extensions have been provided available to users."

These internet extensions all we know are "com", "org", and "net" that have entered into the internet arena and have provided suitable ways to name their own portfolio with geographic, subject and functional categories.



## Emergency Landing of Qeshm Air's Plane to Be Compensated by IIC Timely

Iran Insurance Company (IIC) will compensate the emergency landing of Qeshm Air aircraft in Mashhad as soon as possible, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

In the wake of a technical problem in Qeshm Air aircraft and its emergency land-

ing in Mashhad, Iran Insurance Company announced that it will pay any damages incurred to the plane in the shortest time possible.

According to the insurance company, this plane was fully insured by the company including body, third-party and passenger

insurances, and thankfully, any passenger of the plane did not harm due to the emergency landing of the aircraft.

Experts of the insurance company studied the dimension of the accident immediately after the incident, the issue of which was negotiated with the senior

managers of Qeshm Air.

With due observance to the said issue, the insurance company has expressed its readiness to compensate the damages incurred to the plane at the earliest opportunity, the Public Relations Dept. of the company concluded.

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## Study shows alcohol could be more damaging to the brain than marijuana

Booze could be more damaging to your brain than weed - according to a recent study which linked alcohol consumption to long-term changes to parts of the brain, but didn't find any long-term changes in relation to marijuana.

The study found that the negative effects of drinking were worse for adults over the age of 18, but that even in younger people there was a noticeable effect on reducing the levels of grey matter, the stuff that processes information in the brain.

But the researchers are keen to point out that it's a complex picture – more work is going to be needed to figure out exactly what these drugs do to the connections inside our neural networks.

"With alcohol, we've known it's bad for the brain for decades," says one of the team, Kent Hutchison from the University of Colorado Boulder.

The research looked at brain scans collected in previous studies, covering 853 people aged between 18 and 55, and 439 young adults aged between 14 and 18. A range of different levels of cannabis and alcohol use were reported by the participants.

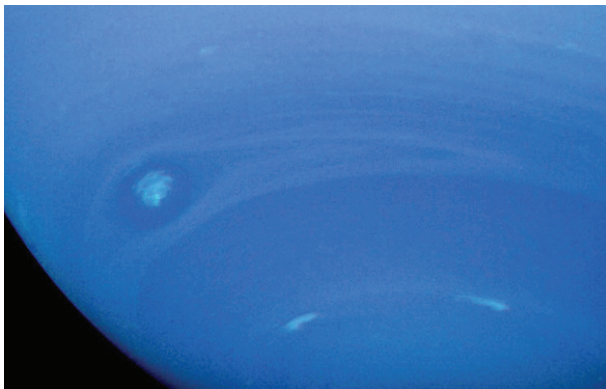
As well as reducing the volume of grey matter in the brain, alcohol use was associated with a loss of integrity in the white matter – the parts of the brain that handle communications between grey matter clusters, as well as links to the rest of the body.

In other words, any kind of damage to grey or white matter can impair the brain's normal function. The negative effects were particularly pronounced for people with a long history of drinking, the researchers said.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## A massive vortex on Neptune is evaporating before our eyes

Neptune might not have the mass of Jupiter or the rings of Saturn, but it does have one distinction among planets in our solar system. Its winds are the fastest ever measured, even reaching supersonic speeds at times. Neptune's tumultuous atmosphere gives rise to vortices similar to Jupiter's Great Red Spot, but storms on Neptune usually just last a few years.



We first learned of Neptune's "anticyclones" when the NASA Voyager 2 probe passed by in 1989. They were not as large or as long-lived as Jupiter's famous Red Spot, but they could still tell us a great deal about the planet. The probe sent back images of dark spirals on the surface, and a few years later astronomers started monitoring Neptune with the Hubble Space Telescope.

Storms on Neptune are dark in color because of the way the planet's currents operate. There are three dominant wind jets on Neptune. One goes from east to west at the equator, and two others go west to east near the planet's poles. The anticyclones form between these jets, pulling up darker material from below the top layer of clouds. From what we know of Neptune's atmosphere, scientists have made some guesses about how a storm would behave when it dissipated. However, the reality is looking much different.

Previous simulations of vortex dissipation on Neptune predicted that the storm would drift toward the equator. As it neared the jet stream, the vortex would be torn apart and possibly produce an explosion of cloud activity. What's actually happening is less visually impressive. The storm is drifting toward the south pole and slowly eroding as it gets closer.

(Source: extremetech.com)

## Gene-editing tool to detect infections such as dengue, Zika virus, HPV

New diagnostic tools have been developed using the clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR) gene editing tool. A bunch of researchers were able to come up with new CRISPR variants that can diagnose certain diseases, detect viruses, and even record a cell's exposure to chemicals.

CRISPR is typically associated with its potential use for treating diseases such as HIV, ALS, and even Huntington's disease, but researchers have come up with new ways that make it an even more powerful diagnostic tool.

The first study comes from Jennifer Doudna, an American biochemist and leading figure of the CRISPR revolution. Her team of researchers have produced a variant of the CRISPR tool that is able not only to cut through specific bits of double-stranded DNA but also snip single-stranded DNA near it. After discovering this, the team used CRISPR to detect a couple of common types of HPV.

The second study comes from Feng Zhang, another CRISPR pioneer. Last year, his lab developed a system called SHERLOCK, which is able to detect bits of DNA and RNA to analyze whether fatal viruses such as Zika or dengue are in a blood sample.

"SHERLOCK provides an inexpensive, easy-to-use, and sensitive diagnostic method for detecting nucleic acid material — and that can mean a virus, tumor DNA, and many other targets," said Zhang. The "SHERLOCK improvements now give us even more diagnostic information and put us closer to a tool that can be deployed in real-world applications."

David Liu's team of researchers devised two ways to do this.

(Source: Tech Times)



## Tehran Municipality to hold startup weekend in support of green businesses

**ENVIRONMENT d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A startup weekend event will be held by Tehran Municipality in a bid to support businesses which are eager to work in environment-related fields, said Sadreddin Alipour, the head of the center for environmental management and sustainable development of Tehran Municipality.

This is the first startup weekend by the title of “environment and urban management” which is going to be held by Tehran Municipality from February 28 to March 2 in Tehran’s Shahid Beheshti University.



Traffic management, air pollution, sustainable management of water resources, waste management and biodiversity are among the main topics of this event.

The purpose of these startup events is that individuals get a chance to put forward their ideas, Tasnim quoted Alipour as saying.

The municipality will support top ideas and will facilitate their presence in global events, he highlighted.

Considering environment as a one of the main elements of world’s metropolises, he added that 60 percent of all projects carrying out in the city are related to the environment.

Startup weekend is a 54-hour weekend event, during which groups of developers, business managers, startup enthusiasts, marketing gurus, graphic artists and more pitch ideas for new startup companies, form teams around those ideas, and work to develop a working prototype, demo, or presentation by the last evening of the event.

## Benefactors to provide underprivileged students with Noruz clothing

**SOCIETY d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Some 24,000 students who live in single-parent and impoverished families in Tehran have been identified and benefactors will provide them with clothes for Noruz, the Iranian new year holidays, starting March 21, said Kamyab Sadri, the head of parenting and teaching society of Tehran affiliated to the Ministry of Education.

Special vouchers will be given to these students so that they can get three clothing items from marketplaces which will be held accordingly, he added.

He went on to say that last year they could provide 2,000 students with Noruz clothing.

Just 31 days remain till the start of the new Iranian calendar year and its special celebrations known as Noruz. One of Iranian traditions in Noruz is that family members, especially children, wear new attire.

This act of benefactors will certainly bring smile to the cute faces of those impoverished kids whose wishes are often too trivial and commonplace in the eyes of the majority.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Learning How to Drive

A: Ok! I’m ready for my driving lesson! Should I start the car?  
B: Hold on there Fittipaldi, first let’s go over things one more time. Now before you even think of starting the car, make sure your seat is at a comfortable position and you can **grip the steering wheel** firmly. Next check your **rear view mirrors** to make sure you can see properly.  
A: We have been through this a million times! Let’s get going already! I’m ready!  
B: Fine start the car. Now gently step on the **clutch** and shift to 1st **gear**. Good, now **accelerate** gently and **let go** of the clutch as you do it. There we go, good!  
A: I’m doing it! I’m driving! This is awesome! Let’s turn some music on!  
B: Keep your eyes on the road! No music! We are coming up to a red light, step on the **brakes**. What are you doing? I said the brakes! **Look out** for those people! Get off the **sidewalk**!  
A: Get out of my way! This is just like playing video games!  
B: It’s the police! **Pull over!**  
A: They’ll never take me alive!

■ **Key vocabulary**  
**grip:** hold, reach  
**steering wheel:** the wheel which the driver holds in a car  
**rear view mirror:** a small angled mirror fixed inside the wind-screen of a motor vehicle enabling the driver to see the vehicle or road behind  
**clutch:** the pedal that you press before you change gear  
**gear:** the machinery in a vehicle such as a car, truck, or bicycle that you use to go comfortably at different speeds  
**accelerate:** if a vehicle or someone who is driving it accelerates, it starts to go faster  
**let go of:** to stop holding something or someone  
**brake:** a piece of equipment that makes a vehicle go more slowly or stop  
**look out:** used to warn someone that they are in danger; watch out  
**sidewalk:** the part of the road where people walk  
**pull over:** to move a car to the side of the road and stop  
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**  
**seatbelt:** a belt in a car fastened around the midsection to keep the person safely secured against the seat  
**speed limit:** the maximum speed allowed on the road  
**intersection:** a place where two or more major roads meet  
**traffic light:** a set of electrically operated signal lights used to direct or control traffic at intersections  
**yield sign:** a road sign in the shape of an upside-down triangle, meaning to slow down and prepare to stop if necessary  
(Source: [irlanguage.com](http://irlanguage.com))

# Iran health minister appointed WHO commissioner on NCDs

**I →** The commission on NCDs is co-chaired by President Tabaré Vázquez of Uruguay; President Maithripala Sirisena of Sri Lanka; President Sauli Niinistö of Finland; Veronika Skvortsova, Minister of Healthcare of the Russian Federation; and Sania Nishtar, former Federal Minister of Pakistan.

The commission is comprised of heads of state and ministers, leaders in health and development and entrepreneurs. The Commissioners are tasked with recommending actions to facilitate and accelerate progress in addressing and preventing NCDs as the main leading killers on earth, mainly cardiovascular disease, cancers, diabetes and respiratory disease, and promoting mental health and well-being.

World leaders are expected to participate in the third United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on NCDs in order to meet the need to speed up action to beat NCDs which is high on the global political agenda in 2018. The commission will provide actionable recommendations to contribute to the assembly which is scheduled for the second half of 2018.

NCDs claim 15 million lives mostly aging between 30 and 69 each year worldwide. Most particularly some 50 percent of premature deaths caused by NCDs occur in low- and lower-middle income countries. Additionally NCDs are responsible for the deaths of 7 in 10 people across all ages globally, equivalent to approximately 40 million people.

In 2015, world leaders committed to reduce premature deaths from NCDs by one third by 2030 as part of the United Nations’



Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh Hashemi is delivering a speech in WHO headquarters in Geneva in June 2017.

Sustainable Development Goals. Recent WHO reports indicate that the world will struggle to meet that target.

In a news release made by WHO on Friday Director-General Tedros emphasized on everybody’s right to a healthy life, adding that, “We can beat the drivers of the NCD epidemic, which are among the world’s main obstacles to health. I am looking to the Commission to

show us new ways to unblock the barriers to good health, and identify innovative, bold and practical actions steps to scale up prevention and treatment of NCDs and provide health for all.”

Michael R. Bloomberg, WHO Global Ambassador for Noncommunicable Diseases and Commission member, also regretted the fact that for the first time in history more people are

dying of noncommunicable diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes, than infectious diseases.

“This loss of human life spares no one- rich or poor, young or old - and it imposes heavy economic costs on nations. The more public support we can build for government policies that are proven to save lives - as this Commission will work to do - the more progress we’ll be able to make around the world,» Bloomberg added.

Co-chair Dr. Nishtar says the Commission’s establishment has come at an opportune time, as the world prepares for the UN High-level Meeting on NCDs. “While there have been improvements in some countries and regions, the overall rate of progress has been unacceptably slow. This is resulting in too many people suffering and dying needlessly from NCDs, and leaving families, communities and governments to bear the human and economic costs,” she lamented, stating, “This year, governments will be held to account on progress they have made in protecting their citizens from NCDs.”

According to the Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center, Endocrinology and Metabolism research Institute 76 percent of the burden of the diseases in Iran comes from NCDs.

In line with WHO’s activities to combat NCDs in 2015 Iran established a committee called National Non-Communicable Disease Committee at the Ministry of Health headed by the health minister Qazizadeh-Hashemi which was endorsed by the then Director-General of the World Health Organization Margaret Chan Fung Fu-chun.

## Spring rainfalls to exceed normal average: academic

**ENVIRONMENT d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Meteorological patterns demonstrate that the country will receive appropriate amounts of rainfall in the upcoming spring and it will compensate for the lack of precipitation in autumn and winter, said the eminent meteorology professor Hossein Ardakani.

“Study of rainfall patterns shows that we will observe appropriate rain in the spring and the level of precipitation will even reach above the normal range,” Tasnim quoted Ardakani as saying on Friday.

Ardakani, who is known as Iran’s father of meteorology, had successfully forecasted recent day’s rains and informed the meteorologist society about it earlier.

“People should not worry since future precipitation will lead to partial improvement of this [drought] status and water reservation in dams,” highlighted the professor.

Iranians generally hope that the projections of the distinguished scientists comes true but the thing is it may not.

Officials are repeatedly talking about lack of precipitation and drought in the country and call for appropriate use of water in domestic, agriculture and industry sectors.

For one, Tehran’s Governor General Mohammad Hossein Moqimi highlighted that despite of heavy snow and recent rains, the country is still facing drought and urged all people to reconsider their water consumption patterns, Khabaronline reported.

## Medicinal plants: The next big thing in economic arena?

**SOCIETY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Given water shortage in Iran as an arid and semi-arid area, shifting focus toward cultivation of medicinal plants can both create jobs and boost export revenues in line with the goals of resistance economy, deputy health minister for social affairs said on Friday.

There exist some 8,000 medicinal plants species in Iran, however, a great number of factories processing medicinal plants import raw materials, Seyyed Mohammad Ayyazi regretted, adding, this is while there is an untapped potential in this sector to both produce such products and exporting them.

Ayyazi made the remarks over a ceremony marking a national campaign on medicinal herbs held in Tehran from February 14-16, ISNA reported.

He further highlighted that the ministry is seriously supporting medicinal herbs producers and the minister has tasked the Food and Drug administration to do what’s necessary to back the producers.

Abolfazl Razavi, the vice president for development of villages and underprivileged areas, for his part, explained that 80-billion-rial (nearly 1.6 million)



The photo is depicting a woman picking saffron at a farm in Bojnord, North Khorasan province, in October 2016. Photo by Vahid Khademi/IRNA

low interest loan will be granted to the villagers who are interested in cultivation of medicinal plants in rural areas of Iran.

Following the approval of a recent law in Majlis [the Iranian parliament], all villagers are entitled to such incentives

to encourage cultivation of medicinal plants, Razavi noted, Tasnim reported.

Unfortunately, he lamented, while 94 percent of world’s saffron is produced in Iran the export revenue merely amounts to \$650 million.

Global herbal market size is estimated approximately \$72 billion which is predicted to reach \$7 trillion by 2050. Medicinal plants are used in various industries which are worth around \$80 billion.

Europe is the largest herbal product market valued at \$7.5 billion and has 40% market share. China has the highest number of medicinal plants and also is the leader in export of medicinal plants globally having 15% sharing global export under this category.

Indian system of medicine use 90% raw material derived from medicinal plants. Rich in natural resource base, 90% of the medicinal plants are presently situated in wild forests.

In Iran, as Peyman Yousefi, an official with Agriculture Ministry said earlier in December 2017, some 150,000 hectares of lands are under cultivation of medicinal plants, however, “we do not have a significant share in global market.”

Obviously, the lack of proper and standard practices in processing such production, as well as old farming practices is slowing down the country’s economy and keeping it away from a potentially lucrative industry, IANA reported.

### Embassy of India Tehran

#### New Address to collect Indian Visa applications:

All type of visa applications (except Diplomatic and Official Visa) will be accepted at new address at

**1<sup>st</sup> Floor, No.2, Anahita Alley, Afriqa Blvd, Tehran (Tel: +98 21 91005012)**

**No.58, Abouzar 8 Corner, Ahmad Abad, Mashhad (Tel: +98 513 843 1919)**

with effect from 20.02.2018.

Consequent to IVS Global Services Pvt Ltd appointing **Hamsafaran Alborz** Travel Agency as local partner replacing Negin Parvaz Pars, all concerned are hereby informed that with effect from 20.02.2018,

**Hamsafaran Alborz & Ati Tous Yeganeh** Travel Agencies will be accepting all type of visa applications.

Negin Parvaz Pars, address: No.145, Negin Building, Dr. Beheshti Street, After Soheravardi Junction, Tehran

is **not** authorised to collect visa applications on behalf of Indian Embassy Tehran after 19.2. 2018 at its offices at Tehran, Esfahan, Mashhad and Shiraz.

Till next information, all Visa applications will only be accepted at **Hamsafaran Alborz**

**& Ati Tous Yeganeh** Travel Agencies, at **1<sup>st</sup> Floor, No.2, Anahita Alley, Afriqa Blvd, Tehran**

**& Also No.58, Abouzar 8 Corner, Ahmad Abad, Mashhad (Tel: +98 513 843 1919)**

from 20.02.2018.



सत्यमेव जयते

## Want to monitor air pollution? Test a pigeon

Pigeons might be seen as the scourge of cities, but researchers say they could help us explore both the levels and impacts of a host of toxins in the air, from lead to pesticides.

Scientists say feral pigeons are a valuable way of probing contaminants in environment, since they are exposed to the same air, water, food and other factors as humans, and don’t venture far from home.

“Because they are alive they process these chemicals in their bodies. This offers up the opportunity to not only find toxin hot spots in our environment, but to understand how these toxins affect biology,” said Dr Rebecca Calisi of the University of California, Davis, who is presenting research on the topic at the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Previous work by Calisi and her team looking at blood lead levels from 825 unwell pigeons across the New York City borough of Manhattan, collected between 2010 and 2015, suggested that pigeons are a useful bioindicator of lead levels. The study showed that blood levels of lead in the birds were higher during the summer – an effect that has also been noted in children. The team also found that levels of lead in the pigeons’ blood were linked to the rate of children with raised blood lead levels in the same part of the borough.

(Source: [TheGuardian](http://TheGuardian))



# As support falls, German SPD sees 'no Plan B' to Merkel coalition

Support for Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) hit a record low, a poll showed, and the party's leader-in-waiting said she had "no Plan B" should members reject a coalition deal with Angela Merkel's conservatives.

The SPD's 464,000 members vote in a postal ballot beginning on Feb. 20 on whether the center-left party should go ahead with the agreement its leaders clinched last week to renew their power-sharing alliance with the chancellor's CDU/CSU bloc.

"I am convinced we will get a majority," Andrea Nahles, who senior SPD officials this week endorsed as the party's future leader, told Der Spiegel magazine in comments published on Saturday. "I don't have a Plan B."

Nahles made the comments after a survey conducted by pollster Infratest dimap from Feb. 13 to 15 showed support for the SPD fell to 16 percent, an all-time low and just one percentage point ahead of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The SPD has slid further into disarray since its leaders struck the coalition deal, blighted by bitter divisions over whether to team up again with Merkel, a loss of confidence in outgoing leader Martin Schulz



and discontent over the succession process.

"The past days were very difficult, that is true, and that is reflected in such numbers," said Nahles. "But I am very hopeful we can that we can now start moving forward."

The turmoil in the SPD has led to calls from some politicians in Merkel's conservative bloc to drop the coalition plan and form a minority government instead.

On Tuesday, the SPD appointed Hamburg

mayor Olaf Scholz as interim leader and recommended Nahles as Schulz's longer-term successor.

Nahles has campaigned for a re-run of the coalition that has been in power since 2013, and last month helped secure party delegates' backing for the negotiations with a barnstorming speech.

But the result of the members ballot, due on March 4, is wide open.

Many in the party harbor misgivings about sharing power with Merkel, believing the party should rebuild in opposition after suffering its worst result in last September's election since Germany became a federal republic in 1949.

An influential member of Merkel's conservative bloc said on Friday she should form a minority government, arguing the Social Democrats would not be a reliable partner.

The Infratest dimap poll for broadcaster ARD put support for Merkel's conservative bloc at 33 percent, with the ecological Greens on 13 percent, the radical Left party as on 11 percent and the business-friendly Free Democrats (FDP) on 9 percent.

(Source: Reuters)

## Oxfam sexual misconduct just tip of iceberg: Haiti president



Haiti's president says the prostitution scandal involving workers of British charity group Oxfam is only the tip of an iceberg, calling for widespread investigations into other aid organizations operating in the Caribbean country.

Official reports recently revealed that Oxfam staff hired prostitutes while working in Haiti following a devastating 2010 earthquake.

"The Oxfam case is the visible part of the iceberg," Haiti's President Jovenel Moise said in a phone interview with Reuters on Friday. "It is not only Oxfam, there are other NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in the same situation, but they hide the information internally."

"There should be an investigation into other organizations that have been working here since 2010," he added. "For example, Doctors Without Borders had to repatriate about 17 people for misconduct which was not explained."

Reacting to Moise's comments, spokesperson for Geneva-based Doctors Without Borders (MSF/Médecins Sans Frontières) welcomed scrutiny on the aid sector and said the organization had zero tolerance of sexual misconduct.

Oxfam, one of the world's biggest disaster relief charities, issued an apology this week for unspecified sexual misconduct uncovered in a 2011 internal investigation.

Hitting back at criticism over the prostitution scandal, the head of Oxfam denounced the claim as "out of proportion," and said the charity has agreed not to bid for any more state funds until reforms are in place.

The aid group also said it would create an independent commission with the power to access records and interview staff, and impose stricter controls on employees.

(Source: Press TV)

## Thousands of Catalans call for release of jailed independence leaders



Thousands of protesters have marched in Catalonia's main city of Barcelona, calling on Spain's central government to release the pro-secession leaders of the autonomous region.

The separatist supporters gathered in city center on Friday to censure Madrid for keeping Catalonia's politicians, including Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart, leaders of two grassroots separatist groups who were arrested in the aftermath of the region's October 2017 secession referendum.

The protesters carried banners reading "Free political prisoners!" and observed four minutes of silence to show their solidarity with the jailed Catalan leaders.

President of the Catalan Parliament, Roger Torrent, also took part in the rally.

During the event, Albano Dante Fachin, a former member of Podemos Party, condemned the detention of the Catalan leaders.

Catalonia declared secession following the October referendum. That declaration prompted a major crackdown by the Spanish

government as it took control of institutions and dismantled the regional government.

Spain has branded the entire process of seeking secession in Catalonia illegal.

Senior leaders of the independence drive were arrested on charges of rebellion and sedition while arrest warrants were issued for former Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont and four of his cabinet members, who have fled to Belgium.

However, the leaders caught in the crackdown managed to keep their majority in Catalonia's parliament in snap elections in December.

Their lawyers now argue that Spain should set them free so that they can perform their political duties.

Earlier this month, three jailed leaders, including Sanchez, Cuixart and Oriol Junqueras, said they would take their cases to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to protest their imprisonments, which they said were hampering their political activities.

(Source: Press TV)

## Trump had affair with ex-Playboy model



fake news. The president says he never had a relationship with McDougal," a White House spokesperson said.

The new report comes amid an ongoing wave of revelations about sexual harassment in the U.S., which has toppled a number of powerful men in entertainment, politics, busi-

ness and the media.

The latest allegation of Trump's extramarital affair and a subsequent payoff mirrors the account of Stephanie Clifford, a former porn star who Trump met at a golf event in 2006, a year after his marriage to Melania.

Trump's lawyer had arranged a \$130,000 payment to Clifford a month before the 2016 presidential election to prevent her from publicly discussing the alleged sexual encounter, The Wall Street Journal reported last month.

Nearly 20 women have accused Trump of sexual misconduct, ranging from unwanted touching to groping to assault. Trump has denied any wrongdoing, and sometimes claimed that he does not know the women. The White House has called his accusers liars.

Weeks before the presidential election last November, The Washington Post released a tape in which Trump boasted about how he sexually assaulted women because he was powerful.

(Source: agencies)

## Trio of suicide bombers kill 20 at crowded market in Nigeria

A trio of suicide bombers detonated at a crowded fish market in northern Nigeria, killing at least 20 people, police said on Saturday.

Borno state police spokesman Joseph Kwaji confirmed the Friday night attack to The Associated Press. Hospital officials said two patients later died from their injuries.

The bombers, all believed to be female, left dozens wounded at the fish market in Konduga, just outside the state capital, Maiduguri. The city is the birthplace of the Boko Haram terrorist insurgency and has been a frequent target.

Boko Haram continues to carry out deadly suicide bombings in Borno state and other parts of northern Nigeria as part of its violent campaign to establish a state in the West African nation.

The terrorists have increasingly used

women and youth as bombers, often after abducting and indoctrinating them.

■ **Boko Haram: Nigerian Army speaks on Shekau's 'escape'**

Elsewhere, Nigerian Army on Friday dismissed as "misleading" reports indicating that the Boko Haram factional leader, Abubakar Shekau, escaped to Cameroon.

Brig.-Gen. Sani Kukashaka, the Director, Army Public Relations, said in a statement issued in Maiduguri that the army was not aware of the whereabouts of the fugitive Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau.

Kukashaka said that the army was in a manhunt for Shekau, adding that N3 million was offered as reward for any credible information that would lead to his arrest.

"The attention of the Nigerian Army has been drawn to a news story on some news

medium, alleging that the wanted factional terrorists' group leader, Abubakar Shekau, is in Kolofata, Republic of Cameroon.

"The report alleged that a top Boko Haram commander; Abdullahi Bello, alias Abu Zainab, who was captured by the Nigerian Army on February 14, disclosed that Shekau escaped to Cameroon.

"This is not true; the Nigerian Army did not arrest such person, neither do we have such suspect in our custody.

"Contrary to the allegations, the Nigerian Army is not aware of the whereabouts of Abubakar Shekau, hence the reward of the sum of N3 million for any credible information on his whereabouts", he said.

■ **Boko Haram, world's deadliest terrorist outfit**

The Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA/

ISWAP/Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad and commonly known as Boko Haram until March 2015, is a terrorist organization based in northeastern Nigeria, also active in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon.

Founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, the group has been led by Abubakar Shekau since 2009. From March 2015 to August 2016, the group was briefly aligned with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit. Since the current insurgency started in 2009, it has killed tens of thousands and displaced 2.3 million from their homes and was ranked as the world's deadliest terror group by the Global Terrorism Index in 2015.

(Source: agencies)

## Sheikh Tamim: Qatar blockade 'futile'

➔ Earlier on Friday, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned of a "mess" in the Middle East.

"The Middle East ... [has] a number of different fault lines that are crossing each other and interconnected," Guterres said during his address to the conference, pointing

to ongoing tensions between Israel and Palestine, Sunni and Shia Muslims and the Persian Gulf crisis.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and the Saudi regime's Minister of Foreign Affairs Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir are all

expected to address delegates during the annual-three day security conference.

An open discussion on the current political tensions in the Persian Gulf region is also scheduled to be held on Sunday.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Brazil's military takes over security in Rio de Janeiro after violence mars carnival

Brazil's President Michel Temer on Friday handed the military full control of security in Rio de Janeiro in an increasingly desperate fight to tame runaway gang violence.

Army patrols are already used in Rio's gang-ruled favelas, but a decree signed by Temer will now give the military full control of security operations in Rio state, which the president said had virtually been seized by organized crime gangs.

The army will have primacy over the state police, a situation unheard of since the country's return to democracy in 1985 after two decades of military rule.

"I am taking these extreme measures because circumstances demand it," he said after signing the decree to combat seemingly endless waves of gang-driven violence.

"The government will give tough and firm answers, taking all necessary measures to eradicate organized crime."

He described organized crime as "a metastasis that spreads through the country and threatens the tranquility of our people".

"We cannot passively accept the death of innocents," Temer said in a speech at his Planalto palace in the capital Brasilia in which he outlined the human cost of the violence.

"It is intolerable to be burying fathers and mothers, workers, policemen, young people and children and seeing whole neighborhoods besieged, schools in the crosshairs of rifles and avenues transformed into trenches."

Chamber of Deputies head Rodrigo Maia - who took part in a preparatory meeting with the president a day earlier - described the move to reporters as "hard and extreme".

Congress is expected to ratify the decree within 10 days.

The country has seen a wave of violence that prompted Raul Jungmann, the defense minister, to declare last month that "the security system is broken".

Luiz Fernando Pezao, Rio state governor, issued an apology after the carnival in Rio was marred by violence and muggings: "We were not ready. There were mistakes in the first days and we reinforced the patrols."

(Source: The Telegraph)

## May: Britain committed to Europe's future security

Theresa May has urged security cooperation by European Union partners to continue in the aftermath of Brexit, on the second day of the annual Munich Security Conference.

The 54th international conference brings together government representatives and defense and security experts from across the globe.

"The UK is just as committed to Europe's security in the future as we have been in the past," May said in her keynote speech on Saturday.

"This cannot be a time when any of us allow competition between partners, rigid institutional restrictions or deep-seated ideology to inhibit our cooperation and jeopardize the security of our citizens."

Furthermore, European officials have previously accused May of wanting the best of both worlds for Brexit.

On June 23, 2016, Britain voted in favor of Brexit, with the Leave campaign receiving 52 percent in a referendum.

May pledged to protect EU citizens' rights in Britain after Brexit, saying that decisions by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) would be taken into account by British courts.

(Source: AL Jazeera)

## Morgan Tsvangirai: From a nickel miner to an icon

8 ➔

■ **Tsvangirai remained stubborn**

Tsvangirai could have remained stubborn, but he compromised and joined Mugabe as prime minister, in the coalition arrangement brokered by then South African President Thabo Mbeki. Tsvangirai always said he decided to work with his tormentor-in-chief because it was the necessary step to take in order to save lives.

The economy was in seriously bad shape and Zimbabweans were in a desperate situation. As it happened, Zimbabweans had much respite during those five years of the coalition government. Things got worse after 2013, when Mugabe again claimed victory in very controversial circumstances.

During his long struggle for democracy, Tsvangirai endured several unlawful detentions, beatings and torture at the hands of the Mugabe regime. The most vicious of these attacks was on March 11, 2007, when he was bashed mercilessly by state security agents while preparing to attend a prayer meeting in the suburb of Highfields.

It was this ugly spectacle that awakened Africa and the rest of the world to the sadist nature of the Mugabe regime and prompted them to take a more hands-on approach.

Despite all the heavy challenges that he faced, Tsvangirai remained resolute. Internally, he faced criticism from some of his comrades, with whom he had founded the party, but, towards the end of his life, he had been reunited with them under the banner of the MDC Alliance.

Some argued that he probably stayed on too long as leader of the opposition, but he always maintained that the job they had started in 1999 needed to be completed. Towards the end, however, he was preparing to hand over to a new generation, as he put it in his statement. He was unwell and he knew that he could not carry on any longer.

Sadly, his party is severely divided, as different factions vie to succeed him. The greatest irony in this moment after his death is that those who fought him and beat him up are giving him honor and respect, while those who struggled alongside him started fighting each other before he has even been buried. It's an undignified fight which could have been avoided with proper succession planning.

How will Tsvangirai be remembered? He will live long in the memory of Zimbabweans as a tenacious fighter for democracy and freedom. He will always be a hero to many people. His name went far beyond Zimbabwe and is one of the most recognizable names from the southern African region.

He gave people hope. He inspired a generation, and, no doubt, his legacy will inspire future generations. He was not without fault, but then who among humans is? I worked with him and remember a humble, unassuming character who wanted the best for his fellow Zimbabweans and for humanity. It was a great honor and privilege to work with him.

(Source: Aljazeera)



## Allegri denies Champions League ‘obsession’ ahead of Turin derby

Juventus boss Massimiliano Allegri insists he is not obsessed with winning the Champions League and does not want his side to lose focus on Serie A ahead of Sunday’s derby with Torino.

Juve surrendered a two-goal lead against Tottenham in the first leg of their last-16 tie on Tuesday to draw 2-2, leaving them facing a difficult task to progress to the quarter-finals ahead of the return tie at Wembley. The result was greeted with frustration by fans at the Allianz Stadium, who have seen their side lose the final twice in the last three years, most recently to Real Madrid last May. Allegri, however, says success in Serie A and the Coppa Italia remains just as important to him and feels a failure to defeat Spurs should not be considered a disaster.

“The Champions League mustn’t be experienced like an obsession because, when you have an obsession, you never win!” he told a news conference.

“Everyone around Juventus ought to be very proud, because we have become stable among Europe’s top 10 clubs.

“The important thing now is to focus on Serie A and the Coppa Italia semi-final, because there’s a long way to go before March 6 and Wembley. “We have the same chance of progressing as we did before the first leg. We got a lot wrong in that game. Our pass completion rate was around 55 per cent and it’s usually at 70 per cent. “Having said that, Tottenham have been among the most prolific sides in the Premier League for years, with a strong defence and the division’s top scorer. They are not an easy team to face.” Juve will welcome back Paulo Dybala for the derby on Sunday, although Allegri says the Argentina international has not recovered enough from a hamstring injury to start the match.

Mario Mandzukic will also miss out through illness, while Federico Bernardeschi faces a late fitness test and Gianluigi Buffon will be rested.

“Mandzukic has a fever, so I sent him home,” said Allegri. “Bernardeschi had a muscular problem in training yesterday. He’s available to us but he’ll need to be assessed.

(Source: Mirror)

## Mercedes wary of threat from McLaren-Renault

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff says that the team is taking McLaren-Renault very seriously heading into the 2018 season. McLaren will run with Renault engines this year, after terminating a disastrous three-year campaign with Honda towards the end of 2017.

Mercedes, who have won every drivers’ and constructors’ title since 2014, is wary of the threat that McLaren now pose. Mercedes faced a title battle in 2017 when Ferrari managed to produce a car capable of making the Silver Arrows sweat.

Wolff says that at the top, you need to be aware of all the potential threats: “This is the pinnacle of motor racing you need to respect every team and the top drivers,” he told Autosport.

“We are taking Ferrari, we are taking Red Bull, we are taking McLaren, we are taking Renault seriously. These guys can fight for a championship and some others might be surprising us.

“I want to remain humble and expect competition from all of these teams and if we are able to align the dots like we have done in the last year then we will be winning races and then we will be fighting for championships and if we don’t then we haven’t been good enough.”

(Source: F1 Today)

## Brazil coach Tite reveals likely World Cup starting lineup

Brazil coach Tite said that he has already chosen his preferred starting lineup for this year’s World Cup in Russia.

But eight of the 23 places in his squad for the June 14 to July 15 tournament remain open, the 56-year-old said in an interview with Brazilian news service Uol on Friday, reports Xinhua news agency. Barring injury, the starting eleven will comprise a front three of Gabriel Jesus, Neymar and Philippe Coutinho; a midfield of Renato Augusto, Paulinho and Casemiro; and a backline of Marcelo, Marquinhos, Miranda and Daniel Alves, with Alisson in goal. Others guaranteed to be on the plane to Russia are Manchester City midfielder Fernandinho, Chelsea playmaker Willian, Paris Saint-Germain defender Thiago Silva and Liverpool forward Roberto Firmino.

“The list is partly confirmed and partly still open,” Tite said. “It’s confirmed for players who are playing consistently well for both their clubs and the national team.”

Among those vying for the final eight places, are Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson, Bayern Munich full-back Rafinha, Juventus pair Alex Sandro and Douglas Costa, Atletico Madrid left-back Filipe Luis and Gremio midfielder Arthur.

Brazil are among the frontrunners to win football’s main event after dominating the South American zone qualifying tournament. The five-time World Cup champions have been drawn in the same group as Switzerland, Costa Rica and Serbia.

(Source: Goal)

## Thiago back for Bayern

Thiago Alcantara has been named in the Bayern Munich starting line-up for the first time since November for Saturday’s clash with Wolfsburg.

The Spain international suffered a thigh muscle injury in the 2-1 Champions League win at Anderlecht on November 22 and has been sidelined ever since.

The 26-year-old starts the Bundesliga clash at Volkswagen Arena, though, as head coach Jupp Heynckes rests a number of other senior stars ahead of next week’s clash with Besiktas.

Mats Hummels, Robert Lewandowski, Jerome Boateng, Thomas Muller, David Alaba and Joshua Kimmich have all been named on the bench, with Bayern seemingly wary of any further injuries ahead of the first leg of their Champions League last-16 showdown.

Kingsley Coman, James Rodriguez and Arturo Vidal did not travel with the squad, as all three are suspended.

(Source: Soccernet)

# Back on top, Federer becomes oldest ATP world number one

Roger Federer added yet another record to his vast collection when he guaranteed becoming the oldest ATP world number one by beating Dutchman Robin Haase 4-6 6-1 6-1 to reach the semi-finals in Rotterdam on Friday.

Fresh from winning his 20th grand slam title in Melbourne this month, Federer took a wildcard into the ABN AMRO World Tennis event with his eyes fixed on a return to number one for the first time since November 2012.

Needing to reach the last four to overtake great rival Rafael Nadal, Federer showed some early nerves in his quarter-final clash in the port city’s Ahoy Arena, dropping serve in the ninth game on his way to conceding the first set.

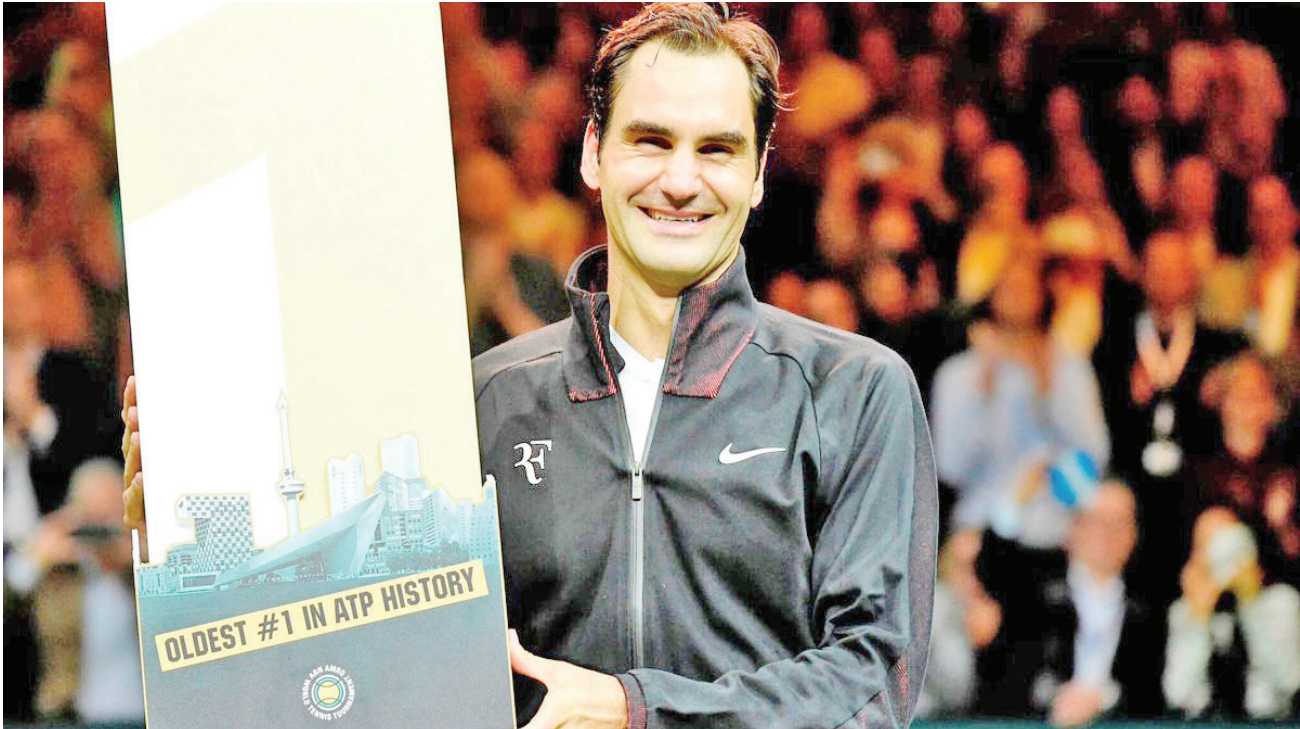
But the 36-year-old Swiss, as he usually does, moved through the gears to punish a physically struggling Haase.

A demoralized Haase double-faulted on match point and after an initially restrained celebration Federer sat on his chair and looked close to tears as his feat sank in -- as did some of the Swiss fans leading the rapturous applause.

“Reaching number one is one of, if not the ultimate achievement in our sport,” Federer said on court after being handed a huge No.1 shaped plaque by Dutch former Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek, the tournament director.

“Sometimes at the beginning you just kind of get there because you played so well, but later you have to fight for it and have to wrestle it back from someone who deserves to be there. When you are older you maybe have to put double the work in. This maybe means the most to me in my career.”

Federer, whose glittering career has re-ignited since taking six months off in 2016, has won three of the last five grand slams having gone five years without one.



One of the greatest ever late-career runs by any sportsman or woman means he surpasses Andre Agassi who was the previous oldest man to top the ATP rankings.

American Agassi was 33 when he scaled the summit in 2003.

He was one of the first to congratulate Federer.

“Roger Federer continues to raise the bar in our sport. Congratulations on yet another remarkable achievement!!” Agassi said on Twitter.

Federer also set another record with the

more than five-year gap between his previous and most recent stints as world number one being the longest since ATP rankings began in 1973.

Incredibly Federer first reached number one in 2004, as a 22-year-old, and having now returned there 14 years later playing some of the best tennis of his career, he looks capable of another lengthy stretch on the throne.

He already holds the record of 302 weeks ranked number one.

On his Instagram account later, Federer said: “A night to remember forever. Thank

you to all my fans who have been there for me since the beginning.”

The journey continues on Saturday when Federer faces Italian Andreas Seppi in the semi-final with a 97th career title in sight. Seppi beat Russian Daniil Medvedev in three sets.

The other semi-final will feature Bulgaria’s Grigor Dimitrov and Belgian David Goffin. Dimitrov beat Andrey Rublev while Goffin was given a walkover by injured Czech Tomas Berdych.

(Source : Reuters)

## Russia shielded players from doping bans



Russian football players were protected from being caught doping under direct government orders that laboratory director Grigory Rodchenkov said he followed to ensure cheating was covered up.

Outlining his involvement in football for the first time to The Associated Press, Rodchenkov claimed an instruction to “avoid any scandal” came from Vitaly Mutko, the former Russian sports minister who now serves as a deputy prime minister despite being implicated in a far-reaching doping controversy. “Russian footballers were immune from doping-control actions or sanctions,” Rodchenkov said in response to questions through his lawyer from his hiding place in the United States.

Rodchenkov fled Russia two years ago to confess to his role in a widespread doping cover-up in his homeland -- notably at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi and by track and field athletes.

In correspondence with the AP, Rodchenkov provided his first account of how he helped footballers escape doping sanctions at the behest of the government.

“Mutko ordered protection for Russian

footballers when he was the president of the Russian Football Union,” Rodchenkov said. “He told me directly to ‘avoid any scandal by hiding positive results’ and ‘doping would be handled internally,’ meaning that those doping irresponsibly or without protocols could be disciplined or reported.”

While not stating that he helped footballers to obtain drugs -- like in other sports -- Rodchenkov admits to being complicit in the cover-up.

“When they had [adverse analytical findings],” Rodchenkov said, “those results were supposed to stay out of [IWADA’s administration and management system].”

The focus is sharpening on doping practices in Russian football with the World Cup kicking off in Moscow in four months. Amid mounting evidence of his role in the doping deception that turned his country into Olympic outcasts, Mutko recently stepped down as head of both Russia’s football federation and the World Cup organizing committee. While Mutko has been banned for life from the Olympics, he has not faced any footballing sanctions.

(Source: ESPN)

## Coaching Real Madrid is ‘exhausting’: Zidane



Zinedine Zidane has admitted that coaching Real Madrid is draining as he prepares his side for their return to La Liga action on the back of the Champions League victory over Paris Saint-Germain.

“It is exhausting, for sure, even more so at Real Madrid,” the Frenchman, who had been under considerable pressure prior to the rousing 3-1 win over PSG in the first leg of their last-16 tie, told reporters at the club’s Valdebebas training complex Saturday.

“Of course there could come a time when there needs to be a change, for the coach, the club, the players, everyone, but it is not the moment.”

Zidane has won eight trophies in a hugely successful two years at the helm, including back-to-back Champions Leagues.

His team’s indifferent domestic form - they are fourth in La Liga ahead of Sunday’s game at Real Betis - means his future at the Santiago Bernabeu probably depends on the outcome of the PSG tie, with the second leg in France on March 6.

Before that, Madrid face a run of five

league games in 14 days, including a rescheduled trip to near neighbours Leganes next Wednesday.

The gap to league leaders Barcelona - 17 points with a game in hand before this weekend - is surely too great, but they are looking to climb back into the top three in La Liga.

Zidane, who has lost Toni Kroos to a knee injury that could make him a doubt for the PSG return, is set to rotate his squad in these matches and give some fringe players an opportunity.

“It is the best way to prepare for the second leg against PSG, by being good [and] playing well in La Liga,” the Frenchman added, whose side lost 1-0 at home when they last faced Betis, in September.

“There are five matches, and each time we’ll be playing after having just two training sessions. That has not happened to us before and it means we will have even greater need for everyone to be available.

“It would have been good to have another day before [Sunday’s] match, but we don’t.”

(Source: Daily Star)

## Chen leaps from disaster to Olympic history

American jumping ace Nathan Chen lived up to his reputation on Saturday, redeeming himself with quadruple jumps after a pair of disastrous skates in Pyeongchang and making Olympic history into the bargain with a brilliant free skate.

Even though he ended out of the medals, Chen’s clean landing of an unprecedented six quads - the first time anybody has done so in the Olympics - helped him vault from 17th to fifth place on the weight of the free skate.

Mao Asada of Japan, who won silver in Vancouver 2010, had a similar experience in Sochi in 2014, following a terrible short skate with a stellar free program that lifted her from far down the ranks up to sixth place and left her in tears.

Chen said that his fall and the other mistakes of Friday’s short program proved strangely freeing.

“Honestly, I wasn’t nervous at all,” the 18-year-old told reporters after his performance, saying that doing so badly led to his decision to add another quad to his program.

“I sort of planned it yesterday after I had such a bad short. I might as well just go for everything right now, I have literally nothing to lose so I might as well just go for it.”



After repeatedly saying that the Olympics were just another competition for him prior to his short skate on Friday, Chen - taking part in his first Olympics - ruefully admitted that the expectations and the occasion got the

best of him.

“As much as I tried to deny it I guess I really did feel the pressure a lot, from especially before the short program, thinking about medals and all that, things that were completely out of my control,” he said.

“That just tightened me up and made me really cautious out on the ice, and that’s not the right way to skate.”

Chen said earlier this week that after his poor skate in the team competition he had gone straight to the rink for 20 minutes of practice that had helped settle his head.

But Friday was different.

“There was no ice time, or I totally would have (practiced),” he said. “I went home and lay in bed and tried to relax a bit.”

In the end, he was philosophical.

“I was glad I was able to show myself and everyone else that I can bounce back from a bad performance. I’m human, I make mistakes, and unfortunately I had a really bad time,” he said.

“I’m really happy with what I did here and tomorrow is another day.”

(Source: Reuters)



# Wrestler Karimi banned for six months, Iran protests

**S P O R T S** Iranian wrestler Alireza Karimi has been handed a six months ban for deliberately losing a bout to avoid facing an opponent from Zionist regime.

United World Wrestling (UWW) has confirmed the sanction and also handed a two year penalty to his coach Hamidreza Jamshidi.

An investigation was launched in December after it was alleged that Karimi had lost the quarter final of his under-86 kilograms freestyle contest at the 2017 Under-23 World Championships in Bydgoszcz on purpose.

He lost to his Russian rival Alikhan Zhabrayilov, who went on to win the gold medal in the Polish city, 14-3 on November 23.

It has been ruled that Jamshidi instructed his wrestler, a two-time Asian champion and a Senior World Championship bronze medalist, to lose.

"The chamber found that Karimi, on instruction of his coach Jamshidi, willfully lost his quarter finals match against Alikhan Zhabrayilov. Both wrestler and coach were found to have acted in direct violation of the International Wrestling Rules and the UWW Disciplinary Regulations," a UWW statement said.

Iran and Israel do not have diplomatic relations with the countries seen as bitter enemies.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Wrestling Federation said it would protest a decision to ban one of its athletes and the national coach, imposed by United World Wrestling (UWW) on Friday.

"The federation will protest the verdict," Iran Wrestling Federation president Rasoul Khadem said on state television.

"During his six-month ban, Karimi can take part in domestic competitions and in the final stage of the national team selection.

"His ban will be over before the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games and the World Championship," Khadem added.



## Rahimi named Iran's Chef de Mission for 2018 Youth Olympic Games



**S P O R T S** Asghar Rahimi has been named as Iran's Chef de Mission for the 2018 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The 2018 Summer Youth Olympic Games is the third edition of the Summer Youth Olympics, a major international sports in which culture and education

are also of great importance, are due to be celebrated in the tradition of the Summer Olympic Games from Oct. 6 to 18 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

It will be the first Summer Youth Olympic Games to be held outside Asia and the first Youth Games for either summer or winter to be held outside Eurasia.

## Ashkan Dejagah sidelined up to eight weeks: Report



**S P O R T S** Iranian international midfielder Ashkan Dejagah will be sidelined for six to eight weeks due to a foot injury, according to his agent Reza Fazeli.

Dejagah suffered the injury during the Nottingham Forest's training last week, Fazeli said.

The 31-year-old midfielder has under-

gone surgery and could be sidelined for two months.

Dejagah will likely miss the 2018 World Cup.

The ex-Fulham star joined Nottingham on Jan. 31 and played against his former club on Feb. 3 at the Craven Cottage as a substitute.

Last week, Iran coach Carlos Queiroz announced via his Facebook account that Team Melli's captain has undergone surgery.

# Prince George hopes to inspire on One Year to Go until Para Nordic Worlds

One year from now Prince George will host a World Championships for the first time. It will also be the first time the World Para Nordic Championships take place in Canada.

To mark "one-year out," the Caledonia Nordic Ski Club is joining with Engage Sport North, Tourism Prince George, and the City of Prince George on Saturday (17 February) to present free events that will inspire all ages and foster participation.

Paralympian Michelle Stilwell will speak in the Otway Nordic Centre lodge, recounting her experiences that led to becoming a quadriplegic at 17 before later winning six gold medals in three Paralympic Games.

Also a member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Stilwell will then try sit-skiing for the first time as sit-skiing is one of the Para Nordic events. British Columbia Para Nordic coach Tony Chin will also be demonstrating sit-skiing for those who want to try it.

"The idea of this one-year out event is to start exposing



Prince George residents to the amazing people who will be coming here in 2019 for the first World Championships in our city's history," said Kevin Pettersen, chair of the Local Organizing Committee.

"We're going to do that by having a decorated Canadian Paralympian telling her story and by giving local residents – whether they currently ski or not – the chance to get acquainted with one of the Para Nordic events: sit-skiing. All of the events are free and we encourage everyone to come out to Otway and give these sports a try."

As part of the program, representatives of Engage Sport North will also be teaching the basics of cross-country skiing instruction at an introductory level. Engage Sport North is a multi-sport organization dedicated to advancing sport participation in the region.

The Prince George World Para Nordic Skiing Championships will run from February 16-24, 2019. Approximately 140 athletes from 20 countries are expected to compete.

This is going to be the sixth edition of the World Championships. The latest one took place in Finsterau, Germany, in February 2017.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

## Arjen Robben considering MLS, China or Qatar move

Bayern Munich winger Arjen Robben has told Sportbuzzer that he has no plans to retire and could follow in the footsteps of Bastian Schweinsteiger and move to Major League Soccer, saying he is also considering China and Qatar.

Robben, 34, has won six Bundesliga titles and four DFB Pokals during his time at the club. He also scored Bayern's late winner in the all-German Champions League final against Borussia Dortmund at Wembley in 2013, but his current one-year deal expires this summer.

"That's exactly the current topic of conversation at my kitchen table at the moment, when talking to friends and family," Robben said when asked whether he could imagine seeing out his career in the United States, China or Doha.

"Now is the time that I have to make a decision. A few years ago, it was usually relatively straightforward but I am approaching the end [of my career] now and I have a lot to think about. It's not easy but it's also exciting. A lot is still open but I have already ruled out certain things in my head -- but they are staying private.

With his Bayern contract up for renewal, Robben is convinced he has plenty to offer and will not be retiring in the summer.

"I'm still feeling very fit at the moment and believe I can still play for one or two years

more at the highest level -- that is my goal."

"I've achieved everything in my career that I set out to -- with the Champions League as the crowning glory."

Robben added that he "would be happy if Jupp Heynckes continued," although he stressed his future is not tied to the identity of the Bundesliga champions next coach.

"Of course, this decision is not completely independent of it," he said. "The coach is the one you work with on a daily basis. But I enjoy such open and honest communication with all those responsible here that I am not worried at all. The club will have a plan and then the club and I have to decide how we proceed."

Bayern have won 20 of 21 games since Heynckes returned for a fourth term at the club in October -- including a DFB Pokal penalty shootout success in Leipzig, and Robben hailed his contribution during a fourth spell in charge.

"It's super to have Jupp Heynckes back. He, Peter Hermann [assistant] and Hermann Gerland [assistant coach] all know the club inside out and what every player needs. There was a turnaround from the very first day and of course that was down to the coach. I would be happy if Jupp Heynckes continued -- but it's his decision alone and whatever happens we have to respect it."

(Source: Soccer.net)

## South Korea official floats idea of co-hosting Asian Games with North

**PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (Reuters)** - A South Korean province is considering a proposal to co-host the 2021 Asian Winter Games with North Korea in a bid to strengthen inter-Korean ties, South Korea's Yonhap News Agency said on Saturday, quoting provincial governor Choi Moon-soon.

Gangwon province, host for the current 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, is considering the idea also as a way of making further use of Olympics venues, Choi was quoted as saying.

North Korea is participating in the Pyeongchang Games at the invitation of the South, which is using them to help ease tensions between the two countries, still technically at war.

The host city for the 2021 event has not been decided yet.

A spokesman for South Korea's sports ministry said it "hopes to continue sports exchanges with North Korea after the Winter Games" but it had not yet discussed any bid for the 2021 Games.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who held talks with top North Korean officials at Pyeongchang at the start of the Games, said on Saturday there was also a growing understanding of the need for talks between the United States and North Korea. Washington has been pursuing a pol-

icy of isolating North Korea and exerting maximum pressure on the reclusive state to persuade it to drop its nuclear and missile weapons program.

"Talks between South and North Korea are making significant progress ... Meanwhile, a shared understanding of holding talks between the United States and North Korea is growing," Moon told reporters in Pyeongchang.

"(I) hope the inter-Korean talks could lead to talks between the U.S. and North Korea and also denuclearisation talks."

Last week, Moon met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, who delivered an invitation for Moon to attend a summit in North Korea "at an early date".

Moon said it was premature to talk about when a summit could take place. "There is a high expectation of an inter-Korean summit, but people seem to be getting a bit ahead of themselves," he added.

About the possibility of co-hosting the 2021 Asian Winter Games, the Gangwon governor said he would start mapping out details once the Olympic Games end and that the proposal would also utilize North Korea's Masikryong ski resort.

Prior to the Winter Olympics, the two Koreas held a joint training program at the Masikryong resort.

## Iran beat Lebanon for 2nd win at West Asian Women's Handball Championship

**Press TV** — Iranian handball players have pulled off their second victory at the preliminary round of the 2018 Asian Women's Club Handball Championship in Jordan.

Shahid Chamran Larestan team, which are representing the Islamic Republic at the continental sports event, faced Lebanon at Princess Sumaya Hall of al-Hussein Youth City in the Jordanian capital city of Amman on Friday evening, and posted a 29-19 win.

Earlier, the Iranian handball players had hammered Iraq 43-8 in their opening match on Thursday.

The 2018 West Asian Women's Handball Championship started on February 15, and will run through February 21.

The six-day and league-format competition has brought together best female players from Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Qatar.

## Tractor Sazi's Farzad Hatami to miss Al Gharafa match

**TASNIM** — Tractor Sazi striker Farzad Hatami will miss the upcoming match against Al Gharafa of Qatar due to injury.

Tractor Sazi football team will play in Doha's Thani bin Jassim Stadium against Al Gharafa on Monday.

The striker sustained an injury in the match against Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli in Matchday One of the AFC Champions League.

Tractor Sazi of Iran sit at the bottom of the Group A without any point.

## Hanyu defends Olympic title, Uno takes silver

**GANGNEUNG, South Korea (Reuters)** - Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu took gold in the men's singles competition on Saturday despite several mistakes in an otherwise mesmerizing programme, becoming the first man in 66 years to defend his Olympic title and giving Japan its first Pyeongchang gold.

Skating in front of a crowd of euphoric supporters at the Gangneung Ice Arena, the 23-year-old took steps out of his quad toe loop and triple Lutz. But those errors did not stop him from delivering a gold-worthy performance despite a gap of weeks in his training after injuring his ankle last November.

Hanyu, a two-time world champion, finished nearly 11 points overall ahead of compatriot Shoma Uno. It was the first time Japanese athletes took two top podium places at a Winter Olympics since 1972.

"Getting to this place was really tough," Hanyu told reporters. "Because I had time off from skating, I was able to do a lot of planning and thinking about strategy."

Out of competition since October and off the ice for weeks after a training fall that injured his ankle in November, Hanyu said his leg was still not in perfect condition and that a making a full recovery was his first goal.

"When I was hurt I had a lot of days when I thought I might not be able to skate again, so now having been able to skate and getting these good results is really the best," Hanyu later told a news conference.

Japan exploded with joy at his win, the first time a male figure skater defended his Olympic title since American Dick Button in 1952. Within 90 minutes of Hanyu's victory the hashtag "Hanyu-kun" - an affectionate diminutive - had been tweeted 1.1 million times and was the top trend globally.

Skating last, Uno fell on his opening quad loop but fought his way back to silver, earning a combined total of 306.90 points.

Javier Fernandez, a six-time European champion competing in his last Olympics, made a wobbly landing on his quad Salchow early in his programme but regrouped to earn 197.66 points for his free skate and 305.24 overall.

"I know I didn't do the perfect programme, but I was satisfied with what I did," Fernandez told reporters.

"It got me an Olympic medal. That's all I've got to say."

## Yarnold takes skeleton gold to make Winter Olympics history

Lizzy Yarnold created history by becoming the first Briton to successfully defend a Winter Olympics title – and then revealed how close she had come to pulling out of the Games because a virus that had laid her low for a week.



The 29-year-old Sochi 2014 champion trailed leader Janine Flock of Austria entering the fourth and final run, where she overhauled the deficit to win by 0.45 seconds. British team-mate Laura Deas claimed bronze by 0.02secs as Britain won two medals in the same event for the first time in Winter Olympics history.

"After the first run yesterday I was almost at the point of pulling out," said Yarnold. "My chest infection was stopping me from breathing. I just tried to get the second run down and then fight another day today. If it wasn't for my physio Louise Turner telling me to go down again, I'm not sure I would be here."

"I was dizzy, I couldn't breathe. I have no idea what happened. I've been ill for a week. It's been a great week. We have the doctors, I have my physio Louise. Everyone is supporting me in helping people get here. Athletes are people too. Now I'm going to sleep for weeks. The emotions are gratitude to the whole team to get here, and relief, and exhaustion. And lots of crying."

(Source: BBC)



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## Schiller to reprise concerts in Tehran

**A R T** **TEHRAN** – The German electronic music band Schiller led by its composer Christopher von Deylen will give concerts in Tehran for the second time in March.



Schiller performs a concert at the Grand Hall of the Interior Ministry in Tehran on December 12, 2017. (YJC/Mitra Samavaki)

Ritmeno, an Iranian music news agency that is the organizer of the performances, has arranged the second concert for three nights beginning on March 4.

Earlier in December 2017, the band gave performances at the Grand Hall of the Interior Ministry in Tehran. The Performances were warmly received by Iranian concertgoers.

## Fajr unveils poster for Cinema Salvation

**A R T** **TEHRAN** – The 36th Fajr International Film Festival unveiled a poster for Cinema Salvation, the official competition section of the festival, on Saturday.



A poster for the Cinema Salvation of the 36th Fajr International Film Festival.

A selection of 15 feature films and 15 short movies will compete in the section, the organizers announced.

The festival, which will be running from April 19 to 27 in Tehran, has received submissions from filmmakers from Turkey, Italy, China, Bulgaria, Afghanistan, England, Egypt, France, Iraq, Palestine and several other countries.

Registration still continues until March 10 and the final list of the competing movies will be announced afterwards.

A jury of five foreign and two Iranian members will be judging the films. The members of the jury will be announced later.

## Tehran gallery sets up Abbas Kiarostami bust

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The Tehran-based Boom Gallery, which showcased photo collections by Abbas Kiarostami during several exhibitions, has set up a bronze bust of the world-renowned Iranian art icon in its courtyard.



July 2016 at the age of 76.

The life-sized statue has been made by Alireza Asanlu, the gallery announced on Saturday.

The gallery displayed Kiarostami's photo series "Snow White", "Roads", "Moonlight", "Doors without Keys" and "Doors and Memories" at several exhibits.

Kiarostami was an advisor to Boom. He passed away in

## British actor Robert Pattinson says he does not believe in true love

**BERLIN (Reuters)** — British actor Robert Pattinson does not believe in true love, he said at the Berlin Film Festival on Friday, in contrast to the lovestruck pioneer he portrays in the western comedy period film "Damsel".

Directed by David and Nathan Zellner, "Damsel" stars Pattinson as the wealthy Samuel Alabaster who traverses the Wild West in search of his love Penelope, played by Australian actress Mia Wasikowska.

"Do I believe in true, pure love? No. No, I think it's, yeah, I mean it's obviously more complicated," he said at a news conference after the screening.

"Damsel" is one of 19 films competing for the festival's Golden Bear award.

# Unacknowledged Fajr films triumphant at Qoqnus Screen Awards

**A R T** **TEHRAN** – Those films that failed to garner an award at the 36th Fajr Film Festival last week were honored on Friday night during the 7th edition of the Qoqnus Screen Awards, which is organized by the Art Bureau to honor revolutionary films.

"Damascus Time", a film directed by Ebrahim Hatamikia about the soldiers who fought against Daesh, received a Qoqnus.

Earlier last week at the Fajr Film Festival, Hatamikia shared the film's award for best director with Bahram Tavakkoli, the director of "The Lost Strait".

However, he lashed out at the organizers of the festival and Iranian TV and accused them of undermining his movie, which had been financed by the Owj Arts and Media Organization, a Tehran-based institution producing revolutionary works in art and cinema.

He also called himself "a dependent filmmaker" and "a man of the system" and said that he is proud of making a film about those who fought against Daesh.

Hatamikia could not attend the Qoqnus Screen Awards, which were presented at the Andisheh Hall of the Art Bureau. Therefore, "Damascus Time" producer Mohammad Khazaei received the award on his behalf.

"Hatamikia's criticism was distorted on social media where he was accused of seeking more awards, while that was not true," Khazaei said at the awards ceremony.

"Long ago, a media frenzy had been launched against the revolutionary guys and they labeled us 'dependent filmmakers', but Hatamikia worked [at Fajr] like shock troops, giving the future generation courage not to feel humiliated for having to make films on the revolution," he added.

Owj director Ehsan Mohammad-Has-



"Damascus Time" producer Mohammad Khazaei accepts an award on behalf of director Ebrahim Hatamikia during the 7th Qoqnus Screen Awards at Andisheh Hall in Tehran on February 16, 2018. (Fars/Soheil Sahranavard)

sani also received a Qoqnus. "I also repeat that we are all dependent," he said after accepting the award and added, "We are proud of not having to ask foreign embassies for money to make our films."

He also praised Hatamikia for his remarks at the Fajr festival and said, "We heard Hatamikia's remarks and that was the beginning of a struggle."

Hadi Hejazifar received the Qoqnus for

best actor for his roles in "Damascus Time" and "Lottery", director Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian's sex trafficking drama.

The Qoqnus for best documentary went to "Women with Gunpowder Earrings" by Reza Farahmand. The film is about Nur, a female journalist who covers stories about Syrian and Iraqi women and children in the war against the Daesh terrorists.

"The Elephant King" directed by Hadi

Mohammadian also won a Qoqnus.

IRGC commander General Ali-Akbar Purjamshidian also spoke at the awards ceremony and proposed that a campaign titled "We Art the Men of the System" be launched in support of Hatamikia.

"We are proud to be working for the system to earn a living. We are proud of not having to earn a wage from America and Israel," he noted.

## Simin Daneshvar's "Savushun" published in Italy

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Eminent Iranian author Simin Daneshvar's social-historical novel "Savushun", also known as "Suvashun", has recently been published in Italian.

The Milan-based company, Francesco Brioschi Editore, is the publisher of the book, which has been translated into Italian by Anna Vanzan.

She is a graduate in Oriental languages and cultures from the University Of Ca' Foscari in Venice, and has received a Ph.D. in Near Eastern studies from the New York University.

Daneshvar died in 2012 at the age of 90. She is mostly known as the author of "Savushun" which has been translated into over 17 languages around the world.

## Berlin festival movie tells true story of Cold War rebels with a cause

**ESSEN, Germany/BERLIN (Reuters)** - As Soviet tanks crushed an uprising in Hungary in 1956, a group of children in East Germany began their own protest, taking on a communist regime that would keep their country divided for three more decades.

The true story is told in "The Silent Revolution" ("Das schweigende Klassenzimmer"), a movie that premieres at the Berlin International Film Festival that opened this week in the city that is now the capital of a unified, peaceful Germany.

With tightly controlled news media back home, two schoolboys from the East see footage of the 1956 Hungarian uprising - a key moment of Cold War history - while on a trip to the cinema in West Berlin.

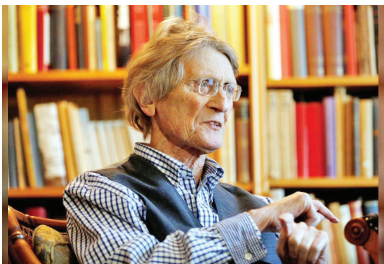
They tell their classmates and after listening to western news on the radio together at a house in the countryside, they agree to hold a minute's silence for those killed in the failed revolution.

The entire class is ultimately expelled and most flee to the West in a bid for freedom and to put their academic careers back on track.

Dietrich Garstka, who wrote the book on which the movie is based, started school in 1945 - the year Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime collapsed - so the communist East German system was all he knew.

He risked a lot by refusing to answer his history teacher's questions during the minute's silence, but, Garstka said: "Doing that protest was important to me, to show these scumbags that we think differently to them."

He and his classmates realized they would have no chance of making a life for themselves if branded enemies of the state, so they decided it was better to take the risk of fleeing.



Dietrich Garstka, who fled former Communist East as a schoolboy and inspired the film "Das schweigende Klassenzimmer" which is due to premiere at the Berlinale film festival, gesticulates during an interview with Reuters in Essen, Germany, February 9, 2018. (Reuters/Leon Kuegeler)

"They completely underestimated us, thinking we were little puppets who believed what the 'great socialists' said," he told Reuters.

While Garstka's rebellion was against a system that most Germans now look on as a grimly repressive regime, he says young people today remain rebellious and always will.

"I think young people are often underestimated by their parents nowadays. They're not indifferent ... you can be sure they'll get involved whenever there's a campaign or something to do," Garstka said, adding that ecological issues were often the focus of protests in today's Germany.

"If I wanted to be ironic, I could say we had the luck of growing up in a dictatorship and we could show that (rebelliousness)."

"The Silent Revolution", directed by Lars Kraume, premieres in Berlin on Tuesday. The festival runs until Feb. 25.

## Berlinale film shows refugees' lives at historic airport

**BERLIN (Reuters)** — In 2015, with Germany facing turmoil after flinging its doors open to a million refugees, Berlin repurposed a defunct airport to house them, creating an ad hoc village that is the setting for a film to premier at the Berlinale film festival.

Built by forced labor on the orders of Adolf Hitler's architect Albert Speer, Tempelhof Airport is a mirror of its city's history, serving as West Berlin's lifeline during the 1948 Soviet blockade.

The airport was closed in 2008 and its runways were turned into a garden the size of New York's Central Park for a now united city.

Its hangars, the setting for the documentary "Central Airport THF", in 2015 became an emergency shelter for more than two thousand of the million-odd people who came to Germany, fleeing war and persecution in the Middle East and Africa.

The film, by Brazilian director Karim Ainouz, documents the life of the airport's new residents, drawing a parallel the lives of Berliners in the vast adjacent park, contrasting refugees with hipsters on kite skates, joggers and picnicking families.

"There was a contrast there that I thought was really important to document," said Ainouz, who said he wanted to show the lives of refugees through a more personal lens than was then common.

Ibrahim Al Hussein, a Syrian from Aleppo, had just turned 18 when he arrived at the airport and had to live in the hastily built shelter for more than a year where Ainouz met him.



Ibrahim Al Hussein (L) from Syria and Qutaiba Nafea from Iraq pose for the photographer ahead of an interview with Reuters about Karim Ainouz's Berlinale International Film Festival entry movie "Central Airport THF" at historic Tempelhof Airport in Berlin, Germany February 13, 2018. (Reuters/Fabrizio Bensch)

Qutaiba Nafea, another of Ainouz's subjects, is a 38-year-old Iraqi refugee who was studying to be a doctor in his home country but found himself working as a translator at the shelter health center.

"It was like a life blog for me, I was filming my daily life here," said Al Hussein.

Al Hussein's monologues and his depictions of daily life at the shelter reflects the uncertainty, the homesickness and the hope for a new future which overshadow refugees' lives while waiting for their asylum applications.

Perhaps inspired by his experience, the young protagonist, who now works at a cinema himself and is an aspiring film editor.

"People from all around the world will come and watch the film and get an idea about our life at the airport," he said.

## Nigerian cinema fans celebrate "Black Panther" release

**LAGOS (Reuters)** — Film fans, actors and comic enthusiasts in Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos have been flocking to screenings of Marvel superhero movie "Black Panther" which opened in Africa's most populous country this week.

The Walt Disney Co movie, which features a predominantly black cast, is set in the fictional African nation of Wakanda. It tells the story of the new king, T'Challa/Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman), who is challenged by rival factions.

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, is also a cultural powerhouse that boasts the continent's biggest film industry, known as Nollywood. Lagos is the country's filmmaking hub.

At a screening of Black Panther on Friday in Lekki, an upmarket district of Lagos, Nollywood stars mingled with TV personalities and locals. The showing was one of a number of screenings in the city this week.

Most people were dressed in traditional Nigerian robes and gowns, with some opting to wear specially made attire in keeping with the film's futuristic take on African garments.

"Black Panther is a film that celebrates black excellence. Bringing it to Nigeria is especially exciting," said Bolaji Kek-



A general view of the entrance for the premiere of "Black Panther" in Los Angeles, California, U.S., January 29, 2018. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

ere-Ekun, a 33-year-old filmmaker.

"The people who made the film were very specific about

the references they used in relationship to Africa. They are pulling from the best fashion and art," he said.

The fictional African country is depicted as a verdant land with stunning waterfalls where spacecraft designed like tribal masks soar over a modern metropolis.

The portrayal of Wakanda as a futuristic, wealth-laden nation was welcomed by local actress Ijeoma Grace Agu, who used body paint and a two-piece outfit as a homage to the film's fashion aesthetic and said she was excited to watch the film.

"For once we are not just dressed in slave clothes or doing slavery or brutality. For once we are dressed in good clothes," said Agu.

Directed by black director Ryan Coogler and featuring actors including Michael B. Jordan, Angela Bassett, Lupita Nyong'o and Forest Whitaker, the film has received widespread critical acclaim after years of criticism about the under-representation of black people in Hollywood.

"Seeing us exude power and strength, seeing our culture, our high fashion sense portrays us in a different light," said Agu.