



Syria should be cleansed from terrorist in future months: military chief **2**



Flare stack of SP phase 14 platform lights **4**



Iran beat Iraq in FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 Asian Qualifiers **15**



Tehran to host ABU meeting on intellectual property **16**

UN resolution saves terrorists



Syria preserves right to retaliate against terrorist attacks on civilians

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Iran promoting investment opportunities in southeastern Makran shores

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The 2nd **d e s k** International Summit for Presenting Investment Opportunities in Makran Shores (in southeastern Iran) commenced on Sunday at Milad Tower Conference Hall in Tehran. Investors from 37 countries along with Iranian businessmen and officials are attending this three-day event, IRIB news reported. According to the Makran Shores Development Secretariat, which is the event

organizer, six major areas including transit and commodity transfer, fishery, industries, tourism and energy infrastructure have been defined for investment attraction and development in Makran shores. Urban development is also among the highly emphasized areas of interest in this region, so that recently the establishment of two new cities of Jask and Tiss has been approved by the country's supreme council for urban development.

Senior MP: Nuclear propellers do not need IAEA permit

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A senior **d e s k** Iranian MP has said a plan by Islamic Republic to develop nuclear propellers does not need a permission from the International Atomic Energy Agency. Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, told reporters on Sunday that Iran is among countries with heavy international marine traffic and by en-

tering the industry to develop nuclear marine propulsion systems it can boost its marine traffic.

His remarks came a day after Behrooz Kamalvandi, the spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, said Tehran had precipitated its nuclear propeller program in response to the United States' ill-wished approach to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. **->2**

Iran won't bow to modification of JCPOA: Hossein Askari

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Hossein Askari, an expert on Saudi Arabia who also teaches international business at the George Washington University, strongly believes that Iran should not agree to "any modification" of its nuclear deal.

In a recent interview with the Tehran Times, Professor Askari said: "For

any accord to be modified you need the agreement of all parties."

Following is the brief text of the interview with Hossein Askari:

■ Newly revealed documents of the U.S. State Department demonstrate that the obstruction of the Iran nuclear deal by U.S. government officials has been softened. **->7**



ARTICLE

By Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

U.S., Europe play games with JCPOA

The U.S. attacks on the nuclear deal and the dual approach of Europeans towards the JCPOA are the prime pieces of a puzzle perniciously played by Washington and the European Troika. During the Munich Security Conference, this moves against the nuclear deal even grew more dangerous.

Trump's U.S. National Security Adviser, Herbert McMaster, explicitly called for a review of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Contrary to U.S. commitments (JCPOA Clauses 26-29), McMaster called Iran an unreliable, insecure partner while addressing the 54th Munich Security Conference last Saturday, and insisted that U.S. allies halt trade with Iran over its alleged meddling in regional affairs. He stated: "So the time is now, we think, to act against Iran... as a matter of international security... we must stop doing business with [Revolutionary Guard Corps] affiliated interests..."

After McMaster, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel played along with the U.S. game by showing overall support for the JCPOA on the one hand, but attacking Iran's regional policies on the other. A closer look at Gabriel's remarks reveals his support of the U.S. maneuvers.

Gabriel urged the U.S. not to withdraw from the JCPOA. Instead, he asked the American authorities to cooperate in establishing new strategies to confront "Iran's destabilizing policies" and "to limit its influence in the Middle East". The multilateral agreement between Iran and the P5+1 states, namely the U.S., the UK, France, China, Russia plus Germany, removes all nuclear-related sanctions against Iran in exchange for certain limitations on its peaceful nuclear program. However, it seems Gabriel is suggesting sanction renewals or expansions.

While the conference was also the scene of EU opposition to Donald Trump's economic policies, the European Troika and the Trump Administration agreed on taking steps against the JCPOA. Now, the U.S. and its European vassals may be aiming to complete their maneuvering: a recent Reuters report claimed that the U.S. State Department has sent a document to its embassies in Berlin, Paris and London that might be viewed as a revision of previous requests by the U.S. In this document, the ambassadors of Germany, **->7**

Iran-Saudi conflict not a zero-sum game: professor

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute, says Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are deceiving the world by pretending to fight against terrorism.

"This is a part of a new strategy to deepen the perception that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are actively fighting against terrorism and to signal to Europe (and the United States) that they are doing what they can to that end".

Prof. Adib-Moghaddam, who is also the author of Psycho-nationalism: Global Thought, Iranian Imaginations, believes that the gap between Qatar



and the other Persian Gulf Arab states, as well as Iran and Saudi Arabia, won't last long. Adib-Moghaddam, a professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies, adds that "this conflict between closely knit communities can-

not be solved in a zero-sum mentality where the winner takes it all."

Here is the full text of the interview with Professor Adib-Moghaddam:

■ Saudi Arabia and the UAE have pledged to financially back a five-nation coalition force in West Africa's Sahel region. What are the reasons behind this support?

A: This is a part of a new strategy to deepen the perception that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are actively fighting against terrorism and to signal to Europe and the US that they are doing what they can to that end. It is possibly a PR stunt. Al-Qaeda is active in West Africa where it takes advantage of the lack of state sovereignty and enforcement of security. So the effort is real and necessary, but the motives are slightly more sinister. **->7**

Iraq rejects Riyadh's request to extradite over 400 Saudi 'terrorists'

Iraq has rejected a request from Riyadh to hand over more than 400 Saudi Arabians, whom it has imprisoned on terrorism charges.

According to the London-based newspaper Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, the Saudis were captured along with "hundreds" of other Arabs and Europeans in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) and al-Qaeda terrorist outfits.

The paper cited government spokesman Saad al-Hadithi as saying that Baghdad would allow the extradition of those foreigners who have been acquitted of terror charges.

Iraq says all foreign prisoners fall under the jurisdiction of the country's legal system. So far this year, it has sentenced a German and a Turkish

woman to death over their links to ISIL.

Riyadh made the extradition request after pledging \$1.5 billion during a donors' conference held in Kuwait to Iraq's post-ISIL reconstruction.

ISIL Takfiri terrorist group follows the radical ideology of Wahhabism, which dominates Saudi Arabia. It views people of other faiths and creeds as "infidels" punishable by death.

The outfit unleashed its campaign of bloodshed and destruction on Iraq and neighboring Syria in 2014, overrunning large swathes of territory. At the time, extremists from Britain, France and Germany as well as from elsewhere across Europe joined the group to establish a Takfiri caliphate.

As their exodus began, many European leaders

ignored repeated warnings that hardened terrorists could return home one day and hit back, simply because they wanted to see the downfall of the Syrian government.

On Saturday, the British newspaper The Daily Mail warned that as many as 1,000 ISIL wives were returning to Europe, as the Takfiri caliphate collapses in the Middle East.

European authorities fear the decline of ISIL and its territories is prompting women and their children to flee the Middle East and relocate in the West.

A report by the European Union border agency Frontex warns the threat is "evolving" and that it is hard to assess the long-term threat of widowed wives and orphaned children. **->13**



Rescue drill in Persian Gulf

A rescue drill, aiming to increase the emergency preparedness of the country's sea fleet, was held in the Persian Gulf on Sunday.

The photo is depicting a vessel, erupted in flames, with rescue workers striving to douse the fire. The operation was designed to simulate a rescue exercise to improve disaster preparedness particularly during the two-week Noruz holidays (March 21-April 2).

The drilling operation was held with head of Ports and Maritime Organization, Mohammad Rastad, and Hormozgan province's representative to the parliament in attendance.



ARTICLE

By Maryam Qarehgozlou
Head of the Tehran Times
social desk

Defenseless national land areas

The controversial directive from the Supreme Council of Environment on revision of national protected areas will definitely leave such regions in an exposed position.

Under the new directive, issued on February 21 during a session headed by President Hassan Rouhani, the protected areas which have caused difficulties (!) for different sectors will be decreased or in some cases increased in the country.

In Iran, areas protected by the Department of Environment (DOE) cover 8.2 million hectares which fall into four categories: national parks (11 sites), wildlife refuges (25 sites), protected areas (47 sites), and national nature monuments (5 sites). Moreover, Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture, manages 131 reserves with a total area of 111,000 hectares of these 19 are natural forest parks, 91 are forest reserves, and 21 are natural parks.

Despite the fact that such areas are called protected they are already being illegally or even legally exploited by building dams, constructing roads and doing logging or mining activities.

Now, after issuing the new directive the protected areas can be lawfully decreased. Although the directive is also allowing the increase of protected areas it is crystal clear that the environment will certainly be harassed more than ever, and now it is permitted by the law.

Hamid Zohrabi, caretaker for DOE's natural environment directorate, has said that as per the directive some 28 areas constituting 77,000 hectares, which are "not very much valuable ecologically" and were causing "too many social and economic problems for the public" are reevaluated for changing their status from protected to unprotected.

The decision, which seems to be taken with no scientific basis, will worsen the current environmental predicaments including soil erosion, sand and dust storms, and groundwater depletion.

Hossein Akhiani, botanist and environmentalist, have told Hamshahri daily newspaper that Iran, as a party to the international conventions on the environment cannot easily leave some protected areas unprotected. **->12**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



No security threat in Makran: Hatami

POLITICS TEHRAN — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Sunday that through the efforts of the Navy and other branches of the military there is no security threat in the Makran region and the situation is quite ripe for investment.

Makran sits on the shores of the Sea of Oman in south-east Iran. Hatami made the remarks on the sidelines of the second conference on the development of Makran, hailing the economic activities that have been carried out by the government in the coastal region, Mehr reported.

The brigadier general added that there are a lot of infrastructure projects under construction in Makran, hoping that the region will flourish in the future.



Only 6.7% of Americans view Iran as main foe: envoy

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baeidinejad has said that only 6.7 percent of Americans view Iran as their main enemy.

In a post on his Twitter account on Sunday, Baeidinejad cited a Gallup poll, saying anti-Iran sentiments have been decreasing among American people in recent years.

"In 2006, 31 percent of Americans regarded Iran as their greatest foreign foe," he said, adding that the figure had decreased to 16 percent in 2014. According to Gallup, 3% of Democrats, 10% Republicans and 7% of independents view Iran as the nation's greatest foreign foe.



UN expected to vote on Iran for alleged arms violation

POLITICS TEHRAN — The UN Security Council is expected to vote on Monday on a British-drafted resolution that would condemn Iran for allegedly violating a UN arms embargo against Yemen.

The resolution claims that Iran has been providing missiles and drones to Houthi fighters in Yemen.

"We are still working on the text, but the intention is to adopt it Monday morning," Kuwait's UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaiba, who is the current president of the council, told reporters on Saturday. Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia has opposed the draft, saying it should be about renewing the work of experts monitoring arms sanctions against Yemen, not condemning Iran.

Syria should be cleansed from terrorist in future months: Military chief

POLITICS TEHRAN — Major General Mohammad Baqeri, chief of the Iranian armed forces, said on Sunday that the whole territory of Syria should be cleansed of terrorists in future months.

The comments by General Baqeri came a day after the UN Security Council adopted resolution demanding a 30-day truce across Syria.

"We will be committed to this resolution which is an international decision and the Syrian government will also be committed. However, there are parts in the suburbs of Damascus which have not been mentioned in the resolution which are not subject to truce and cleansing will be continuing there," Baqeri explained.

The military chief of staff said parts



of the Damascus suburbs are "held by the terrorists".

The resolution does not cover militants from Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and the Nusra Front.

The senior Iranian general added, "Once again, those who do not want security and peace for Syria brought up the issue of truce when they saw that the Syrian army and government seek to cleanse the suburbs of Damascus from terrorists."

During his speech at the conference, Baqeri said that major powers seek to impose their culture on other countries.

"It has been for many years that the major powers have colonized the world's nations, and today they seek to impose their culture on others," he said.

Suicides harmed the security apparatus: human rights official

POLITICS TEHRAN — A few cases of suicides in prisons harmed Iran's security apparatus, the deputy chief of the Iranian High Council for Human Rights said, rejecting claims that the suicides were committed due to pressure on the detainees in the prisons.

"By investigating espionage cases in different countries, we can conclude that some of those who are accused of espionage commit suicides," Kazem Qaribabadi said, ISNA reported on Sunday.

Most recently, Kavous Seyed-Emami, a university lecturer and a Canadian-Iranian environmentalist, died while in custody in Tehran. The Judiciary said he had committed suicide after he was charged with "espionage in the area of environment."

Weeks ago, ten lawmakers toured the

Evin prison in Tehran for three hours to visit those detained in the early January unrest. While at the prison the MPs viewed CCTV footage of the suicide of a young man while in custody.

Qaribabadi said the footage convinced the lawmakers that the inmate had committed suicide.

"When detainees are handed to prisons, the guards are required to use all of their potential to protect their lives, irrespective of their crimes," he asserted.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official pointed to the recent unrest by a cult group in the Pasdaran neighborhood, northern Tehran, saying Westerners and special rapporteurs on human rights exploit any legal confrontation against rioters as a violation of the rights of minorities.

Security of Persian Gulf states intertwined: Diplomat

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mo-

hammad-Kazem Sajjadpour, director of the Center for Political and International Studies at the Foreign Ministry, has said that destiny and security of the Persian Gulf littoral states are intertwined.

"Some states assume that they can protect their security at the cost of undermining security of others which is a wrong assumption that causes insecurity," he told ISNA in an interview published on Sunday.

He added, "Insecurity and political and economic chaos in one country affect its neighbors and no actor can be indifferent towards such issues in other countries. Neighborliness is intertwined with the issues of common

interests."

Sajjadpour also noted that "buying security" through reliance on extra-regional countries is a "security disease gripping the Middle East region".

He expressed regret over the fact that certain regional countries have a mentality that originates from their "tribal tendencies" and set hope on extra-regional powers.

"If they think properly about the issue of security in the region, they will understand that regional security should be provided by the regional countries," the diplomat remarked.

Elsewhere, he said that Iran is the only country in the region which relies on its own people for security.

Senior MP: Nuclear propellers do not need IAEA permit

1 → To a question on whether nuclear propeller activities had anything to do with the United States' anti-Iran measures, Boroujerdi said: "Whenever countries feel they have developed the technology, they can use it."

"Both Iranian ships and submarines could be equipped with nuclear propellers," Boroujerdi underlined.

Referring to the order issued by President Hassan Rouhani demanding the Atomic Energy Organization to move towards developing its nuclear propulsion systems, he said that the IAEA is quite aware of Iran's activities pertaining to development of the marine nuclear propellers.

"There have been no specific objections by any interna-

tional bodies in this regard," the MP said.

Nuclear marine propulsion is the propelling force of a ship or submarine with heat provided by a built-in nuclear power unit.

Many sea vessels built by developed countries, including commercial and military ships and tankers, are equipped with nuclear propellers.

First Announcement



INTERNATIONAL TENDER No. : 96 - K/175

1-Tender Holder: Security Paper Mill of Central Bank of I.R.Of Iran.

2-Tender Subject: Purchase wearing and spare parts of Claflin Refiner 111

3-Tender Deposit: an unconditional and extendable Bank guarantees from Iranian Bank for the amount of 16,800 Euro or 840,000,000 Iranian Rials.

4-Deadline for receiving tender documents:

Maximum 10 days after second advertisement

5-How to get document: Bidder can receive the tender documents by sending their written inquiry to Fax: +981143132566 or sending letter to email address info@takab-cbi.ir or refer to national database portal of Iran Tenders Information [http:// Iets. Mporg.ir](http://Iets.Mporg.ir)

6-Deadline for submitting offers:

Maximum until dated 07 April 2018 (97/01/18)

7-Validity period of financial offers:

The offers must be valid for 90 days after 07 April 2018 (97/01/18)

8- The offers no sign, conditional, altered and the offers that submit after the expiration of the period of bid submission will be considered as null and void.

9- Tender Holder reserves the rights to reject some or all of the offers.

10-The winner of tender must be submitting an unconditional and irrevocable performance bond guarantee equal to 10% of value of the contract.

11-All the cost of published advertisement must be paid by winner of tender

12-Place for receiving and submitting tender documents:

7th km Chamestan Road, Amol, Mazandaran, Iran, Security paper Mill-

Department of the commercial department building

13-Delivery time: 4 month after signing the contract for further information.

prospective bidder may contact us via the following

Tel:+981143132630 , 43133751 Fax: +981143132566

Web site: <http://www.takab-cbi.ir> E-mail: info@takab-cbi.ir

First Announcement



INTERNATIONAL TENDER No. : 96 - K/168

1 -Tender Holder: Security Paper Mill of Central Bank of I.R.Of Iran.

2-Tender Subject: Purchase one set of Swimming Roll related to calender Machine

3-Tender Deposit: an unconditional and extendable Bank guarantee from Iranian Bank for the amount of 18:025 Euro or 775:000:000 Iranian Rials.

4-Deadline for receiving tender documents:

Maximum ten days after second advertisement

5-How to get document: Bidder can receive the tender documents by sending their written inquiry to Fax: +981143132566 or sending letter to email address info@takab-cbi.ir or refer to national database portal of Iran Tenders Information [http:// Iets. Mporg.ir](http://Iets.Mporg.ir)

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N. Korea says open to talks with U.S., condemns new sanctions as ‘act of war’

Members of a high-level North Korean delegation visiting South Korea for the closing ceremony of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics said North Korea was open to talks with the United States, the South's presidential office said.

In a meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in an undisclosed location in Pyeongchang, the North's delegation also said developments in relations between the two Koreas and those between North Korea and the United States should go hand in hand, said the Blue House in a statement.

Meanwhile, North Korea has censured the latest round of sanctions imposed by Washington against Pyongyang as an “act of war,” accusing the U.S. administration of trying to undermine an improvement in inter-Korean relations triggered by the Winter Olympic Games in the South.

The condemnation came on Sunday after the U.S. Treasury blacklisted more than 50 North Korea-linked shipping companies, vessels, and trade businesses, imposing an asset freeze and barring the U.S. citizens from dealing with them.

The U.S. President Donald Trump described the measures as the “heaviest sanctions ever” levied on Pyongyang.

“The two Koreas have cooperated together and the Olympics was held successfully,” the North's KCNA news agency cited North Korea's Foreign Ministry as saying in a statement.

“But the U.S. brought the threat of war to the Korean Peninsula with large-scale new sanctions on the DPRK ahead of the Olympics closing ceremony,” the statement said, using the initials of the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

“Like we have said repeatedly, we would consider any restrictions on us as an act of war, and we will not stop the U.S. if it really has the nerves to confront us in a ‘rough’ manner,” it added.

Tensions have been high between Washington and Pyongyang over North Korea's missile and nuclear programs.

The administration in Washington claims it prefers a diplomatic solution to the crisis, but it repeatedly threatens Pyongyang with military action.

North Korea, already under numerous sanctions, has resisted the pressure campaign led by Washington to try to force Pyongyang to halt its weapons program. It has vowed to keep up the development of its weapons programs as a deterrent against the U.S., which has substantial military presence in the region.

The North Korean officials will be in South Korea until Tuesday to participate in the Winter Olympics' closing ceremony, which will also be attended by the U.S. President Donald Trump's daughter and adviser Ivanka.

Officials from both Seoul and Washington have said there will be no meeting between Kim Yong-chol and Ivanka



Trump, who is traveling with Korea experts from the U.S. administration and White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

The two Koreas have been improving ties since last month, when Pyongyang announced its willingness to take part in the Winter Olympics, a decision that led to the historic visit to the South by North Korean leader's sister, Kim Yo-jong, during which an invitation was extended to South Korean President Moon Jae-in for a visit to Pyongyang.

Moon, who hopes to use the games as an opportunity to restore regular communication with Pyongyang and resolve a standoff over the North's weapons programs, however, did not immediately accept the invitation to a summit in Pyongyang, saying the right conditions must be created first.

The two neighbors have been separated by a heavily-militarized border since the three-year Korean War came to an end in 1953. The conflict ended with an armistice rather than a formal peace treaty and left many families separated at the two sides.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula has been tense due to Pyongyang's development of its nuclear and missile

programs.

■ **Protests erupt over attendance of North Korean delegation head**

Meanwhile, the attendance of the Olympics' closing ceremony by Kim Yong-chol, who was in the past a military intelligence chief, sparked a protest near the border with the North.

The blacklisted North Korean general is widely blamed for a spate of attacks, including the torpedoing of a South Korean warship in 2010 with the loss of 46 lives. Pyongyang denies responsibility.

Hundreds of protesters staged a sit-in at Tongil Bridge, trying to block a motorcade carrying the North Korean dignitaries to the PyeongChang Winter Games closing ceremony venue.

The protesters waved banners that read, “Arrest Kim Yong-chol!” and “Kim Yong-chol should kneel in front of the victims' families and apologize!”

About 2,500 police were deployed at the border crossing to maintain order.

(Source: agencies)

‘Crunch time’ for UK’s May as she sets out Brexit plan

Britain's opposition Labor Party warned on Sunday that it could team up with Conservative rebels to force the country to become part of an EU customs union, a move that could threaten Theresa May's government.

Labor's Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer warned May that “crunch time is coming” over her Brexit plans, which she will set out on Friday, although she has always said Britain would not remain a member of the EU customs union. The prime minister only holds power thanks to the support of Northern Ireland's DUP, and there is a serious threat her government could be brought down if a handful of her Conservative MPs team up with opposition parties to demand that she pursues some kind of post-Brexit customs union. EU supporters back a form of union, which would align tariffs charged on goods imported from the rest of the world, saying it was essential in retaining tariff-free access to the continental market.

“The customs arrangements at the moment are hardwired into the membership treaty so I think everybody now recognizes there's going to have to be a new treaty – it will do the work of the customs union,” Starmer told BBC television.

“Obviously it's the only way of realistically



to get tariff free access, it's really important for our manufacturing base.”

He suggested that Labor could back an amendment by pro-EU Tory MP Anna Soubry to a trade bill currently going through parliament, demanding May “take all necessary steps” to secure a trade agreement that “enables the UK to participate after exit day in a customs union with the EU”.

Brexiters argue that such a deal would prevent Britain from striking free trade deals with the rest of the world, one of the key benefits of leaving the EU.

■ **‘Bright new chapter’**

May is under pressure to set out more details of her position before talks get underway on the future partnership in April.

“Now these cross-party amendments have

gone down essentially saying the same thing and to put it bluntly crunch time is coming for the prime minister,” said Starmer.

Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn is due to outline the party's position on Monday, and is expected to announce moves towards a “softer” Brexit, a move that is likely to cause division among the party's working-class base, the majority of which voted to leave the EU.

Trade minister Liam Fox, an arch Eurosceptic, later told the same BBC program that Britain had to be able to set its own trade policy with the rest of the world after leaving the EU in March 2019.

“The key thing about a customs union is that it puts a big frontier around Europe,” he said. “I want the United Kingdom to make its own decisions. We want to be rule-makers in our own country and not rule-takers.”

May this week brought together her key ministers to thrash out Britain's negotiating stance. One minister, who was not present during the cabinet talks, said they had agreed that Britain would seek to align itself with European Union rules in certain sectors of the economy, but will retain the right to diverge.

EU President Donald Tusk dismissed the reported plans as “based on pure illusion”.

(Source: AFP)

Erdogan vows to ‘break arms’ of U.S.-backed militants

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has issued one of his strongest warnings meant for the U.S., pledging to “break the arms and wings” of Washington-backed militants in Syria.

The warning in an address to his ruling party members in the southern province of Kahramanmaraş came as tensions grow between Turkey and the U.S. over the latter's support for Kurdish militants.

Turkey's patience boiled over when the U.S. announced last month to create a 30,000-strong force comprised of Kurdish militants, which would be deployed along the Turkish border. Without mentioning the U.S., Erdogan said, “They want to sever us from our sisters and brothers by forming a terror corridor along our borders. They do not hesitate to link arms with terrorist organizations.”

“They are not aware of the fact that we will break the arms and wings of the structure they have been striving to form and destroy it completely,” he added.

Turkey launched an operation in the Syrian city of Afrin on January 20 to eliminate the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which Ankara views as the Syrian branch of the outlawed Kurdish Workers Party (PKK).

The U.S. views the YPG as an ally in Syria, where the



militant group forms the backbone of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) which is being trained, equipped and protected by the Americans.

“We believe we will sooner or later bring down the terrorist organizations and those who are behind them,” Erdogan said.

“Those who see us as yesterday's Turkey, and treat us in this manner, have begun to gradually realize the truth,” he said, in an apparent reference to Washington which has had long-held military ties with Ankara.

The Syrian government has condemned both the “Turkish aggression” and the “illegitimate” U.S. presence in Syria, saying they violate international law and impede the political solution and victory over terrorism.

While Turkey is coming under mounting pressure over reports of rising civilian casualties, Erdogan has announced plans to expand the offensive to Manbij where Turkish troops are likely to face U.S.-led forces.

On Saturday, Erdogan said “a global smear campaign” had been launched against Turkey's operations in Syria.

“The launch of a worldwide war of propaganda, based on lies, slander and distortion, by those who cannot deal with Turkey on the ground, will not work,” he said.

Erdogan further rejected reports that civilians were being targeted in Turkey's operation in Syria. He said Turkey was on a mission to eradicate terrorism, which was key to preventing the re-emergence of colonialism, in another apparent dig at the U.S.

Later on Saturday, Erdogan traveled to the province of Osmaniye, where he said a total of 1,951 YPG militants have been “neutralized” in the Afrin operation.

(Source: agencies)

Mosques flattened in fresh Saudi airstrikes in Yemen

Saudi Arabian warplanes have flattened a mosque in Yemen's west-central Ma'rib Province, and stricken another in the north-western Sa'da Province.

The first attack targeted the mosque in Ma'rib's Sirwah district, Yemeni news website Sahafah24 reported on Sunday.

Yemen's al-Masirah television network published a video released by the country's War Media outlet showing the moment the

structure fell into ruin.

A day earlier, the aircraft targeted a mosque and other religious centers in Sa'ada's Razih District.

Two people were wounded in Saudi airstrikes in Sa'ada's Sahar district. A woman was also injured in a Saudi attack targeting a road in the province's Saqayn district.

The footage broadcast on al-Masirah also showed the aftermath of the attacks on Sa'ada.

The Saudi military campaign was launched in March 2015 with the aim of reinstalling Yemen's former Riyadh-backed government and crushing the country's Houthi Ansarullah movement, which has been both running state affairs and defending the nation against the aggression.

Around 13,600 Yemenis have so far lost their lives in the war, which also recruits many of Saudi Arabia's regional allies,

and enjoys logistical, political, and arms support from the United States and the United Kingdom

Saudi Arabia has also imposed an all-out blockade over Yemen's ports, saying it was aimed at preventing transfers of weapons to Ansarullah. The siege has been depriving the most impoverished Arab nation of direly-needed food and medicine.

(Source: Press TV)

Syrian Kurdish leader arrested in Prague after Turkish request



The former leader of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) has been detained in Prague after Turkey issued an Interpol Red Notice.

Salih Muslim, until 2017 co-leader of the PYD in Syria, had been attending a press conference in the Czech capital where he had accused Turkey of carrying out atrocities in the PYD-controlled territory of Afrin in Syria.

According to the Turkish pro-government Daily Sabah, Turkey has begun proceedings for Muslim to be extradited to Turkey following his detention on Saturday by Czech authorities.

Interpol Red Notices are put out by the organization either at its own initiative or following requests from Interpol member states to alert others that an individual's arrest is sought.

Turkey, which regards the PYD as an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), issued red notices for Muslim and 47 high-ranking PKK members in November 2016.

A further red notice was issued on 13 February 2018, which included Muslim on the most wanted list and offered a 4 million lira (\$1.05 million) bounty for him.

The TEV-DEM coalition, which governs PYD-controlled Syria, confirmed the arrest.

“We condemn this illegal act,” it said in a statement

Muslim was elected co-chair of the PYD in 2010 and led the party, along with co-chair Asya Abdullah, as Syria descended into civil war. The PYD's military wings, the People's Protection Units (YPG) and Women's Protection Units (YPJ), became a major fighting force against the Islamic State group, and were supported by the US as part of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) coalition with Arab partners in northern Syria.

In 2017, Muslim and Abdullah were replaced by Shahoz Hassan and Aysha Hesso as PYD leaders.

Turkey launched an operation into Afrin on 20 January with the aim of driving the PYD out of the enclave.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that 219 members of the pro-Turkish forces, which includes Turkish military and Syrian fighters, and 243 members of the pro-PYD forces have been killed so far. As many as 170 civilians have also been killed.

Both Turkey and the PYD/SDF have issued different figures, however.

(Source: Middle East Eye)

Mexico president drops plan to visit U.S. after Trump call



Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto has shelved a plan to visit the United States following a phone conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump, in which the U.S. president reportedly lost his temper. The Washington Post first reported the development, citing U.S. and Mexican officials.

It said Peña Nieto was planning to visit Washington in February or March, but “shelved” his plan after a “testy” phone call with Trump on Tuesday.

The 50-minute phone call between the Mexican president and his U.S. counterpart reached an impasse over Trump's campaign promise of building a wall on the U.S.'s border with Mexico and making Mexico City pay for it.

The report said the two leaders “devoted a considerable portion” of the phone conversation to discussing the border wall. Peña Nieto reportedly asked Trump to publicly affirm Mexico's position that it will not pay for the wall. The U.S. president refused.

According to the Mexican account of the conversation, Trump at some point “lost his temper.” According to the American version, he was frustrated by Peña Nieto's demand.

The Mexican president had canceled an earlier trip after Trump threatened to impose a tax on Mexican imports to pay for the border wall. During his campaign for presidency, Trump had hinted that illegal Mexican immigrants to the US were “murderers” and “rapists.” That enraged the Mexican government and people. Once the U.S. president promised to build the wall and make Mexico pay for it, Mexico City made it clear that it was not going to. Meanwhile, an upcoming presidential election in Mexico scheduled for July is a determining factor and any compromise by Peña Nieto may risk damaging his public image and reducing his chances for re-election.

Some experts say that a trip to the U.S. by the Mexican president any time before the election would be a risk.

(Source: agencies)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	98080.3
IFX	1094.35

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	44,750 rials
EUR	55,350 rials
GBP	67,700 rials
AED	13,200 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	63.55/b
Brent	67.04/b
OPEC Basket	63.08/b
Gold	\$1,330.20/oz
Silver	\$16.58/oz
Platinum	\$1,000.25/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

ICCIMA to dispatch trade delegation to Albania, Macedonia in late-Apr.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** —Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) is planning to dispatch a trade delegation to Albania and Macedonia on April 23-26, ICCIMA portal reported.

According to the report, ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie will be heading the delegation visiting the European countries.

The visit is aimed for the two sides’ businessmen active in various areas including energy, agriculture, tourism, technical and engineering services, food and pharmaceutical industries to get to know each other and explore grounds of cooperation.

\$2b worth of foreign-funded projects underway in industrial parks

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Managing Director of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) Sadegh Najafi said the organization has 37 major projects underway with \$2 billion of foreign investment.

“We have extensive planning to attract foreign investment in our projects; in this regard ISIPO seeks to present highly profitable projects to foreign companies as well as to Iranians living outside the country,” IRIB news quoted the official as saying.

IME trades rise 39% since last Mar.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — During the first 11 months of the present Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2017- February 19, 2018) above 1.035 quadrillion rials (about \$23.11 billion) of goods have been traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), registering 39 percent increase in comparison with the same period in the previous year, IRNA quoted the CEO of Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) as saying in a news conference on Sunday.

According to Hamed Soltaninejad, during the first 10 months of the current year (ended on January 20, 2018) IME transactions constituted 48 percent of the total trades done in Iran’s capital market.

Flare stack of SP phase 14 platform lights

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Flare stack of the first platform of Iran’s South Pars gas field’s phase 14 of development was lighted on Saturday.

The 2,500-ton platform 14A, which is the main platform of phase 14, was installed on its designated offshore spot on January 24, according to the Public Relations Department of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing South Pars.

Phase 14 is expected to produce 56.6 million cubic meters of sour gas and 75,000 billion barrels of gas condensate per day, one million tons of liquefied gas and one million tons of ethane per year, and 400 tons a day of sulfur.

South Pars, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world’s reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of



condensate. The field is divided into 24 standard phases of development in the first stage. Most of the phases are fully operational at the moment.

Iran, Spain explore industrial co-op in Tehran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — In a meeting between officials from Iran’s Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO), Spanish Chamber of Commerce, and Confederation of Employers and Industries of Spain in Tehran the two sides investigated mutual cooperation between Iranian and Spanish industries, the website of IDRO reported

on Sunday.

During this meeting, director of International Affairs at IDRO Ali Araguchi provided the participants with some information about IDRO different activities such as those in railway sector.

The Director of International Affairs at the Spanish Chamber of Commerce, José Vicente González, for his

Latvia calls emergency meeting after third-largest bank fails

Latvian authorities will gather for an emergency meeting on Monday following the failure of the country’s third-largest bank, the Prime minister said on Saturday, as the country kept watch for any fallout on other banks.

ABLV Bank is failing or likely to fail and will be wound up as saving it is not in the public interest, the European Union’s Single Resolution Board and the European Central Bank (ECB) said separately on Saturday.

Accused by U.S. authorities of large-scale money laundering, ABLV scrambled this week to come up with a survival plan, but failed as customers fled and management could not come up with sufficient cash, despite offers of emergency central bank liquidity.

Latvia’s Finance Minister Dana Reizniece-Ozola said the situation in other banks was stable and that the level of deposits at around 20 billion euros (\$25 billion) had not changed significantly.

Reizniece-Ozola added that the regulator was demanding and receiving regular information from private Latvian banks.

Other banks at risk in Latvia are those that, like ABLV, specialize in accepting foreign deposits, Reizniece-Ozola told Reuters on Friday. She said she had a list of more than a dozen lenders that fitted this description and could therefore be affected in some way.

Prime Minister Maris Kucinskis said Latvian authorities and local and interna-



tional experts need to agree on the next step in order to improve financial supervision.

“That’s why the emergency meeting of the Financial Sector Supervision Council has been called on Monday ... and this question has also been put on the agenda of the government (next week),” Kucinskis said in an emailed statement to Reuters.

Privately held ABLV, Latvia’s third-biggest bank, has been in focus since U.S. authorities accused it of covering up money laundering, bribing officials and facilitating the breach of sanctions against North Korea.

The money laundering accusations, denied by the bank, destabilized the lender and around 600 million euros worth of deposits left within days, forcing the ECB to suspend all payments on Monday to prevent a disorderly collapse.

“I am convinced both about the stability of the Latvian financial sector and the ability to take significant steps so that the banking sector could regain its reputation,” Kucinskis said. (Source: Reuters)

India calls for changes in WTO to transform world economy

India on Sunday called for bringing changes in Geneva-based World Trade Organization (WTO) to transform the global economy.

Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu said that the global trade has benefitted all the nations in terms of creation of jobs and promoting economic activities.

“Now the question is whether we should make WTO

better or forget it. Organizations need reformation all the time and it needs to be changed with change in times,” he said here at the CII’s Partnership Summit.

Prabhu said the WTO was created on certain solid principles including democracy and transparency and even the smallest country has a say in the 164-member organization.

“That is something which is a very unique character-

istic. Therefore, we must bring in transformation in the WTO itself to transform the world economy. To bring that transformation, we have to put constant efforts,” he said.

As part of such efforts, Prabhu said, India is organizing a mini-ministerial meeting on March 19 and 20.

India has invited representatives from several countries to discuss, debate and “find out ways of how to move forward,” he added. (Source: Economic Times)

Second Announcement



SINGLE- STAGE INTERNATIONAL TENDER

GOVERNMENT TRADING CORPORATION OF IRAN

Government Trading Corporation of Iran (hereinafter referred to as GTC), affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad of the Islamic Republic of Iran, intends to purchase 45,000 M/Ts 10 pct M/L Indian 1121 sella rice,(in 3 separate cargoes of 15000 MTs 10% each. cargoes to be shipped in 3 lots at 3 days interval during May, June 2018) on CFR basis, through single stage international tender.

All qualified companies and suppliers who are interested to bid above tender are invited to receive tender documents from 26/02/2018 until 6/03/2018 from Trades & Tenders Committee located on the 4th floor of GTC building no 2 , at No 225 Fatemi Avenue Tehran-Iran. along with an official letter of introduction.

The bidders are required to submit stamped and sealed envelopes containing their offers latest by 13:00 on 10/04/2018 to the Tender secretariat located on the 7th floor. The bid’s envelope will be opened at 10/04/2018 By14:30 In the presents of the bidder’s representative in GTC’s purchasing committee hall . (9th floor, No 12, Jihad Square, Tehran, Iran).

Bid bond: bid bond worth EUR 299,205 (IRR 13,733,500,000) for each 15000 MT cargo

Bid bonds may be deposited either cash in Rials or through an unconditional bank guarantee issued in Euros by renowned Iranian bank located in Tehran, with three months validity and extendible for another three months.

Note: participates who wish to bid for more than one cargo are obliged to deposit the above mentioned bid bond for each extra shipment.

For more information, you may refer to our website WWW.GTC-PORTAL.COM or contact us by phoneNo.00982188957477 (foreign trade department) .

Second Announcement



ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

GOVERNMENT TRADING CORPORATION OF IRAN

The Government Trading Corporation of Iran (hereinafter referred to as GTC), affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad of the Islamic Republic of Iran, intends to purchase 30,000 M/Ts 10 pct M/L, crude degummed soybean oil through single stage international tender.

All of qualified companies and suppliers that are interested to bid above tender are invited to receive tender documents from 2018/02/26 until 2018/03/06

from the secretary of Trades &Tenders committee located on the 4th floor of GTC building no 2 , Iran, Tehran , Fatmei Ave . opposite of Water and Wastewater Co. along with an official letter of introduction.

The bid participants are required to submit their stamped and sealed envelopes containing their offers latest on 13:00(Tehran time) on 2018/04/10 to the secretariat of tenders committee located on the 7th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be held on 2018/04/10 at 14:00(Tehran time) with the presence of bidder’s representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, No 12, Jihad Square, Tehran, Iran).

Bid bond: the bid bond worth EUR 359,834 (IRR. 16,516,390,000) in cash or unconditional bank guarantee with three months validity and extendible for another three months.

For more information, you may refer to our website WWW.GTC-PORTAL.COM or contact us by phoneNo.00982188957477 (foreign trade department) .

15 things to watch in the oil market 2018

By Jude Clemente

As the world's most vital and traded commodity, the dynamics of the oil market are without end. So don't think this is an exhaustive list, but here are 15 things to watch in oil this year, not ranked in any order.

■ 1 - Global oil demand will rise by 1.5 million barrels per day (b/d), to pass 100 million b/d for the first time ever.

■ 2 - U.S. crude oil production will grow by 1.4 million b/d to average 10.7 million b/d. For shale, at \$37, "the wellhead price required to generate a profit is about half of what it was in 2010."

■ 3 - Saudi Arabia wants oil to reach at least \$70 to launch Aramco's IPO (5 percent to be listed). Russia thinks prices will be closer to \$60, but has a budget breakeven price of \$53.

■ 4 - OPEC and Russia seek a more established, longer-term alliance, basically because the 1.8 million b/d production cut has succeeded. Next steps to be discussed in June. This alone explains why the U.S., Canada, and Mexico must better integrate their energy markets, with a powerful NAFTA being critical.

■ 5 - After peaking to \$8 in September, the WTI-Brent spread has tumbled to ~\$3. But still, after soaring to 2 million b/d last week, surging U.S. crude exports will still be very strong. We could be exporting over 4 million b/d by 2022 - unimaginable when the crude ban was lifted in December 2015.

■ 6 - Chinese apparent oil demand will grow 6 percent to over 12 million b/d, with



import dependency slightly increasing to a record 70 percent. China will lead the world in new demand for the 10th straight year.

■ 7 - Global oil-fueled car sales will reach 91 million, versus 73 million in 2010 - illustrating the still very massive might of oil. "Tesla loses another \$675 million in Q4, its biggest quarterly loss yet."

■ 8 - OECD inventories are now only 52 million barrels above the five-year average, a surplus down 264 million barrels from a year ago. U.S. crude storage at Cushing, OK is at its lowest since 2014. In fact, some believe that the global surplus has now been eliminated, but I see the market rebalancing in the 2nd or 3rd quarter.

■ 9 - EIA has Brent averaging \$62-63 and WTI at \$58-59, higher than what was

forecast in previous months. Any rise to \$75 or above will need to come from very robust new demand and/or a geopolitical event.

■ 10 - At 20.5 million b/d, U.S. oil demand will reach levels not seen since the pre-recession 2007. Sorry Mr. Musk, but our gasoline demand will hit an all time record, 9.33 million b/d, per EIA.

■ 11 - Down 20 percent from a year ago, Venezuela produced 1.6 million b/d last month and could drop to 1.3 million b/d this year. Much of OPEC's over-compliance, now at 127 percent lies with "Venezuela's Oil Problems Abound." The U.S. is still considering a ban on imports from Venezuela, which would further devastate.

■ 12 - Nigeria just pledged to keep output under 1.8 million b/d this year, but produc-

tion could still reach beyond 2 million b/d, since the goal is 2.5 million b/d within a few years. Both Libya (nearly 1 million b/d in January) and Nigeria were originally exempt from cutting supply because output was down already from unrest, and have said output would not grow this year.

■ 13 - Russia's biggest state-run crude producers, Lukoil and Rosneft, have said that they're not changing planned investments, despite a production cut deal scheduled through the end of 2018. Russia should maintain its compliance level close to 100 percent, but if prices stay closer to \$70, and global inventories keep declining, producers might see the deal as soon ending and choose to expand drilling.

■ 14 - The value of the U.S. dollar might be the most volatile factor for oil prices. The dollar and oil prices have an inverse relationship: a stronger dollar makes oil and other dollar-denominated commodities more expensive for holders of other currencies, so demand drags. Signs are the Fed raising interest rates and pushing the greenback up.

■ 15 - In Latin America, although presidential front-runner (election July 1) AMLO will be focusing on the Mexican refinery business over crude exports, the plan is to up production 50 percent to 3 million b/d by 2030, not very ambitious though. Brazil's Petrobras starts a \$60 billion investment plan to 2022, and Shell says that it can produce when oil is \$40 per barrel from its pre-salt holdings. While the Libra field, which started production in November, is claimed to have breakeven costs of just \$20. (Source: Forbes)

Libya oil field halt slows exports, sending crude prices rising

Libya's oil exports from the Mellitah terminal will be "modified" after protests disrupted production at the key El-Feel deposit for the first time in two months, putting the OPEC nation's crude production at risk of a decline again.

Crude loadings at Mellitah, the export terminal for El-Feel, will be "modified" after force majeure was declared on deliveries from the deposit on Feb. 23, the state-run National Oil Corp. said in a document obtained by Bloomberg. NOC said Saturday guards at the field were protesting over pay and other benefits. Force majeure is a legal clause protecting a party from liability if it can't fulfill a contract for reasons beyond its control.

Production at El-Feel, operated by a joint venture of NOC and

Italy's Eni SpA, was last disrupted for one day in December due to a power outage. The field has production capacity of 90,000 barrels a day but it's not clear what output was before the outage. NOC officials were not immediately available to comment.

Libya, a member of OPEC, was allowed to increase oil production while other nations in the group cut output to curb a global glut. The North African nation's output earlier this month was 1.1 million barrels a day, the highest since June 2013, a person familiar said Feb. 15. Oil finished a second week of gains on Friday after news that El-Feel was shut and American supplies drained.

Mellitah was set to load four cargoes this month, each holding

about 600,000 barrels, according to a loading program seen by Bloomberg. One vessel was scheduled to be loaded Feb. 21 to Feb. 23.

With a fragile political accord barely holding the country together, Libya faces an array of challenges preventing its return to the output levels of about 1.8 million barrels a day pumped in 2008. Pipelines and other facilities are targeted by armed factions and tribal groups jostling for political control and a share of oil revenue. El-Feel was briefly shut in August after an armed group closed its pipeline, prompting the NOC to declare force majeure back then.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Asia set to lose 3 million bpd of oil production

Oil production in Southeast Asia and East Asia will decline by 20 percent between 2017 and 2025, according to a new report from Rystad Energy.

Natural depletion from mature oil fields will significantly erode oil production in the region, and new projects will not be able to makeup for the decline. Rystad Energy expects total oil production in Southeast Asia and East Asia to decline to 10.4 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (boe/d) by 2025, down from 13.1 million boe/d in 2017.

Oil production from China, Rystad Energy predicts, will decline by the least, "supported by the stable output from the giant Changqing field and several ramping up projects, including Longmaxi Shale." The predications show the Changqing field contributing more than 1 million boe/d over the next five years.

But production in Southeast Asia doesn't fare as well, with output dropping sharply. Rystad cited the example of the Exxon-Mobil led Banyu Urip project in Indonesia and Shell's deepwater project Gumusut-Kakap in Malaysia, both of which to peak and decline over the forecast period.

Underpinning the decline in output from mature fields is the dwindling volume of new oil and gas discovered over the past decade and a half. In fact, since the broader oil market downturn began in 2014, discoveries in East and Southeast Asia have plunged. In 2017, the worst year for discoveries, only about 300 million boe in reserves were discovered, down from over 4 billion boe in 2012 and 6.5 billion boe in 2000. Fewer discoveries will mean fewer and fewer new sources of supply coming online in the years ahead.

More importantly, even the limited volume of oil that was discovered recently may not necessarily translate into production. "Most of the recent key discoveries," Rystad said in its report, "are still unsanctioned."

Even as China doesn't suffer as much as some of its regional neighbors, output has still declined quite a bit in recent years. The IEA sees China producing an average of 3.8 million barrels per day (mb/d) in 2018, down by 0.5 mb/d since 2015. Much of China's output comes from mature oil fields and requires hefty levels of investment to keep output from falling. The market downturn that began in 2014 forced China's main state-owned oil companies to scale back spending, and ultimately, the companies shelved some production that was no longer profitable.

Production from the region has been declining since 2015 and Rystad Energy predicts that the losses will continue for the rest of the decade. "Current discoveries waiting in the pipeline to be developed are not enough to offset the declining trend in the region."

In a global context, Southeast and East Asia amount to a major bullish force on the oil market, not only because supply is falling, but also because demand is soaring. By all accounts, Asia will represent a large slice of future oil demand growth going forward. Just a few days ago, BP published its annual Energy Outlook, in which it predicted that China and India alone would make up half of total global energy demand growth over the next three decades.

(Source: oilprice.com)



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Turkey may try to build an unmanned tank

By Zachary Keck

Turkey may try to build an unmanned tank.

That's according to Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Speaking at a meeting at the presidential palace on February 21, Erdoğan declared: "We will carry it a step further [after domestically produced unmanned aerial vehicles] . . . We should reach the ability to produce unmanned tanks as well. We will do it." Erdoğan's comments came weeks after five Turkish soldiers were killed in a tank while fighting in Syria's Afrin district. Ankara has deployed military forces in Syria to battle Kurds in the neighboring country.



Turkey has long invested in building its own home-grown unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). At the Dubai Airshow in November of last year, Ankara unveiled its new Karayel UAV built by the local firm Vestel Defence Industry. Defense News reported at the time: "With a 13-meter wingspan and an endurance of eight hours when fully armed with a 120-kilogram payload, the Karayel-SU is the latest in a family of UAVs built by Vestel for the Turkish Armed Forces and the export market." Those drones can be equipped with antitank weapons like the MAM-L and the laser-guided MAM-C, both also built by local firms. The Karayel can also serve as a surveillance drone.

Another domestically built drone is the Anka. A medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) UAV, the Anka was built by Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) and took its maiden flight in 2010. The drone is primarily designed for surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions, but also can engage in signals-intelligence collection. More recently, however, Turkey has been weaponizing the Anka drone by equipping them with weapon systems like the antitank weapons also being placed on the Karayel UAV. In 2016, Ankara began soliciting bids for two new types of UAVs: multicopter-type strike drones and nano drones.

At the meeting where he expressed interest in building unmanned tanks, Erdoğan praised the country's progress in building UAVs and other military systems. "Almost all of the armored carriers [operating] in Afrin are domestically produced. I thank our friends who produced them," the Turkish president said. He added: "If the defense industry of Turkey does not produce drones, then every drone shot down in Syrian Afrin will put us in a difficult position. Now, we do not think about it, replacing each shot down drone with a new one."

If Turkey proceeds on trying to build an unmanned tank, it will not be the only country pursuing this objective. As Dave Majumdar has previously noted, Russia has long been developing a similar type of vehicle. "Called the Uran-9, the robotic armored vehicle is not intended to replace main battle tanks such as the T-90 or T-14 Armata. Rather, the diminutive machine is designed to provide fire support to special operations forces and to conduct reconnaissance," he wrote in 2016.

Nonetheless, the Uran-9 -- which is remotely controlled -- boasts a number of weapon systems, including the 2A72 thirty-millimeter automatic cannon, a 7.62-millimeter machine gun, and M120 Ataka antitank guided missiles. Thus, the Uran-9 is capable of engaging in battle with fellow tanks, as the Ataka missiles have a range of eight thousand meters. When deployed, the Uran-9 is also accompanied by two robotic reconnaissance/fire support vehicles. Still, Rosoboronexport, the state-run Russian export company, still markets the Uran-9 as being primarily suited for counterterrorism missions. "The Uran-9 will be particularly useful during local military and counter-terror operations, including those in cities. Its use will significantly reduce personnel casualties," Rosoboronexport has stated.

The United States has not moved as quickly to invest in an unmanned tank, even as it readily takes advantage of unmanned aerial vehicles and, increasingly, sea-based autonomous systems. In a November 2017 monograph for the Strategic Studies Institute, Robert J. Bunker criticized the United States for not moving faster in pursuing unmanned tanks. "The Russians are beginning to implement robotic concepts within their main battle tank designs that are more advanced than contemporary U.S. and British systems," Bunker wrote, adding, "Armed robotic U.S. tanks will likely be inevitable at some point in the future, as the success of programs such as the Switchblade armed tactical drone further help to usher in additional armed teleoperated robotic systems."

Still, the U.S. armed services have cautiously dipped their toes in this arena. As far back as 2015, the U.S. Marines began exploring a machine gun mounted on a robot. More recently, the U.S. Army announced that the first prototype of its Robotic Combat Vehicle will be deployed in the field in 2020-21. While these are far from being unmanned tanks, they are stepping-stones towards that eventual outcome. The end designs are unlikely to look like their manned counterparts, however, as they'll need less armor and thus be much lighter.

(Source: The National Interest)

U.S. allies are failing to fill the global leadership void

By Hal Brands

If America abandons the liberal international order it created, can that order still endure?

This has been the central geopolitical question posed by Donald Trump's presidency. So far, longtime U.S. allies have been working to fill the void created by the retreat of American leadership, and thus to prevent the erosion of a system that has served so many so well for so long. Yet their efforts cannot be more than a temporary solution to the crisis of global stewardship that Trump has created.

From the time Trump announced his candidacy in 2015, his visceral distaste for the international system the U.S. shaped after World War II was obvious. Generations of previous presidents saw the promotion of a geopolitically stable, economically open, ideologically liberal world order as a form of enlightened self-interest -- a strategy that would allow America to remain secure, prosperous and free by helping others become secure, prosperous and free.

Trump, however, has long seen this order-building project as a geopolitical fool's errand that allows other countries to free-ride on American labors. "We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon," he said in his inaugural address.

Despite the best efforts of many of his advisers, including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Trump has thus taken dead aim at key aspects of America's own international order.

He has harangued and bullied U.S. allies, and withdrawn or threatened to withdraw from numerous free trade agreements. He has derided the importance of human rights and democratic values, and sought to make common cause with countries -- namely Russia -- that most threaten American interests, allies and ideals. Not least, he has revived narrowly nationalistic rhetoric and ideas -- encapsulated in his "America First" slogan -- that sound to many observers like the very antithesis of inclusive, positive-sum global leadership.

Fortunately, America's closest partners have not simply stood still as U.S. statecraft has taken this ominous turn.

Japan and Australia responded to the U.S. withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership by launching a surprisingly effective bid to sustain that agreement without Washington's participation. (So effectively that Trump has made noises about re-considering U.S. involvement.)

Likewise, Japan and the European Union agreed to negotiate a major free trade pact. In global security affairs, France and Japan are now reportedly planning naval exercises in the South China Sea to show support for freedom of navigation in the face of a continuing Chinese challenge. Meanwhile,



The EU, Australia and Japan are scrambling in the face of Trump's retreat.

the EU, led by Germany and France, has outlined ambitious plans to improve European defense cooperation, in part as a hedge against a future in which U.S. commitments no longer seem so ironclad. Finally, the rest of the world is continuing to implement the Paris accords on climate change, despite Trump's decision to withdraw.

This behavior should be encouraging to those who value the U.S.-led international order, precisely because it is the ultimate testament to the success of that order. That U.S. allies see such great value in this system demonstrates just how attractive a world Washington has created in the decades since World War II. They are conducting a critical holding action -- they are trying to keep the liberal order as healthy and stable as possible until Washington once again emerges as its chief defender.

All this will help keep the positive dynamics that U.S. leadership has traditionally fostered -- openness, security, international cooperation -- from being swamped by more negative trends like protectionism, instability and parochial nationalism, at least in the short term.

Yet neither the liberal order nor the U.S. can thrive in the long term without stronger American engagement, for three key reasons.

First, America's allies may be defending the liberal order, but they are not necessarily doing so in the way that Americans might

prefer. It is laudable that the EU, Japan and other countries are pushing back against protectionism, but the agreements they conclude will be far less favorable to U.S. interests than they would be if Washington were at the table and setting the agenda.

American exporters are already worried, for instance, that an 11-member "rump TPP" will put them at a competitive disadvantage by creating a more integrated economic zone from which the U.S. will be excluded. Trump may think his foreign policy will allow the U.S. to cut better deals, but it is actually giving other countries incentive to cut deals at America's expense.

Second, Trump's withdrawal is not just creating space for America's democratic allies. It is also clearing the field for authoritarian actors whose goals often run contrary to U.S. interests. As I recount in my new book, "American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump," Chinese leaders have cleverly positioned themselves to benefit from Trump's nationalistic turn. The have accelerated geopolitical and geo-economic projects, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Project and the Belt and Road Initiative, which are meant to weaken the U.S.-led order by creating China-centric alternatives.

They have also exploited Trump's global unpopularity by portraying China as the new world leader on issues such as climate and globalization. Some of these claims are

risible -- Beijing's foreign economic policy is mercantilist to its core, and China has long been adept at reaping the benefits of the liberal economic order without obeying its rules. But U.S. withdrawal is nonetheless giving the global initiative to actors threatening as well as benign.

Finally, although U.S. allies have sometimes bristled at descriptions of America as the "indispensable nation," the hard reality is that there are limits to what they can achieve without Washington. No one, not even most Europeans, expects great breakthroughs in European defense cooperation in the age of Trump. This is because EU military integration still suffers from its perpetual problem -- it has all the liabilities of a complicated multilateral undertaking without the benefit of having the U.S. there to plug the inevitable gaps.

Likewise, the downsized TPP and the EU-Japan trade agreement are positive developments, but it is hard to imagine that a truly liberal international economy will long endure if the world's two largest national economies -- the U.S. and China -- take protectionist stances.

In short, longstanding U.S. allies can buy time for Washington to get back in the game -- but they can't do much beyond that. If Atlas doesn't take up his burden again sometime soon, the world he formerly supported will surely start to crumble.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Burma is bulldozing history and memory

Burma is compounding the malevolence of its brutal ethnic cleansing campaign against the Muslim minority Rohingya people. The Burmese military unleashed a wave of violence in northern Rakhine state in August 2017, killing Rohingya, burning villages and forcing more than 650,000 to flee to Bangladesh. Now, satellite imagery published by Human Rights Watch shows that Burma, also known as Myanmar, is covering up the crime, bulldozing the scorched villages into oblivion.

The images show that at least 55 villages have been cleared of all buildings and vegetation using heavy machinery, among the 362 villages that were targeted by the military. In 10 more villages, the images show, hundreds of buildings that were partially destroyed by arson have now been leveled.

The bulldozers and backhoes are wiping clean a crime scene. Courageous Reuters reporters revealed recently that in one village, 10 Rohingya villagers -- fishermen, shopkeepers, two teenage students and an Islamic teacher -- were massacred and their bodies dumped into a shallow grave. How many more shallow graves are scattered across this blighted landscape? Burma has blocked international observers and foreign journalists from seeing the devastated region. A



serious forensic examination is essential to hold the military to account for its actions.

Wiping the villages from the face of the Earth is also an insult to history and memory. It suggests the perpetrators believe they acted with impunity, a disturbing show of arrogance made even more brazen by the fact that hundreds of thousands of Rohingya victims are living in camps just beyond the border in Bangladesh. Earlier, the Burmese military exonerated itself of any responsibility for atrocities in northern Rakhine state.

The explanation offered by some in the government that the bulldozers are rebuilding the area strains cred-

Remembering the Persian Gulf War

What: U.S.-led 'Operation Desert Sabre' and the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait
Where: Iraq and Kuwait
When: 24 -- 26 February 1991

■ What happened?

On 24 February 1991, the United States of America and its coalition partners began "Operation Desert Sabre", the ground invasion of southern Iraq and Iraqi-occupied Kuwait.

The move signified the latest escalation in the Persian Gulf War, which had begun on 2 August 1990. In the wake of the Iran-Iraq War, which had concluded in summer 1988 without a formal peace agreement, tensions between Iraq and many of its regional neighbors had festered. Disagreements with Kuwait reached a peak over the question of the Rumaila oil fields, situated some 20 miles from the border, with then Iraqi President Saddam Hussein accusing Kuwait of siphoning crude oil from the fields. Citing Iraq's historical claims to Kuwait and calling

it "Iraq's 19th province", Hussein launched an invasion on 2 August 1990. Following the invasion, Kuwait City, the Kuwaiti capital, was quickly captured and the royal family forced to flee. Iraq formally annexed Kuwait on 8 August 1990 and an eight-month occupation followed.

Although Hussein's invasion was supported by Jordan, Algeria, Yemen and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), key regional players including Egypt and Saudi Arabia called on the U.S. and NATO to intervene. Economic sanctions and naval blockades proved ineffective, as did the United Nations Security Council demand that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January 1991.

When this deadline passed and Hussein showed no sign of withdrawal, the U.S.-led coalition launched a month-long aerial bombardment of Iraq. On 24 February the ground offensive "Operation Desert Sabre" was launched, with an estimated 750,000

coalition troops on standby in the region, 540,000 of which were U.S. personnel. Kuwait City fell quickly, and within three days U.S. forces had destroyed most of Iraq's elite Republican Guard.

On 26 February 1991, Hussein announced Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. Reports circulated that large-scale looting and the destruction of hotels, schools and the university had taken place, alongside alleged torture, execution and rape. By 28 February any Iraqi resistance had collapsed and U.S. President George Bush declared a ceasefire.

■ What happened next?

Fed by the perception that Hussein's regime would be vulnerable following its defeat, a number of Iraq's minority groups rose against the regime, most notably the Kurdish population in the north of the country. Hussein's brutal repression of the uprisings and alleged use of chemical weapons against those involved sparked a mass exodus of Kurdish refugees to neigh-

boring Turkey and Iran, with U.S. forces in the region imposing a no-fly zone over northern Iraq in an attempt to provide humanitarian assistance.

Palestinians living in Kuwait also suffered a backlash as a result of the PLO's support for Hussein's invasion, with almost all of the previously 400,000 strong community fleeing to Jordan.

In the long term, the Persian Gulf War of 1991 can be seen as a factor leading to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Dubbed "Operation Iraqi Freedom" the invasion was justified by allegations that Hussein possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). Coalition troops captured Baghdad in April 2003 and toppled the statue of Saddam Hussein in the city's Firdos Square. U.S. troops formally withdrew from Iraq in 2011, although under the Obama administration U.S. forces provided aerial support in an effort to slow the advance of Daesh forces.

(Source: The Middle East Monitor)

Iran won't bow to modification of JCPOA: Hossein Askari

1 → According to these dossiers, the U.S. has outlined a course of action in which three European countries Britain, France and Germany would be “totally committed to improving” the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). In return, U.S. President Donald Trump would extend Iran sanctions relief, keeping the Obama-era nuclear deal alive. According to these documents, The U.S. State Department is seeking an agreement with the European countries on improving the JCPOA for an “uncertain” period of time. Assuming that the documents hold true, can we consider them to be a turn in the Trump's policy toward the Iran nuclear deal?

A: No, not at all. The U.S. and Israeli goal is the same. Have a nuclear armed Israel in the Middle East. Isolate Iran and make sure that it does not have nuclear breakout capability. And arm all Arab dictators with U.S. arms. In this way, the U.S., with Israel as its agent in the region, can support dictators and pursue its economic interests. Arab dictators and an isolated Iran with a crippled economy.

This new Trump initiative, if true, is the realization that Europe cannot be bullied to follow Trump. The U.S. has to sweet talk the Europeans and make any initiative look as if it is a joint agreement for the Europeans to save face. Also, in view of the ongoing dispute with North Korea, Trump does not want to convey the message that agreements with the U.S. are not worth the paper on which they are written.

Nothing has changed, it is a new strategy with the same goal as before.



■ Assuming that these documents hold good, is it safe to say that Trump's pressure on the Iran nuclear deal was aimed at getting concessions from Tehran and possibly some European countries?

A: Yes. Absolutely so. Trump has tried to bully Europe and Iran, and now he is using a little bit of honey on the Europeans. He wants to show Americans that he knows how to negotiate and make better deals. He wants some results before the 2018 elections.

■ Reuters has cited a senior U.S. officials that there is a hope to “Fix” the Iran deal by reaching an agreement on modifying some of the JCPOA contents, by endorsement of a supplemental agreement, or by referring it to the UN Security Council. Provided European countries accept the U.S. demands, is there a possibility that nuclear talks with Iran, Russia and China will resume again?

A: The answer to your question depends on Iran. If Iran stands firm, the answer is

no, the nuclear talks will not resume. Iran has no choice but to stand firm. If it gives in to Trump one centimeter, it will open up the floodgates.

Iran's position should be simple. The JCPOA is an agreement and it stands. Iran will abide by it as long as the other signatories also uphold their commitments. However, if any party wants to talk about another agreement on any issue Iran will sit down and talk. The link to JCPOA must be broken.

■ Some believe that there are three possible solutions regarding the Iran deal: 1. Modifying the current agreement, 2. Holding talks to reach a supplemental agreement, 3. Following up on a new Security Council Resolution for additional changes. In your opinion, which one of these three options will be the most likely outcome?

A: I think that number 1 should be out of the question. I believe that Iran will not, and should not, ever agree to ANY modification. And for any agreement to be modified you need the agreement of ALL parties.

Number 2 could be a possibility if it is clearly understood that this is a separate series (from the JCPOA) of discussions. Such talks and discussions should go beyond Iran's nuclear issues. Iran should include Israel's nuclear disarmament, U.S. bases and forces in the region and regional peace. I believe that if Iran plays its cards well it could get enormous popular Muslim backing at the global level. It could bear enormous fruits for Iran and Muslims generally.

Number 3, like number 1, would do little.

Iran-Saudi conflict not a zero-sum game: Professor

1 → ■ What is the strategic importance of the Sahel region for Riyadh and Abu Dhabi? And what are the two countries competing over in the region?

A: Too many to mention, but chief among them are strategic access and depth in three directions: In the north to the Arab countries littoral to the Mediterranean. Don't forget that the UAE in particular has repeatedly used its air force in Libya. And to the East, the Red Sea is an increasingly important geo-strategic theatre, not least because of the insecurity in Egypt and access to Yemen. This is the reason why China and Saudi Arabia are building military bases in Djibouti just on the other side of the coast of Southern Yemen. From Djibouti, there is control of the Gulf of Aden which is a central nodal point in the

global maritime trade. I don't think that these particular efforts are Iran or Qatar specific. They stem from a larger shift in the foreign policy of the UAE and Saudi Arabia towards a rather more pro-active expansionary policy. Iran is a factor in this equation, but there are other driving forces, as indicated.

■ Right after that Saudi Arabia and the UAE joined G5 Sahel force summit in Paris and pledged their support, Qatar's Emir visited the region to sign trade and economic deals. Can West Africa come to Qatar's rescue and salvage the country under sanctions imposed by Saudi-led allies?

A: Neither the rift between Qatar and the other GCC countries, nor between Iran and Saudi Arabia, is sustainable

in the long term. This conflict between closely knit communities cannot be solved in a zero-sum mentality where the winner takes it all. Movements towards that end from all sides have created the humanitarian disasters in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, even Palestine. But it is true that at this stage the Cold War between Saudi Arabia and Iran, is intense and that it is playing itself out even in the academic and the cultural realms of universities and think tanks. This is very regrettable, but an unfortunate fact. The only way to counter this trend is to re-accentuate the merits of cultural diplomacy even more. Iran needs to globalize its presence in that regard through its embassies as I have indicated in previous interviews. This is what Saudi Arabia is doing very well, and very effectively indeed.

Demonizing Iran - fair or foul?

TEHRAN (FNA) — US President Donald Trump has given the Iran nuclear deal a final reprieve, warning NATO allies they have to work with him to fix what he calls flaws in the pact or face a US exit.

Trump says he will not waive sanctions against Iran that were lifted as part of the international deal unless his conditions are met, including “Iran changing its destabilizing behavior in the Middle East.”

That the deal is not renegotiable is beyond dispute. That Trump's stance amounts to desperate attempts and unethical conduct to demonize Iran and undermine the solid multilateral agreement “because the deal makes the US look weak” is equally beyond dispute. The question is which country has to change its destabilizing behavior; which country the world community sees as a rising threat to the Middle East, and whether Washington's relentless onslaught is fair or foul?

1- The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 paved way for emergence of ISIL, which took large swathes of land in the Levant and destabilized the entire planet. Although ISIL has been defeated by the anti-partition alliance of Iran, Syria, Iraq, Russia, Hezbollah, and Popular Mobilization Units, the Trump administration says it will indefinitely keep American military forces there, even in territories that have been cleared of terrorist fighters. Meaning, the US is not there to fight terrorism. According to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, “US troops will be in Syria to contain Iran and Russia, and to prevent the Syrian government from taking back terrorist-held areas.” No wonder Senator Tim Kaine says “Trump risks acting like a king by unilaterally starting a war.”

2- Western media reports confirm that the US-led coalition regularly attack Syrian government forces and their allies fighting ISIL in the country. The US and its allies have been bombarding what they claim to be ISIL



positions since September 2014 without any authorization from the Syrian government or a UN mandate. Their strikes have on many occasions resulted in deaths of pro-government forces and civilian casualties, failing to fulfill their declared aim of countering terrorism and in many cases, and paving the ground for defeated terrorists to launch an attack on army positions minutes after the US air raids in some others.

3- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has warned against the threat of the Takfiri Fatah Al-Sham Front militant group, formerly known as Nusra Front, as the main source of violence in Syria's Eastern Ghouta region, censuring the US for not taking any serious action against the terror group. Lavrov has also pointed to the ongoing Astana process for the Syrian peace settlement, arguing that the West seeks to undermine the initiative as the process blocks the ongoing US-led efforts to disintegrate Syria. This is while Russia, Iran, and Turkey have been organizing the

Astana talks since January 2017. Together, they have been acting as guarantor states for the peace process.

4- The US is planning to open its embassy in Jerusalem Al-Quds in May. This dangerous decision - which reflects the wishes of Israel, with no Palestinian approval or even input - has infuriated the Palestinians, who declare that Washington can no longer play a role as lead mediator in the Middle East peace process. The decision has also sparked outrage across the Muslim world and even Washington's Arab allies. This forced the UN General Assembly on December 21 to overwhelmingly vote in favor of a resolution that calls on the US to withdraw its controversial recognition of the occupied city as the Israeli capital.

5- Trump has just announced America's “largest ever” tranche of sanctions against North Korea, in an attempt to increase pressure on the nuclear-armed country. This includes further cutting off sources

of revenue and fuel, and targeting vessels, shipping companies and trade businesses. With substantial US military presence in the region, it doesn't take a strategic mind to understand how this could end up; certainly not peace in the Korean Peninsula, as Pyongyang has vowed to keep up the development of its nuclear weapons programs as a deterrent against US aggression.

6- Trump has loosened restrictions on who the US can sell arms. He wants to sell fighter jets, drones, and warships to America's allies in the Persian Gulf (such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates which have been bombing Yemen since 2015) in defiance of human rights and arms control. Again, there is too great a risk of fueling further violence in the Middle East and arms being diverted to be used in terrorist attacks.

7- The Pentagon regime has just released its 2018 Nuclear Posture Review. Its debut demands more attention, because this is a renewed round in the nuclear arms race, one inevitably bringing the world ever closer to the unthinkable - a nuclear war of catastrophic consequences. Since the US has an active stockpile of more than 4,000 nuclear weapons, more than enough to destroy the world several times over, its new nuclear modernization strategy should rouse alarms, and spark UN hearings and global debates.

All this and more should provide enough evidence to conclude that it is war-party Washington, and not Iran, which is a clear and present danger to the world peace. To be sure, the real threat to the Middle East is sitting in the White House - over his decision not to recertify the Iran nuclear deal, and trying to terrify the world about the non-existent threat posed by Tehran. The only evidence the international agreement needs fixing, as Trump claims, is a figment of his fevered brain - along with his closed-minded Saudi-Israeli allies across the pond.

U.S., Europe play games with JCPOA

1 → Britain and France are asked to commit themselves to work together to reach agreement on the development and testing of long-range Iranian missiles, on the guarantee of the IAEA inspections, and on the reform or elimination of «sunset clauses». These U.S. demands, in fact, are nothing new. They have been floated before.

Reuters quoted American and European authorities' remarks claiming that Washington and the European Troika can push a «complementary agreement» with Iran. But this means that the acceptance or rejection of any “complementary” agreement by Iran, China and Russia

won't even matter. Thus, Washington and the European Troika may decide on a «unilateral agreement», according to which, the nuclear deal with Iran will be automatically cancelled if Iran continues its missile tests or does not permit the inspection of its military sites. This is a clear violation of the spirit and content of the JCPOA. The Munich conference demonstrated subterfuge, conniving and unfair dealing over the JCPOA. It uncovered the Washington-European game of opposition to the nuclear deal. This trend will likely intensify in March and April and given what we know so far, the U.S. and the EU intend

to formulate and hold P4 + 0 talks instead of reviving the P5 + 1 negotiations.

This move will certainly provoke a firm response from the Islamic Republic of Iran, and also opposition from China and Russia. Iran will be looking for support from China and Russia to counter attacks on the JCPOA as it currently stands. In the coming weeks, the common opposition of Washington and the European Troika towards the JCPOA will become blatantly clear, and it has, contrary to absurd claims, nothing to do with alleged attempts to “preserve” the nuclear accord.

The zealot at Hamra Checkpoint: a prime world danger



By Martin Love

NORTH CAROLINA — Twelve years ago I found myself at a place called Hamra Checkpoint deep in the West Bank at the western edge of the Jordan River valley. I had flown from New York to “Israel's” Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv, and there a Palestinian driver met me and took me to Hamra Checkpoint along a circuitous back road route that avoided the primary highways upon which only Israeli vehicles are permitted to travel in the West Bank. The driver could go no farther than Hamra. There, some 20 Israeli soldiers were guarding a military gate of sorts preventing travel up to my destination, the town of Tubas in the lovely, rolling hills overlooking the Jordan Valley. And 100 meters farther on, on the other side of the checkpoint, stood an elderly Palestinian gentleman, my host in Tubas and the headmaster of a school that had recently been established by a Palestinian native of Tubas who lived in the US and who had made a fortune as a medicinal drug developer and businessman. He was giving back to his hometown with the new school, and he had had wanted me to go to Tubas and evaluate the school and stay for a couple months with his parents and siblings, too. It was an invitation I readily accepted.

The school's headmaster was waiting patiently for me beside his dilapidated car beyond the checkpoint. My driver from the airport departed and I was alone, almost, at the checkpoint but for the soldiers and a few Palestinian workers trying to get somewhere themselves. It was a cold February morning with clear skies, and waiting with my bag in the middle of the road I was questioned by a couple of the soldiers. Where was I going and why? But I had a couple questions myself for them, especially for a porcine Israeli soldier whose English was excellent. I asked him where he was from. He said “Israel”. But I knew better, having looked him over and heard him speak, and I asked forthrightly: “No. Where are you REALLY from?” Perhaps I had startled him, because he did blurt out an answer and said: “New York”. He was, in fact, just another young Jewish immigrant to “Israel” from the US serving out his mandated time in the IDF. I wanted to tell him he had no business there and to return to New York, but did not. I wanted to move on.

And then I noticed someone else standing alone on a hill beside and overlooking Hamra. He was clearly neither a Palestinian nor an IDF soldier, and he seemed to be, by his posture, cradling a weapon and wearing civilian clothes, something I figured out fast enough: a Jewish “settler” living somewhere in a nearby illegal Jewish “settlement” in the West Bank. He also seemed to be the primary authority at and around Hamra Checkpoint, because a while later he spoke from a distance with the soldier I had queried, but in Hebrew, and then he seemed to wave the muzzle of his rifle in the direction I wanted to go.

Yes, after an hour's delay, I was permitted to join my host and travel on to Tubas. Perhaps I should have been grateful to this apparently authoritative civilian that I could then head to Tubas, but I was not. It dawned on me that this settler (and many others like him) completely dominated the Likud government in “Israel”, and the illegal territorial expansion of the state was THE prime motivation of the Zionists and their government. And not just a “settler” he was, but an extremist and religious zealot that, if more organized and funded, was every bit as malevolent as the terrorists who just a few years later flooded in to nearby Syria, supported by the US and the Saudis and some other Persian Gulf Arab regimes, aiming to topple the Assad government and sow further chaos in the Middle East.

And later, I thought, oddly enough, of something called “Exter's Pyramid”, an inverted one, that in the world of finance pictorially represents the financial risks of various asset classes. At the very bottom of this pyramid, representing the least risk, is Gold. (At the top, the unfunded liabilities of governments, such as those in the US, as the most dangerous in terms of default) If one were to create a similar pictorial image of various entities representing the greatest danger and malevolence geopolitically, one might readily rank Jewish settlers like the man at Hamra Checkpoint as the worst, with the US Military Industrial Complex a close second. (Up among entities of little risk to humanity in general would have to be Iran, even though the corrupted Western mainstream media would have you think otherwise.) It seems that Jewish settlers, anyway, because they control the actions of “Israel's” government, and “Israel's” leaders grip and feed US foreign policy in the Mideast, that these “settlers” may, to an gross extent, hold the fate of the world in their hands: Because the Middle East is more combustible than ever with both Russia and allies and the US and allies in a face off, particularly now in Syria, that could erupt in to World War 3.

I have never forgotten the weapon toting Jewish civilian “settler” at Hamra. I had had an encounter there with a religious zealot who represented, when you boil the equations down to their essences, the purest threat to world stability one can now encounter, I believe.

I did, 12 years ago, enjoy weeks with peaceful and oppressed Palestinians in Tubas at the new school, which sadly no longer exists. I can't ever forget that, too, as I ponder with astonishment Trump's vilification of Iran. And that vilification seems to be based solely on the fact that in 1979 in Iran there was a revolution that threw off a largely US-British puppet regime that no one in Iran was happy with. Iran, we know, has never offensively attacked ANY country in centuries, and plans solely to try to defend itself if attacked. It's a demonstration of how twisted and moronic any Western hostility to Iran is, and if it were to abate, geopolitical sanity might prevail as well as political sanity in the US. But we remain a long way from it.

The last thing Germany – and Europe – need is a grand coalition

By Timothy Garton Ash

Sunday 4 March will be a turning point for Europe. On the same day as an important general election in Italy we'll find out whether an internal referendum of German Social Democrat party members has produced a yes for the grand coalition government in Berlin, continuing its current partnership with Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats.

Conventional wisdom says this would be a good result for Europe. I think the conventional wisdom is wrong. Like putting on a medical corset to alleviate a serious back condition then carrying on with your life just as before, a grand coalition would be good in the short term but bad in the long. You need to address the causes, not just the symptoms. And there is an alternative.

I spent two days in Berlin this week, and I've never encountered less enthusiasm for a prospective

new government. This is supposed to be a wedding, but it feels like a funeral. That is also what it could prove to be: the funeral of the SPD, one of Europe's oldest and most important parties of the center-left. In a shocking public opinion poll a few days ago, the far-right, nationalist-populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) scored 16%, half a point ahead of the Social Democrats. That may be a flash in the pan, but at 20.5%, the Social Democrats' result in the last general election was already an all-time low.

We know from history that a grand coalition of the main center-left and main center-right parties tends to strengthen the extremes – and this has already happened. It was partly as a result of there having been this same grand coalition – or GroKo (for Grosse Koalition) – for eight of the previous 12 years that the AfD garnered the support

of one in eight German voters in last September's election. And remember that the AfD makes Ukip look moderate, and Silvio Berlusconi seem like a distinguished conservative gentleman.

■ Regeneration of center-left

A crucial part of the response to the wave of anti-liberal populism flooding across Europe must be a fundamental regeneration of the center-left. The French Socialists have virtually disappeared from view, and in the Italian election campaign Matteo Renzi's Democratic Party is doing almost as badly as the SPD. It is clearly impossible for the German Social Democrats to regenerate their party while locked in a joyless governing coalition with their main opponents. That is one reason why the Young Socialists, led by a man called Kevin Kühnert (named after the former English football star Kevin Keegan), are touring the country trying to

persuade their older comrades to vote #NoGroKo.

Conventional wisdom says that after five months, Europe badly needs a stable German government, and that government needs to give a positive response to Emmanuel Macron's ambitious European proposals. After all, the year leading up to the 2019 European elections is meant to be a crucial one to put wind in the sails of a post-Brexit European Union. This is why European council president Donald Tusk tweeted: "German GroKo is good news."

I am not persuaded that you need a German GroKo in order to have the essential European coalitions of the willing, or that a GroKo would be better for the European project in the longer term. Play out a mildly pessimistic but entirely plausible scenario. The German economy falters in a couple of years, and at the same time eurozone arrangements put in

place by the grand coalition – responding to Macron at the insistence of the Social Democrats – result in Germany having to make financial transfers to a crisis-torn southern European state. Imagine the response among disgruntled German voters. Twenty per cent for the AfD?

The worst argument of all for a grand coalition is the one produced as a clincher in my Berlin conversations: there is no alternative. But the elite politics of Merkel's now famous alternativlos, a new version of Margaret Thatcher's Tina (There Is No Alternative), is precisely what voters are rebelling against when they choose the AfD, or Donald Trump, or Brexit. Imagine that you're an unhappy German voter. You voted last September to change something. Then absolutely nothing changes: same chancellor, same coalition, same woolly rhetoric, very similar policies. ➔13

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New genetic link reveals some ovarian cancer passed down by fathers

By Mark Lieber

A previously unrecognized link has been found between ovarian cancer and a gene on the X chromosome, according to a new study. The finding, which reveals that a father's genes play an important role in a woman's ovarian cancer risk, could change the way doctors look for and treat one of the most lethal types of cancer.

The gene, called MAGEC3, is still under investigation by scientists. A normal version is thought to be protective against tumor formation, according to the study, which was published last week in the journal PLOS Genetics. However, mutations may result in the unrestrained growth and reproduction of cells, leading to cancer.

Ovarian cancer has a five-year survival rate of approximately 45%, according to the American Cancer Society. In 2015, there were about 1.5 million cases of ovarian cancer worldwide and more than 161,000 deaths, making it the eighth most common cause of death from cancer.

"Ovarian cancer is sometimes called the silent killer. It's hard to detect, and it's hard to predict," said Kevin Eng, an associate professor of oncology at the Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and a leading author of the study.

The study identified the gene by comparing more than 3,000 grandmother/granddaughter pairs from the Familial Ovarian Cancer Registry at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York.

Founded in 1981, the registry contains more than 50,000 participants from more than 2,600 families with a history of ovarian cancer.

"Our study really leveraged this large familial registry that we've had running at Roswell Park for over 35 years," Eng said. "The familial cancer registry is, I believe, the oldest ovarian cancer registry in the world."

Eng and his colleagues theorized that, because women have two X chromosomes but men have only one, a mutated gene on the X chromosome would be shared twice as often between paternal grandmother/granddaughter pairs than maternal pairs.

The authors of the study "really thought outside the box," according to Dr. Krishnansu Tewari, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology and interim director of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology at the University of California, Irvine, who was not involved in the research.

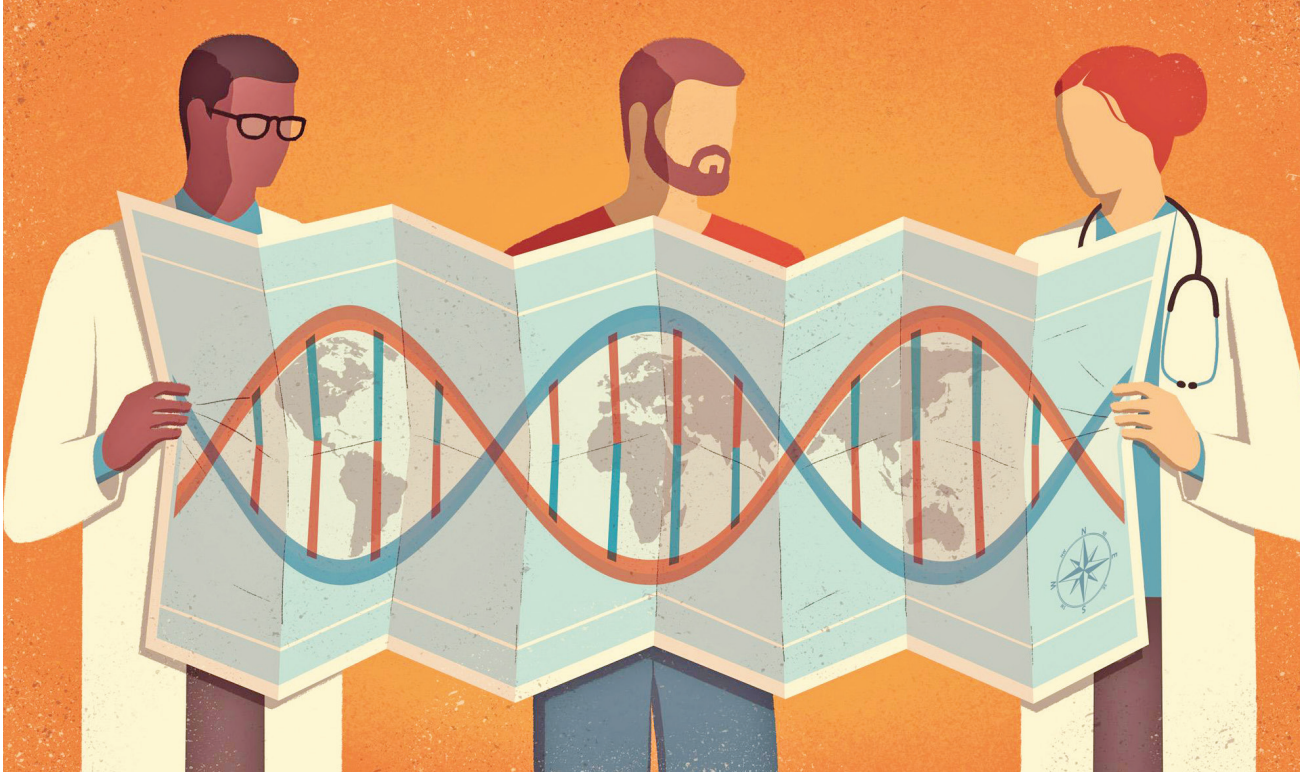
"If the problem is on the X (chromosome) and the sisters are all affected but the mom isn't, that means it's coming from the dad, and originally it came from an affected grandmother on the paternal side," Tewari said.

The researchers found that women whose paternal grandmothers had ovarian cancer were twice as likely to develop ovarian cancer themselves, compared with those whose maternal grandmothers had ovarian cancer -- consistent with the theory that the responsible gene was on the X chromosome.

Overall, 28.4% of the granddaughters in the paternal pairs also developed ovarian cancer, compared with 13.9% of the granddaughters in the maternal pairs.

Notoriously hard to diagnose

The results of the new study may provide



The median age of onset for ovarian cancer is 65, but for the early-onset ones, we're talking about women getting cancer earlier than 45.

valuable insight into one of the most difficult cancers to identify and diagnose at a treatable stage, according to Tewari.

"Ovarian cancer doesn't have any specific early symptoms," he said. "It's the most lethal gynecologic cancer because there's a paucity of early symptoms and absence of a validated screening test."

Screening tests include vaginal ultrasound or a blood test that looks for CA-125, a protein that is often elevated in patients with ovarian cancer. However, these tests typically detect only advanced cases and have a high false positive rate, meaning many people with a positive test do not actually have cancer.

"When symptoms manifest, they are often indicative of advanced disease: bloating, abdominal and pelvic discomfort, sometimes pelvic pain, difficulty with the bowels, pressure on the bladder," Tewari said.

"All those symptoms are nonspecific symptoms that really reflect advanced disease."

Due to the advanced nature of most ovarian cancer cases, treatment typically includes aggressive surgery and heavy doses of chemotherapy, according to Tewari.

"The cornerstone of treatment is aggressive cytoreductive surgery -- what we call surgical debulking, where you cut out all the tumor in order to leave the patient with as little residual disease as possible," he said. "This sets the stage for chemotherapy."

"That said, the 10-year disease-free survival is still under 10%," he added. "That is why it is so important for patients to voluntarily enroll into clinical trials that are testing new, promising drugs."

Looking beyond first-degree relatives

The study's findings could change the

way doctors perform family histories for gynecologic cancers, according to Tewari.

"I think it's definitely going to have an immediate impact on how we take family histories and how much importance we place on second-degree relatives such as a paternal grandmother," he said.

"Whenever we talk about genetic testing, we're usually so focused on the first-degree relatives -- the mother, the daughter, the sister -- and we always think of the grandmother as a second-degree relative," Tewari added. "But in this case, a paternal grandmother could be very critical."

Study sheds light on the 'other' breast cancer genes

Before this study, the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes were the ones most commonly associated with ovarian cancer, accounting for around 15% of all ovarian cancer cases, according to Tewari. However, these genes are located on autosomes -- i.e. not the X or Y chromosome -- and follow a different inheritance pattern than genes on the X chromosome.

"If a father has a mutation on chromosome 3 and the mother doesn't, there's only a 50% chance for each child to inherit a bad chromosome 3," Tewari continued. "But if the father's one X chromosome has a mutation, then all of his daughters will inherit that bad X chromosome because the father determines the sex of the child."

Eng said that "the weird thing about this pattern is also that Dad will always pass on the same X chromosome to all of his daughters. So unlike BRCA, you have this all-or-nothing pattern, so you and every one of your sisters is going to have the same X chromosome from dad."

Individuals with the mutated gene on the

X chromosome also developed ovarian cancer at a surprisingly young age, according to Eng.

"The median age of onset for ovarian cancer is 65, but for the early-onset ones, we're talking about women getting cancer earlier than 45," he said.

Men who carry the gene may still be at risk

Men who carried the mutated gene were also not in the clear, the researchers found. Though men cannot develop ovarian cancer, those with the mutation were significantly more likely to develop other types of cancer, particularly prostate cancer, according to Eng.

"To some extent, we did see a bump in prostate cancers for the intervening dad," Eng said. "This suggests that there could be other cancers that are caused by this particular gene."

What this means for the future diagnosis and treatment of ovarian cancer is still unclear, Tewari says.

"I think that part of the study is very preliminary at this point," he said.

"Once the putative gene is validated, we can sequence it, we can clone it, we can test for it, and we can potentially save many women from ovarian cancer and some men from prostate cancer," Tewari added. "The exact number of lives saved will really depend on what percentage of presumably sporadic cases of ovarian cancer are indeed X-linked."

According to Eng, knowing your family history is still among the best ways to identify your risk for ovarian cancer. "One of the best preventative measures is talking with your family, knowing if you have a family history of ovarian cancer and communicating that to your primary care physician," he said.

(Source: CNN)

My blurry vision turned out to be skin cancer in my eye



By Jen Babakhan

Most people have heard of melanoma—but ocular melanoma? Britta Fortson's diagnosis at age 18 sent shock waves through her life. Here's her inspiring story.

In 1991, Britta Fortson of Jacksonville, Florida, was preparing for her high school graduation when she noticed the vision in her right eye was blurry. Only 18 at the time, she made an appointment with a commercial chain vision center. When the contact lenses she received didn't correct her vision, she was sent to an ophthalmologist, who saw something unusual on her optic nerve during the exam. "The ophthalmologist sent me straight to an oncologist," she told Reader's Digest. "He knew right then it was cancer."

The diagnosis of ocular melanoma, a rare and deadly cancer making up only 5 percent of all melanomas, rocked the teen and her family, changing Fortson's plans to go away to college. Instead, she attended a community college while she awaited treatment. "The doctor wanted to remove my eye, but my mother was adamant that they didn't. She found a hospital in Philadelphia that would perform radioactive plaque therapy instead, which allowed me to keep my eye, though I did lose my vision in it," Fortson explains. The treatment was effective, and after further testing she was given a clean bill of health and allowed to go to Florida State University as she originally planned.

During the years that followed Fortson would marry, have two children, and become a speech pathologist for a nursing home. She became immersed in pursuing her talent for singing, and developed a love of competitive running. "After I reached the five-year mark of being cancer-free, I never really feared that the cancer would return," Fortson recalls.

In 2015, at the age of 42, Fortson received an abnormal lab test result during a routine annual check-up with her primary doctor. "My liver enzymes were elevated, so my doctor ordered an ultrasound," she explains. "I felt fine, so I put it off for three months," she continues. When the doctor requested that she have her husband come with her to the appointment to receive the results, she knew something was wrong. "I was shocked," she says. "I never thought it was possible that my eye cancer had come back in my liver of all places," she recalls. When a biopsy revealed that the tumor in her liver was indeed melanoma, Fortson's sister encouraged her to go to MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. Ocular melanoma spreads to other regions of the body, most often the liver, in about 50 percent of cases, and is the second most diagnosed form of melanoma. Fortson met with Sapna Patel, MD, at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and began treatment with immunotherapy. "I had an immediate positive response, which is rare for my disease," she explains.

Fortson continued the treatment for two years before discontinuing once her tumors ceased to shrink any further. "In 2017, my doctors wanted to test the tumors because though they looked inactive on the CT scans, they couldn't be sure," she says. She underwent a liver resection and tumor biopsy. The results were good, and no cancer was present. Today, Fortson lives her life as though each day is her last. "I'm training for a marathon right now. I'm traveling. My bucket list is on," she says.

The causes of ocular melanoma are murky, though you may be at increased risk if you have a fair complexion with light eyes, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology. There are no proven preventive measures, but experts recommend you reduce exposure to UV light by wearing sunglasses outdoors.

Learn how moles aren't the only thing you should be checking for when it comes to skin cancer.

(Source: rd.com)

7 silent signs you could have insulin resistance

By Jenn Morson

It is estimated that roughly 25 percent of Americans suffer from insulin resistance syndrome, or the presence of high levels of insulin in the body. Here are common symptoms of insulin resistance syndrome.

Symptom of insulin resistance: Abdominal obesity

Obesity, and specifically abdominal obesity, where excess fat is stored in the mid-region, is an underlying symptom of insulin resistance. Because abdominal fat is particularly active hormonally, there is an increased output of those hormones, which impairs glucose tolerance. An insulin resistance diet combined with exercise can help combat abdominal obesity and reduce insulin resistance. Avoid these worst habits for belly fat.

Symptom of insulin resistance: Large pores and acne

Sebum, the oil that lubricates the skin, is overproduced in those who suffer from insulin resistance syndrome. A diet rich in carbohydrates promotes this overproduction, causing enlarged pores and acne. Eating more fresh vegetables and lean meats and consuming less sugar can help combat this and other insulin resistance symptoms. Here are some myths and truths you should know about large pores.

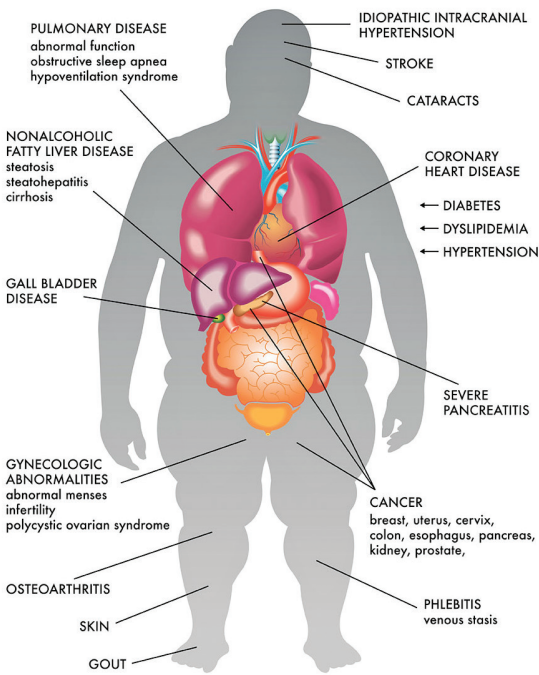
Symptom of insulin resistance: Polycystic ovarian syndrome

Many women who suffer from polycystic ovarian syndrome have high levels of insulin, which causes their ovaries to make too much testosterone and other hormones. This leads to irregular periods and the growth of painful cysts on the ovaries. Controlling insulin levels is essential for balancing these hormones. This can also lead to fertility issues if left unchecked. Pay attention to these symptoms of PCOS.

Symptom of insulin resistance: Hair loss in women

In addition to fat storage and regulating sugar levels, insulin helps regulates hair growth. Women who suffer from insulin resistance are prone to alopecia, or female pattern

Conditions Associated with Insulin Resistance



hair loss. Women who lose more than the typical amount of hair per day, estimated at about 250 strands, should be checked for insulin resistance as this may be the root cause.

Symptom of insulin resistance: Swollen ankles

Swelling of the ankles or other parts of the body can be one of the many insulin resistance symptoms. Swelling tends to be indicative of insulin resistance, as insulin tells the kidneys when to hold on to sodium and water. When fluid is retained unnecessarily, swelling and bloating can result. Here are some other reasons you might be bloated—and when it could signal a health problem.

Symptom of insulin resistance: Elevated blood sugar

When the pancreas can no longer produce enough insulin for the body to process glucose, the blood sugar rises. Elevated blood sugar can translate to excessive thirst, lethargy, frequent urination, and more serious insulin resistance symptoms, such as kidney damage, if left unchecked. People with insulin resistance need to monitor their blood sugar and maintain an insulin resistance diet in order to keep these symptoms at bay. These sneaky things can also raise your blood sugar.

Symptom of insulin resistance: Carbohydrate cravings

It may seem counterintuitive, but having insulin resistance means that while you have too much glucose in your blood, your body is unable to make use of that to convert to energy. That is why your body sends mixed signals to your brain and causes it to crave carbohydrates. So carbo-cravings are one of the most common insulin resistance symptoms. In spite of eating enough carbs, your body thinks it needs more. Combating these cravings can be difficult, but it is necessary to heal the body of insulin resistance syndrome. The good news is that unlike other insulin-related conditions, insulin resistance syndrome is curable through an insulin resistance diet and other insulin resistance treatment options, such as exercise and monitoring. With the help of your physician, you can reverse the effects of insulin resistance syndrome and live a healthier lifestyle. You should also watch out for these diabetes symptoms you might be missing.

(Source: Reader's digest)

Coffee: More links to health than harm



Past studies have suggested that drinking coffee is associated with many health benefits, such as added longevity, lower blood pressure, less weight gain with aging, and a reduced risk of many diseases, including type 2 diabetes, liver disease, cardiovascular disease, several degenerative neurological diseases (like Parkinson's disease), and cancer. Now a massive review of more than 200 large studies, published Nov. 22, 2017, in The BMJ, backs up many of those links. The largest health benefits were associated with drinking three to four cups of coffee per day: drinking more than four cups per day did not bring additional benefits. It's not all good news, however; the study found that women who drank coffee had greater risks for fracture and pregnancy complications. But overall, the researchers say, coffee drinking appears to be safe. They caution that the findings are all based on observational studies, not randomized controlled trials — the gold standard of research.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

‘We’re being hijacked by technology’: Industry insiders question ethics in tech

We’re being hijacked by technology, according to the Center for Humane Technology, a nonprofit created by former tech industry insiders who have worked for companies like Google and Apple.

The founders of this nonprofit are worried about the toll technology is having on society and the ethics behind development. The goal is “solving digital attention crisis.”

Aza Raskin, one of the co-founders of the Center for Humane Technology, is specifically worried about the Silicon Valley’s influence.



“Their best interests are not ours,” Raskin said. He is concerned about kids, many of whom, he says, base their self-worth off the number of “likes” they get on social media.

“The way in which Silicon Valley decides for you to value your friendships becomes the way you value your friendships and yourself and that’s just not right,” Raskin said.

Raskin added, he doesn’t believe this was the initial intention. He said the fault lies in the profit model because the products are designed to addict consumers.

“Their interests are not directly aligned with us,” Raskin said.

Through the Center for Humane Technology, Raskin and his colleagues are working to change that. He thinks companies need to admit there’s a problem and remodel how they make their money.

Raskin compared the status of the technological world right now to the organic movement. For growers, it was much cheaper to grow food with pesticides, which can be harmful to people and the environment. It wasn’t until the people demanded change that the growers had to adhere.

“And if enough people stand up and say, ‘No, this is not the way we want to relate to each other, this is not the kind of society we want to live in,’ then there’s enough pressure to find better business models and sort of be ‘organic of tech,’” Raskin said.

At Portland State University, professors are working to help kids notice their addiction by giving them an inside look at the design process.

There is a cluster of two classes taught within the Engineering and Technology Management (ETM) building: Design Thinking and Human Centered Design. Bill Dresselhaus, a former Apple employee who helped design the Apple Lisa, teaches the courses.

“The whole purpose of Design Thinking and Human Centered Design is to design for people and what they need and what’s best for their welfare,” Dresselhaus explained.

Dresselhaus doesn’t teach ethics and design separately because he thinks the two go together.

“I don’t really have a design ethics part of my courses,” Dresselhaus said. “I don’t want to separate design ethics from design because ethics and good design should be built into the process. ... Every designer has to think, ‘What’s going to be the end use of this and how are people using it?’”

When Dresselhaus was a developer for Apple and other major tech companies, he followed the lessons he learned while at Stanford.

“Every day they would ask us, ‘Does anybody need it, does anybody care? Is it of any value?’” Dresselhaus explained.

There was great value in one of his major designs while at Apple.

“I was hired to do Lisa, which was the forerunner of the Macintosh,” Dresselhaus said. “The Apple Lisa mouse was the first mass-produced, widely-used commercial mouse. Xerox PARC had a mouse with their original Xerox Alto computer system but only made a relatively few of these. This mouse inspired Steve Jobs to develop the widely used Apple Lisa commercial mouse for the Lisa Computer.”

He now teaches that “need finding” strategy to his students.

While the focus of the courses is mostly design, ETM department chair Tim Anderson says students can learn how to stop addiction before it starts.

“If we can help make people more sophisticated consumers and producers of design, perhaps they’ll make more informed decisions there,” Anderson said.

Another unique aspect of the course is that any undergraduate can take it. They don’t have to be studying within the ETM department.

“The fact that we have engineers working alongside a music major and a business school student and a philosophy major,” Anderson said. “They’re changing the ways that they converse, the ways that they talk about technology, the way that they talk about design and the physical products.”

Anderson, Dresselhaus, and Raskin all agree: it’s not just the developers and technology companies to blame, consumers also have a part.

Raskin said after companies admit there’s a problem, consumers need to identify theirs. You can take a quiz to see if you’re addicted to your phone. If you decide you need to cut back on your screen time, Raskin suggests the following tricks:

1. Turn off unnecessary notifications
2. Turn your phone on grayscale mode. A black and white phone is much less appealing
3. Try only charging your phone to 80 percent, that way you know you should only use your phone for necessary things, not to constantly check social media.
4. If you want change, you should call your local representatives and ask for it.
5. It’s a good idea to talk about this with your kids, so they understand the impact technology can have on them.

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

Technology has given us more time than ever ... to waste on technology



on our free time. The essay suggested that a sufficiently advanced space suit would be but one example of a self-regulating man-machine system, able to take care of problems so that we would have one less chore to consider.

“If man in space, in addition to flying his vehicle, must continuously be checking on things and making adjustments merely in order to keep himself alive, he becomes a slave to the machine,” the authors wrote. “The purpose of the Cyborg, as well as his own homeostatic systems, is to provide an organizational system in which such robot-like problems are taken care of automatically and unconsciously, leaving man free to explore, to create, to think, and to feel.”

By the 1970s and 1980s, the idea that technology would free us from drudgery and give us all more free time was everywhere. In the 1979 book *The Mighty Micro*, author Christopher Evans predicts how technology will have advanced by the millennium to the point that we can enjoy “a twenty-hour working week and retirement at fifty.”

■ An erroneous prediction

Needless to say, this hasn’t happened exactly. Instead, technology has saved us time on dozens of tasks, but we seem busier than ever. The German sociologist Hartmut Rosa writes about this in the book *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, in which he describes the paradox of a world in which the more apps we download to streamline our lives seems to add to the overload.

As Rosa writes, “The ‘tempo of life’ has increased, and with it stress, hecticness, and lack of time ... In almost every sphere of social life there are enormous gains in time by means of technology, [but] we don’t have any time.” One of Rosa’s points is that technology has opened up new possibilities we could never have previously dreamed of, but this had added new complications.

Sure, productivity apps and the like can help us carry out these tasks more efficiently, but many of them are tasks we wouldn’t previously be doing. Consider, for instance, the way that the internet’s hyperlinked structure has changed the way that we research information. While it has doubtless helped to democratize information, and saves time versus visiting a library to look up information, it has also opened up myriad potential rabbit holes of information it’s easy to get lost in. Who hasn’t started researching a single statistic, only to find themselves watching some tangentially connected music video on YouTube?

This illustrates the double-edged sword of technology. As jobs can be carried out (theoretically) faster, there is also more we are expected to do. Emails take a comparatively short time to respond to so there is an expectation we should respond quickly. A related example was the way that companies issued smartphones to employees, beginning in the mid-2000s. This was initially presented as a reward to hard-working employees, but carried with it the implicit understanding that employees would be more accessible outside of regular working hours.

After all, who wouldn’t reply to an email on a family holiday when it only takes a minute? And if you don’t do, Bob from the next cubicle certainly will...

■ Is there a backlash brewing?

Decoupling time and technology is not easy. But a few people are trying. From February 23, the Wyndham Grand hotel chain will be piloting a scheme in which they offer guest 5 percent off their room rate if they agree to lock their phones away in a timed lockbox for the duration of their stay.

“In my own life, I see how my phone has crept into those spare minutes waiting in a line, sitting at a restaurant waiting, or even

when I’m on the floor playing with my kids,” Noelle Nicolai, the Wyndham Grand “resident reconstructor” who developed the initiative, told *Digital Trends*. “We’ve seen the same at our hotels, with many guests distracted from each other while on vacation; less interpersonal interaction and more screen time. We’re in the business of memory making, so we wanted to create a program that would result in uninterrupted fun and family time, by removing the distractions that come with today’s technology.”

It’s a cute idea, and hopefully one that will catch on. But is it part of a bigger backlash against the way that technology has gobbled up our time under the guise of saving it? A look at today’s tech giants reveals how difficult this change will be to make. Big technology platforms such as Google and Facebook are, after all, based on continuous user engagement in order to bring in the cash. Even projects like Google’s self-driving car, which would appear to save us time, is really a covert attempt to open up an extra couple of hours each day to use its money-making services.

Perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised that the denizens of Silicon Valley, a place where 70-hour work weeks are a badge of honor, isn’t the best group of people to help us save time and lead relaxed, lower stress lives. After all, even in the example of the Mac team’s “lifesaving” efforts, they did so by working ridiculous hours for months on end. Things may be changing, though.

Recently Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg announced that Facebook is busy making changes intended to actually decrease the amount of time people spend using it. The aim is that, by doing this, people will experience an improvement in the quality of time they spend browsing Facebook.

Apple, meanwhile, has revealed that it is responding to concerns about “smartphone addiction” among young people by providing new tools for monitoring the time users spend staring at their iPhones. These are likely to arrive with iOS 12 later this year.

Making changes so that technologies really do save us time, rather than just giving the illusion of it, is a challenge — but possibly an achievable one. Should concerns like that of smartphone addiction gain momentum it’s possible to imagine other companies following the lead of Mark Zuckerberg and Apple’s Tim Cook.

But in a world in which more and more low-end jobs will be carried out by A.I. — and the power of interconnectivity will make those higher up the food chain more sought after — perhaps tech just needs to give up on the pretense that it’s designed to make our lives simpler and easier.

(Source: [Digital Trends](#))

Technology isn’t just changing society — it’s changing what it means to be human

Is there something unusual about the pace and nature of technological change today? Should we be more worried about the world we’re creating?

Michael Bess is a historian of science at Vanderbilt University and the author of *Our Grandchildren Redesigned: Life in a Bioengineered Society*. His book offers a sweeping look at our genetically modified future, a future as terrifying as it is promising. But he’s also someone who thinks a lot about the broader relationship between technology and society.

The role that technology plays in human life is becoming an increasingly urgent question. Big tech companies like Facebook and Twitter are under fire for their role in spreading fake news and misinformation during the 2016 presidential election. But the impact of social media will likely pale in comparison to potential revolutions in artificial intelligence or gene editing technologies.

I reached out to Bess to talk about our technological future and why he thinks we’re not asking the sorts of questions we should be asking about where we’re headed and what it will mean for humanity.

A lightly edited transcript of our conversation follows.

■ Since the invention of the printing press, people have always panicked about the implications of new technologies. Is there something uniquely worrisome about the nature of technological change today?

Well, it depends which technologies we’re talking about. Smartphones, computers, and the internet are revolutionary technologies, but they seem to me [to be] comparable in their impact to other big revolutions in communications and transportation that we’ve experienced over the past thousand years.

But what we’re on the verge of doing with bioengineering technologies like CRISPR is going to be so qualitatively different and more powerful that I think it’s going to force us to reassess who we are and what it means to be human. Bioelectric implants, genetic modification packages, the ability to tamper with our very biology — this stuff goes far beyond previous advances, and I’m not sure we’ve even begun to understand the implications.

■ But it’s not just the nature of technological change today; it’s also the pace. How different is this compared to previous eras?

The pace is, I think, significantly different. We went from having no World Wide Web to a full-blown World Wide Web in 20 or 25 years — that’s astonishing when you consider how much the internet has changed human life. In the case of, say, telephones, that took many decades to fully spread and become as ubiquitous as it is today.

So what we’ve seen with the internet is blisteringly fast compared to the past. For most of human history, the world didn’t change all that much in a single lifetime. That’s obviously not the case anymore, and technology is the reason why.

■ And what about that worries you?

I worry that we don’t have enough time to adjust. What



is all this doing to our habits, to our cultural sense of who we are? When these things happened slower in previous eras, we had more time to assess the impacts and adjust. That is simply not true anymore. We should be far more worried about this than we are.

■ That’s the thing that worries me the most. Our technology is developing so much faster than our culture and our institutions, and the gap between these things can only grow so far before society becomes dangerously unstable.

We need to be asking specific questions about what we’re gaining and what we’re losing. We’re faced with these new, rapidly shifting means of communication and interaction. What are the pros and cons? I think you can make the case that there are significant benefits and equally significant harms, but it’s hard to really know what those are because so many of these changes are unforeseen or unpredictable.

■ Do you think we’re equipped, as a society, to step back and ask those questions?

I think overall as a society, we’re insufficiently equipped, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t plenty of voices out there speaking sanity. What’s interesting is that you can use these new technologies to get in touch with those voices and connect with other people who are questioning these technologies. The ability to connect in that way offers a lot of promise if it’s used wisely.

■ Technologies are tools that can be put to good or bad use. But my sense is that devices like smartphones are rapidly pushing us away from the world. We’re losing our ability to be in the world in a way that isn’t mediated by some electronic appendage.

That’s the big concern. My students are aware of this, even though everybody seems to be walking around campus mindlessly staring at their phones. But when you sit down and talk to young people today, it’s clear that they understand what’s happening and why it’s problematic.

The more you live through screens, the more you’re living in a narrow bandwidth, an abstract world that’s increasingly artificial. And that virtual world is safe and controllable, but it’s not rich and unpredictable in the way the real world is. I’m worried what will happen if we lose our connection to

reality altogether.

■ What technological developments do you think have the potential to do the greatest harm to our species and to our way of life?

It really depends which technologies we’re talking about. I’m writing a book now called *Controlling the Technologies of Apocalypse*. It’s about the emergence of synthetic biology, which is basically human beings redesigning their biological structure. It’s about us modifying our very genetic code — that’s extremely dangerous if it’s not controlled and safeguarded.

I also worry about nuclear weapons. Nukes remain an ever-present threat, but people have become complacent about them just because they’ve been reduced by two-thirds from the peak numbers of the Cold War. But they’re still there, and they’re still being modernized, and they’re still pointed at each of us.

Artificial intelligence is another technology with potentially apocalyptic implications, and that’s something I’ve been thinking a lot about lately.

■ What worries you about AI?

Intelligence is what made humans the dominant species on the planet. Intelligence is the most powerful instrument around. If you’re embodying that kind of intelligence in increasingly sophisticated machines and are coming to depend on them more and more over time, what worries me is that we’re headed in the direction of building AI technologies that are at the human level and, eventually, far beyond that.

We’re not talking about the narrow forms of AI like the one that drives the Google car or helps the doctor make diagnoses or helps people on Wall Street make investment decisions — those are all very specialized forms of AI and, as far as I can tell, are mostly harmless.

I’m worried about advanced forms of AI becoming so intelligent that they can perform an infinite variety of tasks across domains of activity. We’ll continue to make them smarter and more capable and more powerful until we reach a point at which they start to learn on their own and start to modify themselves. Once that happens, they’ll be fully unpredictable — and then who the hell knows what happens next.

■ You said earlier that these technologies, especially bioengineering, might fundamentally alter what it means to be human. Can you say a bit more about that?

What’s most striking about us as humans is that we are unpredictable in very basic ways. We’re more complex than we can fathom, and there’s something about us that is the opposite of artificial. It’s the opposite of something made.

What the genetic engineering stuff promises to bring down the line is human beings who are tailored to particular purposes, either by themselves over time or by other human beings. So I’m worried that we’ll become products or commodities, and products or commodities are subordinated to particular functions or purposes.

(Source: [Vox](#))

Researchers find a 50% probability of Amazon rainforest turning into barren savannah

Amazon rainforest is one of the world's densest forest ecosystems in the world. It consumes about a quarter of the total carbon dioxide produced in the world which makes it a stand-alone forest that sustains life of thousands of species of animals and plants. But, the gradually growing rate of deforestation will soon discourage the rainforest from sustaining millions of lives that it supports.

According to a team of researchers, Amazon forest might reach its tipping point soon if no human intervention takes place which will reversibly change the dense rainforest into an arid and barren savannah.

A group of researchers calculated the tipping point which is the value beyond which, the situation generally worsens is around 20%. If it crosses the tipping point, the Amazon rainforest might cease to exist with its water cycle cut off and will soon transform into a barren savannah.

Water supply reducing

The team studied the extent of deforestation in the forest and also, the extent to which it will finally hamper its own water cycle. This will have catastrophic results since the forest won't be able to support its own ecosystems if the water supply reduces drastically.



The study is led by Thomas E Lovejoy who is a professor at George Mason University in the department of environmental science and policy and Carlos Nobre, a member of

World Resources Institute and Brazilian Academy of Science.

The duo confirmed that if the deforestation continues along with the environmen-

As per the study, the forest has already reached 17% of deforestation in the past 50 years which leaves only 3% before it reaches the said tipping point.

tal problems like climate change and global warming, there is 50% probability that the forest will transform into a barren savannah and no matter how much efforts humans put in, it couldn't be reversed.

Forest and deforestation

As per the study, the forest has already reached 17% of deforestation in the past 50 years which leaves only 3% before it reaches the said tipping point.

The study published in journal Science Advances stated that negative impacts of synergies between climate change, use of fire, and deforestation are few of the environmental issues that will cause deforestation by 20% to 25% in central, southern, and eastern Amazonia.

Adding to these calamities, frequent floods and droughts have affected the region adversely causing the whole ecosystem to wobble and oscillate.

The study also highlighted the impact of the disrupted water cycle in the South American region which will disturb the human population there. Finally, the scientists stated that the only solution to bring down the deforestation rate or slow it down before it reaches its tipping point is through humans intervention. (Source: The TeCake)

Why are there so many types of lizards?

Lizards have special superpowers. While birds can regrow feathers and mammals can regrow skin, lizards can regenerate entire structures such as their tails. Despite these differences, all have evolved from the same ancestor as lizards.

Spreading through the Americas, one lizard group, the anoles, evolved like Darwin's finches, adapting to different islands and different habitats on the mainland. Today there are more than 400 species.

Constructing a family tree for three lizard species collected in Panama at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) and a fourth from the southeastern U.S., scientists at Arizona State University compared lizard genomes -- their entire DNA code -- to those of other animals.

The researchers discovered that changes in genes involved in the interbrain (the site of the pineal gland and other endocrine glands), for color vision, hormones and the colorful dewlap that males bob to attract females, may contribute to the formation of boundaries between species. Genes regulating limb development also evolved especially quickly.

Lizards evolved quickly

"While some reptiles such as tortoises changed remarkably little over millions of years, anole lizards evolved quickly, generating a diversity of shapes and behaviors," said Kenro Kusumi, corresponding author and professor at ASU School of Life Sciences. "Now that sequencing entire genomes is



cheaper and easier, we discovered molecular genetic evidence for rapid evolution that may account for striking differences between bodies of animals living in different environments."

Kusumi's lab, working with colleagues at the University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix, is especially interested in how reptiles' genomes shape their ability to regenerate and to develop a diversity of body forms.

"This is the first time the complete genetic code -- the

genome -- of any vertebrate species from Panama has been sequenced and analyzed," said Oris Sanjur, co-author and Associate Director for Science Administration at STRI. "Information from these three species is an important contribution to our understanding of biodiversity and the evolution of new species."

Grassy vegetation

Scientists estimate that there are 40 species of anolid lizards living in Panama, compared to only one in the U.S. A team from ASU collected three species with permission from the Ministry of the Environment, MiAmbiente: the Central American giant anole, *Anolis frenatus*, lives high on tree trunks; the grass anole, *A. auratus*, perches on bushes or on grassy vegetation and the slender anole, *A. aplopallus*, found only in Panama, hangs out lower on tree trunks or on the ground.

Researchers at ASU's School of Life Sciences lined up the DNA sequences of the lizards with the DNA sequences of 31 other animals: the lobe-finned fish and the four-legged animal groups that evolved from them. They also took a careful look at genes that code for proteins: more than 22,000 genes in the green anole, *A. carolinensis*, versus approximately 20,000 identified each in *A. auratus* and *A. frenatus* and 13,000 in *A. aplopallus*.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Chinese scientists unveil plans for weird hypersonic jet with extra wing

Building a useful plane that's faster than Mach 5, or five times the speed of sound, is a difficult engineering challenge, but a team of researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences has a plan to pull it off.

The trick to making these faster-than-Mach 5, or hypersonic, vehicles is to build a "waverider"-shaped airframe and top it off with a "high-pressure capture wing," the researchers wrote in a December 2017 letter to the journal Science China.

Waveriders are aircraft bodies shaped to skim along the top of the pressure wave created by their own supersonic flight -- in essence, using the shock wave to increase the plane's lift, or the upward force that keeps a plane in flight. But the roofs of waveriders can also become "compression

surfaces" -- planes that surrounding air flows against, pushing the whole vehicle back toward the ground. High-pressure capture wings (HCWs) attached to the top of the plane turn that pressure instead into additional lift.

The hypersonic planes

The team named this waverider-HCW combination the "hypersonic I-shaped aerodynamic configuration" or "HIAC," after the resulting shape, which in cross section resembles a capital letter "I" with serifs.

This design solves the basic problem of hypersonic planes, the researchers wrote: It's very difficult to build a Mach 5-plus plane with enough room inside for passengers or cargo that it doesn't knock itself out of the air.

For a plane to stay aloft, it generates lift -- which generally occurs when air flowing over the top of a plane is traveling faster than the air underneath it. Meanwhile, the faster a plane goes, the greater the force of the friction of surrounding air, or drag, is. For a plane to fly at very high speeds, however, that drag has to be much lower than that lift, or else the plane will struggle to move fast enough to stay airborne.

Supersonic planes struggle with the additional problem of pressure waves created when they pass the speed of sound, which create additional drag on the airframe. The waverider-HCW combination is all about turning the pressure waves of hypersonic travel from drag and downward force into additional lift.

Waverider airframe

Past designs that relied on the waverider airframe alone, like the Boeing X-51, had to be very slim -- far too small for human passengers or meaningful cargo. But if you raise the roof on a hypersonic waverider, the researchers wrote, the airflow over the top of the vehicle will create drag and actually push it downward, reducing lift.

Well-designed aerodynamic planes, they wrote, create lots of lift, have high lift-to-drag ratios and pack lots of cargo space compared to their total size.

Sticking the HCW on top of a waverider lets designers give the vehicles higher roofs and more cargo space, and creates additional lift to keep the vehicle aloft at extreme speeds. (Source: Live Science)

IME Breaks Historic Record of Transactions Value: CEO

The Chief Executive of Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) Hamed Soltaninejad in his weekly press briefing expounded on the performance of his company in the current year in 1396 (started March 21, 2017) today morning in the presence of media companions and reporters, the Public Relations Dept. of the Exchange reported.

To begin with his speak, the senior official of the company pointed to the indicators of the capital market in the current year in 1396 (to end March 20, 2018) and added, "IME allocated 48 percent share of total value of transactions at the capital market to itself, standing at the first rank among other stock markets in the country."

The report put the total value of stocks transacted at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) at 879,000 billion rials.

He pointed to the statistics on the stocks transacted in the Exchange in 11 months period and added, "total value

of transactions at this market in 11 months of the current year in 1396 (from March 21, 2017 to Jan. 22, 2018) has increased 39 percent as compared to the same period of last year."

In this period, 24,131,000 tons of products, valued at 446,353 billion rials, was transacted in the physical market of Iran Mercantile Exchange.

Industrial and mineral products, valued at approx. 183,000 billion rials, grabbed the lion's share of transactions value at the physical market. In the meantime, petrochemical products, valued at 139,000 billion rials, stood at the second rank in terms of highly-transacted stocks at Iran Mercantile Exchange.

In addition, oil and agricultural products accounted for 20 and seven percent of stocks in Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), valued at 90,000 and 31,000 billion rials



respectively.

In conclusion, the Chief Executive of Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) said that affiliated market with 4,000 billion rials transaction value stood at the subsequent rank.

IMI to Host Organizing 15th National Organizational Excellence Conference

Industrial Management Institute (IMI) will hold the 15th Nationwide Organizational Excellence Conference at IRIB Conferences Center on Feb. 26, the Public Relations Dept. of the IMI reported.

While introducing and appreciating the leader organizations and companies, successful experiences of the companies in the management field would be presented.

With due observance to the said issue, the shortlisted companies and organizations will be appraised in five sectors of 1- manufacturing and production, services, health, education and general sector after being evaluated according to the organizational excellence pattern, the report added.

It should be noted that more than 1,400 Iranian organizations and companies were evaluated and assessed by assessors over the past 15 years, so that strong points and improvable fields of their management systems were identified and improved.

The report put the number of organizations attended in the process of National Organizational Excellence Award both in



private and public sectors at 68 and 32 percent respectively.

In terms of organizational excellence, 68 percent of large-scale companies were applicants for the National Organizational Excellence Award while 10 percent of small-scale companies

were applicants of this national award, the report added.

The National Organizational Excellence Award was introduced in 2003 within the framework of country's developmental programs with the aim of promoting productivity and developing management systems at domestic companies and organizations.

Attaining economic growth through the development of organizational capabilities and promotion of productivity level are considered as the most important objectives in the country.

Considering the classification of National Organizational Award, 38 companies attended in the field of production and manufacturing, 58 percent of companies participated in the field of services while four percent of companies attended in the fields of education and health.

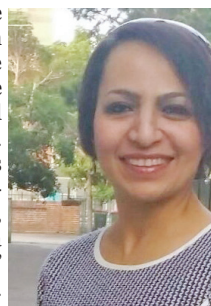
Attaining economic growth rate via promotion of organizational capabilities and improvement of productivity level are of the most and salient economic objectives of the country, the IMI concluded.

Respiratory-driven, non-surgical artificial larynx produces more human voice

In a move that could give a voice to the 300,000 people around the world who have had their larynx removed due to cancer, scientists at the MARCS Institute at Western Sydney University have tested a non-invasive artificial larynx and found it capable of generating a high-quality voice.

Unlike existing prosthetics that rely on input from the nerves or muscles of the larynx, the Pneumatic Artificial Larynx (PAL) device uses the patient's respiratory system and doesn't need to be surgically implanted.

The "existing standard of care requires the surgical application of prosthetic devices into the open wound in the neck, known as the 'stoma', which is left after a laryngectomy so that a patient can breathe," says Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Dr. Farzaneh Ahmadi. The "surgery is invasive; infections and complications are common; and the resulting voice is often hoarse and whispery."



Dr. Farzaneh Ahmadi



In a pre-clinical trial, researchers working on The Bionic Voice research project developed an electronic adaption of a PAL device called the Pneumatic Bionic Voice (PBV), which uses the patient's breath to create a humming sound that is then converted to speech with movement of the lips and tongue. The study found that a device exclusively driven by respiration could in fact aid in recreating the function of the larynx without any nerve input and produce a quality of voice better than the existing gold standard.

The device tested features a tube that goes from the stoma to the mouth and is cumbersome, as can be seen in the above image. However, the team has plans to develop a functional PBV prosthesis in the form of a "control unit" that can be applied over the stoma, and a "voice source" unit that sits on the roof of the mouth. (Source: newatlas.com)

Having children literally shortens women's chromosomes: new study

As any mother will tell you, having kids does a lot to a person's body -- and new research suggests it may even change a woman on a cellular level. Sections of genetic material associated with lifespan called telomeres are shorter in women who have given birth, according to a paper published February 14 in Human Reproduction. Specifically, the telomeres of women who have had children are as short as if they were childless and 11 years older.

Telomeres, discovered in the 1970s, are strings of DNA molecules at the ends of all our chromosomes that act a little like the plastic bits on the ends of shoelaces. Because of the way DNA is replicated as our cells replicate and divide and age, these caps get worn down over time. However, wearing down these caps is better than the alternative -- which would be wearing down the important genetic material of the chromosome itself. If the telomeres are completely gone, the cell wouldn't be able to replicate at all, George Mason University researcher Anna Pollack told Newsweek.

For the record, it's not that women who have had kids are dying 11 years earlier than their childless peers -- nor does Pollack think that the study should be seen as a sign that women should stop having children, either. Lots of things can affect a person's telomeres, including smoking, being overweight and stress. In general, people in this study lost about 10 base pairs of DNA each year. But women who had a child had 116 base pairs fewer than women their age who hadn't had a child.

"We found that women who had five or more children had even shorter telomeres compared to those who had none, and relatively shorter relative to those who had one, two, three or four, even," Pollack said.

(Source: Newsweek)

Lunar missions reveal moon may have widespread water

NASA found proof that water present on the moon is distributed widely across the lunar surface, not just in a particular terrain or region.

NASA gathered new evidence from two lunar missions. The water, however, is not always easily accessible though it appears to be present day and night.

The findings, published in the journal Nature Geoscience, could help scientists gain more insight into the origin of water on the moon and if it could be used easily as a resource. Subsequently, future explorers on the moon might be able to convert water into oxygen and hydrogen to fuel a rocket, or breathing oxygen, or even as drinking water.

"We find that it doesn't matter what time of day or which latitude we look at, the signal indicating water always seems to be present," said senior research scientist Joshua Bandfield, who is the lead study author.

The discovery of water, which is relatively immobile and widespread, indicates that it could be primarily present as OH or hydroxide. OH is water's more reactive relative, which is made up of one atom of oxygen and one atom of hydrogen. Also referred to as hydroxyl, it does not stay on its own for a long duration, choosing to chemically attach itself to molecules or attacking them. Therefore, OH has to be taken out from minerals to be useful.

The research team associated with the study also found that water present on the moon is not attached loosely to the lunar surface.

The researchers could gain more insight into the water sources and how it was stored for a long time on other rocky forms present in the solar system, once they sort out what happens on the moon. (Source: Tech Times)

UK considers ban on plastic straws being considered

Britain is looking at outlawing plastic straws in a bid to tackle pollution in the world’s oceans, the Environment Secretary has said.

Michael Gove said the Government wanted to do “everything we can” to restrict their use, saying: “We’re exploring at the moment if we can ban them.”

He added that such a move could prove to be easier once Britain has left the European Union.

Mr Gove said: “There is some concern that EU laws mean that we can’t ban straws at the moment, but I’m doing everything I can to ensure that we eliminate this scourge and I hope to make an announcement shortly.”



In response, a senior EU figure mocked Mr Gove and the suggestion EU laws could be preventing Britain from taking action on the issue.

However, leading Brexiteer Mr Gove later hit back at the EU official, as he claimed Brussels had yet to propose plans to ban plastic straws and suggested the bloc is behind Britain in tackling other forms of pollution.

He wrote on Twitter: “There has been no specific proposal - as yet - from the EU to ban straws. The EU has promised “analytical work” on the “scope of a legislative initiative” to “reduce” single use plastics.

“Also waiting for the EU to catch up on microbeads - UK’s ban is 1st in Europe.”

According to the Marine conservation Society, an estimated 8.5 billion straws are used in Britain every year, with plastic straws one of the most common items found during beach clean-ups.

The comments from the Environment Secretary come after it was revealed the number of straws bought by Parliament had doubled in the last three years.

Mr Gove is one of a number of Conservative MPs who have pledged to cut down on their use of plastic during Lent.

He has also recently been pictured holding a disposable coffee cup in a bid to burnish his - and by extension the Tories’ - environmental credentials.

Writing in the Evening Standard recently, Mr Gove highlighted how an “overwhelming majority” of plastic straws “end up in landfill or clogging up our rivers and oceans.”

“As a symbol of society’s damaging addiction to single-use plastics and our throwaway culture, straws are hard to beat. If they did not exist, there would be scant reason to invent them,” he said.

Campaigners say single-use straws take more than 200 years to break down.

Some high-profile companies have started to phase them out, with the likes of JD Wetherspoon, Wagamama, Costa Coffee, Pizza Express and Waitrose either taking steps to stop using them or offering them on request only.

Prime Minister Theresa May pledged last month to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste within 25 years, an action plan which included encouraging supermarkets to bring in plastic-free aisles.

The Government has already taken action to ban the use of plastic microbeads to reduce plastic pollution getting into the world’s oceans.

(Source: Sky News)

LEARN ENGLISH

Talking To Your Roommate

A: Charlie, do you have a second?
B: Yeah what’s up?
A: Well, I went and paid the **bills** today and you still haven’t given me your half.
B: Yeah I wanted to talk to you about that. I agreed we would **go halves** on all the bills, but frankly I think it’s unfair.
A: Unfair! Why?
B: Well, you have long hair and use the hairdryer every morning. I don’t. You leave your computer on all night downloading torrents. I don’t. You see **what I’m getting at** here?
A: You leave the air conditioner on day and night! You also take 30 minute showers which means you are using **way more** gas and water than me!
B: Well, while we are at it, stop bringing your friends over for drinks every weekend. You always leave a **mess** and keep me up all night!
A: Maybe you should just **move out** and find another place.
B: Maybe you should move out!

■ **Key vocabulary**
bill: a document that shows how much you must pay
go halves: divide equally
what I am getting at: what I am trying to say
way more: much more, a lot more
mess: if there is a mess somewhere or a place is a mess, things there are dirty or not neatly arranged
move out: to vacate a residence, cause to leave

■ **Supplementary vocabulary**
landlord: one that owns and rents land, buildings, or dwelling units
lease: a contract granting use or occupation of property during a specified period in exchange for a specified rent
utility: a commodity or service, such as electricity, water, or public transportation, that is provided by a public utility
dower: the rights of a widow in the property of her husband at his death
breach of contract: a legal violation of an established contract between two parties

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Defenseless national land areas

➔ Not giving protection to such ecologically valuable and sensitive areas will cause habitat fragmentation and accordingly lead to loss of valuable species.

For one, constructing roads in Asiatic cheetahs’ habitat in Iran, an animal which is on the verge of extinction with only some 50 left alive, has increased the road kills and is pushing it into oblivion.

Things goes from bad to worse by the Majlis (the Iranian parliament) recent adoption of a law that authorizes those who have once illegally, or legally made changes to national land areas, to purchase and own the land lawfully.

Therefore, as per the new law, land-use change, which can actually contribute many environmental predicaments, such as worsening greenhouse gas emission, is now permitted and even awarded by the law.

■ **Why protected areas matter**
According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) a protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed,



Bahram-e Gour protected area in southern province of Fars

Blowing in the wind—picking apart the plastic problem

There are many reasons to worry about plastic – whether resource efficiency or the use of fossil fuels contributing to climate change. But, as a biodiversity organisation, our concern is the impact of plastic on the wider environment, and particularly on life in our seas. That’s why we’ve been working on microplastic pollution for the last seven years.

So what can be done? We are delighted to see a proliferation of initiatives to act on plastics, but how will these help to prevent its escape into the wild?

■ **Reduction**
It’s overwhelmingly clear that at a global level we need to reduce plastic use, and particularly its ongoing production. We can’t manage the plastic that already exists, and the more we use (by a law of averages), the more will escape. We know that on-the-go, disposable items (such as bottles) dominate debris found in beach surveys in Europe, and thus need to be reduced. However, more widely around the world – and particularly in Asia (the source of 80% of marine plastics globally) – a wider range of plastics are reaching the sea, as a result of less effective waste collection and management systems. We need global solutions to address this, changing

the global supply and packaging approaches that will otherwise overwhelm waste collection systems in these countries. We need to pull together to reduce global plastic use, as a key part of turning off the tap on ocean plastics.

■ **Alternatives**
Part of the solution to reducing plastic use will be finding other materials to serve the same purposes. Sometimes plastic use is clearly unnecessary, and at times even inexplicable. However where plastic does perform a clear function, suitable alternatives may not always be obvious. From a biodiversity perspective, biodegradable plastics and bioplastics are not the solution – they behave the same as any other plastic once they reach the sea. Also, in seeking alternatives, we need to look at other potential environmental consequences in terms of increased natural resource use, increased food waste or increased carbon emissions. There is a case to be made for ‘sensible plastic use’, once all other alternatives have been considered, and assuming it can be managed responsibly.

■ **Valuing plastics**
We are less likely to allow resources we value prop-

erly to escape from the system; for example, if we drop money in the street we stop and pick it up. We must value the plastic we already have, and use it responsibly. We have a mountain of plastic we need to do something with (and shipping it to countries less able to cope with it cannot be an answer). If we don’t use this plastic, the alternatives are incineration or conversion into novel fuel sources – which may get rid of the plastic, but can leave toxic residues. Otherwise we can only put it in landfills – but we know that plastic doesn’t always stay buried in these...

Using plastic wisely means recycling it multiple times. But for this to work we need to value recycled plastic more highly – it needs to have a premium to drive a recycling economy, and we need commitments across the board to use recycled material in new products, wherever possible. In reality this may need statutory requirements for minimum recycled content, increased producer investment in recycling and perhaps even rebalancing of taxation systems to favour recycled over virgin plastic.

(Source: phys.org)

‘Diabetes bus’ begins Tehran service



The Changing Diabetes Bus in Tehran’s Mellat Park, northern Tehran, in an undated photo

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A special **d e s k** bus under the management of Novo Nordisk, a global healthcare company, started a 5-day stay in Tehran on Saturday, aiming to create awareness on diabetes prevention and control.

Novo Nordisk unveiled the ‘Changing Diabetes Bus’ in 2006 under the motto ‘a global drive to change diabetes’. The bus has visited some 30 countries since then, Fars reported on Sunday.

The service will be accessible for Tehraners from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (local time) at Gorgan square, said Mehran Zaman-Zadeh, director of eastern Tehran’s diabetes society.

The diabetes bus will provide some free

of charge health care services such as conducting diabetes test and BMI measurement, along with offering various films, brochures and CDs, he highlighted.

According to International Diabetes Federation (IDF), over 629 million people will live with diabetes by 2045. The facts show that 79 percent of adults with diabetes are living in low- and middle-income countries and 50 percent people with diabetes are undiagnosed.

Some 5 million individuals in Iran have been diagnosed with diabetes to date, said Mahyar Khosroshahi, diabetologist and a member of the Iranian Diabetes Society, BornaNews reported.

Mobile gas stations operational in Tehran



SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — An application, named Pido, has been recently launched in Tehran, enabling users living in district 2 of the city to place orders online for gasoline to be delivered to them.

Very much like ride hailing applications the user can put an order for gas by choosing his/her destination and the costs will be calculated depending on the location; once the user approves the order the nearest tank truck will transport the gas to the given location.

It’s the first time that this idea is being implemented in the middle-east region, ISNA quoted Ehsan Jafar-Tabari, the ex-

ecutive director of the Iranian startup as saying on Sunday.

Currently the application provides its services only in Tehran District 2 and has received a warm embrace by Tehraners, he said, adding that according to the plan, the service will cover all areas of Tehran by the end of spring.

In the first phase, 50 tank trucks with 1,000 liters capacity have entered the fleet while this number will increase to 300 units by the middle of spring, he highlighted.

The gas delivered by the application is sold at the same price as gas stations with an added cost charged for delivery services, he noted.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

Iran exports nano-products worth \$35m to 17 countries

Iran’s nano-products export to 17 countries worldwide was valued at \$35 million last year (March 2015-March 2016), the secretary for Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council affiliated with the vice-presidency for science and technology, said on Thursday.

“Not only has Iran excelled at the nanoscience, but also at developing the technology and its application into new and various products. In that regard, Iran is among the top countries in nanoscience worldwide,” Sa’eed Sarkar told IRNA news agency.

No single country can compete with Iran in the field of nanotechnology in the Middle East, Sarkar said, adding, however, developed countries may look down on Iran in the field of new technologies and considering it a developing country.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“contra-, contro-”

■ **Meaning:** against
■ **For example:** This is a list of previously **controversial** issues amongst editors.

PHRASAL VERB

Fool around

■ **Meaning:** to waste time behaving in a silly way or doing things that are not important; mess around
■ **For example:** He always used to fool around in class.

IDIOM

In the same boat

■ **Explanation:** if two or more parties are in the same boat, they are in the same unpleasant or difficult situation
■ **For example:** When the factory closed down, the workers all found themselves in the same boat.

محصولات نانو به ارزش ۳۵ میلیون دلار ایران به ۱۷ کشور جهان صادر می شود

دبیر ستاد ویژه توسعه فناوری نانو معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری حجم صادرات محصولات حوزه فناوری نانو که به ۱۷ کشور جهان صادر می شود در سال گذشته را حدود ۳۵ میلیون دلار اعلام کرد.

سعید سرکار روز پنج شنبه در گفت و گو خبرگزاری ایرنا گفت: : نه تنها از نظر علمی بلکه از نظر توسعه فناوری و تعداد و تنوع محصولاتی که به بازار عرضه می شود، در بین کشورهای برتر دنیا قرار داریم.

وی با بیان این که در منطقه خاورمیانه در حوزه نانو کشوری نیست که بتواند قابل مقایسه با ایران باشد، افزود: در مواردی کشورهای پیشرفته جایگاهی برای ایران در عرصه فناوری های نوظهور قائل نیستند و آن را کشوری در حال توسعه می دانند.

UN resolution on Syria, saves terrorists

INTERNATIONAL desk The Syrian army has launched a ground operation against the al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham) and other terrorist groups in the Eastern Ghouta region, wresting control over some areas.

Iran's Arabic-language Al-Alam news channel reported the recapture of the Na-shabeya and Hazrma areas as well as Farzat Hill by the Syrian military on Sunday.

It also said that Syrian army soldiers had advanced in al-Zariqiya as terrorists fled the region.

The fresh campaign is aimed at gaining control of the neighborhoods occupied by the Takfiri terrorists in the suburbs of the capital Damascus.

Eastern Ghouta near Damascus has witnessed renewed violence in the past few days, where terrorists have mounted repeated mortar attacks on the Syrian capital in the face of an imminent rout. Western powers, however, blame the Syrian government and Russia for the crisis.

However, due to the United States efforts as it has always supported the terrorists in the war shattered Syria, the terrorists have gained momentum to regain power and try to mobilize forces.

This is while the Syrian army with the help of other resistance fronts is on then threshold to root out terrorism in Syria.

■ **UN: 30-day ceasefire across Syria** The operation came one day after the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously passed a resolution demanding a 30-day ceasefire across Syria to allow for humanitarian aid deliveries and medical evacuations.

The UN Security Council unanimously voted in favor of a resolution demanding a 30-day truce in Syria.

The resolution was adopted by 15 votes to none, after several delays and a flurry of last-minute negotiations.

The truce does not apply to operations against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh), al-Qaeda and al-Nusra Front along with "individuals, groups, undertakings and entities" associated with the terrorist groups.

It also allows the Syrian government's operation to continue against terrorists in Idlib Province, the country's largest remaining militant stronghold.

■ **Syria preserves right to retaliate against terrorist attacks on civilians**

Meantime, Syria's Ambassador to the UN Bashar Ja'afari stressed on Saturday that his government preserved the right to retaliate



against terrorist attacks on civilians.

"We practice a sovereign right of self-defense and we will continue to fight terrorism wherever it is found on Syrian soil," he said.

The Syrian envoy also urged some Western countries to stop spending billions of dollars on supporting, financing and arming the terror outfits and allow the Syrian people to determine their own future.

"These governments should also recognize that the strategic schemes to divide Syria and to change the governing system in it by force and to guarantee the continuity of terrorism and the illegal military presence on our territories will not succeed," he said.

■ **Russia, France, Germany leaders urge 'information exchange' on Syria**

Elsewhere, the Russian, French and German leaders have agreed to speed up their "exchange of information" on Syria, the Kremlin says.

In a statement on Sunday, the Kremlin added that Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the Syrian crisis with French and German leaders, Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel, respectively.

During phone talks, the three leaders discussed the implementation of a UNSC resolution on a month-long ceasefire in the war-torn country, it noted.

According to the statement, Putin, Macron and Merkel stressed "the importance of continuing common efforts in the interests of the full implementation of the resolution as soon as possible."

The Kremlin said the German, Russian and French leaders "had expressed satisfaction"

that the Security Council had managed to agree on the resolution following "common constructive work."

Putin informed Macron and Merkel of steps Russia is taking to evacuate civilians and deliver humanitarian aid to those in need, it added.

"Special attention has been paid to the fact that a ceasefire does not cover operations against terrorist groups," the statement said.

Merkel's office also said in a statement on Sunday that the German chancellor and French and Russian presidents stressed "that it is crucial that the [Security Council] resolution be implemented quickly and comprehensively."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Thursday the Ghouta-based militants had rejected Russia's offer to "evacuate peacefully" and that they were using civilians there as "human shields."

Russia says it will consider supporting a UN-proposed ceasefire in Syria if it does not cover the ISIL and the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri terrorist groups.

He added that Russia was ready to consider a UNSC draft resolution demanding a 30-day truce in Syria as long as it did not include the two Takfiri groups and other militants "who are shelling residential quarters of Damascus."

Eastern Ghouta is included in a deal between Turkey, Russia and Iran to establish de-escalation zones in Syria with the aim of reducing violence in the war-torn country.

Russia has been lending aerial support to Syria's counter-terrorism operations since

September 2015.

Meanwhile, the United States and its allies have been bombarding what they call ISIL positions inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from Damascus or a UN mandate.

The strikes, however, have on many occasions resulted in civilian casualties and failed to fulfill their declared aim of countering terrorism.

■ **UNICEF: 85 percent of Syrian refugee children in Jordan live in poverty**

The developments follow as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has warned that 85 percent of Syrian refugee children in Jordan live in poverty, having a difficult time in satisfying their most "basic needs."

According to figures announced by the UN agency on Sunday, some 38 percent of Syrian refugee children are also not in school and almost half of those under the age of five do not have access to proper healthcare.

The findings, which were based on interviews by hundreds of families among Jordan's 660,000 registered Syrian refugees, showed that refugee children "are facing a more challenging time in meeting their minimum basic needs," said Robert Jenkins, the UNICEF's Jordan representative.

According to official figures, the overall number of registered and unregistered Syrian refugees in the Kingdom stands at about 1.3 million.

Around 5.5 million Syrians have fled the foreign-backed militancy in their homeland since 2011, most of whom living in neighboring countries where they desperately struggle to survive.

Aid groups call on Jordan to lift other restrictions on Syrian refugees, including on movement from camps to Jordanian towns.

The UN children agency in Jordan lacks some \$145.7 million for child programs in 2018, said Jenkins, urging donor countries to step up at a time of growing need.

The kingdom sealed its border with Syria in June 2016, after a deadly cross-border attack by the ISIL Takfiri terrorists, leaving tens of thousands of Syrians stranded in a remote desert area. The closure ended the UN's regular aid shipments from Jordan to displaced Syrians struggling for survival in a remote stretch of the desert.

However, back in early last month, Jordan agreed to a request by the UN to deliver humanitarian aid to thousands of displaced Syrians stranded in dire conditions in the vicinity of the border crossing with Syria.

Jordan's PM reshuffles cabinet to soothe anger over poor economy

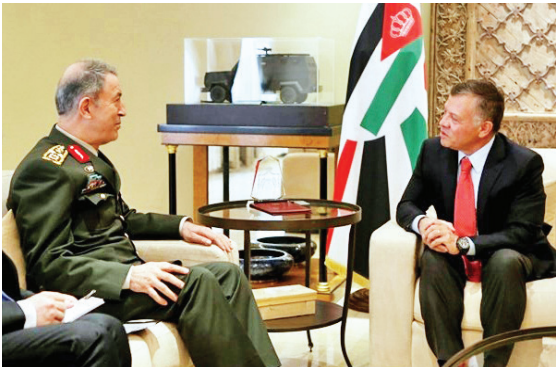
Jordan's Prime Minister Hani Mulki reshuffled his cabinet on Sunday and appointed the king's chief of staff as his special deputy for economic affairs in an apparent bid to soothe widespread anger over rising hardship and flagging growth.

Mulki's reshuffle, his sixth since coming to power in May 2016, comes three days after hundreds of protesters in the city of Salt, 30 km west of the capital Amman, demanded his resignation and called for the Jordanian king to force the government to roll back price hikes and end high-level corruption.

Earlier this month Mulki avoided a vote of no-confidence in parliament after deputies sought to bring down the government over the price hikes that raised taxes on most consumer and food items and some fuel items. This was followed by a doubling of the prices of subsidized bread.

Jafar Hassan, chief of staff of the office of Jordan's King Abdullah, takes up the post of deputy Prime Minister for economic affairs, a role that had been left vacant in Mulki's previous cabinet.

Hassan, a former Harvard educated planning minister, will be leading the ministerial team overseeing a tough three-year program agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of long delayed structural reforms to cut public debt to 77 percent of national output GDP (gross domestic



product) by 2021 from 94 percent now.

Earlier this year, Mulki imposed steep IMF-mandated tax hikes to cut rising public debt that have hit incomes of ordinary Jordanians, causing his popularity to plummet.

Finance Minister Omar Malhas kept his job in the reshuffle. Ayman Safadi, a long-time adviser to the royal family, who took up the post for the first time early last year and has been leading the kingdom's talks with Washington over its Middle

East policy remains as foreign minister.

Politicians and economists say the tough fiscal consolidation plan and the price hikes, the widest in range in recent years, worsened the plight of poorer Jordanians.

Removing subsidies has triggered civil unrest in the past. Unlike previous hikes, only a few scattered protests have taken place, but slogans carried by demonstrators in the rally in Salt were the most critical so far.

"We will wage an intifada [Uprising] until prices go down. There are limits to our patience," protesters chanted. Some indirectly blamed the monarch. On Friday the authorities sent gendarmerie reinforcements to Salt.

The government has said cash transfers to low income citizens had mitigated the impact of price rises.

In recent years Jordan's economic growth has been hit by regional conflicts weighing on investor sentiment and as consumer demand generated by Syrian refugees staying in Jordan has receded, according to the IMF.

Real GDP was revised downwards to 2 percent in 2017 about one percent lower than anticipated at the start of the IMF program and was expected to hover around 3 percent, almost half the levels it attained a decade ago.

(Source: Reuters)

Campaigning begins in Egypt's presidential election

Campaigning has kicked off in Egypt's presidential election, with incumbent President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi expected to win easily after his real challengers were detained, prosecuted or intimidated out of the race.

Sisi, who has been in power since he led the 2013 military overthrow of his predecessor, Egypt's first democratically-elected president Mohamed Morsi, is one of the two candidates.

The other candidate is Moussa Mostafa Moussa, leader of the pro-government centrist Ghad (Tomorrow) Party that had collected signatures of support for Sisi's presidential campaign.

Moussa formally filed his candidacy just minutes before the deadline, saving the upcoming election from descending into farce with Sisi as the sole candidate.

Campaigning began on Saturday, one

day after the National Electoral Commission officially announced the names of the two presidential hopefuls.

The commission spokesperson Mahmoud al-Sherif said the body had not received any legal challenges against the two candidates or "any objections on their eligibility."

The commission also urged the media to be "objective" and banned government officials from "trying to influence the outcome of the election, positively or negatively."

It allows 11 days — until March 13 — for campaigning abroad and 28 days — until March 23 — in Egypt while the "candidates can withdraw from the race until 1 March."

The election is set to be held on March 26-28 in Egypt and on March 16-18 abroad. In case of a second round, the poll will take place on April 24-26 in Egypt and on April 19-21 abroad.

Sixty million people are eligible to cast their ballots in the presidential election.

Sisi's critics say he has silenced all forms of political opposition during his first four-year term.

His administration has been under fire for widespread arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture against perceived dissidents, and trial of thousands of civilians in military courts since the 2013 coup.

Several human rights groups have denounced the election as "farical" and opposition leaders have called for a boycott.

A coalition of opposition figures said in a joint statement that Egyptians should stay away from the polls in protest as the government had prevented "any fair competition in the upcoming elections"

"We call on our great people to boycott these elections entirely, and to not recog-

nize anything that results from it," read the statement.

Moussa has widely been accused of cooperating with Sisi's administration. However, he has denied the allegation, claiming, "We are not puppets in this race."

All genuine opposition candidates to Sisi have withdrawn from the election.

Among key figures arrested ahead of the polls were Abdel Moneim Abul Fotouh, a former leading member of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood movement, and ex-army chief of staff Sami Anan.

Abul Fotouh was put on a terror list and accused of spreading false news that could harm Egypt's interests.

Anan, seen as the most credible rival to Sisi, was also detained for allegedly announcing his candidacy while still a registered officer.

(Source: agencies)

with signs: "Bibi, the people have chosen you," referring to the premier by his nickname.

The anti-corruption protesters carried signs saying: "Bibi, you are not above the law," "love Israel, separate from Netanyahu," and "corrupt go home." They shouted: "A mafia country and a corrupt prime minister."

(Source: agencies)

Hamas slams Saudi foreign minister's 'misleading' remarks

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has condemned recent remarks made by Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubair, who said the Gaza-based movement was "extremist".

In a statement, Hamas said that the Saudi foreign minister seeks to mislead the public opinion and distort the image of the legitimate Palestinian resistance.

Hamas said that these remarks would encourage the Israeli regime to commit further crimes against the Palestinian people.

Jubair's claims are inconsistent with the Muslim world's stance towards the Palestinian cause and its support for the Palestinian people.

Addressing the European Parliament in Brussels on Friday, al-Jubair described Hamas as "extremist" and claimed that Qatar had stopped its support for the Palestinian movement and this has "facilitated the handover" of government offices in Gaza to the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority.

The handover was actually part of a historic reconciliation deal reached between the resistance movement and its rival Fatah party in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, last year.

In a move to put an end to their decade-long rivalry, the two movements agreed in October 2017 to "enable the national unity government to carry out its work and assume its full responsibility in running the Gaza Strip, as is the case in the West Bank, by December 1, 2017."

Fatah and Hamas have been at odds ever since the latter scored a landslide victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006. Since 2007, Hamas has been governing Gaza while Fatah has been based in the autonomous parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The two rival Palestinian factions finally agreed on a unity government in April 2014, but it fell apart months later.

The Fatah-Hamas reconciliation efforts have enraged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who stressed that the regime would not accept "imaginary appeasement where the Palestinian side is reconciling at the expense of our existence."

The Israeli premier has already said that he would put his stamp on reconciliation only if Hamas recognizes Israel, disbands its military wing and cuts ties with Iran.

(Source: al Alam)

Iraq rejects Riyadh's request to extradite over 400 Saudi 'terrorists'

➡ "An estimated 30 percent of 5,000 foreign terrorist fighters who resided in Europe, and left to Syria, Iraq or Libya have come back to the Continent," Frontex said.

According to The Daily Mail, European authorities are alarmed by a frightening trend of women having sought "more active roles" in ISIL's campaign.

Several women were involved in a plot to attack Notre Dame cathedral in Paris in September 2016, while there have been numerous high-profile cases of British women fleeing to Syria to marry ISIL terrorists.

Frontex said almost 1,000 women from Europe have joined the different Takfiri groups in the Middle East, mainly ISIL. "Furthermore several hundred minors are also believed to have been brought to, or born in, the same region," it said.

Iraqi officials have announced that the country was holding 500 wives and 1,000 children of ISIL terrorists.

Last July, Iraq famously arrested a 16-year-old German woman, only identified as Linda W., among 26 foreigners in the northern city of Mosul. They turned out to be from the town of Pulsnitz in eastern Germany.

(Source: Press TV)

The last thing Germany – and Europe – needs is a grand coalition

➡ To be sure, new elections now, after five months of unprecedented political muddle, might produce an even larger protest vote for the AfD. But there is a better alternative, which the chancellor and federal president could agree to try if the Social Democrat party membership votes no: a Merkel-led Christian Democrat minority government. Minority government would be an innovation in the history of the Federal Republic. But it has been done in many other democracies, and there's nothing in the German constitution that says you can't do it.

■ **Security policy**

Indeed, the very strong position that constitution deliberately gives to the chancellor might make it easier to sustain a minority government. The mainstream opposition parties, Free Democrats and Greens as well as Social Democrats, would surely offer support on the main, consensual thrust of European or security policy, as well as budget and confidence votes. Yes, the minority government would lose some parliamentary votes on other issues, but as the German historian Heinrich-August Winkler points out, that would actually increase the importance of parliamentary debates and the work of select committees. Would that be bad for a parliamentary democracy? Quite the reverse.

Berlin's response to Macron's European proposals would be somewhat less enthusiastic, especially in relation to the eurozone. But that would be a realistic reflection of where most Germans are on this, which is a very long way from former SPD leader Martin Schulz's vision of a United States of Europe by 2025. At the same time, the Christian Democrats might feel impelled to offer Macron more on a common foreign, security and defense policy – especially when faced with the terrible trio of Brexit, Trump and Putin. Would that be bad for Europe? Quite the reverse.

A minority government under Merkel probably would not last a full term, but that would also not be end of the world. I'm a great admirer of Merkel, but we are definitely approaching the time for a change at the top. That, too, is democracy. An election in 2019 or 2020 with sharper opposition parties, and with a new, younger leader of the Christian Democrats, would hardly be worse than one forced on a stale and crumbling grand coalition.

The motto silently hanging over the conventional wisdom of Berlin is a conservative one first used in 1957: Keine Experimente! (No experiments). But what Germany needs now is rather Willy Brandt's cry from 1969, Mehr Demokratie wagen! (Risk more democracy!). The experiment of a minority government would create some uncertainties in the short term, but in the long run it would be better for Germany and for Europe.

(Source: The Guardian)

Late Kane header snatches victory

Harry Kane netted his 150th goal in club football as a late header claimed a vital 1-0 victory for Tottenham against Crystal Palace, handing a hammer blow to the Eagles' bid for Premier League survival in the process.

Having missed a gilt-edged opportunity earlier in the second half, Kane made amends in the 88th minute of Sunday's clash at Selhurst Park, powering home a brilliant header from Christian Eriksen's corner.

Mauricio Pochettino's side had dominated throughout, but often struggled to break down Palace's stubborn defence.

Eriksen did manage to carve out an opening in the 54th minute, only for Kane to volley wide from inside the six-yard box.

It was Kane's second big opportunity of the game, with Wayne Hennessey having pulled off an excellent stop to deny the Premier League's leading scorer early on.

Palace's injury woes were compounded late on when defender James Tomkins went down in innocuous fashion, and his absence was felt when Kane finally headed home the winner with the final whistle fast approaching.

(Source: Goal)

Barcelona's Semedo facing five weeks out with hamstring injury

Barcelona full-back Nelson Semedo has been ruled out for up to five weeks with a hamstring injury.

The 24-year-old pulled up when chasing back during the second half of his side's 6-1 LaLiga thrashing of Girona at Camp Nou.

Tests have revealed Semedo sustained muscle damage and Barca expect him to be out of action until April.

"The club's medical services department has confirmed that first-team player Nelson Semedo has suffered an injury to his left hamstring," a club statement confirmed.

"Further testing carried out has indicated that he will be out for approximately five weeks."

Semedo is set to miss a busy run of games which includes a league game against second-place Atletico Madrid and the second leg of the Champions League last-16 tie with Chelsea.

He is also likely to sit out Portugal's friendly matches with Egypt and Netherlands next month.

(Source: Soccerway)

'Best in history' Messi lauded by Coutinho, Busquets

Philippe Coutinho and Sergio Busquets hailed the performance of the "amazing" Lionel Messi in Barcelona's crushing 6-1 LaLiga victory over Girona.

The Argentina international set up Luis Suarez for an equaliser after Girona had taken a third-minute lead, and netted twice himself, the second an inventive free-kick steered under the opposition's defensive wall at Camp Nou.

Coutinho, a January arrival from Liverpool, also supplied an assist for Suarez before getting on the scoresheet, and the Brazilian is already revelling in a productive relationship with his superstar team-mates.

"Leo is amazing," he told Movistar.

"He fooled everyone with his goal. It's incredible how good he is. Each game we understand each other better, with him, with Suarez, he's very important for us.

"Bit by bit I'm learning and I have a lot of work to do."

Holding midfielder Busquets echoed the sentiments of Coutinho, saying of Messi's contribution: "He always makes the difference and that's what makes him the best player in the world and in the history of football."

Ousmane Dembele could not find the back of the net himself but did tie up Suarez for the Uruguayan to complete his hat-trick, and Coutinho expects the young France international to hit his stride soon.

"Barcelona play unique football," he said.

"Dembele is a great player, I'm sure that with time and work we will learn. We want to do the best we can."

(Source: Four Four Two)

Michael Laudrup "at final stages as a football coach"

Michael Laudrup has revealed that he is at the "final stages" of his career in football management.

The former Real Madrid and Barcelona player hung up his boots in 1998, before joining Brondby in his first post as a manager.

Laudrup, who is currently in the dugout at Al Rayyan in Qatar, told reporters that the repetitive nature of football management is becoming "tiring".

"I am in my final stages as a coach, this job in Qatar will be my ultimate or penultimate," he said. "This summer I will be 54, and when I stopped playing in 1998 I never thought that I would be coaching for so long.

"In 2000 I agreed to be Morten Olsen's number two in the Denmark team and I am still going. It is the repetition all the time: training, travelling, call-ups and what I most dislike is the waiting around, at the airport, in the coach at the stadium, in the hotels before playing, the same buffets in the restaurants, this is tiring.

"I also want to live other things in life, the years go by. I don't know whether after as a journalist you can ease off a bit and keep going. I imagine so but as a coach it is hard to take it easy. Comment on the television? I don't know, but I want to live another life and I cannot say whether in a year, two or three."

Laudrup has also managed Swansea City in the Premier League, moving to South Wales in 2012 before leaving the Swans almost two years later.

(Source: Sports Mole)

'Born with skis on': Norway celebrates Winter Olympics medal record



South Korea were over by soon after lunch-time in Norway.

"I've no objection to staff taking a few minutes off to gather round the TV at big moments during the morning," Jensen said. "We all work better afterwards, don't we? And I can't imagine their frustration if they couldn't watch. Winter sports are really a very big deal in Norway."

The prime minister, Erna Solberg, who was seen glued to her mobile phone and tablet during major medal events, gave the thumbs-up, observing that if the games could trigger a "short-term fall in efficiency", people were "happy when Norway does well, and this means higher productivity".

Most companies seem not to have risked the wrath of their workers. It helped, said Fredrik Jensen, who runs a small temp agency, that because of the time difference, events in

South Korea were over by soon after lunch-time in Norway.

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Older Norwegians say the atmosphere has rivalled the pre-mobile fervour of the

country's last home games, in Lillehammer in 1994, when the nation was so distracted that thieves broke into the National Gallery on the day of the opening ceremony, making off with its version of Edvard Munch's The Scream.

There are reasons besides straightforward national pride for such all-consuming interest in the team's performance: the vast majority of Norwegians either are or have been keen participants in many of the sports they are now watching.

The country's policy of sport-for-all and its emphasis on fun rather than competition – until they are 13, children are not ranked in sports events – means nearly 93% of children and young adults are active members of one of the country's 11,000 local sports clubs.

(Source: Guardian)

Nasri handed ban from football after Uefa investigation



Samir Nasri has been banned from football following the investigation into the intravenous drip treatment he received at a Los Angeles clinic.

The player's legal representative in the case told Press Association Sport that a six-month suspension has been imposed on Nasri by Uefa, European football's governing body. Former Arsenal and Manchester City playmaker Nasri received 500 millilitres of hydration in the form of sterile water containing micronutrient components on December 26, 2016, while on holiday.

At the time, he was on loan from City to Sevilla, and Nasri had reported feeling ill and vomiting before calling a doctor, his Maryland-based former girlfriend Dr Sarabjit Anand who provided an initial diagnosis.

Nasri received treatment from a private medical company, Drip Doctors, in his hotel room and later posed for a photograph with the organisation's co-founder Jamila Sozahdah that drew publicity.

World Anti-Doping Agency rules state there is a 50-millilitre infusion limit per

six-hour period for active athletes. A request by Sevilla for a retroactive therapeutic use exemption (TUE) for Nasri was refused in February 2017 by Uefa, whose decision was later upheld by the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Spanish sport newspaper Marca reported Nasri has been banned for one year, stating Uefa will confirm that on Monday, however Nasri's lawyer, who wished not to be named, disputed that figure.

He confirmed Nasri has received a ban, saying in an email: "Indeed. But he has received only six months suspension."

Nasri is currently without a club, having left Antalyaspor in January after just six months with the Turkish team.

The 30-year-old former France international played for Arsenal from 2008 to 2011 before moving to City for £25million, going on to win two Premier League titles during his time at the Etihad Stadium.

During his loan spell at Sevilla last season he made 30 appearances and scored three goals.

(Source: Evening Standard)

Russians sing banned anthem after beating Germany to gold



Kirill Kaprizov scored in overtime to lead the Olympic Athletes from Russia (OAR) past a feisty Germany 4-3 on Sunday to win the men's ice hockey gold before joining his team mates to defy a ban by singing the Russian national anthem during the medal ceremony.

The Russians, competing as neutral athletes at Pyeongchang as punishment for a years-long Russian doping scandal, came back from one-goal down on a goal by Nikita Gusev with less than a minute left in regulation time to force overtime in one of the most pulsating finals in the history of Olympic hockey.

At their medal ceremony, the players team sang the Russian anthem over the sound of the Olympic anthem at the Gangneung Hockey Centre despite being barred from having their flag raised or anthem played.

The game was played hours after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided not to restore their delegation's Olympic status, which would have enabled

them to march under their flag at the closing ceremony later on Sunday.

The team's assistant captain Ilya Kovalchuk said the players had discussed beforehand whether to sing the anthem if they were to win, and they agreed they would.

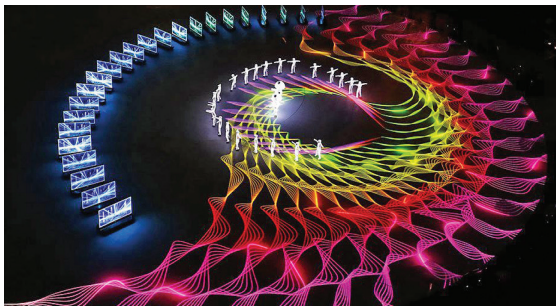
"We knew that we will do it if we win," said Kovalchuk, the all-time leading Russian goal-scorer in Olympic play.

Singing the Russian anthem on the field of play is a violation of the IOC's rules on neutrality, which were imposed on Russia as part of sanctions punishing the nation over systematic doping across many sports.

The victory marked the first time a team from Russia have won the gold medal in hockey since 1992, when the so-called Unified Team representing Russia and five other former Soviet republics beat Canada for the Olympic championship. "It means a lot. We didn't win Olympics since '92," Kovalchuk said.

(Source: Reuters)

South Korea brings curtain down on 'Peace Games'



Despite the divisions and distrust between the two Koreas, they agreed to have their athletes march together at both the opening and closing ceremonies under a banner of unification. They also fielded a unified women's ice hockey team.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach paid tribute to the athletes, saying they were an example to the world. "You have shown how sport brings people together in our fragile world; you have shown how sport builds bridges," he said. "The IOC will continue this Olympic dialogue, even after we extinguish the Olympic flame.

South Korea brought the curtain down on its "Peace Games" on Sunday, with winter sports athletes dancing and singing together at a vibrant closing ceremony, though there was little warmth between dignitaries from the United States and North Korea. South Korea President Moon Jae-in, who hopes to use these Games as an opportunity to engage with the North, warmly greeted U.S. President Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka before offering a brief handshake to North Korean delegation leader Kim Yong Chol.

Despite the cool body language, Moon's efforts may be bearing fruit. The South's presidential office said on Sunday that members of the North Korean delegation had expressed the North's openness to talks with the United States.

Trump sat front and center, beside Moon's wife, while North Korea's Kim was seated a row behind, decked out in a long black jacket and furry hat. Sitting two seats along from him was General Vincent Brooks, the commander of U.S. Forces Korea. Kim's appearance at the closing ceremony has been greeted with outrage by some in South Korea. The former North Korean intelligence chief is accused of having been behind a deadly 2010 attack on a South Korean warship.

South Korean protesters tried to block Kim's motorcade to the closing ceremony earlier in the day.

West Ham send official for QPR target Saman Ghoddos

According to reports in the Swedish media, West Ham United this week sent a scout to the game between Arsenal and Östersund to get a lowdown on Saman Ghoddos.

The OFK forward has impressed this season, and last summer he was linked with a move to Queens Park Rangers.

Fotboll Direkt report West Ham were attendance at the Emirates on Thursday night, with the objective to watch Ghoddos. It was well documented in the last window West Ham were looking to bolster their attacking options, after Andre Ayew and Diafra Sakho exited the club.

West Ham could face competition from other Premier League sides for the Iran international, but it was QPR who were first showing interest in the 24 year old.

Last summer we covered reports from Sweden that QPR tabled a bid for Ghoddos, but this was rejected by OFK.

Again this week QPR were linked with the attacker, but if they have plans to go back in for the player they will face more competition, and they would have to bid more than the £1.9m they offered OFK seven months ago.

(Source: Sportwitness.co.uk)



Lukaku and Lingard complete Old Trafford comeback

Romelu Lukaku ended his wait for a Manchester United goal against a top Premier League side as the Red Devils came from behind to beat Chelsea 2-1 at Old Trafford on Sunday.

The Belgian international cancelled out Willian's opener and set up Jesse Lingard for a second-half winner as Jose Mourinho's side moved back above Liverpool to within 13 points of league leaders Manchester City.

United's 2-0 win in this fixture last season was their only victory over Chelsea across 14 matches in all competitions, and it seemed that poor record was set to continue when Willian blasted home his

12th goal of the season to cap a strong first half-hour from the visitors.

Lukaku levelled before the break with his first opportunity though, combining well with Alexis Sanchez and Anthony Martial before slotting home his first goal against a team in the top eight in 2017-18.

The game seemed destined to end in a draw until substitute Lingard headed home with 15 minutes left, lifting United two points back above Liverpool and leaving the reigning champions in fifth, two behind Tottenham.

Chelsea's bright start saw them come within inches of taking the lead just five minutes in, with Alvaro Morata - restored to the starting line-up in the league

for the first time since January 13 - crashing a volley off the crossbar from point-blank range after being picked out by Marcos Alonso.

United had looked happy to allow the visitors the early possession and showed some more attacking intent midway through the half.

It proved a costly miss, as Chelsea stunned the hosts on the break 32 minutes in. Eden Hazard took the ball into the United half and played a fine reverse pass into the path of Willian, who had time to stride into the box and drill the ball past David de Gea, who should perhaps have done better

(Source: Four Four Two)

Iran beat Iraq in FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 Asian Qualifiers

S P O R T S Iran took revenge on Iraq in the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 Asian Qualifiers on Sunday.

The Iranian team defeated Iraq 83-53.

Team Melli had lost to Iraq 74-66 in late November.

In another match, Kazakhstan defeated Qatar 96-63.

Group D consists of Iran, Kazakhstan,

Qatar and Iraq.

Iran had defeated Kazakhstan

The 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup will be the 18th tournament of the FIBA Basketball World Cup for men's national

basketball teams.

The tournament will be hosted in China and it will mark a new era for the competition as described.

Esteghlal defender Padovani undergoes neck surgery



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Brazilian defender of Esteghlal football team underwent neck surgery Saturday night.

The 34-year-old player broke his neck after a horrific-looking collision with Foolad player.

Esteghlal defeated Foolad 4-1 in Ahvaz's Ghadir Stadium but the player was carried

to the hospital before the interval.

According to the Esteghlal's club, Padovani underwent emergency surgery in Ahvaz and he is in stable condition at the moment.

Padovani has spent the majority of his career in Brazil. In 2012, he was transferred to Foolad, where he won the title in 2013-14 season. In September 2016 Padovani signed with Esteghlal.

2018 Paralympic Winter Games: Iran names team



S P O R T S Iran National Paralympic Committee has announced the team for the PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games.

The country will be represented by five athletes in the prestigious event.

Elaheh Gholi-Fallah and Abolfazl Khatibi are Nordic skiers and Sedigheh Rouzbah, Hossein Soleghani and Pouria Khalil Tash

will represent Iran in snowboard.

The Iranian team will be headed by former para skier Sadegh Kalhor and Isa Saveh Shemshaki is Team Iran's Chef de Mission.

The Paralympics will take place from March 9 to 18 in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

A total of 650 athletes from 45 countries are expected to partake in the event.

Persepolis find new hero in Ali Alipour

Kuala Lumpur: Persepolis striker Ali Alipour started his 2018 AFC Champions League campaign in style and his side will rely on him to replicate his league form on the continental stage to fire them to glory.

Persepolis' run to the 2017 AFC Champions League semi-finals introduced Asian football fans to striker Mehdi Taremi who finished the campaign with seven goals, a tally bettered only by Al-Hilal's Omar Khribin and Brazilian duo Rafael Silva and Hulk.

But by January 2018, Taremi had departed for Qatar, joining Al Gharafa on an 18-month deal. With a transfer ban in place on Persepolis, the Tehran-based side had to find a replacement from within as they looked to mount a title defence on the domestic front, as well as a second consecutive continental challenge.

Ali Alipour had started six games in last season's AFC Champions League, scoring once in the second leg of the quarter-finals against Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli, but coach Branko Ivankovic saw in the 23-year-old the man to replace Taremi in his attack.

Two years Taremi's junior and six centimetres shorter, Alipour is a different type of player. He relies more on pace and intelligent movement to create space, as opposed to Taremi's more traditional centre-forward style which favours



physicality and aerial challenges.

The Croatian's faith in his number 70 paid huge dividends as Alipour has blossomed this season to score 17 league goals, more than his entire career's combined tally since making his Iran Pro League debut with Rah Ahan in 2013.

Alipour's goals have fired Persepolis to a comfortable 16-point gap at the top of the league, needing just one victory from their remaining six matches to be crowned champions for the 11th time in their history.

With the league title virtually wrapped up, the Red Army

turned their attention to the AFC Champions League, where Ivankovic had vowed to better last year's final-four finish. Their task is not easy, having been drawn against Qatar's Al Sadd, UAE's Al Wasl and Uzbekistan's Nasaf in Group C.

The Iranian champions started their campaign emphatically with a 3-0 win over Nasaf at Azadi Stadium, and Alipour made his intentions clear with a second-half brace that demonstrated his versatility; the first a cute finish from inside the six-yard box after finding space behind the Uzbek defence to meet a cross from the right, and the second a well-struck effort with his weaker left foot after arriving late into the box.

On Matchday Two, Persepolis suffered a reversal in Doha after they were consigned to a 3-1 defeat by Al Sadd in a game where Alipour failed to add to his tally. Despite the defeat, Brankovic's men remain second in the group, and a home win in their next fixture against Al Wasl can put them firmly on track to secure one of the two qualification spots to the round of 16.

Alipour will be looking to emulate Taremi's seven-goal exploits in 2017, and he may at some point find himself head-to-head with the man he replaced as the side's primary goal getter.

(Source: the-afc)

Mollaei wins gold at Dusseldorf Grand Slam

TASNIM — Iranian judoka Saeid Mollaei claimed a gold medal at the Dusseldorf Grand Slam 2018.

He was extremely happy reaching the final, but in the final against Frenchman Alpha Oumar Djalo he dominated the contest but couldn't come to a score, until 30 second for the regular time and grabbed gold.

Germany's Dominic Ressel scored against Matthias Casse of Belgium and won the bronze medal.

The prestigious competition brought 500 judo fighters from 71 countries together.

Sabrist Pakdaman claims bronze at World Cup

IRNA — Ali Pakdaman from Iran claimed a bronze medal at the World Cup Sabre de Wolodyjowski 2018 on Saturday.

He started the campaign with a 15-7 win over Miklos Pech from Hungary. Pakdaman beat Russian Dmitriy Danilenko 15-13 and defeated his compatriot Motaba Abedini 15-7 in his third match.

Pakdaman beat Hungarian Andras Szatmari 15-11 but failed to advance to the final match after losing to world No.1 Bongil Gu from South Korea.

Gu won the gold medal after beating Germany's Matyas Szabo 15-10 in the final match.

Poland beach volleyball team routs Latvia to stamp supremacy in Kish Island Open

Press TV — The Polish men's national beach volleyball A team has claimed the top position at the conclusion of Kish Island Open, after achieving a superb straight-set win over the Latvian A side.

On Saturday, the Polish pair of Mariusz Prudel and Jakub Szalankiewicz ruled out Latvia's Martinš Plavins and Edgars Tocs 2-0 in a fixture staged in the Persian Gulf island of Kish.

The Polish beach volleyball players started the match with determination, and accumulated points to surge ahead. The Latvian squad tried to make up the deficit, but was not successful and the Poles took the first set by 21 points to 18.

The Polish side kept the momentum in the second period, and could register a 24-22 victory to claim the title.

Earlier in the day, the German men's national beach volleyball B team routed Austria C outfit 2-0 (21-18 and 22-11) in the third-place game, and took the bronze.

The Kish Island Open, which was a 3-star tournament and part of the 2018 Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) Beach Volleyball World Tour, kicked off on February 20, and wrapped up on February 24, 2018.

Iranian wrestler wins gold medal in Ukraine int'l tournament

IRNA — Iranian free style wrestler Kamran Qasempour ranked first in the 86 kg weight category in XXII Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers and Coaches Memorial in Kiev Saturday.

In the final round, Qasempour defeated his American rival 4-1 to rank first in the 86 kg class of the Ukraine international tournament, being held from February 24-26 with participation of wrestlers from 35 countries.

Before advancing to the finals, the Iranian free style wrestler had already overpowered wrestlers from Azerbaijan Republic, Switzerland and Italy.

Mbappe hits back at criticism from Benoit Assou-Ekotto

Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe has hit back at Benoit Assou-Ekotto after the Metz player criticised him for speaking about helping African sport.

Mbappe, a France international who has a Cameroonian father and an Algerian mother, had lunch this week with France president Emmanuel Macron and his recently elected Liberia counterpart, former football star George Weah.

The 19-year-old said afterward that he would "invest all of my energy" on projects to help develop sport in Africa -- to which Assou-Ekotto, who was born in France but played for Cameroon, took exception.

"These European players of African origin, who have Africa in their hearts and want to help African sport, bla bla bla, while choosing to play for a European team," Assou-Ekotto wrote. "You make me laugh! It looks good when you have a good cause, though."

Assou-Ekotto was part of the Cameroon squad at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil and famously head-butted teammate Benjamin Moukandjo as Volker Finke's men imploded and finished bottom of Group A, pointless and with a solitary goal to show for their campaign.

And in responding to Assou-Ekotto, Mbappe was quick to point out that incident, which spelled the end of Assou-Ekotto's international career.

"These European players of African origin, who have Africa in their hearts and want to help African sport, bla bla bla, while fighting with an international teammate back in 2014..." replied Mbappe. "You make me laugh... However, these are your values."

Mbappe and Assou-Ekotto already clashed earlier this season when Mbappe scored on his debut in a 5-1 win away at Metz in September and Assou-Ekotto was sent off for a foul on the former Monaco man.

The pair will meet again on the pitch next month at Parc des Princes and it promises to be a fiery battle between the two.

(Source: ESPN)

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Intl. experts to hold workshops on cinema in Tehran museum

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Two experts from France and England are scheduled to hold workshops opening at the Cinematheque of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art today.

French composer Jean-Philippe Bec and London's Stora Productions CEO Pascal Benbrik will attend the three-day workshops, the TMCA announced in a press release on Sunday.

Film music, modern methods used in writing scenarios and academic approaches specifically used in the French cinema of today are among the topics to be discussed.

The workshops are open to the public.

A poster for Pascal Benbrik's workshops at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art

Iranian group to reprise Azerbaijani operetta “Arshin Mal Alan”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — All-female Iranian group Shiftegan-e Del plans to perform Azerbaijani composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov's comic and romantic operetta “Arshin Mal Alan” again in Tehran.

The operetta, which premiered in Saint Petersburg on October 25, 1913, will be staged at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on March 9 by director and choreographer Hayedeh Zekavat.

Singer Shahla Milani and narrator Masumeh Aqajani will accompany the troupe during the performance, which only females are allowed to attend.

“Arshin Mal Alan” is about Asker, a bachelor who wants to see and choose his bride before marriage. His wife quest, however, is difficult because at that time (in the 19th century) based on traditions women were kept at home and when allowed out they were heavily covered in hijab. Asker's friend Suleyman suggests to him that he disguise himself as a fabric peddler, a sure way to meet women. Asker agrees and starts to go around to the houses selling fabrics.

Shiftegan-e Del performed the operetta at Vahdat Hall in December 2016.

A poster for “Arshin Mal Alan”

Tehran to host ABU meeting on intellectual property

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Representatives from 10 countries will be attending the second meeting of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) Intellectual Property and Legal Committee opening in Tehran today.

The chairperson of the committee, Yan Bo, and Intellectual Property Center of the State Organization for Registration of Deeds and Properties director Mohammad-Hassan Kiani will attend the two-day meeting that will be held at the IRIB International Conference Hall.

The representatives coming from China, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and several other countries will be discussing the legal problems of digital media in the modern world.

Protecting intellectual property for radio and television, violation of law in social media networks, and observing intellectual property in broadcasting sports news are also among the topics to be discussed.

Oprah Winfrey says ‘definitely not’ running for U.S. president

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Oprah Winfrey put to rest any lingering questions about a potential 2020 bid for the presidency, declaring on a late-night talk show on Thursday that she was “definitely not running.”

The media mogul, appearing on Jimmy Kimmel Live, was emphatic in her response to host Kimmel's question about whether she would run.

“Where do I look into the camera? I am definitely not running for president,” Winfrey said over cries of “no” from the studio audience.

Last month, Winfrey fans lit up Twitter with calls for her to run for president in 2020 against U.S. President Donald Trump after she gave an inspiring speech at the Golden Globe awards show in support of those who have exposed sexual misconduct.

Iran national library celebrates 80th anniversary of establishment

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) is celebrating the 80th anniversary of its establishment in a five-day program that opened on Saturday with a speech by NLAI director Ashraf Borujerdi.

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) President Gloria Perez-Salmeron is in Tehran to take part in the celebration.

The IFLA president is scheduled to meet a number of Iranian librarians, and also she will be traveling to Shiraz to visit an NLAI branch in the city.

Honoring those individuals who have donated books and documents to the library has also been arranged.

During this celebration, the NLAI plans to transfer a collection of reference books and documents to one of its buildings located on Si-e Tir Street in downtown Tehran to provide easy access for readers.

Also on Saturday, an exhibition of documents opened at the library of the University of Tehran.

The Grand Ayatollah Seyyed Shahabeddin Marashi Najafi Library in Qom, Majlis Library, Museum and Documentation Center, and the Astan-e Qods Razavi Museum and Library in Mashhad are some of the centers to display their books and documents during the celebration.

The National Library of Iran was established in 1937. The library has been merged with the Islamic Revolution Cultural Documentation Organization (IRCD) to form the National Library and Archives of Iran.



An expert (L) briefs officials about a restored manuscript during an exhibit at the National Library and Archives of Iran on February 25, 2018. (NLAI)

Tehran art exhibit spotlights acid attacks

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A collection of woodworks created on the theme of acid attacks is currently on display during an exhibition in Tehran.

The exhibition entitled “Identity” opened at Ashiane-ye Mehr Gallery on Friday during a special ceremony, which was attended by the artists and several victims of acid attacks.

“The exhibition is actually talking about an identity they lose and a new one they take on after the bitter accident,” curator Mohsen Mortazavi, who himself is a victim of an acid attack, said at the ceremony.

“Humanity is the prime target for an acid attacker and the exhibition has put its focus on this issue,” he added.

Over 50 artworks have been selected for



Acid attack victims visit an exhibition of woodworks organized at Ashiane-ye Mehr Gallery in Tehran on February 23, 2018 to attract public attention to acid attacks. (Fars)

“Touch Me Not” wins Golden Bear top prize at Berlin film festival

BERLIN (Reuters) — “Touch Me Not”, a film about intimacy, won the Golden Bear prize for best film at the 68th Berlin International Film Festival on Saturday.

Romanian director Adina Pintilie said she had not expected to win the award for her film, which blurs reality and fiction as it follows characters who seek intimacy yet also fear it.

Speaking at a news conference after collecting her Golden Bear trophy, Pintilie said the film invited viewers to feel empathy, embrace otherness and reconsider their ideas about everything. It holds a mirror up to the audience, she said.

“This is why I think for many people this film might not be comfortable but at the same time we challenge you, the viewer, to dialogue and to look at yourself,” Pintilie said.

The Silver Bear award for best director was given to U.S. director Wes Anderson for “Isle of Dogs” - an animated movie about a Japanese city that deports its dogs to a garbage dump island during an outbreak of canine flu.

Bill Murray, who was the voice of one of the dogs, collected the award at the gala ceremony on Anderson's behalf.

“I never thought that I would go to work as a dog and come home with a bear,” he joked as he held the Silver Bear trophy.

Anthony Bajon received the award for best actor for his role as a drug addict who tries to kick his habit with the help of religion in Cedric Kahn's “La priere” (The Prayer).

“I prayed a lot to receive a bear,” Bajon told a news conference after the awards ceremony, adding: “It's very important to show drug addicts that there is a way out of their addiction - in this movie it is the monastery, it is religion that helps this person.”



Director, screenwriter, editor and producer Adina Pintilie receives the Golden Bear award for Best Film “Touch Me Not” during the awards ceremony at the 68th Berlinale International Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, February 24, 2018. (Reuters/Fabrizio Bensch)

And Ana Brun received the best actress award for her role as a reclusive woman who ends up taxiing older ladies around when her partner gets sent to prison in Marcelo Martinessi's “Las herederas” (The Heiresses). That film also won the Silver Bear Alfred Bauer prize for a feature that opens new perspectives.

Polish director Malgorzata Szumowska's “Twarz” (Mug) - about a man who has a face transplant after an accident - took the Silver Bear grand jury prize.

Elena Okopnaya won an award for outstanding artistic contribution for costume and production design in Russian director Alexey German Jr.'s biopic “Dovlatov” about the 20th century writer Sergei Dovlatov.

The awards were decided by a six-person jury headed by German director Tom Tykwer. At the festival, which runs from Feb. 15 to Feb. 25, around 400 films are being screened. Of those, 19 were competing for the top Golden Bear prize.

India's Bollywood legend Sridevi dies at 54 of cardiac arrest

NEW DELHI (Reuters) — Indian actress Sridevi, arguably Bollywood's first female superstar, died in Dubai after cardiac arrest, media reported on Sunday. She was 54. Sridevi is survived by her husband - producer Boney Kapoor - and daughters Jhanvi and Khushi. She was in Dubai to attend a family wedding and died late on Saturday.

In a career spanning five decades, Sridevi acted in 300 films and was awarded the Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian honor in 2013.

Born Shree Amma Yanger Ayyapan in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, she started acting at the age of four, appearing in several Tamil-language films in the 1960s and 1970s, and eventually dropping out of school for a career in the movies.

She acted in Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu films, performing alongside leading men such as Kamal Haasan and Rajinikanth.

Sridevi made her Bollywood debut in 1979 with “Solva Sawan” (16th spring), but it was in 1983, with Balu Mahendra's

Nanette Fabray, winner of Emmy and Tony awards, dead at 97

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Nanette Fabray, a child performer in the 1920s who went on to star in Broadway musicals, dance with Fred Astaire on the big screen and win three Emmy Awards working with Sid Caesar during television's Golden Age, has died at the age of 97, media reports said.

Fabray, who also had her own short-lived TV show in the 1960s as well as a recurring role on the sitcom “One Day at a Time” in the 1970s and 1980s, died on Thursday of natural causes, her son, Jamie MacDougall, told the Los Angeles Times.

Born on Oct. 27, 1920, Fabray was a child singer in vaudeville, billed as “Baby Nanette”, and performed with silent movie comedian Ben Turpin. She debuted as an adult actress in a secondary role in director Michael Curtiz's lavish film “The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex” (1939) starring Bette Davis and Errol Flynn.

Fabray's singing and comedy talents were put to good use in the 1940s in Broadway musicals such as the hit “High Button Shoes” opposite comedian Phil Silvers. She won a Tony Award in 1949 for “Love Life” and was nominated in 1963 for “Mister President”.

In the 1950s, Fabray starred with Caesar, one of the shining stars of television's Golden Age of the 1950s, in his “Caesar's Hour” sketch comedy program. Having taken the place of comedian Imogene Coca opposite Caesar, she won two Emmy Awards in 1956 and another one in 1957.

Fabray's best role on film was with Astaire, one of the great Hollywood dancers, in director Vincente Minnelli's 1953 musical “The Band Wagon”, which earned three Oscar nominations.

“Sid Caesar was the high point of my life,” Fabray told the San Francisco Chronicle in 2000. “Fred Astaire was wonderful. It was



magical to work with him. But I had a rapport with Sid Caesar that comes once in a lifetime.”

Her most memorable moment in the film “The Band Wagon” came in the song “Triplets” in which she, Astaire and co-star Jack Buchanan were clad in baby clothes, including big white bonnets, and sat in three high chairs in front of a cartoonish backdrop.

In unison, they cheerfully sang, “We look alike, we dress alike, we walk alike, we talk alike. And what is more, we hate each other very much.”

“Astaire was a tremendous taskmaster,” Fabray told the Chronicle. “He rehearsed us until I was so sick of everything we were supposed to do. But he was right.”

Fabray was given her own TV show in 1961 but it was not a success. She later landed numerous recurring and guest starring roles on TV series.

She joined the cast of the CBS show “One Day at a Time” in 1979, playing the mother of the sitcom's star Bonnie Franklin, and appeared in 40 episodes. Fabray's niece, Shelley Fabares, also had a regular role on that show.

characters in contrast to the traditionally coy Bollywood heroine.

Sridevi took a break from films soon after she married producer Boney Kapoor in 1996.

A noticeably leaner Sridevi made a successful return to the big screen 15 years later in Gauri Shinde's “English Vinglish” (2012), playing a housewife taking English-language lessons. Her last screen appearance was in “Mom” (2017), as a mother avenging her daughter's rape.