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Trump knows nothing about Cuba: ambassador



© Tehran Times/ Maryam Kanyab

Naming special rapporteur for Iran is 'ill-intended': human rights chief

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The secretary of the High Council for Human Rights in Iran says the Islamic Republic considers appointment of a special rapporteur for Iran is "ill-intended" and "politically motivated", noting Iran has taken genuine steps to promote human rights situation.

Addressing the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, 12 March 2018, Mohammad Javad Larijani said, "The designation of a country-specific human rights Rapporteur for a country like Iran that is consistent with its obligations toward its citizens and the international community is fundamentally unnecessary." **→2**

Britain playing 'Ping-Pong game' over embassy attack: Shamkhani

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani said on Monday that the British government played "Ping-Pong game" over attack on Iran's embassy in London.

"This was a Ping-Pong game devised by the British government at the same time when the leader of a

regional country traveled to London," ISNA quoted him as saying.

He added that the attack on the Iranian embassy was an effort by London to "appease" Saudi Arabia for purchasing British arms.

Four people, who were members of the Shirazi cult, climbed on to a balcony of the Iranian embassy in London on Friday and took down the Iranian flag. **→2**

Pakistan welcomes Iran's call for expansion of trade ties

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran and Pakistan discussed expansion of trade ties during a joint business forum on Monday in Islamabad, IRNA reported.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif along with a 30-member trade delegation, from the country's economic and trade sectors, attended the joint busi-

ness forum to explore areas of mutual economic cooperation.

According to IRNA, creating necessary conditions for the expansion of bilateral economic ties and facilitating trade, especially between the two sides' private sectors, have been reported to be among the main goals of the Iranian delegation's visit to Pakistan. **→4**

U.S. - EU trade war will weaken liberal values: Askari

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
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 "rising tide of nationalism or the right is a threat to EU institutions and its architecture but this will not erode EU's trade policies as a bloc."

Hossein Askari, who teaches at George Washington University, tells the Tehran Times that trade war between U.S. and EU will weaken liberal values.

"If Trump last through his full term of four years, and especially if he gets re-elected, and if

the Republicans continue to hold both houses of the U.S. Congress, that liberal values will be eroded dramatically, with or without a trade war. Trump and Republican control are the real threats to liberal values around the world," Askari says.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ US and the European cooperation after world war was based on trade, security and military regimes such as NATO. Do you think that a possible trade war between the US and Europe could spill over into other areas such as security and military fields?

A: I don't believe that Trump's announcement will lead to a full blown trade war. Europeans, along with others, have little choice

but to retaliate with small but well-targeted tariffs that expose important Republicans in states such as Wisconsin where Paul Ryan is from and Kentucky the home state of Mitch McConnell. All this at a time when Republicans have low poll numbers before the November 2018 mid-term elections. Republican lawmakers will begin to sweat and put pressure on Trump for the first time. But in the meantime, Trump's so-called "base" will begin to show their displeasure, especially U.S. farmers. Once Trump starts getting bad economic news, he will be finished. The economy is the one thing he has going for him right now and it is something that he needs to survive as president. **→7**

'Saudis may not give up right to enriching uranium, reprocessing plutonium'

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Richard Nephew, who served as the lead sanctions expert for the U.S. team negotiating with Iran, is of the opinion that the newly revealed documents of the U.S. State Department "The Saudis are concerned about Iran's nuclear program and want to ensure that they are in possession of a similarly advanced one."

He adds that "The degree to which the United States is not present in international nuclear business is a

potential problem for our own influence in this sector."

Fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, says The Saudis may not wish to give up their right to technologies such enriching uranium and reprocessing plutonium "but this is not the same as seeking those technologies outright."

Following is the text of the interview with Nephew:

■ After few years, U.S. administration announced will nuclear agreement with Riyadh. Why U.S.

convinced to restart negotiation for nuclear agreement?

A: Well, this issue has been around for a number of years, as you note, but it is of interest to both sides. So, it could simply be as simple as a desire to make progress.

But, I think it is also likely that this is a response to the JCPOA. The Saudis are concerned about Iran's nuclear program and want to ensure that they are in possession of a similarly advanced one. What exactly would be required in that -- just reactors? Enrichment?

-- are subjects of speculation and interest of course.

It is for this reason that I think it is in Iran's interest -- not just U.S. interest -- to seek region-wide arrangements for managing the growth of nuclear technology in the Middle East, even at the expense of sacrificing some of its own flexibility and options.

■ Two Kingdom's desire in its nuclear pan are enriching uranium and reprocessing plutonium. Will U.S. accommodate the Riyadh in these issues? **→7**

Israeli forces arrest 10 Palestinian fishermen off Gaza coast

Palestinian authorities say Israeli naval forces have detained ten fishermen after opening fire on several Palestinian fishing boats off the coast of the besieged Gaza Strip.

Head of the Fishermen Committees in the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, Zakaria Bakr, told Arabic-language Palestine al-Yawm news agency that Israeli forces targeted the Palestinian boats off the shores of Rafah city, located 30 kilometers south of Gaza City, on Monday.

Bakr added that marines then boarded the boats and nabbed those on board, before taking the Palestinian fishermen to an unknown location in the Port of Ashdod, located about

40 kilometers south of Tel Aviv.

On February 25, Israeli naval forces opened fire on a Palestinian fishing boat off the coast of the besieged Gaza Strip, killing a fisherman and injuring two others.

About 4,000 fishermen work in Gaza, half of whom live below the poverty line.

Israel imposed a limit of three nautical miles on fishing in the waters off the Gaza shore until August 2014, when Palestinian fishermen were allowed to go out six miles.

Under a ceasefire agreement reached between Israelis and Palestinians following a deadly 50-day Israeli war in August 2014, Tel Aviv agreed to immediately expand the fishing zone off Gaza's

coast, allowing Palestinian fishermen to sail as far as six nautical miles off the shore.

Under the Oslo peace accords, the fishing zone is supposed to extend to 20 nautical miles, but it has shrunk over the years as the Tel Aviv regime has imposed greater restrictions.

Over the past few years, Israeli forces have carried out more than a hundred attacks on Palestinian boats, arresting dozens of fishermen and confiscating several boats.

The Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli blockade since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in the standard of living as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty. **→13**



ARTICLE

By Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

West using JCPOA as lever to pressurize Iran

Recently, Reuters claimed European countries had commenced negotiations with Iran over the country's role in the region in order to ease U.S. President Donald Trump's concerns over the Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Reuters alleges that the talks got off the ground on the fringes of the Munich security conference, with Yemen and certain regional issues taking center stage, and that the negotiations are going to continue in the future.

"European powers and Iran have started talks over Tehran's role in the Middle East and will meet again this month in Italy as part of efforts to prove to U.S. President Donald Trump that they are meeting his concerns over the 2015 nuclear deal," wrote Reuters.

What is worth mentioning about the Reuters' report is that the news agency claims the talks between Iran and Europe on regional issues conducted is phased. Reuters says the first round of the negotiations were held on the sidelines of the Munich security conference with the Yemen war top of the agenda, and that the Europeans hope to discuss the role of the groups supporting Iran in Lebanon and Syria. A few points need to be taken into account in this regard.

First, regional talks with Iran has been one of the common demands of the U.S. and the European Union following the conclusion of the JCPOA. When the nuclear deal was signed in July 2015, many analysts unanimously believed that Washington and the European Troika intended to use the JCPOA as a springboard for regional talks with Tehran.

Efforts by Germany, Britain and France to hold regional talks with Iran can be analyzed accordingly. Here, France seeks to play the role of a leading player. The trip to Iran by French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian comes within the same framework. Paris has promised Washington to spare no effort to hold negotiations with Iran on the Islamic Republic's regional policies. Accordingly, Germany and Britain have got on board with France, too. **→7**



ARTICLE

By Naghmeh Mizanian
Tehran Times journalist

Noruz sweeter with mama's plan

The fragrant smell of spring with Persian folk music playing in the background, family members happily pitching in cleaning the house accompanied by a cup of tea after a tough day, all describe a pleasant family atmosphere during the spring cleaning in one's home.

Elsewhere, however, the smell of dust and detergents, the unhappy voice of a father, an authoritative solo decision-maker who is experiencing stress, hunger or a late meal along with the rest of his family is another scene to encounter.

Two contradictory responses to the same situation, "spring cleaning", pleasant for one family and stressful for another.

■ **Our mothers!**

Noruz is on the way. Noruz is coming with its pleasant traditions. Spring cleaning, shopping, cooking, baking, growing sprouts and.... They all represent the arrival of spring and the smell of love.

A friend just recently described her experience of a Noruz. She explained that she set a meticulous Haft Seen table last year and posed for photos with her family in colorful attire. She then shared with her precious little boy stories about Amoo Noruz, who surprises children with gifts they wish for.

Our traditions are our identity, our being, and our culture, and mothers are liable for passing on cultural traditions to their children.

Our ancestors believed that the souls of our beloved forebears will come back to the physical world in the last five days of a given year, and thus we try to clean our home as a sign of hospitality.

Traditions invite joy and freshness to our home. It is our duty, as mothers, to transfer the beautiful face of this tradition to our children.

I believe we should plan more entertainment in Noruz, making it a lively period for the entire family, and enhancing the spirit of cooperation. The jolly time should never turn into a stressful period for families.

And that all boils down to mothers' proper planning and scheduling that could encourage the feeling of cheerfulness in her household.

We are grateful to our mothers for making traditions a beautiful and yet perpetual experience in our mind.

TENDER INVITATION NO. 96/1016

IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO) , Would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of 20,000 MT Anode on tender basis.

Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till

7-April-2018 based on our required instruction to following address:

NO.49,Mollasadra Ave., VanakS Square,Postal Code: 1991614581

Tehran,Iran.Attention: Ms.Emadi **Tel:** +982188049046-7 **Fax:** +982188049045

For obtaining tender's documents and more information, please check: www.iralco.ir

Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminum Company



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Referendum on
hijab out of the
question: Judiciary
chief

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Judiciary Chief Ayatollah d e s k Sadeq Amoli Larijani said on Monday that calling for a referendum on issues such as hijab, whose abandonment according to Islam is haram (forbidden), is absurd.

A number of the country's elites have united with the enemies regarding the issue of hijab, Amoli Larijani said. "Their stance is that the Islamic establishment should hold a referendum on committing a haram act," he stated. He further said that other haram acts are also undebatable. "Tomorrow, they may use the same argument for bars, sinful gatherings, centers of prostitution..., and so on. This is seriously wrong," the top judge remarked.



Ayatollah
Shahabadi
dies at 86

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ayatollah Nasrollah Shahabadi passed away in Baqiyatallah Hospital in Tehran on Monday at the age of 86, IRIB news reported. Ayatollah Shahabadi was a member of the Assembly of Experts, who was elected from Tehran in 2016 with 1,445,142 votes.

He was son of grand Shia cleric Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Shahabadi, Imam Khomeini's teacher. Ayatollah Shahabadi taught religion at Qom seminary.



Iranian embassy
had predicted
attack before it
happened: MP

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Alaeddin Boroujerdi said on Monday that Iran's embassy in London had warned of the possibility of an attack on the embassy before the Friday attack occurred.

However, the British government paid lip service to repeated warnings of the embassy over the past few months to increase security measures for the Islamic Republic's missions, Boroujerdi said, Mehr reported.

The British government must take full responsibility for the attack and fulfill its responsibilities, he added.



Aref urges
reformists
to renounce
extremists

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Reza Aref, the chairman of the pro-reform Hope faction in the parliament, has called on reformists draw a line between themselves and those who do not comply with the constitution.

In an interview with the Khorasan newspaper published on Monday, Aref said the reformists should disown those who oppose the country's values and attempt to overthrow the Islamic Republic.

One of the problems of the reformist movement is that it has succumbed to certain extremist elements within itself who do not believe in the Islamic Revolution, he said, adding that those elements are not true reformists.



IRGC thwarts twin
suicide attack
near border with
Pakistan

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) troops have thwarted a twin suicide attack near the border with Pakistan, killing two suicide bombers.

The assailants tried to attack a border outpost belonging to the IRGC ground force on Sunday night, Sepah news reported on Monday.

It said one of the attackers was using an explosive-laden truck and the other had a suicide belt.

The report also said one of the attackers blew himself up before being captured, wounding two Iranian forces at the Saravan border crossing in the southeastern Sistan-Baluchistan province.



Armenia eager
to boost ties
with Iran:
ambassador

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Armenian ambassador to Tehran has hailed the growing relations between Tehran and Yerevan, saying his country views its ties with the Islamic Republic as a foreign policy priority.

For nearly 27 years, Armenia, as an independent state, has had bilateral ties with Iran, Ambassador Artashes Tumanyan said, Tasnim reported on Monday.

The Armenian envoy further said that in recent years, political, economic and cultural relations between the two countries have developed satisfactorily, emphasizing that the ties would not be affected by the will of a third country

Saudi Arabia is stuck in Yemen quagmire, Iran says



Commenting on the United Arab Emirates' role in the Yemeni conflict, Qassemi said, "The United Arab Emirates is also a partner in the issue of coalition against Yemen and I think that the Emirates' role is remarkable and cannot be ignored. The Emirates, like Saudi Arabia, should be accountable for aggression against Yemen."

Saudi Arabia launched military campaign against Yemen in March 2015 with the aim of eliminating the Yemeni Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstalling the Yemen's former President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, who has close ties with the Saudis. Failing to achieve either of its goals, Riyadh has not stopped bombing Yemeni targets,

“Saudi Arabia has not learned that aggression against another country cannot last long and no one is able to ignore a nation’s determination.”

Knife-wielding man attacks residence of Iran’s envoy to Vienna

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Late on Sunday a knife-wielding man attacked residence of Iran's ambassador to Vienna and was shot dead by police.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Monday that "the assailant was a 26 years old Austrian citizen whose motives are not clear yet."

Qassemi added, "We are making contacts with the Austrian officials in Tehran and Vi-

enna and we hope that the Austrian security forces would reach the necessary conclusion through the investigations they have been doing since last night."

He noted that the incident did not cause any damage to the envoy's house, however, the guard outside the resident was injured and was transferred to hospital.

According to CNN, the 26-year-old Austrian, who has not been named, "died on

the street from his gunshot wounds", police spokesman Harald Soros said

The guard initially used pepper spray against the assailant, Soros added.

The attack, which occurred at around 11:35 p.m. local time, began after the man confronted the guard on duty.

"They started a fight because the aggressor was too close and the soldier shot him at least four times with his handgun," said Soros.



British-Iranian national gets six-year prison term for spying

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — An unnamed British-Iranian national has been sentenced to six years in prison on spying charges, Mizan, the official news agency of Iran's judiciary, reported on Sunday.

The news agency quoted Tehran Prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi announcing the sentencing, though he did not elaborate on what the charges entailed.

So far there had been no known case of a British-Iranian national being sentenced to six years in prison, suggesting this is a new case.

The British Foreign Office said in a statement early Monday it was "currently investigating the reported sentencing," without elaborating.

A number of dual nationals with Western ties have been arrested since Iran's 2015

nuclear deal with world powers.

Iran does not recognize dual nationalities, so those detainees cannot receive consular assistance.

Others with ties to the West detained in Iran include Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian woman serving a five-year prison sentence for allegedly planning the "soft toppling" of Iran's government while traveling with her young daughter.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe was detained in April 2016 and served a third of her sentence by January 2018, making her eligible for release. However, she remains held.

Her family says Zaghari-Ratcliffe remains held as Britain negotiates a settlement with Iran over 400 million pounds (\$530 million) held by London, a payment the late Iranian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi made for Chieftain tanks that were never delivered.

Naming special rapporteur for Iran is ‘ill-intended’: human rights chief

Javad Larijani says Iran “has taken a genuine and long-term approach to safeguard and promote human rights”

1 → "It should be noted that the Human Rights Council has been established to prevent double-standard behaviors," he stated, emphasizing that Iran "has taken a genuine and long-term approach to safeguard and promote human rights at national and international domain."

Pointing to a number of recent achievements in civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in Iran, Larijani said, "I regret to say that the report presented to the Council on behalf of late Ms. Jahanangir, suffers from serious flaws: it lacks any reliable methodology; it is without any acceptable scrutiny algorithm; it is totally biased and functionally evading main limits of the approved mandate."

The top human rights official further said, "The report before us, deliberately avoided any significant reference to human rights promotional policies of the Islamic Republic of

Iran and its cooperation with the international human rights mechanisms. Iran is making unprecedented strides into the new historical stage of democracy, prosperity and the rule of law."

Describing the Iranian society as the source of reform and evolution, Larijani said, "It is obvious that no instrument in human rights barometers is stronger than a government's enthusiasm and commitment to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of its entire nation."

He also elaborated on Iran's judicial system, saying, "In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the issue of fair trial is emphasized in the Constitution, in the criminal procedure law and in other ordinary laws in all stages of the proceedings, from discovery, investigation and trial to the enforcement of judgments, regardless of race, religion, gender, and ethnicity of people under consideration."



"The observance of the principle of innocence and the necessity of the legality of crimes and punishments are taken into account in Article 37 of the Constitution and in Articles 2 and 12 of the Islamic Penal Code. Accordingly, no one shall be convicted in law unless his or her crime is proven in the pertinent competent court," the top rights official explained.

Larijani went on to say, "The current laws

Britain playing ‘Ping-Pong game’ over embassy attack: Shamkhani



1 → Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baedinejad said that the assailants were carrying knives and sticks and chanted slogans against Iranian officials and using bad language against Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman (the caliphs of Mecca) and Aisha, the wife of Prophet Mohammad (S).

The assailants were arrested after around three hours.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's visit to London ended on Friday.

During the visit, huge deals were signed between the two countries.

According to The National, the two countries also agreed a long-anticipated deal for 48 Eurofighter Typhoon fighter jets, worth some \$6.9 billion.

In an interview with IRNA on Sunday, Ambassador Baedinejad said that the British police should explain the reason behind releasing the assailants on bail.

He also said, "The Shirazi cult has

Iran-Pakistan ties ‘emotional’: Zarif

of their border and prevent the infiltration of terrorists," Zarif said in the meeting.

For his part, the Pakistani minister said Islamabad favors "stable borders for the two countries".

The two senior diplomats also held talks on other issues, including joint action for peace in Afghanistan, the war on terrorism and narcotics trafficking, Muslim world issues, banking transaction, power exports, expansion of border markets, and multilateral economic cooperation for regional peace and stability.

In November 2017, Pakistan's chief of army

staff visited Tehran along with high-ranking military delegation for talks with top Iranian officials, including President Hassan Rouhani and Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri.

In 2016, senior officials from Iran and Pakistan signed six memorandums of understanding to strengthen cooperation in various areas, including health, commerce, security and foreign services.

The documents were signed in a ceremony in Islamabad, attended by President Rouhani

and then Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

On the sidelines of his meetings, Zarif also spoke to reporters about the issue of Pakistani pilgrims visiting Iran, saying that problems facing Pakistani pilgrims visiting Iran's holy cities would be resolved.

"We welcome the Pakistani brothers and sisters who travel to Iran for pilgrimage," Zarif told Tasnim in the Pakistani capital.

Zarif arrived in Islamabad on Sunday at the head of a high-ranking political and economic team.

In retaliatory attacks, Yemeni snipers kill several Saudi regime troopers in Jizan

U.S., Saudi forces launch ‘friendship’ war games amid Yemen offensive

by staff & agencies

Yemeni army soldiers, backed by fighters from allied Popular Committees, have reportedly killed several Saudi regime troopers in the kingdom’s southwestern border region of Jizan over the past 24 hours, in retaliation for the Riyadh regime’s military campaign against the crisis-hit country.

Yemeni military sources told Arabic-language al-Masirah television network on Monday that Yemeni forces shot and killed at least three soldiers in Hamdah village in Jizan province, which is located 967 kilometers southwest of the capital Riyadh. A Saudi regime armored vehicle was also completely destroyed in the military operation.

This came a day after at least five Saudi regime soldiers were killed by Yemeni snipers in the same troubled region.

Yemeni forces and their allies also fired a volley of rockets at military bases belonging to the Saudi regime mercenaries.

Separately, a number of militants loyal to former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi were killed during a series of fierce clashes with Yemen’s popular Ansarullah (Houthi) movement across the war-battered country’s provinces of Jawf, Ta’izz and Dali’.

■ Saudi Arabia leads flood of arms imports to Middle East

Meantime, a study shows weapons imports to the Middle East and Asia have soared over the past five years, with the House of Saud regime leading the steep rise amid its bloody war on Yemen. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), arms imports to the Middle East between 2013 and 2017 jumped by 103 percent compared with the previous five-year period.

The House of Saud regime is now the world’s second largest importer of arms after India. The regime registered a 225-percent rise in military purchases - almost all from the United States and Europe - during the period, the study released on Monday said.

American weapons constitute 61 percent



of arms imports to Saudi Arabia and British weapons 23 percent. During the period, the Saudis received 78 combat aircraft, 72 combat helicopters, 328 tanks and 4,000 vehicles, the SIPRI noted.

The same period, it said, saw Israel increasing its arms exports by 55 percent.

“The U.S. and European states remain the main arms exporters to the region and supplied over 98 percent of weapons imported by Saudi Arabia,” it said.

On Friday, the House of Saud regime signed a preliminary deal to buy 48 Typhoon jets worth as much as \$10 billion.

Saudi Arabia already operates more than 70 Typhoon jets. They have been used extensively in the Yemen war, and the deal is likely to spark outrage among rights groups and campaigners.

Arms remain the main component of Britain-Saudi trade and the British government has approved the export of \$6.4 billion in weapons since the start of the war in Yemen, despite allegations that the Saudi regime-led forces have committed war crimes.

Britain has increased its weapons sales

by around 500 percent since March 2015, The Independent reported last November.

Britain and the House of Saud regime agreed to finalize a warplane deal despite protests against Riyadh’s deadly war on Yemen.

Last May, the U.S. President Donald Trump visited Saudi Arabia in his first foreign visit, signing a \$110-billion deal to sell weapons to the kingdom. “Widespread violent conflict in the Middle East and concerns about human rights have led to political debate in Western Europe and North America about restricting arms sales,” said senior SIPRI researcher Pieter Wezeman. “Yet the U.S. and European states remain the main arms exporters to the region and supplied over 98 percent of weapons imported by Saudi Arabia.”

More than 13,600 people have died since the Saudi regime-led invasion began, and Yemen has turned into the scene of the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

■ U.S., Saudi regime forces launch ‘friendship’ war games amid Yemen offensive

The developments followed as the Saudi regime and the U.S. military forces have

launched joint “friendship” war games in the kingdom’s northern region as Riyadh presses ahead with its deadly campaign against Yemen with Washington’s support.

The maneuvers, dubbed Friendship Military Exercises 2018, are due to continue for several days with the announced objective of boosting military ties between the two countries, Saudi state news outlet al-Arabiya reported on Monday. The report further cited Saudi regime military’s Assistant Training Director Brigadier General Mohammed bin Abdullah al-Buqmi as emphasizing “the readiness” of the Saudi regime forces taking part in the drills and equipment “to carry out the exercise activities as planned.”

According to the mostly pictorial report, American forces participating in the war games had arrived in Saudi Arabia “days earlier with all its military personnel and technical equipment,” without elaborating on the sorts of military hardware and the number of troops deployed for the drills.

Since March 2015, the Saudi regime, together with a coalition of its allies, has been striking Yemen. It has been attempting unsuccessfully to reinstall Yemen’s former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh.

More than 13,600 people have so far been killed since the Saudi military invasion of Yemen began, turning the impoverished nation into the scene of the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. Moreover, much of the country’s infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and factories, has been reduced to rubble in the Saudi war. The development comes a day after Yemen’s Prime Minister Abdel-Aziz bin Habtour said in a Press TV interview that the Saudi regime would not be able to carry out airstrikes against the impoverished country without Washington’s active backing.

The United Nations says a record 22.2 million people are in need of food aid, including 8.4 million threatened by severe hunger.

In addition to its logistical support, the U.S. has been lavishing sophisticated weaponry upon Saudi Arabia since March 2015.

‘Pilot error’ blamed for deadly Kathmandu plane crash

At least 49 people have been confirmed dead, when a U.S.-Bangla Airlines plane carrying more than 70 people crashed in an apparent pilot error, at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) in Kathmandu, authorities said.

Manoj Neupane, deputy inspector general for the Nepali police, told Al Jazeera that at least 40 people were killed at the crash site, while nine others died in the hospital.

At least 22 passengers are undergoing treatment in various hospitals in the city, he said.

Raj Kumar Chhetri, general manager at TIA, told Al Jazeera that the aircraft skidded off the runway after landing in the “wrong direction against the order of the control room”.

“The control room had given permission to land from the southern end. But it landed from the northern side after making few rounds in the sky,” he said.

In a press briefing, Imran Asif, CEO (chief executive officer) of the U.S.-Bangla Airlines, said the pilot of the aircraft, Abid Sultan, is injured and is getting treatment.

Asif said the airline suspects that the crash was caused by “a miscommunication” between the pilot and the control tower at the airport. “There is a video on Youtube, which shows the conversation between the pilot and the control tower. Basing on that, we are making this assumption,” he said.

Nepal’s Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has called Bangladesh’s Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to “express sorrow”



following the crash, Bishnu Rimal, Oli’s chief political advisor, said. The Bombardier Dash 8 Q400 aircraft took off from the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka, to the Himalayan capital of Khatmandu on Monday morning.

Images first posted on social media showed workers at the airport standing at the runway and grounds, as thick smoke was seen rising in the background.

Rescuers were later seen crowding around the plane, which was turned upside-down and badly burned.

In Dhaka, Kamrul Hasan, general manager of the U.S.-Bangla airline, said there were 33 Nepali nationals

onboard the flight.

At least 32 others were from Bangladesh, one from China and one from the Maldives.

He said two airline officials were awaiting a flight to Kathmandu to help gather more information about the incident.

Relatives of some of the passengers gathered in front of the U.S.-Bangla Airlines office at Dhaka’s Baridhara district, demanding to know what happened to their family members.

SM Abul Kalam Azad, brother of a government official who was on-board the plane, was crying outside the airline office.

Azad told Al Jazeera he does not know whether his sister, Umme Salima, is alive or dead. Salima, a Planning Ministry official left for Nepal for a three-day official visit.

Meanwhile the embassy of Bangladesh in Kathmandu has opened a hotline for family members and friends of the passengers.

In 2012, at least 19 people were killed after a small plane flying towards Mount Everest crashed on the outskirts of Kathmandu. During the same year, at least 15 people were also killed when a plane taking tourists to the high-altitude airport near Annapurna crashed.

With additional reporting by Roshan Sedhai in Kathmandu and Faisal Mahmud in Dhaka.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Kremlin: Ex-spy poisoning in Britain totally unrelated to Russia

Moscow says it had no role in the poisoning of a former spy in Britain, noting the case is not an issue for the Russian government. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday that Russia was absolutely not interested in pursuing the case of Sergei Skripal who was poisoned along with his daughter earlier this month. Peskov, however, confirmed Skripal was a Russian citizen.

“The Russian citizen you mention ... worked for one of Britain’s special services, the inci-

dent took place on British territory, and it is in no way an issue for Russia, let alone for the Russian leadership,” Peskov said, insisting, “This is not our issue.”

Reports in British media have suggested that Russia was behind the poisoning of Skripal, 66, and his daughter, in the southern city of Salisbury on March 4.

The reports have likened the case to the death of Alexander Litvinenko, who was killed in 2006 after drinking a radioactive cup of

tea. Britain openly blamed Russia in the case, claiming two assassins hired by Russia’s domestic intelligence agency FSB (Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation/ Federal’naya sluzhba bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii) had poisoned Litvinenko.

Skripal was found guilty by a Russian tribunal of selling classified information to Britain’s spy agency MI6 and was imprisoned in Russia in 2006. He was exchanged in a spy swap in 2010. The Russian embassy in Britain has al-

ready protested against the media hype around Skripal’s case. It has demanded the British government thoroughly investigate the case. The Kremlin’s statement came hours before British Prime Minister Theresa May was to make an announcement about the case after chairing a high-profile security meeting. If May decides to level allegations against Russia, that would seriously affect already strained relations between London and Moscow.

(Source: agencies)

Saudi regime used abuse to seize billions during purge: NYT

At least 17 Saudi detainees were subjected to physical abuse during what was termed an anti-corruption campaign that saw the arrest of hundreds of prominent businessmen and princes in November, the New York Times has found. The newspaper interviewed relatives, advisers, associates of the detainees, as well as Saudi regime officials, who denied the allegations.

“Relatives of some of the detainees said they were deprived of sleep, roughed up and interrogated with their heads covered while the government pressured them to sign over large assets,” the article, published on Sunday, said.

According to the newspaper, the 17 detainees were hospitalized after facing abuse, while one Saudi general died in custody. “One person who saw the corpse of the officer, Maj. Gen. Ali al-Qahtani, said that his neck was twisted unnaturally as though it had been broken, and that his body was badly bruised and distended.”

“A doctor and two other people briefed on the condition of the body said that it had burn marks that appeared to be from electric shocks,” the newspaper said.

Major General al-Qahtani was an aide to the son of the late Saudi King Abdullah. In response to questions by the New York Times about the claims of abuse, an official at the Saudi Embassy in Washington, DC, told the newspaper: “All



allegations of abuse and torture of those investigated during the anti-corruption proceedings are absolutely untrue.”

The official added that the detainees had “full access” to legal counsel and medical care.

In early November 2017, the House of Saud regime launched what they called an “anti-corruption” crackdown led by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS).

At least 380 people were held for questioning, while 65 were held in custody at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in the capital

Riyadh. Those arrested included Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, a billionaire businessman with stakes in companies such as Twitter, Inc, as well as Nasser bin Aqeel al-Tayyar, a board member of Saudi Arabia’s biggest travel company, Prince Mitaab bin Abdullah, the head of the National Guard, and Adel Fahiq, the minister of economy. Most of those detained were released after several months. The kingdom said it seized billions in various types of assets including real estate, commercial entities and cash.

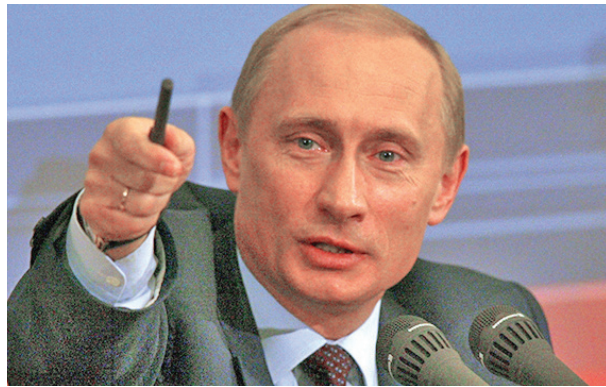
Saudi regime officials said the crackdown, which came through royal decree, was in response to “exploitation by some of the weak souls who have put their own interests above the public interest, in order to illicitly accrue money”. Citing an associate of King Abdullah’s family, the New York Times said part of the campaign “appears to be driven by a family feud, as Crown Prince Mohammed presses the children of King Abdullah, the monarch who died in 2015, to give back billions of dollars that they consider their inheritance”.

According to former detainees quoted by the newspaper, many are being forced to wear tracking devices on their ankles.

“We signed away everything,” a relative of a former detainee, said. “Even the house I am in, I am not sure if it is still mine.”

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Putin ordered passenger plane to be shot down after Olympics bomb threat in 2014



Russia’s Vladimir Putin in 2014 ordered a passenger aircraft which was reported to be carrying a bomb and targeting the opening of the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi to be downed, the president said in a film shown on Sunday.

In a 2-hour documentary titled “Putin” and available on Russian social media, Putin told reporter Andrey Kondrashov he received a telephone call from security officers responsible for the Sochi Olympics on Feb. 7, 2014, shortly before the opening ceremony was due to start.

“I was told: a plane en route from Ukraine to Istanbul was seized, captors demand landing in Sochi,” Putin said in the film seen by Reuters.

The pilots of a Turkish Pegasus Airlines Boeing 737-800 flying from Kharkiv to Istanbul reported that one of the passengers had a bomb and the plane had to change course to Sochi, Kondrashov said in the film.

There were 110 passengers onboard, while over 40,000 people had gathered at the stadium to watch the opening ceremony, the reporter said.

Putin said he sought advice from security officers and was told the emergency plan for that type of situation called for the plane to be shot down.

“I told them: act according to the plan,” Putin said, adding that shortly afterwards he arrived at the Olympic venue with the International Olympic Committee officials.

After several minutes Putin received another call, he said, informing him that it was a false alarm - the passenger was drunk and the plane would continue its flight to Turkey.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Sunday confirmed the comments in the film.

Putin runs for the presidency next Sunday, March 18.

The country is on a high alert ahead of the football World Cup from June 14 to July 15, with matches in a number of cities.

(Source: agencies)

Trump tells voters to ignore his low approval ratings



The United States President Donald Trump says he is more popular than his predecessor Barack Obama and American voters should ignore polls that report him having low approval ratings.

Trump took to his twitter account on Sunday to claim that, unlike what Democratic-leaning media claim, he had an approval rating of around 50 percent.

“Rasmussen and others have my approval ratings at around 50%, which is higher than Obama, and yet the political pundits love saying my approval ratings are ‘somewhat low,’” he wrote.

“They know they are lying when they say it. Turn off the show - FAKE NEWS!” the Republican president added.

The claim was proven wrong as Rsmussen’s official website put Trump’s approval rating at 44 percent, 6 points less than what the president had claimed.

In late February, a CNN poll found that some 35 percent of the U.S. voters approved of the job Trump was doing, five percent less than January, when strong economic outlooks bumped up Trump’s numbers.

Trump’s approval rating, according to the CNN poll, was lower than his three immediate predecessors –Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton -- at the same point in their presidency.

The previous low was held by former President Obama, whose lowest first-year number stood 14 points higher than Trump’s, at 49 percent. Trump is 12 behind the previous low mark of 47 percent set by former Presidents Ronald Reagan in 1982 and Jimmy Carter in early 1978.

The new numbers matched his approval ratings in December, his lowest in a CNN polling since sworn into the White House in January last year.

Another recent poll by Politico/Morning Consult, released on Wednesday, brought more bad news for the president and his supporters by suggesting that currently, Trump would not be able to beat a generic Democrat candidate in a survey, let alone major names such as former Vice President Joe Biden and popular TV host Oprah Winfrey.

The poll showed Trump had a 36-percent chance for victory while a generic Democrat candidate stood a 44 percent chance.

(Source: Press TV)

STOCK MARKET	
TEDPIX	96194.2
IFX	1082.33
Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir	

CURRENCIES	
USD	48,230 rials
EUR	57,730 rials
GBP	68,870 rials
AED	13,400 rials
Source: mehrnews.com	

COMMODITIES	
WTI	62.18/b
Brent	65.65/b
OPEC Basket	61.85/b
Gold	\$1,317.20/oz
Silver	\$16.50/oz
Platinum	\$969.85/oz
Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com	

\$20b is gathering dust in Iranian homes in anticipation of rial devaluation

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Encouraged by the continuous tumble in the country’s currency value, Iranians have flock to buy U.S. currency in anticipation of further depreciations, Tasnim reported quoting a member of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis)’s Economic Committee.



According to Masoumeh Aqa-Pourshahi, who cited unofficial data, Iranians are keeping over 20 billion U.S. dollars at their homes.

Iran has been dealing with an ever-increasing devaluation of its currency (rial) since the beginning of the present Iranian calendar (March 21, 2017), this has recently caused the U.S. dollar to jump to almost 50,000 rials in Tehran’s currency exchange shops.

Some scholars believe that the recent rial depreciation can be the result of government’s decision to benefit from the difference between the official and free market rates as a temporary solution to compensate for the wide budget deficit and some blame Central Bank of Iran (CBI) for the volatility.

Exports of sweets, chocolate up 21% on year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – The value of Iran’s sweet and chocolate exports increased by 21 percent in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2017- February 19,2018) compared to the previous year.



The exports of the mentioned foodstuff rose by 121 percent in terms of weight, IRNA reported on Monday citing Trade Promotion Organization (TPO).

According to TPO, some 513,000 tons of sweets and chocolates worth \$615 million were exported to the world markets.

South Korea will ‘deploy all possible means’ to respond to U.S. tariff

SEOUL (Reuters) — South Korea will “deploy all possible means” to respond to U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, the country’s finance minister said.

Last week, Trump pressed ahead with steep import tariffs of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent for aluminum, but exempted Canada and Mexico and offered the possibility of excluding other allies, backtracking from an earlier “no-exceptions” stance.

South Korea, the third-largest steel exporter to the United States and a strategic ally on the Korean peninsula, has already put in a request for a waiver.

“We will make clear what our stance is,” Finance Minister Kim Dong-yeon said on Monday during a policy meeting in Seoul.

“(The government) will deploy all possible means to respond to U.S. steel tariffs measures and make an all-out effort,” he added, without elaborating.

South Korea’s minister for trade, Kim Hyun-chong, who has visited the United States twice in recent weeks to seek ways to minimize the damage to South Korean steelmakers, will depart for the United States on Tuesday, a ministry spokeswoman said.

Port development projects worth \$205m implemented in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Some 40 projects have been implemented at the cost of 9.859 trillion rials (about \$205 million) for developing and equipping the ports of Iran in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21, 2017), according to the head of Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO).

Addressing a press conference on Monday, Mohammad Rastad elaborated on the measures taken by his organization since the beginning of current year and said 7.480 trillion rials (about \$155 million) of investment has been made for equipping the ports, the portal of Transport Ministry reported.

The official further put the weight of commodities loaded and unloaded in the ports at 142 million tons during the eleven-month period ended on February 19, and said the

figure shows seven-percent rise from the figure of the same period of time in the past year.

Meanwhile, transit and transshipment of non-oil goods have risen 26 percent and 13 percent, respectively, within the mentioned time span, he added and announced about six-percent growth in the capacity of the vessels.

Rastad went on to say that some 6.24 trillion rials (about \$130 million) of investment has been attracted from the private sector in the framework of 16 contracts.

The PMO head further underlined inauguration of the first phase of Shahid Beheshti Port, an extension to the strategic Chabahar Port on the Gulf of Oman, in the present of President Hassan Rouhani in early December as one of the major achievements of his organization in this calendar year.



Pakistan welcomes Iran’s call for expansion of trade ties

1 → During the business forum, Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif who co-chaired the forum with his Iranian counterpart, welcomed Zarif’s suggestion for bolstering mutual trade relations.

“The Pakistani government is already working on strengthening cooperation between the two countries’ chambers of commerce,” he said.

The Pakistani minister noted that the two countries’ trade has accelerated significantly in the past two years and now both sides are willing to take necessary measures to boost the worth of trade to the ideal of \$5 billion.

Asif further underlined the importance of banking relations in facilitating trade and noted that the two countries’ central banks are holding serious talks on



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (3rd L) and Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif (3rd R) co-chaired Iran-Pakistan business forum in Islamabad on Monday.

allocation of bilateral facilities.

“Significant progress has been made,” he said. The official also suggested holding joint trade fairs and exhibitions in order to facilitate the interactions and acquaintance of the two countries businessmen.

Iran ready to supply energy to Pakistan Iranian foreign minister for his part noted that Iran is ready to supply Pakistan’s energy needs including oil, gas and electricity.

“There are lots of areas for mutual cooperation among which energy can be mentioned,” Zarif said.

Zarif further expressed hope that the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project on which Iran has invested \$2 billion will come to an ideal conclusion.

Oil, briefly up on lower rig counts, falls on U.S. output outlook

Oil prices fell on Monday on expectations that U.S. output will rise this year, erasing earlier gains buoyed by lower weekly U.S. rig counts and falling U.S. unemployment.

Brent crude futures were at \$65.11 per barrel at 0920 GMT, down 38 cents from their previous close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures fell 27 cents to \$61.77 a barrel. Helping the dip, hedge funds and money

managers cut their bullish wagers on U.S. crude oil for the first time in three weeks, data showed on Friday.

The reduction came as gross short positions on the New York Mercantile Exchange 3067651MSHT climbed to their highest level in nearly a month.

“Rising production and inventory in the United States has been reducing fund sentiment since it peaked at the end of

January,” ING said in a note.

Crude prices had risen on Friday and earlier on Monday after the U.S. economy added the biggest number of jobs in more than 1-1/2 years in February.

In oil markets, U.S. energy companies last week cut oil rigs for the first time in almost two months RIG-OL-USA-BHI, with drillers cutting back four rigs, to 796, Baker Hughes energy services firm

said on Friday.

Despite the lower rig count, which is an early indicator of future output, activity remains much higher than a year ago. Then, 617 rigs were active, and most analysts expect U.S. crude oil production, which has already risen by over a fifth since mid-2016, to 10.37 million barrels per day (bpd), to expand further.

(Source: Reuters)

European shares shot up across the board, following their Asian counterparts, while emerging market currencies strengthened as investors bought up so-called riskier assets and sold “safe haven” securities such as gold and government bonds.

Markets have been cheering Friday’s U.S. nonfarm payrolls data which showed a hefty 313,000 rise in jobs, but also revealed that annual growth in average hourly earnings had slowed to 2.6 percent after spiking in January.

This suggested that the world’s largest economy is experiencing a combination of high growth and low inflation, referred to in the market as a “Goldilocks” trend; giving investors an incentive to buy assets such as equities and high-yield bonds without having to fear tighter central bank policy.

“Friday’s U.S. employment data was about as perfect a set of figures as you can get from a policy maker’s point of view. The increase in jobs was nothing short of amazing,” said Marshall Gittler, a strategist at ACLS Global, a currency brokerage.

“In other words, it was a ‘Goldilocks’ report: not too hot, not too cold, just right.”

As a result, the S&P500 surged more than 1.7 percent on Friday — its second-best day of the year so far — and the warm glow extended around the globe on Monday.

Germany’s DAX led gains in Europe, rising 0.9 percent, and MSCI’s world equity index, which tracks shares in 47



countries, hit a two-week high.

Earlier, MSCI’s index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan climbed 1.3 percent, poised for a third session of gains.

South Korea rose 1 percent, while Australia’s main index added 0.7 percent, boosted by mining shares on news that Australia could be exempt from new U.S. trade tariffs on steel and aluminum imports.

Concerns over those tariffs have been weighing on European stocks, with the main pan-European stock index hitting

‘No-deal Brexit’ annual cost could reach £58b for UK, EU companies

Companies in Britain and the European Union face an extra £58 billion in annual costs if there is a no-deal Brexit, with Britain’s vast financial sector set to be the worst-hit industry, according to a report on Monday.

Firms across the EU’s 27 countries other than Britain will have to pay £31 billion a year in tariff and non-tariff barriers if Britain leaves the bloc without a deal, the report by Oliver Wyman management consultants and law firm Clifford Chance said.

In return, British exporters to the EU will have to pay £27 billion a year.

“These increased costs and uncertainty threaten to reduce profitability and pose existential threats to some businesses,” the report said.

Britain is due to leave the EU next year after voting in favor of ending more than four decades of political, economic and legal ties with the world’s largest trading bloc.

In the absence of an agreement, trade between Britain and the other 27 EU members would default to World Trade Organization rules and tariffs, a sharp contrast to the access the UK has enjoyed as a member of the EU’s single market.

Although Britain wants a deal, the government says it is preparing for any outcome, including the chance that Britain could crash out of the bloc without a deal. It has set aside £3 billion pounds to prepare for all eventualities.

If Britain stays in a form of a customs union it would reduce the costs for both sides by about half, the report said.

However, Prime Minister Theresa May has ruled out keeping Britain in an EU customs union because it would prevent the country from striking its own trade deals with fast-growing economies such as China and India.

(Source: The National)

First 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 60,000 M/Ts 10 pct M/L raw sugar 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 13.03.2018 until 19.03.2018 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 17.04.2018 to the Tender secretariat located on the 7th floor. The bid’s envelope will be opened at 15:00 on 17.04.2018 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 327,487 (IRR 15,192,133,000) .

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.

For more information, you may refer to our website WWW.GTC-PORTAL.COM or contact us by phone No.00982188957477

(Foreign Trade Department).



we're still at the beginning of our journey

This special interview is part of a dialogue devoted to the celebration of the seventh anniversary the opening of Tanin Peak Sabalan Co.

Mr. Safa Seraj Mahdizadeh, Managing Director of Tanin Peak Sabalan Co. has been featured in this interview to highlight the key challenges facing his company and the opportunities ahead for the sports industry.

■ Please tell me at the beginning of your company and factory history.

First of all, Tanin Peak Sabalan Company was established in 2008 with the production and self-sufficiency of producing sports products, developing and improving the quality of domestic products. The first production stage included of all Rubber and leather sport balls, which were completed with the full line and the latest machines and in seven development phases in a 25,000 square-meter complex with the presence of the Sports Minister and In the future Clothing and other Sports accessories will be produced in this complex.

■ Consider your company's key goals in light of your company's growing prospects. In recent years Tanin Peak Sabalan (beta) has been paying more attention to accelerating service delivery and product quality. We have studied the determination of competitive advantage, market judgments, and customers, and believe that we will look more closely at customer-related issues, in which case we will be closer to the reality of the market. In terms of current values in our company, I can say:

Some corporations are governed by rules, some with hierarchy, but Tanin Peak Sabalan's spell goes along with the rules, with values. Simple but fundamental values that we try to share with our shareholders, our employees and our customers. These values are our guide in all of our mutual communications.

I'll go through the following:

● Being Privileged

We want to be the leader. The privilege of Tanin Peak Sabalan's resonance is the endless passion for innovation and continuous improvement in the quality of products and services.

● Value creation

Our goal is to accurately understand the needs of our customers and move towards responding to these needs, so that customers become highly productive organizations. Our way of working is to establish long-term relationships through credible and continuous accountability to our customers and value for them.

● Responsibility

Our goal is to create an environment that which people who are self-confident, hardworking and Effective, Vital, honest, and whoever sees the organizational and social responsibilities of their own behaviors and best practices.

● Respect for obligations

Respect our commitment to our customers, shareholders and employees, and we trust them. We are proud to be recognized as a best business partner for all of our partners.

■ As you mentioned in the first question, what plans do you have for the future?

One of our most important programs is the production of sports clothes and other sporting goods in this complex. We also intend to create new production lines for sewing balls and improve product quality in order to obtain credible international licenses and presence in diverse markets.

■ Since your company is paying special attention to the future of the sports industry, please tell your big goals about this industry.

Our future program is to design and manufacture smart soccer balls and obtain international certificates and international organizations licenses.

■ While non-oil exports are important for the country (IRAN) What is your Company's program for foreign exports?

Due to the importance of exports to the economy of the country, over the past two years, we have conducted extensive research on markets in different countries to consider countries with higher economic prospects. Our first phase is neighboring countries such as Iraq, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates And Central Asian countries, and our long-term program includes European, African and South American countries.

■ Human resources are well-known in organizations that are renowned for thinking. In the minds of managers of these organizations, manpower is the strategic asset of the organization, what do you think about your manpower or your staff?

Expert human power is the most important capital of any knowledge-based organization. What is the apex of the Tanin Peak sabalan (Beta Sports Balls) is the presence of a powerful and expert manpower, based on market needs, in a knowledge-based and friendly environment, seeking to provide the best solutions, products and services to customers. Our effort has been to create an interactive environment based on continuous learning. Organizing specialized courses in this company based on current needs, and setting base the future of our colleagues based on the career path and the path to success, as well as obtaining specialized certificates in their field of activity, is one of our core programs in the field of education. The idea of graduation is obsolete by companies that need training for their human powers. We want to provide opportunities for our employees to improve their skills and knowledge during work. Employees who apply for training courses that are even unrelated to their work can be fruitful for our portfolio in the future.

Our company intends to implement a culture of work coincident with education in this complex, which does not necessarily need to leave the company to continue their education opportunities.

We call this a "Back to school again" scheme.

■ Because in today's world productivity is synonymous with progress, what are your company policies to increase productivity in

your production?

We think efforts to improve and benefit from various sources such as labor, materials, energy and information are the goal of all economic managers and industrial production units and service providers. The existence of an appropriate organizational structure, efficient practices, healthy equipment and tools, a suitable work space, and above all, qualified human resources are among the basic requirements that should be presented to managers in order to achieve optimal productivity. Employee participation in targeted efforts and discipline can affect productivity. The spirit of the culture of productivity improvement should be institutionalized and the promotion of productivity should be considered as a combination of different factors. Improving productivity requires comprehensive and planned efforts by individuals and authorities that need to improve working conditions and change employee incentives, improve systems, rules, guidelines, procedures, and so on. Here are some of the important things that have been considered to improve our company's productivity:

- High quality work life
- Ability to learn and use new skills
- Creating social cohesion in the organization
- Provide opportunities for employee growth and improvement
- Individual rights maintenance
- Balance in the division of work and Rest time
- Create experiences and organizational pride
- Establish a proper payment system based on performance and create a system of encouragement and punishment
- -Improvement the systems and methods that play a vital role
- An attempt to use employee feedback on decision making and plotting goals and plans

■ Due to the lack of attention to the importance of the sports industry in Iran, what is your opinion about the industry in the country?

sport in the twenty-first century has faced numerous demands and limitations, and has provided the groundwork for business development by creating demand for sporting goods and creating attractiveness for communities. Therefore, the production of sports equipment and services and the provision of sports services have helped to boost economic activity and improve the development of sports. Exercise plays a role as a commodity or product in the economic system of the community. The ever-increasing demand from countries for the purchase of quality equipment and equipment has led international companies in the field of the production and trading of goods, equipment, and sports equipment. Nationality in many countries.

The fact that the engine industry is the driving force behind production and economic development, among which the sport industry as a thriving and rich industry has become active in the field of economic exchanges. The sports industry is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world, with several hundred billion dollars being the annual financial exchanges of the industry. In some countries, there are two times than automotive industry and seven times the size of the cinema industry in the sports industry. The gross annual income of the sports industry in the world in the sectors of production and consumption of goods and services is estimated at over \$ 350 billion a year, accounting for more than three percent of the global economy.

So business and sports are explicitly partnered. They shape each other and form a pattern of co-operation that supports their bilateral development. Increasing production and revenue is at the forefront of the economic programs of different countries, and achieving this requires the recognition of the value of production of various sectors of the economy. Meanwhile, the process of globalization and the expansion of consumer markets, as well as increasing the number of rivals and the intensity of competition, has given impor-

tance to concepts such as competitiveness. Many factors in our country have led many industries to not easily compete with other similar products in such a way as to affect the increasing competitiveness of companies and firms in the market.

These include quality, cost, capital, know-how, technology and the absence of tangible supportive laws in the industry. Hence, producers of products and equipment through the production, creation and exchange of products and values with others, as well as the production of quality products, can provide the competitive environment with the most benefit to them; in other words, It can be said that investing in the production of sports products and sports services, on the one hand, creates employment and, on the other hand, adds to GDP.

This will boost economic and social prosperity. However, sport Goods makers face many challenges and obstacles in the business and the environment. Failure to support the government in a variety of ways, such as the lack of allocation of suitable facilities for the development of production, high prices of raw materials and the low supply of raw materials in the market, increased energy costs, especially after targeting subsidies that raise the price Products; and preventing unnecessary entry of non-quality external goods, including these barriers.

■ We have to admit that our country has not made any significant progress, despite all the efforts that have been made to expand entrepreneurship over the last few years, from establishing institutions and associations to the inclusion of educational programs in schools and universities. What are your suggestions for improving and removing barriers to entrepreneurship development in the country? Considering the importance of the subject you mentioned, the following is recommended to improve the entrepreneurship environment in the country:

- 1) Improve of bank rules and regulations, such as reducing the requirements and steps for providing bank facilities with a suitable bank interest rate for emerging and emerging companies.
- 2) Modifying and reviewing the labor law with the entrepreneurial approach and firm sustainability (neither the working class approach nor the employer-class approach)
- 3) Modifying the rules of trade, export and import with the entrepreneurial approach
- 4) Reduce administrative bureaucracy in government agencies and institutions, such as municipalities, the environment, corporate registries, etc., which are dedicated to issuing legal licenses for entrepreneurs and business owners.
- 5) Development of office automation in organizations and government agencies to facilitate and eliminate unnecessary administrative processes.
- 6) Entrepreneurship training at elementary, secondary, high school and college level
- 7) Development of independent investment funds at the national and provincial level with the support of government agencies and the use of financial resources for retirement and

social security institutions

8) Development of entrepreneurship culture through the and production of documentary, cinematic, cartoon about the biography and success of Iranian entrepreneurs and innovators.

9) Replacing system thinking and systematic attitude rather than individual-centered thinking

■ Work culture among scholars has always been considered as the greatest prerequisite for comprehensive development, so what is your opinion about the culture of work in Iran?

To accelerate the movement towards economic flourishing, supporting a positive and desirable work culture is needed. Therefore, the state of work culture must be transformed by intervening with well-known factors of work culture and trends, insights and knowledge necessary for work in society and organizations. It is recommended that we use internal and external values to develop and enhance the work culture. Indeed, in spite of some ideas in the community, they have not yet taken action to enforce them.

The experience of successful organizations in the other countries shows that, despite environmental factors, there are many positive developments in the organizations, and these developments can be the basis for broad advances across the entire society. The culture of work provides useful and effective use of human and material resources and has beneficial effects in terms of productivity and gaining competitive advantage.

■ What are your environmental protection measures, given the importance of the environmental issue?

Tanin Peak Sabalan Co is one of the greenest sport Goods producers. At the same time, we strive for a culture of environmental responsibility and practical measures such as strengthening conservation of resources and energy and the presence and support of conferences, symposiums, etc., and helping to protect the environment, the country's living and sustainable development.

Achievements:

- Receipt of the show at the 11th International Exhibition of Sports and Equipment 2012
- Industrial Premium unit in year 2010
- Province Premium unit in the year 2012
- Top Entrepreneur of the Year 2013
- Provincial industrial Premium unit in year 2013
- Provincial industrial Premium unit in year 2016
- A successful unit in advancing the culture of work safety and health
- The province's qualitative selection unit from the Ardebil Standard Office in 2016 and 2017
- Get ISO 9001: 2008 certification
- Get a R & D certificate from the Ministry of Mining and Commerce
- Receiving a provincial statute and certificate of observance of consumer rights in 2016
- Receipt of quality certification for medical equipment - at a weight of 1-1/5- 2-3-4-5 kg from the sports federation
- Getting the standard license application for all manufactured products

Thank you for your presence and wish more success for you and your successful complex



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Erdogan is transforming Turkey into a totalitarian prison

In Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the tweet has been turned into a crime, and a troubled democracy is being turned into a dictatorship. Gradually but inexorably, a nation that once aspired to be an exemplar of enlightened moderation is being transformed by Mr. Erdogan into a dreary totalitarian prison. In the latest setback, last week, 23 journalists were sentenced to prison for between two and seven years on patently ridiculous charges that they were members of a terrorist organization and had tweeted about it. Two others were convicted on lesser charges of supporting a terrorist organization.



Mr. Erdogan, the target of a failed coup attempt in July 2016, has embarked on a campaign of repression against perceived enemies in the press, government, academia and law enforcement, among other pillars of Turkish society. More than 60,000 people have been arrested and 150,000 forced from their jobs. Mr. Erdogan's prime targets are the perceived followers of the opposition cleric Fethullah Gulen, who now lives in Pennsylvania. Mr. Erdogan claims Mr. Gulen — once his ally in Turkish politics — had incited the coup attempt, hence the charge of a "terrorist organization." Mr. Gulen denies it.

Turkey once had a robust, independent press, but Mr. Erdogan has waged a multifront campaign: closing media outlets, forcing others into new ownership, and using friendly judges and prosecutors. In the latest cases, some reporters and editors were convicted for what they said on Twitter. A lawyer representing two journalists, Baris Topuk, said at an earlier hearing: "In our opinion, the name of the organization in which the defendants are accused of being members should be TTO: Tweetist Terrorist Organization. There are no weapons or bombs in the case, only news articles and tweets." Ali Akkus, who was news editor of the now-defunct Zaman daily, had said on Twitter, "No dictator can silence the press." The use of the word "dictator" was singled out by a prosecutor in the charges against him. Mr. Akkus received a sentence of seven years and six months in prison.

Cuma Ulus, the editor of the daily Millet, got the same sentence and declared earlier during the proceedings: "I have been a journalist for 21 years. I stood against terrorism and violence, [and] defended expression of freedom during all my life." In the indictment, prosecutors cited three tweets and 22 retweets, accusing him of stirring up frenzy against the government.

Separately, 17 current and former writers, cartoonists and executives from the Cumhuriyet newspaper are also on trial. Mr. Erdogan is reportedly planning an assault on Internet broadcasting and free expression online, as well.

The show trials underscore how far Turkey has fallen from Western norms of democracy, human rights and rule of law. Mr. Erdogan's dictatorship must be called out for what it is. Even if he covers his ears, the United States and other nations must protest, and loudly.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Never again, Holocaust Museum tells Burmese leader

The decision by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to rescind its human-rights award to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is sad, and proper.

Few people in modern times had evoked as much admiration and support as the courageous daughter of Myanmar's founding father when she defied the dictatorial junta in Myanmar through 15 years of house arrest.

And few people have been as disappointing in their subsequent failure to act against, or even to acknowledge, the horrific persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority in her country.

"We had hoped that you — as someone we and many others have celebrated for your commitment to human dignity and universal human rights — would have done something to condemn and stop the military's brutal campaign and to express solidarity with the targeted Rohingya population," the Holocaust Museum wrote in an open letter explaining why it was taking back the Elie Wiesel Award it had presented five years earlier.

Instead, the letter said, the ruling party Ms.

Aung San Suu Kyi leads refused to cooperate with United Nations investigators, used "hateful rhetoric" against the Rohingya and cracked down on journalists trying to report on the vicious suppression of the group.

■ Pressure on Suu

Like many other former admirers of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, the museum said it understood the pressures on her from a military establishment that still holds most of the country's power, and a Buddhist majority which regards the Rohingya as trespassers who have no historic place in Myanmar.

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh to escape a campaign of execution, rape and arson, which the United Nations and the United States have termed ethnic cleansing.

Sadly, there is little to suggest that Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi has been coerced into silence, and far more evidence that she shares the Buddhist nationalism that is behind the military repression of the Rohingya.

By many accounts, she has been furious when international visitors have raised the Rohingya issue with her, and has disparaged human rights groups and international media organizations over how the disastrous treatment of the Rohingya is presented to the world.

■ Rohingya crisis

In January, Bill Richardson, a former governor of New Mexico and longtime friend of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, resigned from Myanmar's advisory board on the Rohingya crisis, calling it a pro-government "cheerleading squad" and accusing her of an "arrogance of power."

Other former supporters, including the Nobel laureates Desmond Tutu and Malala Yousafzai, have publicly censured Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi.

The Holocaust Museum's action is a sorrowful witness to the fall of a hero, but also to the real face of the enemy the Rohingya face in their land.

The United States has already imposed sanctions on many generals and others accused of crimes against the Rohingya, and the United Nations and other nations should urgently add to the pressure.

(Source: The NYT)

Saudi crown prince comes to Washington

By Bruce Riedel

Saudi Crown Prince and Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman is buoyed by his successful visits to Cairo and London as he comes to Washington. Riyadh is sticking to its hardline foreign policy and expects complete support from the Trump administration. But unstated are Saudi concerns about the scandals and chaos surrounding the administration and their potential consequences.

The crown prince is eager to secure international support for his tough line toward Iran and Qatar and his 3-year-old war in Yemen. The Saudis have broken ties with both Tehran and Doha since King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud ascended the throne. Prince Mohammed has hinted that the Saudis want regime change in both. Mohammed stars in a Saudi video that shows him leading a victorious Saudi army into Tehran; the video has gone viral in the region. Saudi forces enforce the land blockade of Qatar and Riyadh makes no secret it wants a change in the emirate.

But the prince just sacked the top commanders of the Saudi military. The joint chiefs of staff were fired this month with no warning. Mohammed, who is the mastermind of the Yemeni war, was frustrated that despite an enormous defense budget, the Saudi armed forces' performance in Yemen has been unimpressive at best. Despite occasional local successes, the war is an expensive quagmire with no end in sight. The Saudi army has barely crossed the border. The Saudis seem determined to continue trying for a military solution and Mohammed says his new generals will be "believers," presumably in him.

In Cairo, the Egyptians supported Mohammed's regional agenda completely and finalized the legal process for the turnover of two islands in the Straits of Tiran to Saudi control. The territory transfer is deeply unpopular in Egypt but it is the price for Saudi financial support. The Egyptians support the Yemeni war but have ruled out sending troops to fight there. Egyptians know from bitter experience the folly of trying to conquer Yemen's Zaydi tribes.

In London, the war in Yemen and UK support for it is opposed by the Labor opposition and much of the public. The prince has been accused of deliberately starving the Yemeni



Mohammed, who is the mastermind of the Yemeni war, was frustrated that despite an enormous defense budget, the Saudi armed forces' performance in Yemen has been unimpressive at best.

people and engaging in war crimes. But the highlight of the prince's visit was the announcement of a preliminary agreement for the purchase of 48 Typhoon jet fighters for the Royal Saudi Air Force. If completed, it will be the largest arms deal since Mohammed became defense minister by far. The Saudi media, controlled by the country's royal court, trumpeted the prince as the victor in the "battle of London" over the British critics.

The Saudi relationship with the Trump team is closer than with any president since George H.W. Bush and the liberation of Kuwait. Since last year's May summit, Washington has praised the elevation of Mohammed to heir apparent and endorsed his Vision 2030 plan to modernize the kingdom. The decision to let women drive in the kingdom rightly enjoys wide support.

Other policies are much more controversial. His anti-corruption drive in November was endorsed by U.S. President Donald Trump but castigated in the Western media as a clumsy shakedown with little legitimacy. The whole affair is likely to produce more unseemly revelations. Human rights activists have noted that executions have doubled in the kingdom since Mohammed became crown prince. The long-promised opening of ARAMCO to foreign investment, the centerpiece of Vision 2030, is now put off to 2019.

As Al-Monitor has reported, opposition to U.S. support for the war in Yemen is strengthening in the Senate. The Democrats who were reluctant to criticize the U.S. posture when Barack Obama was in office are much less constrained now and more attentive to the humanitarian disaster the war has cre-

ated. The Saudis have successfully blocked most media coverage of the war but even the White House has cautioned Riyadh to ease the blockade.

Behind the formal meetings and official statements, the Saudis will try quietly to evaluate the future of the Trump team. The removal of Jared Kushner's top-secret clearance and the mounting legal jeopardy surrounding his future imperil the prince's most valued interlocutor. The money trail to Kushner is under investigation. Trashing Obama, a Saudi favorite pastime, is not a smart long-term approach to a democracy. The prince has little experience with the complexities of America's politics, which are more complicated than ever in the Trump era. All the more reason to take stock.

(Source: Al Monitor)

China, the South China Sea and North Korea

By Quinn Marschik

The USS Carl Vinson's port call to Danang, Vietnam, the first port call of its kind since the Vietnam War, is aimed at China's posture in the South China Sea and will no doubt elicit criticism from Beijing. This comes at a time when the United States increasingly needs China's help to resolve the North Korean nuclear weapons and missile issue. Given that China's help may be necessary to resolve the North Korea nuclear crisis, Washington should not request China's help to squeeze Pyongyang while simultaneously antagonizing Beijing in the South China Sea. Instead, the United States could be better served on the North Korea issue by engaging in further diplomacy before resorting to a more muscular foreign policy in the South China Sea vis-à-vis Beijing.

There are two problems with the current U.S. strategy in the South China Sea. Although the United States has sent other naval vessels on similar visits to Vietnam, the visit of an aircraft carrier is a power signal that Beijing will not overlook. An aircraft carrier is a tool of power projection and, for the United States, a machine that will make "[its] enemies shake with fear." Therefore, China will view the visit of a U.S. aircraft carrier to Vietnam as a continued challenge to its sovereignty in the South China Sea and a further escalation of the ongoing competition with the United States for primacy in the Asia-Pacific.

Perhaps more importantly, American shows of force are unlikely to reverse or even halt China's gains in the South China Sea. According to the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, China has almost completed its defensive and reconnaissance structures in the Spratly and Paracel Islands. These structures will be able to support dozens of combat aircraft and ships, as well as coastal artillery and other military supplies, which can assist Beijing in establishing an air defense identification zone above the South China Sea and in defending the sea lines of communication necessary for China's economic growth.

Since U.S. military actions will only enflame tensions with China and fail to change the facts on the ground in the South China Sea, here is what the United States should do to encourage China to work better with us in resolving the North Korea crisis:

The first step is for the United States to declare support for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-China framework for a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea (COC). While the United States has acknowledged the framework, it has provided suggestions for the COC's future without endorsing the mutually agreed framework. Declaring support for the joint ASEAN-Chinese effort would help reduce tensions between the United States and China. It would also signal that Washington values Beijing as a diplomatic partner that can make a meaningful contribution to the North Korea crisis negotiations.

In conjunction with announcing support for the COC's framework, the United States ought to publicly reiterate its long-time policy of neutrality in the South China Sea dispute. Since China and the Chinese people care about public statements, reaffirming Washington's neutrality in the South China Sea may not only reassure the Chinese government of the United States' willingness to avoid confrontation, but also build trust for critical diplomacy regarding North Korea.

IN THE NAME OF GOD



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	%C Min	%C Max
Low carbon	0.01	0.07
High carbon	0.15	0.3

MOLD DIMENSION			
Thickness(mm)		Width (mm)	
Min	Max	Min	Max
200	250	800	1250

Casting speed(m/min)			
Thickness:200mm		Thickness:250mm	
Min	Max	Min	Max
0.7	1.1	0.5	0.9

INTRESTED BIDDERS MAY OBTAIN SET OF DOCUMENTS, CONTAINING THE RELEVANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS BY SUBMISSION OF A WRITTEN APLICATION AND PAYMENT OF A NON-REFUNDABLE FEE OF **EUR 50**,"FIFTY EURO"TO THE ACCOUNT No.0100013543943 OR **RLS 2,000,000**,"TWO MILION RIALS"TO THE ACCOUNT No.**0100014511008** AT "EXPORT DEVELOPMENT BANK OF IRAN-GENERAL BRANCH", AND PRESENT THE PAYMENT RECEIPT TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS: RAW MATERIAL & ENERGY PURCHASING DEPARTMENT KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY (KSC) KM 10 AHWAZ - BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI ROAD P.O.BOX: 1378 POST CODE : 61397 - 31398 AHWAZ – IRAN *Note1:ALL BIDS MUST BE DELIVERED TO THE AFORESAID ADDRESS ON OR BEFORE CLOSING DATE 4th April.2018.THE OPENING DATE OF ENVELOP "B" WILL BE AT 11AM ON **8th April, 2018** AND ENVELOP "C" ON **15th April**, 2018 IN THE BUYER'S CONFERENCE ROOM LOCATED AT THE HEAD OFFICE OF KSC AHWAZ-IRAN AND THE BIDDERS OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES CAN ATTEND THE MEETING OF THE TENDER.

*Note2: ALL QOUTED PRICE AND BID CURRENCIES AND PAYMENT COULD BE IN SELLER/PRODUCER COUNTRY CURRENCY OR EURO EXCEPT USD. *Note3: THE OFFERED PRICE SHOULD BE VALID UP TO 90 DAYS AFTER OPPENINNG DATE FOR OUR FIRM PURCHASE ORDER SENDING AND UP TO 120 DAYS AFTER OPPENINNG DATE FOR ISSUING L/C.

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Trump knows nothing about Cuba: ambassador

By Maryam Qarehgozlou

TEHRAN — Alexis Bandrich Vega, Havana's ambassador to Tehran, believes that U.S. President Donald Trump is ignorant of the realities in Cuba.

"This president of the United States is not interested in Cuba, nor knows anything, neither of Cuba nor of the Cubans," Ambassador Bandrich Vega tells the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ How do you evaluate bilateral relations between Cuba and Iran, especially in the economic area?

A: In the political area they are very good. We were honored to receive the official visit of President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in 2016. There is a good level of exchanges of messages and communications between our governments.

Each year the number of Iranians who travel to Cuba increases for different reasons, including tourism.

In the economic area, although there are many MOUs between both countries, neither of us is satisfied with the level of exchanges. Many reasons influence, such as the distance, the asymmetries of our economies and the difficulties imposed by the United States to realize our commercial operations not only with them, but with the rest of the world.

I can assure you that there is the political will of both governments to advance in this field and we will achieve it.

■ What about cultural cooperation between Cuba and Iran?

A: The good political relations coupled with economic ones will facilitate the increase of cultural cooperation. Iran has always had a good participation in the International Book Fair in Cuba every year. Iranian films enjoy good acceptance among the Cubans, as well as some programs facilitated by the Spanish-speaking channel Hispan TV.

We have just celebrated a Cuban Culture Week in the Faculty of World Studies of the University of Tehran, which was very well accepted among the attendees.

The cultures of both nations have transcended our borders and there's no doubt that more and more bridges will unite us.

■ How about scientific cooperation between Cuba and Iran, especially in the area of medicine?

A: Undoubtedly, this is an area where both countries have experienced important advances and where more opportunities for cooperation have been found.

Cuba has made, and will make, important technological transfers to Iran in the area of vaccine production.

We have developed important medications, some unique as Heberprot P, against diabetic foot ulcers, which helps reduce the need for amputation in more than 70% of treated cases and is registered in more than 20 countries. In the same way Cuba has also developed important vaccines against different types of cancer, which have shown high effectiveness. We look forward to achieve a possible agreement on med's registration.

We have a vast network of facilities for health tourism, with a growing number of people coming to our country every day to undergo surgical operations and enjoy the hospitality of the Cubans and the benefits of our island.

Recently, a nanotechnology laboratory donated by Iran



We have a vast network of facilities for health tourism, with a growing number of people coming to our country every day to undergo surgical operations and enjoy the hospitality of the Cubans and the benefits of our island.

was inaugurated in Cuba, which predicts a promising collaboration in that area, with mutual benefits.

There is so much to do.

■ Would you explain about Iran-Cuba cooperation at international level.

A: In the international arena we have excellent cooperation. Cuba will always appreciate Iran's support for the Resolution against the blockade of the United States. We have always had the Iranian vote and we hope that we can also count on your denunciation in the 73rd General Assembly of the United Nations later this year.

We frequently exchange support for the candidatures of our representatives for positions in international organizations.

On several occasions, the Cuban government has expressed its full support for the nuclear agreement, as well as demanding its strict compliance.

■ Donald Trump is trying to roll back what Obama did. It is true in the case of Cuba. What is the motivation behind such moves?

A: Totally true. On June 16, 2017, President Trump signed the Presidential National Security Memorandum on the strengthening of the U.S. policy towards Cuba, which increases the prohibitions on economic, commercial and financial transactions of U.S. compa-

nies and entities with Cuban companies and entities, restricts the trips of North

Americans to the Island, expands the list of government officials and Cuban citizens who cannot receive visas, remittances or engage in transactions with U.S. entities, and repeals the Presidential Policy Directive for the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba (Obama 14.10.2016).

The motivations are purely political, of domestic politics, because this president of the United States is not interested in Cuba, nor knows anything, neither of Cuba nor of the Cubans. The U.S. government ignores the majority support of American public opinion, the international community and Cuban emigration in the U.S. to the lifting of the blockade and the normalization of relations between the two countries, meanwhile satisfies the interests of a small minority of the American and Cuban-American extreme right of South Florida, whose interest is to provoke a confrontation between the two countries.

Cuba is willing to continue the respectful dialogue and cooperation on issues of mutual interest, and negotiate pending bilateral issues with the United States on the basis of equality, reciprocity, respect for sovereignty and national independence, without anyone expecting us to make concessions, or renounce one of our principles.

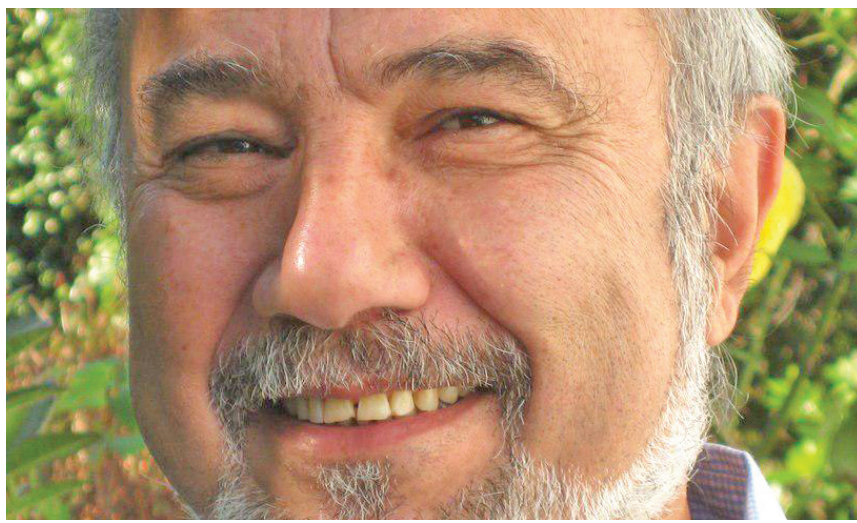
U.S. - EU trade war between will weaken liberal values: Askari

1 → Trump will get minor concessions from the EU, China, Canada and Mexico. He will deliver a blistering speech how his negotiating tactics helped create jobs in the U.S. and roll back his tariffs. How he is the great negotiator who keeps his campaign promises.

Having said this, I don't believe that tariffs, even if they are more prolonged and damaging, will spill into other arenas, especially not into the security and military arenas. The people who run these institutions are more sensible than opportunistic politicians. They will resist attacks on EU-U.S. military cooperation.

■ Rising of rightist in Europe is a threat to the future of the EU and from the other side this can result in more independent trade relations for member countries outside the EU umbrella. Considering this fact how do you see the future of EU?

A: You are absolutely correct that the rising tide of nationalism or the right is a threat to EU institutions and its architecture but this will not erode EU's trade policies as a bloc. For independent trade policies to develop, the architecture of the EU would have to collapse first, or at least simultaneously. You cannot have an EU as we know it with independent trade policies of member countries.



As long as he gets something, no matter how small, he will tweet it to kingdom come to impress his "base" or supporters.

■ In his first treatment, President Trump included tariff exemption for Canada and Mexico. Is this of any value to these two

neighbors or is it just symbolic?

A: He is trying to sweet talk them into concessions in the NAFTA negotiations

that are going on right now. I am sure that he will get some concessions but will they be significant? Who knows? In the end it is all about publicity. As long as he gets something, no matter how small, he will tweet it to kingdom come to impress his "base" or supporters. He will tout them as the biggest, the best and the most beautiful concessions ever in trade negotiations! His base will buy it for a few weeks or maybe months as they only watch Fox News and read his tweets. It is all a show, especially before the November 2018 mid-term elections with the likelihood that the Republicans will lose control of the House of Representatives.

■ Trade wars apparently erode trade cooperation, an important element that liberalism emphasizes for peace. Do you think that trade war between U.S. and EU will weaken liberal values?

A: If it becomes a full blown trade war, absolutely yes. But I also believe that if Trump last through his full term of four years, and especially if he gets re-elected, and if the Republicans continue to hold both houses of the U.S. Congress, that liberal values will be eroded dramatically, with or without a trade war. Trump and Republican control are the real threats to liberal values around the world.

in this sector.

■ Which model for Saudi's nuclear plan are likely, JCPOA or U.S. agreement with United Arab Emirates?

A: Neither. The absence of existing nuclear facilities makes the JCPOA an unnecessary model and political differences (including from the JCPOA) suggest the UAE agreement would be implausible. The approach will be to combine affairs, seeking voluntary restraint from the Saudis with some amount of legal rights for the United States to end cooperation in the event of activities with which we have concerns.

A regional arrangement to nuclear fuel cycle development would obviously help in this regard.



How U.S. is reaping fruits of Saudi war on Yemen

TEHRAN (FNA) — For some reasons, the United Nations and the international humanitarian community have been unable to exert pressure on the United States, Saudi Arabia and their junior partners to change course in the ongoing war of aggression against Yemen.

It's not a real challenge to understand why the U.S. refuses to end its support for the Saudi-UAE coalition bombing the poorest country in the Arab world, much less invest in diplomacy to end the Yemen conflict and increase humanitarian access to the more than 20 million Yemenis who need some kind of help:

1- The Trump White House has made it clear that it wants to derail the 2015 nuclear deal in pursuit of a still a more belligerent approach towards Iran and its allies. Hence, they continue the Yemen war after allegations about (non-existent) Iranian threats. It's even more disturbing to see war-party Washington endorse more weapons sales to Riyadh and build more illegal military bases in Syria that will only exacerbate the U.S.-supported starvation of millions of civilians in Yemen, and prolong the devastating regime-change war in Syria.

2- Three years into the 2015 Saudi-led invasion, untold thousands are dead. Northern Yemen has been through the worst cholera outbreak in human history, and civilians continue to die in bunches from US-backed, Saudi airstrikes. Yemen is in a disastrous state, with a US-Saudi naval blockade threatening to starve millions. If there is one thing Yemen has no shortage of, however, it's weapons, with the US ensuring a massive supply continues to pour into the hands of Saudi and Emirati forces.

3- Thanks to the unnecessary conflict, US arms sales are themselves at a record high, in no small part because of purchases by the UAE, and particularly by the Saudis, who are dropping US bombs on northern Yemen as fast as they can buy them. And while bombs and warplanes are the big dollar amount of sales, they also include large numbers of US-made automatic rifles and small arms ammunition. Saudi Arabia and the UAE buy these small arms, both for their own direct involvement in Yemen, and for arming their allied militant factions on the ground.

4- The US sends weaponry into Yemen that is not well-documented and carefully tracked. The Pentagon regime has confirmed they can't account for the weapons that they give to the Saudis. The Saudi and UAE-bought small arms are not just being sent to Yemen either. Rather, they are also being sent to Syria to be in the hands of their allied militant factions on the ground.

5- Despite some diplomatic games at the US Congress, the conflict won't end any time soon. US arms sales are ensuring that the Saudi and coalition warplanes never run out of bombs to drop, despite those airstrikes accomplishing nothing but killing more and more civilians in the north. Report after report by the UN faults the Saudis for soaring civilian deaths, and particularly the deaths of children, saying that the efforts to prevent harm to civilians remain largely ineffective. The strikes continue to increase indiscriminately, and the Security Council is not doing anything about it.

In a nutshell, US arms sales to Saudi Arabia are a major driving force in allowing them to continue the war. Saudis use US planes and bombs, and are refueled by the US Air Force during this criminal campaign. US culpability in this humanitarian disaster and war crimes should fuel growing concern at the UN.

As much ink as has been spilled about the morass the Americans and the Saudis have stumbled into in Yemen, this war of aggression has nothing to do with trying to intensify efforts to counter Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, much less by Saudi Arabia and the UAE to take seriously their fears about spreading Iranian influence in the region. The escalation of the conflict and the Iran bashing are only designed to increase US weapons sales and justify permanent US military presence in the Persian Gulf.

That perfectly sums up the argument as to why no one in the Trump White House seems able to answer whether or not they want to distance themselves from a war that is causing so much human suffering. The US government, the Pentagon regime, and the Military-Industrial Complex are reaping the fruits of the three-year war. This should be more than enough for them to earn the enmity of the human-rights community and members of the UN concerned about growing civilian casualties.

West using JCPOA as lever to pressurize Iran

1 → The second point is that while the general meeting of the UN General Assembly was underway in New York last summer, key talks were held between U.S. President Donald Trump and senior European officials over Iran's regional policies and their connection with the JCPOA. In the talks, French President Emmanuel Macron promised his U.S. counterpart to channel and manage missile and regional talks with Iran. This comes as the fundamental principles of Iran's foreign policy will remain unchanged. The principles include Iran's backing for resistance groups, and above all, the country's firmly dealing with the regional threats made by the U.S. and its allies and cronies. This firm approach by Iran will shatter the U.S. and Europe's hope for regional talks with Iran. Still, the European officials believe the commencement of regional negotiations with Iran (even if unofficial), per se, can serve as a starting point to curtail Iran's power and influence in the region. Thirdly, the Iranian diplomacy apparatus' insistence on the unchangeable and general strategies of the country's foreign policy, namely support for resistance groups, promotion of the resistance discourse, and fighting Takfiri terrorism will play a key role in foiling the ploys adopted by the U.S. and the European Union for talks.

One should bear in mind that the European Troika are channeling the talks on behalf of the U.S. and in coordination with the Trump administration. What Iran will employ to counter the joint game launched by Washington, Paris, London and Berlin will be the determination to safeguard the country's strategic and behavioral principles in the region. It goes without saying that with this firm and prudent defense, the U.S. and the European Troika will not achieve any of their objectives in restricting Iran's maneuvering power in the region. And lastly, the U.S. and the European Union are using the JCPOA as a lever to channel regional talks with Iran and pressure Tehran into giving in to Washington's regional demands. In other words, Instead of serving its function as an independent legal document, the JCPOA has turned into a political tool to exert pressure on Iran. Here, too, the Iranian diplomacy and foreign policy apparatus should act very prudently and consider "safeguarding Iran's regional power" as its red line, not "safeguarding the JCPOA." Obviously, Washington and the European Troika should get to understand the definitive principle that Iran will not compromise on its fundamental strategies in the region.

1 → A: I think this is an assumption and speculation, not necessarily fact. The Saudis may not wish to give up their right to such technologies (an opinion not unfamiliar to Iranians) but this is not the same as seeking those technologies outright.

■ Some argue that if U.S. do not cooperate with Saudi in its nuclear program, Russia and China may do it and this led to reducing American nuclear influence in the region. What is your opinion?

A: This is indeed a concern and one on which I have written at Columbia University. The degree to which the United States is not present in international nuclear business is a potential problem for our own influence

Why populists are becoming more popular

By John Lloyd

These political forces are embodied in very different parties and movements, but the reasons for their popularity are frequently based on popular perceptions of governments' inability or unwillingness to address their problems. These perceptions, however, do not include a considered judgment on the viability of the programs offered by the anti-establishment parties. They spring from seeing the highest rewards in a globalized world going to the highly educated and the well-connected, while working and middle classes are now fragmented, losing bargaining power and sometimes regarded with scorn for their "incorrect" views.

The most recent example: The success of the populist 5-Star Movement, which emerged as Italy's largest single party – although not an outright majority winner – in the country's March 4 elections. But long before Italians went to the polls to return a hung parliament, similar trends were visible in the United States and the United Kingdom.

In 2016, Hillary Clinton's unwise use of the word "deplorables" – in a campaign speech be-

fore the presidential election she lost – to describe "half" of Donald Trump's supporters remains the classic emblem of supposed scorn for lower-class conservatives by upper-class progressives. It may have cost her more votes than Russian fake news.

In 2014, less consequentially but similarly illuminating, another left-of-center politician, Emily Thornberry, tweeted to her followers a photo of a small terraced house covered in English flags (the red cross of St George on a white background) with a white van parked in front of it. The caption was "Image from #Rochester" – a historic town some 30 miles from London, where Thornberry had been campaigning for the Labour Party. In class-conscious Britain, the tweet from one who lives in an upscale town house in the upper middle-class London borough of Islington and is married to a High Court judge with a "Sir" before his name was taken as the contemptuous action of a snob pandering to British stereotypes about white van owners and the fact that the St. George's Cross flag is associated with far-right groups. She was forced to resign temporarily from Labour's shadow cabinet.

■ Highlighting a few words

These two stories highlight a few words that carry a huge freight – especially in the case of Clinton. Her speech was to an LGBT gala organized to raise money for her campaign. In it she praised the gay and transgender community and described Trump supporters as racist and homophobic. In doing so, and in putting many millions of fellow Americans into a "basket of deplorables," she gave ammunition to those who saw her, and the Democratic Party, as preferring minorities over the white working and middle class.

Thornberry was seen as condescending to the patriotic working class merely by tweeting a photograph of the house and identifying its location – creating a (perhaps correct) perception that she thought such enthusiastic patriotism a sign of chauvinism and limited intelligence. Both women had fired unwise shots in the class war: both paid a political price.

It is that resentment, aimed at "progressive" snobbery, which powers much of the revolt against the left. Similar resentments, in which education, access to jobs, accent, dress and even diet are all now

involved, bubble through the politics of democratic countries, and assume greater importance than the purely economic issues which afflict those on low incomes, in precarious employment or unemployed.

The left, however self-described – liberals, social democrats, socialists – came into being in the 19th century with a claim to bring economic emancipation to working people. It is now dismissed by millions of working people as being the exclusive locality of the privileged, whose very efforts to "understand and empathize" excite contempt and whose attachment to "the left" is seen to be used as a marker of their claim of moral superiority, not of true belief.

■ Post-election foes

The perception that the left can function as a sign of high-minded exclusivity rather than a commitment to a cause is often correct. But the tragedy of the rejection of an out-of-touch leftism is that the rejecters embrace something worse. The pre-election friends of lower-income voters quickly become post-election foes.

Case in point: Donald Trump's tax bill, signed into law before he departed for a Christmas break

at his Mar-a-Lago estate will overwhelmingly benefit America's highest earners while providing far less significant help to the remaining 95 percent.

In the UK, those who voted to leave the European Union were right in their perception that sovereignty must be clearly located in national governments – a view not – as some Remainers charge – rooted in racism, but in a wish to enforce democratic rule. Yet it becomes clearer – as the negotiations drag on – that the economic price for Brexit will be high and the losers will be many of those who voted for it.

In Italy, populist parties that included the 5-Star Movement and the Lega (Northern League,) took over 50 percent of the vote. Their supporters, especially the young among them, dislike the left's ardent support for the European Union, seeing it as an elite set of institutions that did nothing to help Italy cope with waves of migrants. Especially in the impoverished south, voters saw the populists as better just because they were not the left establishment, which they viewed as uncaring and ineffectual.

(Source: Reuters)

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Charity to raise fund for hearing impaired kids on Chaharshanbeh Suri

L I F E TEHRAN — The Komak Charity Foundation has initiated a campaign under the title of ‘Kind Wednesday’ to encourage Iranians to provide cochlear implant (CI) for hearing-impaired kids instead of buying fireworks on Chaharshanbeh-Suri.

Chaharshanbeh-Suri, an old tradition of Iranians jumping over the fire which is practiced every last Tuesday night of Iranian calendar year, is replaced by dangerous firework display during recent years.

The charity, which has been established by actress Katayun Riahi in Tehran to help children with hearing disabilities, have launched the campaign so that people not to spend money on fireworks, which harms hearing ability.

Fireworks endanger hearing and visual abilities of people so the charity decides to initiate a campaign to replace fireworks with obtaining CI for three children who cannot afford the operation,” charity manager Gelayol Ta’ati announced in a press release.

CI surgery is more efficient for children



under four years old, however, due to its expenses many families cannot afford it,

she explained.

She said that the charity provide the ex-

pense for 100 first days of speech-language pathology sessions.

According to cochlear.com, a cochlear implant is an electronic medical device that replaces the function of the damaged inner ear. Unlike hearing aids, which make sounds louder, cochlear implants do the work of damaged parts of the inner ear (cochlea) to provide sound signals to the brain.

It can help people who have moderate to profound hearing loss in both ears, who have profound hearing loss in one ear with normal hearing in the other ear, who receive little or no benefit from hearing aids and who score 65% or less on sentence recognition tests done by hearing professional in the ear to be implanted.

Many adults with cochlear implants hear better with a cochlear implant than with a hearing aid.

A previous study has shown that people with cochlear implant achieve an average of 80% sentence understanding, compared with 10% sentence understanding for hearing aids.

Self-care is critical for working moms to succeed

Of all the tips for working moms, the very top of the list has to be taking care of yourself. Mom’s needs often seem to come last. After your kids, their dad, your job, the pets, and endless errands, there is the one and only... you.

There’s just not enough time in the day to get everything done, so your running shoes or novel or bath salts or strappy sandals just gather dust.

But you can’t always stay on the back burner.

Here are four reasons it’s important for working moms to take care of ourselves:

■ If mama isn’t happy, nobody is

When mom is stressed or burnt out, everyone in the house suffers. Even a baby gets fussy when his mother is upset. Older children may respond to a tense mom by acting out.

If you take an hour or just ten minutes to do whatever makes you feel good the rest of your day will be easier and more fun. Your family will enjoy having an energetic and refreshed mom, even if they complain about your absence. The bottom line is: by paying attention to your own needs, you’ll be better at meeting everyone else’s.

■ Stress and sleep deprivation cause weight gain

Stress and sleep deprivation releases cortisol into your bloodstream, which triggers fat storage around your waist. No wonder it’s so hard to lose that pregnancy weight while getting up every three hours with a new baby! Who knew!?

Not only is it demoralizing to carry more weight than your ideal, it increases your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and arthritis, among other conditions.

And we all want to live long enough to play with our grandkids, maybe even see them get married, right?

So the next time you’re tempted to stay up until midnight sorting, folding, and putting away everyone’s laundry, go to sleep. You can just dress the kids out of baskets of clean laundry. Similarly, taking your work lunch break to exercise can actually give you a burst of energy and makes the afternoon more productive.

■ Other people are capable, too

So many working moms fall into the superwoman trap, thinking we have to be in charge of everything because we’re the only one who will do it right. That mentality not only overloads you with work, it doesn’t give enough credit to your other family members (aka your support system). Even worse, it prevents them from learning skills that can lighten your load and make them feel more capable.

Try leaving the kids with their dad or grandfather for a Saturday morning while you have brunch with your girlfriends. He may not change the diapers as often as you would, or feed them perfectly balanced meals, but I bet they’ll have fun. And not only will he feel rightly proud of his caregiving ability, your children will develop

independence, seeing that they’re all right without mom hovering nearby all weekend.

At work, see if there’s a junior employee looking to advance. Perhaps they’ll be interested in some work you can delegate to them. Again, they won’t be completed the way you would do it, but you’ll have more free time for yourself. You’ll also be mentoring someone who could use the experience.

■ Life is for living

This is your life, right now. Would you rather spend it rushing around to finish your to-do list, or actually enjoying yourself?

Don’t fall into the trap of thinking you’ll relax once you reach the bottom of the list – there will always be something more to do. Instead, ruthlessly prioritize, eliminate tasks that don’t absolutely have to get done and fight the disease to please everyone.

If you’re having trouble carving out time for yourself, start small. Say you always wanted to meditate: wake up five minutes early for some deep breathing and visualization. Or if you miss exercising regularly, schedule a once-a-week power walk during lunch. If it’s on your calendar, you can plan work around it.

And the next time you have some breathing space, don’t fill it with errands. Instead, just breathe.

(Source: thespruce.com)

28 simple and natural ways to detox your body



18. Adapt to a truly healthy lifestyle and try to eliminate daily medication wherever possible:

The more that you can opt for natural methods for taking care of yourself, the better off you will be in the short and long run. A truly healthy lifestyle consists of eating the right foods, exercising regularly and challenging yourself, getting plenty of rest, learning to manage your stress, getting rid of the bad habits, performing a regular cleanse, and adapting to a positive and healthy mindset. This is how you achieve good health now and well into the future!

If you have medication that is lifesaving then that’s a must to continue on with. If however you take medication that could be replaced by natural and healthy home remedies and methods, then that’s another way to cleanse and to opt for better and healthier living. Getting rid of any substances that can be construed as toxins by the body, such as regular medications, is always a wise idea.

A truly healthy lifestyle that incorporates all of these elements will be instrumental in helping you to be your very best, and you will notice it right away.

(Source: bembu.com)

How to clean a fabric sofa with water-based detergent? and a steam cleaner



Pre-condition the fabric. It’s used to dissolve and loosen soiled debris and oil for easier removal during shampooing.

Spot-test the pre-conditioner on a spot of the sofa that isn’t readily viewable to make sure it doesn’t result in discoloration.

Spray the pre-conditioner over all the sofa surfaces you plan to shampoo.

Mix a solution of detergent and water. Mix 3 ounces of your water-based detergent with 3 ounces of water in a bowl or other container.

Spot-test your detergent solution. Dip a rag into the solution and rub it on a little-seen portion of the sofa. You can use the same spot you tested the pre-conditioner on

Let the solution sit on the fabric for 10 minutes, then check it.

Press a paper towel to the spot to see if any of the fabric’s dye comes off on it.

Prepare the steam vacuum. Different models of steam vacuums might look different, so this step will provide very general instructions. Apply the shampoo to the sofa. Place the nozzle against the sofa’s fabric and hold down the trigger or button that releases the solution you poured into the tank.

Let the sofa air-dry. No amount of vacuuming with the button released will dry the fabric out.

(Source: wikihow.com)

Foods you should never eat by themselves

Eat these snacks solo? You may be missing out on important health benefits.

■ Bananas: Pair with milk

Got tummy problems? Get bananas. The yellow fruit is a good source of inulin, a type of fiber that helps balance “good” bacteria levels in your digestive system. Even more, it enhances calcium absorption, benefiting your bones. Pair your ‘nana with good sources of calcium, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, broccoli, and kale, to promote bone health. A good breakfast combo: Add sliced bananas to cereal with skim milk.

■ Strawberries: Eat with peanut butter

Vitamin E promotes healthy eyes and may help prevent macular degeneration (a cause of blindness). Vitamin C boosts the power of vitamin E, putting it into a form that helps your body use it best. Pair sources of vitamin C such as strawberries, citrus fruits, and tomatoes, with a good source of vitamin E, such as peanuts/peanut butter, almonds/almond butter, and sunflower seeds.

■ Broccoli: Serve with mustard

Broccoli is a good source of sulforaphane, a cancer-fighting compound. Unfortunately, cooking the greens destroys myrosinase, an enzyme that makes sulforaphane available to your body. To replace the myrosinase, combine broccoli with mustard or another raw cruciferous vegetable, such as arugula. The extra myrosinase helps your body absorb more sulforaphane, according to a study published in the British Journal of Nutrition. You should never, ever eat these nine food raw.

■ Coffee: Sip with sugar

Take your coffee with sugar? Don’t stop. When you drink coffee with sugar, it makes you more productive, according to a small study published in the journal Human Psychopharmacology: Clinical and Experimental. When participants consumed coffee and sugar together, areas of the brain associated with attention functioned more efficiently than when they drank java solo. Tea drinkers: Try adding a drizzle of honey.

■ Apples: Munch with green tea

The perfect afternoon snack: A cup of tea and sliced fruit. For a particular health boost, make it green tea and apples. Research has found that the phytochemicals quercetin (found mostly in apples, berries, and onions) and catechin (found in green tea and purple grapes) work together to prevent blood platelets from clumping together. When platelets clump, it can contribute to blood clotting and lead to a heart attack. Never eat these foods if you want to live a long life.

■ Onions: Have with bread

The next time you grab a morning whole-grain bagel, ask for a few slices of onion on the cream cheese. Onions and garlic have sulfur compounds that increase absorption of zinc, a nutrient important for immunity and wound healing found in whole-grain foods and legumes. Another good (and easy!) pairing: garlic hummus.

■ Carrots: Eat with avocado

You already know that beta-carotene is good for you (hello, youthful skin and healthy eyes), but you might not have known your body needs fat to absorb it. Eat sources of beta-carotene, such as carrots, cantaloupe, kale, and spinach, with fat, such as avocado, walnuts, olive oil, and almonds. A simple snack might be carrots dipped in guacamole or hummus (made with olive oil). These are the foods that cancer doctors never eat.

(Source: rd.com)



101 ITEMS FOR YOUR BUCKET LIST!

#47. Backpack across at least 10 locations

Backpacking is a great way to enjoy international destinations at a low cost and with a fair degree of freedom. With the boom in budget airline and hostel businesses in the past decade, backpacking has evolved into somewhat of a lifestyle, with free spirits taking 6-month to year-long sabbaticals just to backpack across the world. While some backpack because it’s a cheap way to travel, others backpack for the experience and the adventure. Whatever it is, backpacking is definitely something to try at least once in a lifetime! Even if you are backpacking alone, you can always meet new people along the way — I’ve found that there are many friendly travelers around every country, and it’s a matter of opening yourself and taking the first step to know them!

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

(Source: personalexcellence.co)



#IRANIANLIFESTYLE

A view from a store offering goldfish for Haft-Seen in Tehran (@b.u.t_castle/instagram)



Iranian artisans to show skills at Italian fair

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Four top Iranian artisans will show their handicrafts at the 82nd edition of the International Handicrafts Trade Fair, which will be held at the Fortezza da Basso, Florence, from April 21 to May 1.



Artifacts are on display at the 81st International Handicrafts Trade Fair, Florence, Italy

The craftspeople are natives of southwestern Khuzestan province. They are planning to showcase sets of enameled potteries amongst other indigenous products, Mehr reported on Monday. Iran's pavilion will be set up by the national touring and automobile club in close collaboration with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, the report added. The event will host clusters of master craftspeople from all over the globe with pieces of classical, modern, ethnic, contemporary themes. Over the past couple of years, dozens of Iranian handicrafts have gained the UNESCO Seal of Excellence.

The world's first energy-positive hotel

A new building just inside the Arctic Circle is promising to be the world's first energy-positive hotel. Designed by international architecture firm Snohetta, Svart in Norway will produce more renewable energy than it uses. It will feature 4800 square meters of solar panels on its roof and the building will sit on stilts, a nod to local coastal building traditions.



"Nature in the Arctic is fragile and pristine. We have to respect the natural beauty of the site and not ruin what makes Svartisen an attraction in the first place," Zenul Khan, Snohetta's Svart project manager, told CNN. "By creating such a sustainable building, we aim to encourage a more sustainable approach to tourism by making people conscious about the way we experience exotic locations." The building will be made of locally sourced materials such as stone and wood, cutting down on the construction carbon footprint. A host of other initiatives include shaded terraces instead of air conditioning during the summer, and geothermal wells for winter heating. "What is truly special about the hotel is its 360-degree views. No view from the hotel is dull: you see the fjord, the mountains, the sky. Each room is, in a way, assigned its own, unique view," said Khan. (Source: stuff.co.nz)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic center of Naples

Located in southern Italy, Naples is a major port city in the center of the ancient Mediterranean region. Its origins go back to its foundation as Parthenope or Palaepolis in the 9th century BC, subsequently re-established as Neapolis (New City) in 470 BC. It is therefore one of the most ancient cities in Europe, whose current urban fabric preserves a selection of outstanding elements of its long and eventful history, as expressed in its street pattern, its wealth of historic buildings and parks, the continuation of many of its urban and social functions, its wonderful setting on the Bay of Naples and the continuity of its historical stratification.



Historic center of Naples, a World Heritage in Italy

Naples was among the foremost cities of Magna Graecia, playing a key role in the transmission of Greek culture to Roman society. It eventually became a major cultural center in the Roman Republic, civitas foederata. Sections of the Greek town walls excavated since World War II and the excavated remains of a Roman theatre, cemeteries and catacombs testify to this history. In the 6th century CE, Naples was conquered by the Byzantine Empire, becoming an autonomous Duchy, later associated with the Normans, Swabians, and the Sicilian reign. Evidence of this period includes the churches of San Gennaro extra moenia, San Giorgio Maggiore, and San Giovanni Maggiore with surviving elements of 4th and 5th century architecture, the chapel of Santa Restituta in the 14th-century cathedral, and the Castel dell'Ovo, one of the most substantial survivals from the Norman period, although subsequently remodeled on several occasions. (Source: UNESCO)

Chaharshanbeh-Suri: Iran's festival of fire

HERITAGE TEHRAN – This evening, millions of Iranians will make bonfires at sunset and jump over the fire till midnight to observe Chaharshanbeh-Suri, a week before Noruz, the New Year holidays.

A fire festivity, Chaharshanbeh-Suri is held on the night before the last Wednesday of the year when families and friends gather by bunches of open fires and keep them lit till dawn. Narratives say that ancient Iranians originally observed Chaharshanbeh-Suri in a bid to ward off all the misfortunes and bad omens with hopes that their wishes would come true. People chant "Give me your fiery red color and take back my wintry sallowness," while they are jumping over open fires. In short, the festivity may symbolize a euphoria of nature on the eve of spring. In ancient Persia, fire was deemed a sacred element, a belief that modern Zoroastrians still adhere to. The fire has been supposed to give people its warmth and energy and take away their paleness, sickness and problems in return.

■ A negative aspect

Over the past couple of years, Chaharshanbeh-Suri has been somehow turned into nightmare for many because it has been given new definitions. Earsplitting bangs dominate everywhere, caused by loud explosion of fireworks from locally-made firecrackers to imported ones. The city feels like being under siege; fireworks go off every second, shaking windows. Each year, hundreds of people are burned and injured so that to be on the safe side many prefer to stay at home before nightfall. On the other hand, there are also strong calls by the police,



A couple is about to release a special balloon to mark Chaharshanbeh-Suri festival in Tehran.



People jump over bunches of fire during a Chaharshanbeh-Suri festival in Tehran

officials and celebrities among social campaigns that call for having a right approach to the event. Chaharshanbeh-Suri may be observed as an uneventful salute to the New Year and lastly being delivered to the future generations. ■ **More on Noruz** The Iranian New Year holidays, or Noruz, is the

longest, oldest and most cherished festival on the nation's calendar. Perhaps the most enduring image of the event is mostly about socializing, deepening family bonds and meeting up with old friends mostly in their homes. A clean house, new clothes and special spring dishes and food are amongst traditional ways to celebrate Noruz.

Narratives say that ancient Iranians originally observed Chaharshanbeh-Suri in a bid to ward off all the misfortunes and bad omens with hopes that their wishes would come true.

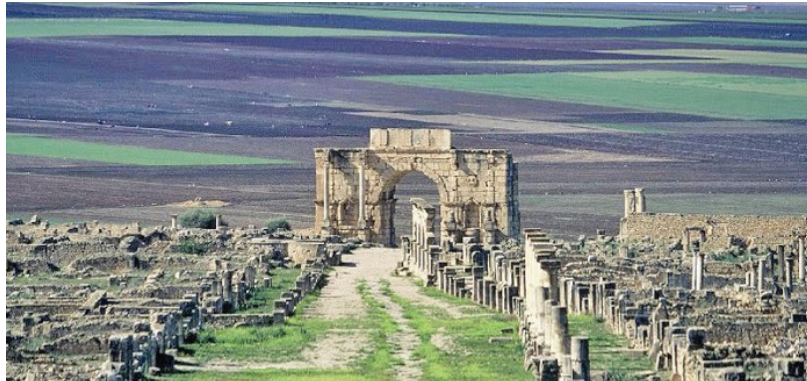
Chinese tourism to Russia booming with record 1.5 million visitors



Tourists from China accounted for the highest number of foreign visitors to Russia last year, according to Chinese Ambassador Li Hui. "The number of Chinese tourists in Russia reached 1.5 million in 2017. This is the largest number among all countries for Russia. China, for its part, ranked second among the countries visited by Russian tourists," said the Chinese envoy at a board meeting of the Russian Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East in Vladivostok. According to Li, 32 tourist routes were established between the Heilongjiang province and Russia's Far East. Vladivostok was the second favorite Russian city among Chinese

tourists, with Moscow topping the list. The introduction of electronic visas for the Primorsky Region has made travel easier for Chinese citizens. Russia and China have been working on boosting tourism. To accommodate growing number of visitors from China, Russia has introduced visa-free travel for Chinese tour groups and hired Chinese-speaking staff at airports and train stations. Industrial tourism is also popular with Chinese tourists coming to the Urals region. They visit the Uralmash factory, which served as a model for the construction of China's largest heavy machine production facility in 1958. (Source: RT)

Morocco seeks conservation of archaeological sites



Morocco's National Rock Heritage Park has successfully identified more than 400 new archaeological heritage sites across the country. Aiming to study, document, and protect the deep-rooted heritage of Morocco, the park is planning more scientific and archaeological research programs, according to a statement made by the Ministry of Culture. The park has also contributed to the establishment of excavation programs in the areas of Tata, Tan Tan, Al-Haouz, Aousserd, and other Moroccan regions. Furthermore, it is working to protect rock engravings from plunder and destruction in southern

regions, according to the statement. The Ministry also chaired a series of scientific and communication meetings which aimed to protect rock art sites. These meetings, according to the Ministry, help promote cultural heritage and encourage local and regional authorities to adhere to the program regulations to preserve the sites. The Ministry also organizes training sessions for local actors that teach preservation of rock heritage, and offer tools and various means to raise awareness for the need to protect the national archaeological sites. (Source: Morocco World News)

Secret to a great trip: Ditch the devices

By Elaine Glusac

As the former travel editor for The Wall Street Journal and a past news director at Travel + Leisure, Sara Clemence knew about making the most of her time in the field, cramming in as much as possible while traveling. In 2016, burnout hit and she began thinking about information overload and fractured attention spans, her own included. "Fifteen years ago, travelers would be looking around and reflecting and absorbing," she said. "Now they're looking for the best place to take a selfie." Her answer to what she identifies as "digital saturation in travel" is slowing down and easing up on electronic use, the topic of her new book "Away & Aware: A Field Guide to Mindful Travel" (Dovetail Press). Full of Zen-channeling ideas for enriching trips, the illustrated book advocates living in the moment and embracing circumstances, including jet lag, a lesson she learned on a trip to China at age 10. Sleepless before dawn, she heard Shanghai gradually awaken beginning with a distant bicycle bell and growing to a full crescendo of cycling commuters. "I would never have had that memory if I had had some magical remedy to jet lag," she said. The following are excerpts from a conversation with Ms. Clemence. ■ **What is mindful travel?** Mindful travel is about tuning into your destination. It's about disconnecting from your devices and connecting to your surroundings, being aware of and attentive to the people and food and culture and scenery around you. It's something that's gotten a little lost in this hyper-connected age. Many people are too absorbed by the convenience and distraction of their phones to pay close attention to



An illustration from "Away & Aware: A Field Guide to Mindful Travel." (Credit: Chris Santone/Dovetail Press)

their surroundings. If you're looking for meaningful experiences, chances are you're not going to get them by hustling around checking things off your list. You need time to discover, to reflect, to have a conversation with a stranger. In my experience, that's when something really special can happen. Also, under-scheduling gives our minds a break from the regular grind. Slowing down can be really restorative and that's one of the many reasons that we travel. ■ **What are your tips for meeting people while traveling?** Starting a conversation with a total stranger is challenging whether you're traveling or not. It really helps to ask a question. One of my favorite ways to start an actual

conversation with somebody is to ask about food because so many people really like to give their opinions about food. So, ask them where they like to eat. There's a fine distinction between asking, where should I eat — I being the tourist — and where do you like to eat. Sometimes people will give a tourist-friendly place. But if you ask where they like to eat, it's more likely to yield a local, interesting restaurant or food stall or market. You advise leaving the camera at home to focus on the experience. Is there some way to shoot and be mindful? It can really help to be more thoughtful about how you use your camera. Say you're only going to take three photos a day or only photograph certain kinds of things. Photographers say everybody needs to be taking fewer better photographs. It has a dual effect. One, it makes you more thoughtful about what photographs you're taking and it also removes the temptation to photograph everything. ■ **How can families practice mindfulness while traveling?** Letting your kids help plan your travels is a big one, because then it becomes a team effort. They're invested in what you're doing. It's important to set limits on devices just as you set limits on yourself. When your kids start getting bored, it can be really hard not to rush to fill their time with some sort of activity. It's perfectly healthy for children to be bored. When we were traveling for six months last year, my 5-year-old son started making toys out of whatever materials we had at hand. He would make a house out of tissue box, or he'd make a bottle into an airplane. It made me feel we were accidentally enhancing his resourcefulness. (Source: The New York Times)

Researchers identify proteins associated with diabetic complications and heart disease

Protein pathways that are closely linked to changes in both triglyceride and hemoglobin A1c levels in diabetic patients have been identified in new research by the Intermountain Medical Center Heart Institute in Salt Lake City.

The findings of two related studies bring new interest in additional research that will help healthcare providers understand the links and identify ways to intervene earlier and prevent the onset of heart disease or diabetic complications.

“Understanding the biology of how proteins interact with other cells in the body can improve patient care and help physicians prevent catastrophic events like heart attack, stroke, or death,” said Stacey Knight, PhD, a researcher with the Intermountain Medical Center Heart Institute and lead author of the study.

■ Cardiovascular events

The “findings of these studies may help explain the often-increased triglyceride levels that lead to cardiovascular events for diabetic patients.”

In diabetic patients, high triglyceride levels are associated with heart disease and stroke.

High levels of hemoglobin A1C are also associated with increased complications like diabetic retinopathy.

For one of the studies, researchers looked at 264 patients who were enrolled in the FACTOR-64 study, which was a clinical trial designed to reduce the risks of diabetic patients for cardiovascular disease.



Researchers found a significant association between the pathways of semaphorin and plexin, both of which have been found to the linked with diabetic retinopathy — a diabetic complication in which high blood glucose levels damage the blood vessels of the retina.

A SOMAscan assay was used to determine the plasma levels for more than 4,000 proteins.

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■ Increase of proteins

“We found that an increase of the proteins in this pathway may result in increased hemoglobin A1C — or an increased A1C increase proteins in the pathway,” said Dr. Knight. “We’ll need to further explore this association to identify how those two elements influence each other.”

The second study looked at the same population of patients from the FACTOR-64 study and identified three protein pathways that were significantly associated with triglyceride levels:

Additional research is needed to help clinicians better understand the relationships between triglyceride levels and these three protein pathways.

“These initial findings made us pause for a moment and start asking additional questions about these relationships,” said Dr. Knight.

“We hope to further explore these pathways to better identify where interventions may occur to help reduce risk for cardiovascular events in diabetic patients.”

(Source: newswwise.com)

Tadpoles of new species rely on ‘suction cups’ to keep up



Indonesia, a megadiverse country spanning over 17,000 islands located between Australia and mainland Asia, is home to more than 16% of the world’s known amphibian and reptile species, with almost half of the amphibians found nowhere else in the world. Unsurprisingly, biodiversity scientists have been feverishly discovering and describing fascinating new animals from the exotic island in recent years.

Such is the case of an international team from the University of Hamburg, Germany, University of Texas at Arlington, USA, University of Bern, Switzerland and Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia, who came across a curious tadpole while collecting amphibian larvae from fast-flowing streams as part of an arduous expedition in the remote forests on the island of Sumatra.

To the amazement of the scientists, it turned out that the tadpoles possess a peculiar cup-like structure on their bellies, in addition to the regular oral disk found in typical tadpoles.

■ New species

As a result, the team described two new species and a genus in the open access journal *Zoosystematics and Evolution*.

A previously known, but misplaced in an unsuitable genus, frog was also added to the group, after it was proved that it takes advantage of the same modification.

“This phenomenon where tadpoles display ‘belly suckers’ is known as gastromyzophory and, albeit not unheard of, is a rare adaptation that is only found in certain toads in the Americas and frogs in Asia,” explains lead author Umilaela Arifin.

The abdominal sucker, it is hypothesized, helps these tadpoles to exploit a very special niche - fast-flowing streams - where the water would otherwise be too turbulent and rapid to hang around.

■ The exclusive access

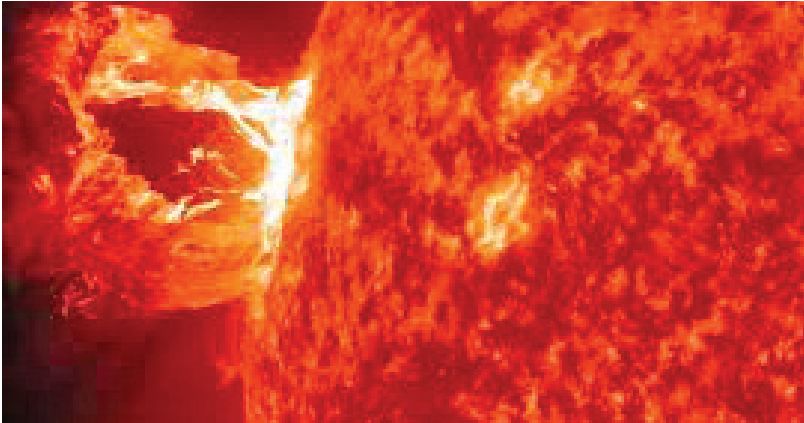
Gastromyzophorous species, however, rely on the suction provided by their modified bellies to secure an exclusive access to plentiful food, such as algae, while the less adapted are simply washed away.

When the scientists took a closer look at the peculiar tadpoles and their adult forms, using a powerful combination of molecular and morphological data, they realized that they had not only stumbled upon a rare amphibian trait, but had also discovered two brand new species of frogs in the process.

Moreover, the animals turned out so distinct in their evolutionary makeup, compared to all other frogs, that the scientists had to create a whole new genus to accommodate them. Formally named *Sumaterana*, the genus is to be commonly referred to as *Sumatran Cascade Frogs*.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

Solar storms can crash communications, scientists say



The aurora borealis, or northern lights, form during geomagnetic storms and are visible at high latitudes. These storms can also pose risks to the power grid.

Communication systems are an integral part of daily life, but the sun can disrupt them by triggering powerful geomagnetic storms. To forecast these disturbances — which could affect GPS systems, air travel, national security and life-saving communications — scientists recently modeled the Earth data in 3D, an upgrade from one-dimensional predecessors.

The sun releases radiation, some of which helps support life on Earth. This includes heat and visible light. But the sun also emits more-dangerous rays, and the blue planet’s magnetosphere protects Earthlings from this radiation.

■ Solar events

Occasionally, however, intense solar events like flares send high levels of radiation toward Earth. When that radiation arrives and interacts with the magnetosphere, a geomagnetic storm can form. The planet feels its impact in many ways: Sometimes, the northern and southern lights manifest at Earth’s poles, but the radiation can also cause communication systems to fail.

This artist illustration depicts events on the sun that can change the conditions in near-Earth space. Space weather begins

with an eruption such as a huge burst of light and radiation called a solar flare or a gigantic cloud of solar material called a coronal mass ejection.

This artist illustration depicts events on the sun that can change the conditions in near-Earth space. Space weather begins with an eruption such as a huge burst of light and radiation called a solar flare or a gigantic cloud of solar material called a coronal mass ejection.

In a new U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) study, a scientific team used Earth data to calculate the voltages along power lines in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. They found that many of these measurements were significantly different from the results that the previous 1D model produced.

■ 3D data of Earth

“Our study suggests that 3D data of the Earth should be used whenever they are available,” Greg Lucas, research physicist at the USGS and lead author of the study, said in a recent statement about the new findings, which were published Feb. 26 in the journal *Space Weather*.

Using 3D modeling to gain a better understanding of the complex structures below the measurement sites, scientists can better determine which U.S. sites are most vulnerable to blackouts when powerful geomagnetic storms strike.

(Source: space.com)

Dementia risk could be determined through test one day

Dementia, increased cognitive decline, can be debilitating and interfere with a person’s normal daily activities. Although there is no way to prevent the condition, early detection is important and new research shows there might be a way to predict who will be impacted through a blood test.

Alzheimer’s Disease is the most common form of dementia and the sixth leading cause of death worldwide, according to the Alzheimer’s Association. Up to half of the people impacted by the disease or other forms of dementia have not been diagnosed, but catching the conditions early improves access to support and medical care.

A new study indicates that early detection could one day be possible in the form of a blood test. In a study published this month in *Alzheimer’s & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer’s Association*, found certain biomarkers linked to dementia risk.

For the research, scientists studied blood samples from 22,623 people from five countries. Of that, 995 developed some form of dementia. They found that certain lipoproteins — these carry cholesterol throughout the body — were linked to increased dementia risk. Additionally, people who had higher concentrations of branched-chain amino acids, creatinine (a waste product in the body) and two types of lipoproteins, were at reduced risk. There are 20 types of amino acids, either found in our bodies or in food, which keeps our tissue and muscles healthy.

Further research could make it possible for blood tests to assess dementia risk, the study authors believe. However, study co-author Dr. Sudha Seshadri of the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston cautions it’s not yet determined whether there’s a causal relationship or if these biomarkers are early signs of the condition. But this study does give Seshadri hope.

(Source: Newsweek)

Breakthrough in circuit design makes electronics more resistant to damage and defects

People are growing increasingly dependent on their mobile phones, tablets and other portable devices that help them navigate daily life. But these gadgets are prone to failure, often caused by small defects in their complex electronics, which can result from regular use. Now, a paper in today’s *Nature Electronics* details an innovation from researchers at the Advanced Science Research Center (ASRC) at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York that provides robust protection against circuitry damage that affects signal transmission.

The breakthrough was made in the lab of Andrea Alù, director of the ASRC’s Photonics Initiative. Alù and his colleagues from The City College of New York, University of Texas at Austin and Tel Aviv University were inspired by the seminal work of three British researchers who won the 2016 Nobel Prize in Physics for their work, which teased out that particular properties of matter (such as electrical conductivity) can be preserved in certain materials despite continuous changes in the matter’s form or shape. This concept is associated with topology -- a branch of mathematics that studies the properties of space that are preserved under continuous deformations.

“In the past few years there has been a strong interest in translating this concept of matter topology from material science to light propagation,” said Alù. “We achieved two goals with this project: First, we showed that we can use the science of topology to facilitate robust electromagnetic-wave propagation in electronics and circuit components. Second, we showed that the inherent robustness associated with these topological phenomena can be self-induced by the signal traveling in the circuit, and that we can achieve this robustness using suitably tailored nonlinearities in circuit arrays.”

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Coffee or tea: Which is better for your health?

More than 75 percent of people drink coffee, while 40 percent of people drink tea. Both offer many health benefits, including lowering the risk of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Which is better for your health, coffee or tea?

Coffee can be a great way to jump-start the day, while a cup of tea can be relaxing after a hectic day at work. Both coffee and tea offer great health benefits, but which one is better for improving overall health?



When it comes to coffee and tea most people look at how it can protect from many of the most common health conditions, such as cancer, heart disease, and gastrointestinal diseases.

In a recent study, Elliott Miller, MD, a medical specialist from the National Institutes of Health, examined the signs and symptoms of heart disease in more than 7,000 people in the United States.

Professor Miller and his team found 75 percent of people drank coffee in the morning, while 40 percent enjoy drinking tea. The researchers found that drinking tea also reduced the odds of developing heart disease.

Many other studies have found that tea can reduce the risk of breast, prostate, and skin cancer. In addition, tea can help calm the mind, help lower blood pressure, and reduce cholesterol.

For some people, coffee may cause them to be anxious, however, research shows coffee reduces the risk of diseases, such as diabetes, Alzheimer’s, and Parkinson’s. Drinking coffee can also lower the risk of dementia, diabetes, and gallstones.

In previous surveys, researchers have also found the caffeinated beverage may also lead to a longer life. Drinking at least 3 to 4 cups of coffee a day can help offer many health benefits, except in women who are pregnant.

(Source: Tech Times)

A magnetic ‘wormhole’ that connects two regions of space was created in the lab

Back in 2015, researchers in Spain created a tiny magnetic wormhole for the first time ever. They used it to connect two regions of space so that a magnetic field could travel ‘invisibly’ between them.

Before you get too excited, it wasn’t the kind of gravitational wormhole that would theoretically allow humans to travel rapidly across space in science fiction TV shows and films such as *Stargate*, *Star Trek*, and *Interstellar*, and it wouldn’t have been able to transport matter.

But the physicists managed to create a tunnel that allowed a magnetic field to disappear at one point, and then reappear at another, which is still a pretty huge deal.

Magnetic field

A wormhole is effectively just a tunnel that connects two places in the Universe. So far scientists have simulated this process, but are nowhere near creating a gravitational wormhole, as it would require us to create huge amounts of gravitational energy - something we don’t yet know how to do.

But what physicists are good at is generating and manipulating electromagnetic energy, and so the team from the Autonomous University of Barcelona decided to see if they could build a magnetic wormhole in the lab instead.

In 2014, they managed to create tunnels that directed

magnetic fields from one place to another, but these weren’t true wormholes because they didn’t keep the magnetic field undetectable or magnetically ‘invisible’ while it was travelling inside the tunnel.

This is something they managed to overcome in 2015, by using metamaterial and metasurfaces to build their tunnel.

That meant that they could make the magnetic field from a source, such as a magnet or an electromagnet, appear at the other end of the wormhole with no trace of it in between.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

IUST to Host 5th Intl. Aluminum Conference

Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST) will hold the 5th International Aluminum Conference in line with presenting latest scientific achievement in the aluminum industry and attraction of foreign investment.

Dr. Mansour Soltaniyeh Scientific Secretary of 5th Iran Intl. Aluminum Exhibition and Conference (IIAC2018) announced the above statement and said,

“presenting latest scientific achievements will be showcased in this edition of conference.”

Paving suitable way for investing in the field of aluminum industry was the main topic of discussion in this edition of the conference, he maintained.

Of total 107 abstracts sent to the Secretariat of the Conference, 74 articles, developed by universities, academic

centers and domestic industries as well as foreign research centers such as ATIE Uno Informatica and Italtelco from Italy, Hatch Ltd. From Canada and Swiss ABB Metallurgy Institute, have been admitted.

All articles accepted in ISC will be used in this edition of the Conference. Moreover, top articles also be published in exclusive issue of Science and Material Engineering Magazine, affiliated to Iran University of

Science and Technology (IUST).

According to him, Science and Material Engineering Magazine of Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST) has been admitted in ISI forum.

This Conference will be held on 4th, 5th and 6th of Ordibehesht of the next Iranian calendar year on April 24-26, 2018, the Public Relations Dept. of Iran University of Science and Technology concluded.

Nen-e nokhodchi

Nen-e Nokhodchi (roasted chickpea four-leaf clover cookies) are delicate cookies call for roasted chickpea flour, sold in Persian markets.

- **Ingredients**
- 1 cup canola oil

1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar

4 tsp. finely ground cardamom

1 Tbs. rose water



- 4 1/2 cups fine, roasted chickpea flour, sifted 3 times

4 Tbs. unsalted, slivered pistachios for garnish

■ **Direction**

Combine oil, sugar, cardamom and rose water in bowl, and mix for 2 minutes until white and creamy. Add chickpea flour all at once, and mix for 1 minute until dough is no longer sticky. Dust work surface with chickpea flour, knead dough 2 minutes by hand and flatten dough on surface until 6 inches square and 3/4-inch thick. Wrap in plastic wrap, place on plate and let rest for 1 hour in refrigerator. Preheat oven to 300F.

Unwrap dough. Use cloverleaf cookie cutter, and cut out dough. Place cookies on nonstick cookie sheet, leaving 1 inch between pieces to allow for spreading. Decorate each with slivered pistachios. Place sheet on rack in center of oven.

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until cookie bottoms are light golden. Remove cookies from oven, and allow to cool.

(Source: vegetariantimes.com)

LEARN ENGLISH

That's Funny!

Announcer: Hello everyone, and welcome to **open mic night**! First up, we have a very funny man coming straight from the state of Montana, Robert Hicks!

A: Thank you, everyone! You know, there's nothing I love better than **standup comedy**! You know, I've been working on my **routine** for months now, and I've got some real **zingers** for you tonight. Let's start out with some short jokes. Where do you find a one legged dog? Where you left it.

A: Get it? What do you call a sheep with no legs? A cloud!

A: Tough crowd... Alright, now you're going to love this joke. What do cows do for entertainment? They rent moooovies!

A: Okay, Okay, we've got a few **hecklers** in the audience, but this one is good! What does a fish say when it runs into a wall? DAM!

A: Okay, Last one! Why do gorillas have big nostrils? Coz they got big fingers!!!!!!! Crowd: Get off the stage!

■ **Key vocabulary**

open mic night: when a club or restaurant allows for anyone to sign or perform

standup comedy: when someone performs comedy while standing on a stage

routine: a series of things (such as movements or jokes)

zinger: a quick and clever comment that criticizes

heckler: someone who interrupts (someone, such as a speaker)

(Source: learnenglish.com)

Female pilots to make debut in Iran Air

W O M E N

d e s k

TEHRAN – For the first time, the Iranian flag-carrier airline, Iran Air, also known as Homa, is set to recruit female pilots, said Farzaneh Sharafbafi, the CEO of Iran Air here on Sunday.

The airline publishes a job vacancy advertisement to recruit new pilots annually; the main feature of this year's advertisement is the possibility for female pilots to apply, PANA quoted Sharafbafi as saying.

Currently, five top managers of Iran Air are women, she said, adding, based on official figures, about 1,780 women are working in Homa and nearly 4,000 others are involved in affiliated companies and air travel agencies.

A number of 16 percent of the women working for Homa are among the middle-ranking officials, the CEO of Iran Air stated.

"This is highly significant for us to have female pilots among our personnel," Sharafbafi emphasized.

Iran enjoys high number of female pi-

lots, Sharafbafi noted, adding, employment of new pilots, men or women will be according to Iran Airs' quality based administrative procedures.

"In the job vacancy advertisement, it has been announced that after passing certain exams, the applicants will undergo a 6 to 8-month training course to get familiar with the basic regulations of Iran Civil Aviation Organization and Iran Air."

She noted that the selected applicants will then begin to work on a certain type of plane as co-pilots.

Sharafbafi further underlined that one of the main criteria to measure a country's development is the significance that it attaches to women.

Women can play a key role in the social development as well as the realization of social justice in a society. Today, the world is paying more serious attention to the role of women in the society, she concluded.



Capitan Fahimeh Ahmadi

Zarif on his Twitter message values women's dignity



W O M E N

d e s k

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, in his twitter message, on Thursday, on the occasion of women's day, honored the women's esteem to lead the global campaign against violence.

Following is his message:

"My wife and I had the honor of participating in the International Event on Women, Sustainable Peace and security, organized by our VP for women and Family Affairs.

Women are most qualified to lead the global campaign against violence and extremism.

Happy Women's Day to all."

In Iran the Women's Day is marked on the occasion of birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatemeh Zahra (SA), the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (S) on March 9, 2018.

International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated on March 8 every year. It is a focal point in the movement for women's rights.

Interior Ministry sees 300% growth in female managers



W O M E N

d e s k

TEHRAN – There is a growth of 300 percent in the number of managerial positions for women in Interior Ministry, said Seyed Salman Samani, the ministry's spokesman here on Thursday.

The managerial positions include head-women of the villages to general managers and deputy governors, working in different parts of the country, he added.

Currently the number of women, working in different managerial positions, related to

Interior Ministry, reaches to 3,605, he added.

A total number of 1,227 women were working in managerial positions of Interior Ministry in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (March 2013-2014), Samani explained.

Assigning women on managerial positions in different provinces as general managers, governors and sheriffs proves the intention of the ministry on demonstrating the active and effective role of women in decision-making in managerial posts, he concluded.

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Syrian army troops gain more ground in Eastern Ghouta

The Syrian government forces have managed to make further advances on the terrorists' lines in militant-held Eastern Ghouta near the capital Damascus, tightening the noose around the foreign-backed terror groups, which have held captive several hundred thousands of people in the flashpoint enclave.

Some three weeks after the commencement of a full-scale offensive aimed at liberating Eastern Ghouta from the grips of Takfiri terrorists, the Syrian troops succeeded in taking the control of more than half of the volatile enclave, moving closer to recapturing the region rests on the edge of Damascus.

The government forces have already managed to slice the enclave in three isolated pockets, making it extremely difficult for terrorists to move from a section to another as reinforcement.

According to the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the army troopers and pro-government forces on Monday used Medeira, a town retaken a day earlier, as a "launching pad" to carry out a fresh attack on militants in an attempt to push against areas closest to the capital.

The other two areas, which are still in militant's hands, are Douma, the enclave's largest town to the north, and the zone around Hammuriyeh and other towns to the south.

Militant groups active inside the enclave, particularly the so-called Jaish al-Islam (Jaysh al-Islam/Army of Islam/Brigade of Islam) Takfiri outfit and the al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham) Takfiri terrorist group, are still trying to prevent civilians from leaving the enclave as they constantly target the safe passages of al-Wafideen and Jisreen with shells and explosive bullets.

On Sunday, at least four civilians lost their lives and nearly a dozen others sustained injuries after al-Nusra Front terrorists shelled residential neighborhoods in and around Damascus with mortar fire.

Eastern Ghouta, a besieged area on the outskirts of Damascus with some 400,000 people, has witnessed deadly



violence over the past few weeks, as Takfiri terrorist outfits have launched mortar attacks on the Syrian capital in the face of an imminent humiliating defeat, killing around dozens of civilians in past three weeks.

■ **One killed as people protest against militants in Ghouta**

Also on Monday, dozens of people in Kafr Batna, a town located in southern parts of Eastern Ghouta near the capital, staged a rally against the presence of foreign-backed militants wreaking havoc in the flashpoint region. They also shouted slogans, such as "Syrian nation and army are united" or "God bless the army", voiced their full support of the efforts government trooped exerted to liberate the enclave from the clutches of terrorists.

At least one protester lost his life after militants went on

a shooting spree against the demonstrators. Reports also said that several people were also wounded in the process.

■ **Over half a million people killed since 2011 in Syria**

The Britain-based SOHR which is sympathetic to the anti-Damascus militants, reported on Monday that around 511,000 people had been killed in Syria since the onset of foreign-backed militancy some seven years ago.

The so-called monitor further said that it had succeeded in identifying only more than 350,000 of those killed.

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

(Source: Press TV)

Taliban likely to miss Afghan peace meeting, says host Uzbekistan

The Taliban is likely to miss an Afghan peace conference at which participants are set to call for direct talks between the militant group and the government of President Ashraf Ghani, the Foreign Ministry in Uzbekistan says.

Representatives of the group have made no application to attend the March 26-27 meeting in the Uzbek capital Tashkent, suggesting they will not attend, a ministry statement said on Monday.

Ghani is set to attend along with the United States Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan and European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini.

Also set to attend are the foreign ministers of India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Turkey and the United Nations Special Representative for Afghanistan Tadamichi Yamamoto.

The Taliban urged Washington last month to begin talks to end almost 17 years of war in Afghanistan, which suggests they want to explore dialogue.

The group ruled Afghanistan until 2001 when it was toppled by a U.S.-led military invasion in the wake of the September 11 attacks and it is struggling to retake the control of territories it held in the country.

Ghani in February offered recognition of the Taliban as a legitimate political group as part of a proposed process he said could lead to talks.

Conference participants will call for an urgent start of direct talks between the Kabul government and the Taliban, the press office of Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry said in a written reply to questions from Reuters.

(Source: Reuters)

Sri Lanka: UN condemns anti-Muslim violence

The United Nations on Sunday condemned a string of anti-Muslim attacks in Sri Lanka including the burning of mosques and businesses.

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman told the Sri Lankan government the people behind the violence should be brought to justice.

During his visit, Feltman "condemned the breakdown in law and order and the attacks against Muslims and their property", a UN statement said.

Feltman, who met with local Muslim leaders to show solidarity, "urged swift and full implementation of the government's commitment to bring the perpetrators of the violence and hate speech to justice, to take measures to prevent recurrence, and to enforce non-discriminatory rule of law".

Violent attacks against Muslims swept the central district of Kandy over the last week.

The violence, triggered by the death of a Sinhalese Buddhist man after being beaten by a group of Muslim men over a traffic dispute, left at least two dead with and mosques, dozens of homes, and businesses torched or destroyed.

Several dozen people were wounded in the riots.

Authorities declared a state of emergency and imposed a curfew in an attempt to curtail the violence, but Sri Lankan Muslims told Al Jazeera they were concerned the attacks would continue.

Police have arrested the suspected instigators of the riots.

On Saturday, President Maithripala Sirisena announced a three-member panel will be appointed to investigate and lifted the curfew. However, soldiers remained in the streets.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Israeli forces arrest 10 Palestinian fishermen off Gaza coast

➔ **Israel's Netanyahu accused of perpetuating 'fake crisis' to force early election**

Elsewhere, members of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition have accused the embattled premier of brewing a "fake crisis" over a legislative dispute, concerning the controversial military conscription of ultra-orthodox Jewish men, in an attempt to seek an early election to help him survive corruption investigations.

Right-wing and religious parties in the government are currently separated over the framing of a bill that would guarantee the exemption ultra-Orthodox seminary male students have traditionally enjoyed from compulsory military service.

The widening rift could potentially hurl Israel to the snap ballots more than a year before its scheduled date, as the spiritual leaders of the major ultra-Orthodox political factions have already threatened to vote down the 2019 budget unless the legislation, which is bitterly opposed by Minister of Military Affairs Avigdor Lieberman, is approved.

If persisting disagreement is not settled and the budget is not approved, then, the three-year old government of Netanyahu would most likely fail to reach its expiry date in November next year.

"Over the past week we've baked a good solution for the draft crisis. I can say that there's no draft crisis. It's a fake crisis," Education Minister Naftali Bennett, head of the Jewish Home party, told reporters ahead of Sunday's cabinet meeting.

He added that "it could be that there's someone who for personal reasons wants to generate a crisis and lead the state to elections... In the end it's all up to one person who has to decide whether he wants elections or not, and that's the prime minister."

The Israeli premier, who would face a possible indictment on bribery charges in the coming months, met with leaders of the ultra-Orthodox parties Saturday night, after which he noted that they were working on a draft for the contentious bill that would satisfy legal and political demands.

Earlier in the day and following the coalition talks, Netanyahu's office announced that the cabinet ministers were waiting for ultra-Orthodox parties, which control 13 of the government's 66 seats in the 120-member Knesset, to present a revised version for the bill. Secularist right-wing parties want the exemption lifted or at least the language changed.

At least three police probes revolving around bribery allegations threaten the four-term prime Netanyahu's political survival. He has rejected any wrongdoing and says he is the victim of a "witch hunt."

However, polls suggest he could remain prime minister and his Likud party could win most of the seats in fresh elections despite police investigations into his affairs.

(Source: Press TV)

U.S. will make no concessions before North Korea talks: Pompeo

The United States will make no concessions to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in discussions leading to potential talks between the reclusive leader and President Donald Trump, and during any subsequent negotiations, CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) Director Mike Pompeo said.

Kim, on the other hand, must stand by the concessions he's offered, including ceasing nuclear and missile testing, continuing to allow the U.S.-South Korean military exercises, and leaving denuclearization "on the table," Pompeo said on "Fox News Sunday."

"Never before have we had the North Koreans in a position where their economy was at such risk, and where their leadership was under such pressure that they would begin conversations on the terms that Kim Jong Un has conceded to," Pompeo said.

The discussions with North Korea, should they occur, "will play out over time," Pompeo said.

Trump may be meeting with Kim in the coming month, in the hopes of winding down the Asian nation's nuclear weapons program, South Korean officials announced on Thursday at the White House.

It would be an unprecedented meeting by a U.S. president that upends decades of American foreign policy. Some experts have said it could become a stalling tactic by Kim to avoid additional economic sanctions while continuing to develop weaponry.

Asked on ABC's "This Week" program whether the meeting may not happen, White House Deputy Press Secretary Raj Shah said, "There's the possibility. If it does, it's the North Koreans' fault. They have not lived up to the promises that they made." Holding the meeting in Pyongyang is not "highly likely," but nothing has been ruled out for a location, he said.

Pompeo said sanctions on North Korea will continue. There's no question they are having an impact on North Korea's economy and brought Kim to the negotiating table, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said.

"Now we have a situation where the president is using diplomacy, but we're not removing the maximum pressure campaign," Mnuchin said on NBC's



"Meet the Press." "The president is going to sit down and see if he can cut a deal."

It's right to pursue a diplomatic approach, but the question is whether Trump is equipped to succeed with a complex and volatile situation that needs seasoned diplomats, said Ben Rhodes, a former deputy national security adviser for President Barack Obama.

"This is not a real estate deal or a reality show," Rhodes said on ABC. But Pompeo, on Fox, said Trump "isn't doing this for theater."

Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts also raised concerns about Kim playing Trump because of complicated negotiations a time the State Department has been "decimated" by departures of key staff, and with no U.S. ambassador to South Korea in place.

"When the president succeeds in negotiations like this, the United States succeeds," Warren said on CNN's "State of the Union." "But I am very worried that he's going to go into these negotiations and be taken advantage of."

Pompeo spoke about Kim in January, saying the leader wouldn't stop with just one successful arms test and that the country is within months of developing a nuclear missile capable of reaching the U.S. North Korea tested a missile in November that analysts say put U.S. soil in range, following other weaponry tests over the years.

It's still the CIA's assessment that North Korea is "a few months" away from being able to reach the U.S. with a nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missile, Pompeo said on CBS's "Face the Nation" on Sunday.

General Paul Selva, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters Jan. 30 that while the regime has "made some strides," it hasn't yet demonstrated having all the components for a strike with nuclear ICBM.

"It's possible he has them and so we have to place the bet that he might have them, but he hasn't demonstrated them," said Selva.

Prior to announcing the meeting, Trump and Kim have traded barbs and threats on the global stage, with Trump calling the North Korean "short and fat" and a "madman." Kim responded by calling the president a "mentally deranged U.S. dotard." Trump also threatened to use military force if necessary to stop North Korea's nuclear threat, saying the country would be met with "fire and fury."

Pompeo on Sunday repeated his agency's conclusion about Kim's personality that in spite of the bombast, "we know a fair amount about him. We know that he is rational in the sense that he responds to stimulus. We've seen this."

Trump vouched for Kim at the annual Gridiron Dinner in Washington

on March 3, saying in a satirical speech to members of the media that, "I won't rule out direct talks with Kim Jong Un. I just won't. As far as the risk of dealing with a madman is concerned, that's his problem, not mine."

Still, Martin Dempsey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Kim has shown he's mostly interested in preserving his own regime.

"We've seen he's willing to do nearly anything to do that," Dempsey said on CNN's "Fareed Zakaria GPS" on Sunday. "And this is why this negotiation will be so challenging."

A key question is whether any U.S.-North Korean talks include reducing the conventional military threat that Kim poses to South Korea as well as denuclearization, with its "thousands of artillery pieces and rockets arrayed along the Demilitarized Zone," Dempsey said.

"Our negotiators will have to decide, how compartmentalized do we want it to be?" Dempsey said. "Are we trying to bring stability to the Korean Peninsula, which takes you on one path, or are we trying, simply, to denuclearize?" he said. "That will be an important decision."

Dempsey's view was underscored by Lieutenant General Robert Ashley, director of the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency. Ashley told the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 6 that "with its large artillery and infantry force forward-deployed," Kim's forces "can mount an attack on South Korean and U.S. forces with little or no warning."

"Although resource shortages and aging equipment continue to hamper North Korea, its conventional military remains a major threat to South Korea," Ashley said in his written statement.

Ashley also outlined the difficulty of targeting both North Korea's nuclear and conventional capabilities as it "continues intense efforts to deny us information about its capabilities and intentions."

Kim's underground facilities program "is the largest in the world, and its primary function is to protect and conceal regime leaders, weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles, military forces, and defense industries," Ashley said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

ISIL terrorists kill over two dozen civilians, PMU fighters in Iraq

Remnants of the the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group have shot and killed more than two dozen civilians and pro-government fighters in two separate attacks amid ongoing counter-terrorism operations to purge the extremists from all parts of the war-battered country.

Captain Habib al-Shamri said ISIL terrorists set up a fake security checkpoint on a highway near al-Azim district in the eastern Iraqi province of Diyala, and stopped a number of civilian vehicles.

Shamri added the Takfiri then opened fire on the passengers, killing 15 civilians and injuring five others. The injured civilians were taken to a nearby hospital to receive medical treatment. He noted that the terrorists escaped after the attack.

The officer also said that another ISIL attack in the same province killed three more people.



Separately, seven fighters from volunteer forces, better known as Popular Mobilization Units (PMU/Hashd al-Sha'abi), were killed when ISIL terrorists attacked a house of a tribal sheikh in the town of Mukashafah, south of Tikrit.

Major Sabhan Matar said ISIL extremists mounted the assault when the Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters were meeting at the house.

On December 9, 2017, Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared the end of military operations against the ISIL terrorist group in the country.

On July 10, Abadi formally declared victory over ISIL extremists in Mosul, which served as the terrorists' main urban stronghold in the conflict-ridden country.

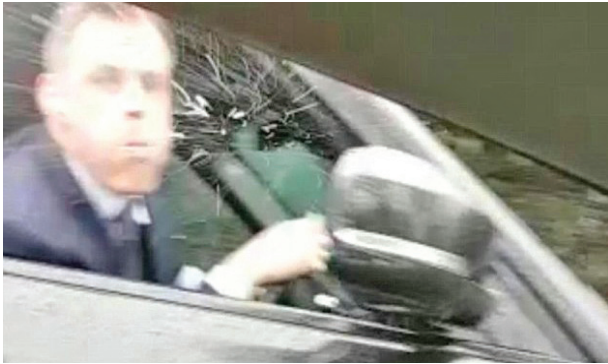
In the run-up to Mosul's liberation, Iraqi army soldiers and volunteer PMU fighters had made sweeping gains against ISIL.

The Iraqi forces took control of eastern Mosul in January 2017 after 100 days of fighting, and launched the battle in the west on February 19 last year.

ISIL began a terror campaign in Iraq in 2014, overrunning vast swathes in lightning attacks.

(Source: Press TV)

Carragher apologizes after spitting at girl



Jamie Carragher has apologized after a video showed the former England and Liverpool defender spitting towards a girl in a car from his own vehicle.

The 40-year-old, now a television pundit for Sky Sports, had been covering his former side's 2-1 defeat by Manchester United on Saturday.

The video, obtained by the Mirror, shows Carragher react by spitting at a car after being "goaded".

He said he was "totally out of order" and has apologized to the family. A Sky Sports spokesperson said: "It's unacceptable behavior and we will be addressing it with Jamie."

In the video, Carragher exchanges waves with the girl's dad. Carragher winds down his window while the girl's dad winds down his passenger side window. The dad can then be heard shouting: "Unlucky Jamie lad. Two, one."

Carragher reacts by leaning out of his window and spitting towards the car, hitting the girl, who is sitting in the front passenger seat.

On Sunday night he apologized on Twitter and said that while he was "goaded three/four times while being filmed", there was "no excuse".

Carragher was supposed to be acting as a pundit for Danish television channel TV3 Sport, which is part of the Modern Times Group media company, for Manchester United's Champions League game at home to Sevilla on Tuesday.

However, he has reportedly been pulled from their coverage as they investigate the spitting incident, with MTG Sport executive vice-president Peter Norrelund telling Danish newspaper Ekstra Bladet they had sent an employee to speak to Carragher before deciding what further action to take.

(Source: BBC)

West Ham owners to get extra security at home games

West Ham United's owners will be given additional protection at the London Stadium with a larger police presence and barriers to prevent a repeat of the crowd disturbances that marred Saturday's 3-0 home Premier League defeat by Burnley, British newspapers reported on Monday.

Pitch invasions and ugly scenes in the stands, including fans taunting West Ham owners David Gold and David Sullivan in the directors' box, led the club to launch a probe and call an emergency meeting with the Stadium stakeholders.

West Ham supporters are unhappy about the club's move from the Upton Park stadium which was their home from 1904-2016.

Former West Ham midfielder Trevor Brooking, who was also in the directors' box, said Sullivan was struck in the face by a coin and that fans who contributed to the toxic atmosphere should stay away from the team's home games.

West Ham have asked for police to be stationed inside the ground for the five remaining home games this season. The club will also ban the fans who ran on to the pitch.

Police in riot gear had to quell trouble inside the London stadium and disturbances were reported outside the ground as West Ham beat Chelsea 2-1 to reach the League Cup quarter-finals in 2016.

West Ham are 16th in the league, three points adrift of the relegation zone. They next host Southampton on March 31.

(Source: Mirror)

Chelsea must be ready to suffer at Barcelona, says Conte

Chelsea must be prepared to "suffer" in Barcelona on Wednesday if they are to have any chance of progressing to the Champions League quarter-finals, manager Antonio Conte has said.

Barcelona scored a 75th-minute equaliser through Lionel Messi to cancel out midfielder Willian's second-half goal in the first leg clash between the teams at Stamford Bridge last month.

Conte said his team could face a more daunting task against the five-times European champions at the Nou Camp.

"We must be very good but when you play against this type of team, which I think is one of the best in the world, you must be prepared to suffer, in the same way we did in the first leg, where we were almost perfect," Conte told the club's website (www.chelseafc.com). "This is not a (Chelsea) team with great experience, we have a lot of players who are playing their first or second season in the Champions League. "But we have to work as a team and try to be ready to suffer the moments we have to suffer, and in every moment we have to know that we can have a chance to score."

Barcelona dominated possession in the first leg but Conte's side were unfortunate not to end with a victory after Willian was twice denied by the woodwork before halftime.

"Given our opponents' ability to dominate possession, especially on home soil, we will also need to show plenty of patience and concentration in waiting for our opportunities and making the most of them when they arrive," Conte added.

(Source: Guardian)

Greek league suspended after PAOK club president invades pitch with gun

A leading European league has been suspended after a key game ended in chaos Sunday when the president of a Greek club entered the pitch during the match with a handgun holstered on his waist.

The incident occurred in a Greek Superleague match between rivals PAOK and AEK Athens, after the referee disallowed a last-minute goal for PAOK defender Fernando Varela.

With confusion surrounding whether the goal had been awarded or not, Savvidis walked onto the pitch accompanied by bodyguards wearing a handgun in a holster on his waist. The match was subsequently abandoned as Savvidis was escorted from the field.

"We have decided to suspend the Championship indefinitely," Greece's Deputy Culture and Sports Minister Georgios Vassiliadis told National Greek broadcaster ERT following a meeting with the Prime Minister Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras

"We are in communication with UEFA and the Championship will not resume unless there is a new and clear framework agreed by everyone so we can move forward with rules and regulations. We are not going back, we continue the fight for transparency and a better football."

Earlier Vassiliadis told CNN Sport that "scenes where armed officials enter the sport field send us many years backwards. Such extreme phenomena demand courageous decisions.

"We will not allow to anyone to derive us from our target even if we need to take tough decisions in communication with the UEFA."

World governing body FIFA told CNN



in a statement that it was aware of the incident and "fully condemns such behavior," though "as the incident occurred in domestic competition, all disciplinary action falls under the jurisdiction of the Greek Football Association."

■ 'Provocative headlines'

An arrest warrant has been reportedly issued for Savvidis, though as he has a license to carry a gun the warrant relates to the pitch invasion.

"Ivan (Savvidis) didn't threaten anybody with a gun," his media department told Rus-

sia's Sport Express newspaper.

"It means that the provocative headlines in certain media are totally untrue. He carries weapons as he has a permission for it. It's not prohibited in Greece."

In a written statement posted to the club website, PAOK said: "Ivan Savvidis is preparing to take all necessary steps to protect the club and all his executives and associates from the threats and attacks they are suffering."

■ **Trouble in English Premier League**
Savvidis is a Greek-Russian business

Per Mertesacker reaps praise, criticism for speaking of pressure felt during career



The comments published in Saturday's edition of Der Spiegel news magazine painted a picture of a man who has hated his job ever since he became a professional footballer 15 years ago.

Per Mertesacker, who is to hang up his boots at Arsenal at the end of the season to take up a job coaching at the Premier League club's academy, said he has been so nervous before every game that he feels like vomiting and struggles with diarrhea. "The pressure has eaten me up," he said.

The 33-year-old former national team and Werder Bremen player said that he had taken great pains throughout his career to keep his nerves hidden from his teammates, due to the shame he felt and worries about possible consequences for his career.

'No desire' left to play

He said many have told him that he should enjoy the last few months of his playing career, but that he had "no desire" left to play the game.

"I'd rather sit on the bench, or even better, in the stands," he said.

The 2006 World Cup in Germany seems to have been particularly torturous for Mertesacker.

■ "It's finally over"

"The pressure ate me up. There was this constant horror scenario of making a mistake that could lead to a goal," he said, before conceding that although he was disappointed when Germany were eliminated by Italy in the semifinals.

"I just thought: It's over, it's over. It's finally over," he said.

At the same time, Mertesacker said he was conscious of the fact that as a footballer, he has had a privileged life, and that he appreciated all that football had given him.

Through his comments, the 33-year-old defender said he wanted let up-and-coming youngsters know that there is another side of the coin to a career as a footballer – and that in his next job, he plans to "attack the system."

It is also worth noting that Mertesacker was a squad member at Hannover when goalkeeper Robert Enke decided to take his own life after battling with mental illness.

Reactions to his comments have been mixed. While many have praised him for speaking so openly about the problems he experienced, others have been quite critical.

(Source: DW)

Brian McKeever wins eleventh Paralympic title



History was made on Monday (12 March) when Canadian veteran Brian McKeever won his eleventh Paralympic gold medal. He led the vision impaired race from start to finish eventually winning by over a minute led by guides Graham Nishikawa and Russell Kennedy. In his fifth and final Games the 38-year-old revealed what keeps him motivated.

The win for McKeever sees him become the most successful male cross-country skier in Paralympic Games history with 11 golds, one more than Germany's Frank Heffle and Terje Loevaas of Norway.

Yury Holub of Belarus sprang a surprise finishing second to make it two silver medals in a row for him and guide Dzmitry Budzlovich after their performance in the biathlon sprint. The bronze medal went to Thomas Clarion of France with his guide Antoine Bollet.

The day got even better for Belarus when Sviatlana Sakhnenka won the first gold medal of these Games for her country despite breaking a pole during the race. Alongside guide Raman Yashchanka she fought off a strong challenge from Ukraine's Oksana Shyshkova to become Paralympic champion in the 15km

men and politician, who previously held the position of Deputy to the State Duma in the Russian government between 2007 and 2011.

Having taken over the Thessaloniki club in August 2012, Savvidis paid off more than \$13.4 million of the club's debt by 2015.

Dubbed the "Double-headed Eagles Derby" on account of the clubs' badges, the rivalry between PAOK and AEK has a fierce and storied history.

AEK currently lead the Superleague -- with PAOK in third -- meaning Sunday's game was crucial in the Greek title race's likely outcome.

The Greek Superleague lists the result as a 1-0 PAOK victory, though it remains unclear whether this scoreline is final.

Greece wasn't the only major European league affected by a pitch invasion over the weekend.

English Premier League club West Ham United has launched an inquiry after a number of fans invaded the pitch during Saturday's 3-0 defeat by Burnley at the London Stadium.

"West Ham United have immediately launched a full and thorough investigation into the incidents which marred the second half of today's match and are committed to taking decisive and appropriate action," said a club statement on Saturday.

"An emergency meeting has been called with all London Stadium stakeholders. There will be no further comment at this time."

West Ham is 16th in the table, three points above the relegation zone.

(Source: CNN)

Djokovic suffers 'weird' loss to qualifier at Indian Wells

Novak Djokovic produced a puzzling performance as the former world number one lost to Japanese qualifier Taro Daniel in the second round at the BNP Paribas Open in California on Sunday.

On his return from right elbow surgery, Djokovic looked a pale shadow of his former self as he went down 7-6(3) 4-6 6-1 to make a quick exit from a tournament he has won five times.

"It felt like the first match I have ever played on the tour, very weird," he told reporters. "I just completely lost rhythm, everything, struggled a little bit with the health the last couple of weeks."

Djokovic took six months off after Wimbledon last year and returned in January's Australian Open where he lost in the fourth round. He had surgery in Switzerland shortly after that.

"I was grateful to be out on the court after surgery that quickly but at the same time just didn't feel good at all," he added. "Nerves were there. I made so many unforced errors."

Djokovic's performance in the final set against the world's 109th-ranked player on center court raised some eyebrows, with four-times grand slam champion Jim Courier saying the Serb had "capitulated".

"The question marks surrounding his defeat today will only grow larger," Courier said in commentary on the Tennis Channel.



"We wondered post surgery what it was going to look like, how his elbow was going to react to the strain and stress, but it was his heart and head that didn't react the right way in this match. That is as head scratching as anything you'll see."

Holder Roger Federer avoided the same fate as Djokovic, though the Swiss top seed was pushed by left-handed Argentine Federico Delbonis in a match that was completed

on Sunday after being halted by rain at 2-2 in the second set the previous day.

The top seed fended off a set point in the tiebreak to beat Delbonis 6-3 7-6(6).

"It's been a long time since I have been interrupted at night and have to come back the next day," said Federer.

"In the night-time, the ball is much more deader. The surface doesn't react so much."

Frenchman Gael Monfils survived a match point before beating big-serving American John Isner 6-7(5) 7-6(3) 7-5 in a contest that had only one break.

Isner, the 15th seed, frittered away seven break points, while Monfils converted one of his three opportunities, which proved enough.

Yuki Bhambri of India pulled off a surprise when he toppled ninth-seeded Frenchman Lucas Pouille 6-4 6-4.

In late action, Croat second seed Marin Cilic beat Hungarian Marton Fucsovics 7-5 6-3, while Canadian Milos Raonic defeated 17-year-old compatriot Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4 6-4.

"I was attacking when I had my chances and controlling most of the times the points," said Cilic. "I didn't serve too good today but overall I'm pleased."

The tournament also lost Japan's Kei Nishikori, who withdrew through illness.

(Source: Reuters)

Persepolis aim to reach ACL final: Branko Ivankovic

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic says they are aiming to reach the AFC Champions League final match for the first time. The Iranian giants qualified for the ACL semi-final last year but failed to book a place in the final match after being defeated by Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal.

The Croat says Persepolis want to go one step forward to reach the competition's final this season.

The Iranian giants, who sit top of the Group C with six points, defeated Al Wasl of the UAE 2-0 last week and will meet the team at the Zabeel Stadium in Dubai on Tuesday.

"Al Wasl are a strong team and we know it will be difficult match. In my opinion all participating teams in ACL are strong teams. However, we are determined to defeat our opponents," Ivankovic said in the pre-match news conference.

"We've played so many matches in the past days but it could not prevent us from reaching our goal. Persepolis are a well-prepared team than we were last year," former Iran national team coach stated.

"We're proud of us for advancing to the semi-final last year but Persepolis are going to book a place in the final match this time," Ivankovic concluded.



Team Melli coaches plant trees



S P O R T S On the occasion of the Week of Natural Resources, March 6-13, the head coaches of Iran national volleyball and football teams expressed their appreciation for nature by planting trees in Tehran.

Igor Kolakovic accompanied by top officials of the Iranian volleyball federation planted a sapling on Sunday.

With the motto that 'I Am a Forester', Carlos Queiroz, too, planted a tree at the

Saipa club, in western Tehran.

Ali Daei, who was the former Iran coach, and now the coach of Saipa, former Persepolis and Iran coach Ali Parvin, Iran national basketball captain Hamed Haddadi, and basketball coach Mehran Shahintab were all in attendance at the tree-planting ceremony.

The families of Iranian oil tanker Sanchi's victims took part in the ceremony in remembrance of their loved ones.

Esteghlal of Iran held by UAE's Al Ain



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal of Iran were held to a 1-1 draw by Al Ain of the UAE in Matchday Four of the AFC Champions League on Monday.

In the match held in Tehran's Azadi Stadium, Mame Thiam found the back of the net from the penalty spot in the 42nd minute.

Al Ain managed to control the match in the second half and put the Iranian team under pressure in front of 100,000 spectators.

In the 78th minute, Al Ain's Tsukasa Shi-tani equalized the match with an accurate curling shot from outside of the box.

Earlier in the day, Al Rayyan of Qatar beat Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia 2-1 in Doha's Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

Esteghlal remain top of the table with six points on goal difference.

Al Rayan sit in second place (six points, +1), Al Ain are third with three points and al Hilal sit bottom of table with two points.

Preview - Group C: Al Wasl FC v Persepolis FC

Dubai: Al Wasl will be eliminated from the AFC Champions League if they suffer a fourth successive defeat in Tuesday's game with Group C leaders Persepolis at Zabeel Stadium.

Farshad Ahmadzadeh and Ali Alipour got on the scoresheet as Persepolis claimed a 2-0 victory over Al Wasl in Tehran last week to remain top of the standings at the midway point of the group stage.

The loss was Al Wasl's third in a row and, realistically, only a win on home soil will keep their hopes of reaching the next phase alive. They will be able to call on Ali Salmin once more after the midfielder served a one-game ban last week.

Persepolis go into the encounter boasting a fine recent record against Emirati opposition, having won their last five games against sides from the UAE, and a sixth

victory in succession would leave them in a strong position ahead of the last two rounds of fixtures.

With Persepolis above Al Sadd and Nasaf on goal difference alone going into Matchday Four, Group C is already looking like a close finish awaits, with the top three locked together on six points in an intriguing battle.

(Source: AFC)



Preview - Group A: Tractorsazi Tabriz v Al Jazira FSC



Tabriz: Tractorsazi Tabriz will be looking for their first win in Group A of the AFC Champions League when the Islamic Republic of Iran side host Al Jazira at Yadegar-e Emam Stadium on Tuesday.

The sides played out a scoreless draw in their first meeting a week ago in what was Tractorsazi's first point of a campaign that had previously seen defeats to Al Ahli and Al Jazira.

But with Al Jazira and Al Gharafa both just three points ahead of Tractorsazi, and Al Gharafa away at group leaders Al

Ahli, victory for the Iranian team could put them right back into the hunt for last 16 qualification.

Mohammad Iranpourian returns from suspension for the hosts, but Al Jazira are without the suspended trio of Ali Mabkhout, Mohamed Jamal and Ahmed Al Hashmi after they picked up their second bookings of the campaign last week.

In more positive news for the visitors, Moroccan Mbarck Boussoufa is available once more after serving a one-game ban as the Emirati team seek a first win since Matchday One.

Time for Iran to have AFC Champions League success

Iranian football is booming. The national team may have been placed in a tricky World Cup group with Spain, Portugal and Morocco but is the one Asian team that has a chance of surviving such a pot. Under Carlos Queiroz, Team Melli have been the best on the continent for some time and there is the potential to shock a few people in Russia this year.

There is a growing number of players in action in Europe and performing well. The likes of Karim Ansarifard, Reza Ghoochannejhad, Alireza Jahanbakhsh and Sardar Azmoun have been playing well in leagues such as the Netherlands and Russia and the latter two at least should make the step to a bigger stage in the not too distant future. Others will follow.

At the club level, there is also cause for optimism. After a few years of inconsistent performances in the Iranian league, the twin Tehran titans Persepolis and Esteghlal are starting to find some of their old swagger and Iranian football needs these two to be strong. Persepolis won the title in dramatic fashion in 2008 but had to wait until 2017 to lift the trophy once more. The Reds have dominated the current season and with five games remaining are 15 points clear at the top.

The title could have been clinched on March 1 at the Tehran derby but Esteghlal took the game 1-0, a rare setback for Persepolis this season. Back to back title wins will show that the Reds have truly returned. The fact



that Esteghlal finished second last season and could do so again this is also encouraging.

What has been lacking is success in the Asian Champions League. The national team is going well and the same can be said of the overseas exports but for one of the continent's powerhouses have struggled to make a mark in the biggest club competition is something that needs to be redressed.

Since the Champions League started, Iranian fans have had to watch as fans from rival countries have celebrated. There have been

two wins for Saudi Arabia, three for Japan while South Korea has five to look back on.

Sepahan made the final in 2007 and Zob Ahan did the same in 2010 to face Urawa Reds of Japan and Korea's Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma respectively. Neither really gave the impression that they felt they could win and the East Asian teams ran out fairly comfortable winners.

Maybe it will take Persepolis or Esteghlal to change the poor record. Neither has done much since the competition was introduced

in 2003 though Esteghlal is a past winner of the old Asian Club Championship. The two teams have one semi-final appearance each. Esteghlal made it in 2013 but were well-beaten by FC Seoul. The best for Persepolis came last year and a loss to Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia in a clash of two Asian giants.

So far this season, so good. Persepolis under Branko Ivankovic and Esteghlal with Winfried Schaefer have two coaches who know the Asian scene pretty well. At the halfway point of the group stage, both top their groups and there is nothing for them to fear at all in the western half of the draw.

It adds to a feeling of persecution in Iran. The federation and clubs are already unhappy at not being able to play Saudi teams on a home and away basis. Riyadh and Tehran cut diplomatic ties in January 2016 and meetings take place in third countries. Especially given that Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates were told by the Asian Football Confederation in January that they had to play games with Qatar home and away, despite the absence of any kind of relations there, Iran have been disappointed that they were told that they had to play their 'home games' in Oman.

This seems to be out of Iran's control at the moment but what is not is a first Champions League title. With so much else going well, it is time for continental club success. (Source: Foxsportsasia.com)

Matchday Four - Group B: Al Wahda 3-0 Zobahan



Abu Dhabi: Mourad Batna bagged a goal and an assist as UAE's Al Wahda defeated Islamic Republic of Iran's Zobahan 3-0 on Matchday Four of the AFC Champions League Group B on Monday.

Al Wahda started on the front foot as Batna's shot in the fourth minute went just wide off the left post. Zobahan responded through Seyed Hosseini whose shot was saved by goalkeeper Rashed Ali.

Sebastian Tagliabue put the home side in front in the dying moments of the first half, sweeping home from Balazs Dzsudzsak's deftly executed free-kick.

Just 12 minutes after the restart, Batna extended Al Wahda's lead as his curled shot from the edge of the box found the back of Zobahan's net, making it 2-0.

In the 65th minute, Mohamed Al Akbari rounded the scoring for the Emiratis after calmly converting Batna's ground cross. Al Wahda maintained composure and an organised defence until the referee blew the full time whistle.

Despite the win, Al Wahda remain in Group B's last spot with three points ahead of a trip to Tashkent to face Lokomotiv, while Zobahan stay second with six points and will face Al Duhail in Matchday Five.

(Source: AFC)

Zlatko Kranjcar nominee for Iran U-23 football team seat

TASNIM — Former Persepolis and Sepahan coach Zlatko Kranjcar is a candidate to take charge of Iran u-23 football team.

The 62-year-old Croat had been nominated to be appointed as Iranian Olympic football team in 2014 but ex-Iran defender Mohammad Khakpour was chosen for the post at that time.

Iran U-23 football team are without a coach after parting company with Amir Hossein Peyrovani in July.

Under guidance of Peyrovani, the Iranian football team failed to qualify for the 2018 AFC U-23 Championship in China.

Now, the Iranian football federation are searching for a new head coach and media reports suggest that Kranjcar is a candidate to take charge of the team.

Kranjcar led Sepahan to win Iran Professional League (IPL) and Iran Hazfi Cup.

Nishikori withdraws from Indian Wells through illness

Japan's Kei Nishikori said he had withdrawn from the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells through illness. "I have been sick for over a week and tried everything I could to get better," the world number 25 was quoted as saying on the tournament's Twitter account.

The only Japanese player ever to be ranked in the world's top five, Nishikori was due to face Argentine Leonardo Mayer in the second round on Sunday. He has been replaced by lucky loser Ruben Bemelmans of Belgium.

"I'm still not strong enough to go play a match," Nishikori said. "I'm very sorry as I love this tournament."

The 28-year-old had returned to play this winter after a five-month injury layoff due to a wrist injury.

Nishikori became the first men's player representing an Asian country to reach a grand slam singles final at the U.S. Open in 2014 but lost in straight sets to Croat Marin Cilic.

(Source: Reuters)

Poor attendances at Arsenal home games a worry for Wenger

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger is worried by an apparent dip in attendance at the Emirates stadium in recent weeks but said he is confident the team will do "absolutely everything" to win back their fans.

British media reports said there were thousands of empty seats in Arsenal's 3-0 Premier League win over Watford on Sunday despite the club selling 59,131 tickets, just short of their total capacity of 59,867 seats.

The stadium was a lot emptier in the 3-0 league defeat by Manchester City earlier this month although freezing conditions could have kept fans away on that day.

Wenger acknowledged that empty seats were a concern.

"Of course I worry because I want our fans to be behind our team and be happy," Wenger told Standard Sport. "But after what happened in that week (against City) it's a bit understandable.

"We are in a job where we have to get the fans on our side and do absolutely everything to achieve it. That's what we want to do."

Arsenal are sixth in the league with 48 points and face an uphill task to qualify for next season's Champions League by finishing in the top four.

"I don't know how much negativity is out there. I focus on my job. I think I've shown in 22 years that I can do that, that I'll respect everyone's opinion and focus on my job with total commitment," Wenger said.

Their hopes of participating in Europe's elite competition next season hinge on winning the Europa League. Arsenal beat AC Milan 2-0 in the first leg of their last 16 clash and take on the Italians at home on Thursday.

(Source: Reuters)

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Goethe-Institut, Sadi Foundation to cooperate on promotion of Persian, German

A R T TEHRAN — The Goethe-Institut Berlin and Iran's Sadi Foundation plan to organize programs to promote learning the Persian and German languages, the Sadi Foundation announced on Monday.



Goethe-Institut Berlin director Gabriele Gauler (L) and Sadi Foundation's Europe Department director Zahra Salemi pose in Berlin in an undated photo.

A plan to organize a day for the Persian language in Germany and also a day for the German language in Iran was discussed in a recent meeting at the Goethe-Institut Berlin between the director of the foundation's Europe Department, Zahra Salemi, and the director of the institute, Gabriele Gauler.

The final decision about the plan will be announced to Iran after the Goethe-Institut Berlin makes an in-depth study of the topic. "The Sadi Foundation was established based on the necessity for a systematic method that organizations such as the Goethe-Institut, Spain's Cervantes Institute and France's Institute Alliance Française are seeking for language learning," Salemi said at the meeting.

She said that the foundation needs to use the experience the organizations such as the Goethe-Institut have gained over the time.

The Sadi Foundation is Iran's official organization tasked with promoting the Persian language and literature overseas.

Film Museum of Iran to screen three Italian films

A R T TEHRAN — The Film Museum of Iran will be screening three Italian films this week.

"Il Giovane Favoloso", a 2014 drama by Mario Martone, "Scialla", a 2011 comedy by Francesco Bruni, and "Malavoglia", a 2011 film by Pasquale Scimecca, are the movies to go on screen for three nights on March, 15, 16, and 17, the museum announced on Monday.



A scene from "Il Giovane Favoloso".

The program has been arranged in collaboration with the Embassy of Italy in Tehran.

Madcap British comedian Ken Dodd dies, aged 90

LONDON (Reuters) — British comedian Ken Dodd, well-known to the country's television audiences for his spiky hair, buck teeth and "tickling stick", has died aged 90, his publicist said on Monday.

Dodd achieved fame in theaters in the 1950s with a madcap humor and a relentless barrage of off-the-cuff ripostes. His style, which later brought him television and radio fame, owed much to music hall tradition.

"To my mind, he was one of the last music hall greats," his publicist Robert Holmes said in a statement to media. He added Dodd died on Sunday.

The Liverpool-born comedian was a tireless live performer who drew up a "giggle map" of Britain, telling him what made people laugh in different parts of the country.

Dodd was also holder of a Guinness World Record for telling 1,500 jokes in three and a half hours.

Towards the end of a career which earned him a knighthood, he chose not to retire and had been due to perform in the northern English town of Bolton this month before he was taken ill.

"I'm told that before I go out on stage, I look my age," he told The Guardian newspaper in November. "Once I'm there, I suddenly turn into a 32-year-old."

He also had a singing career, with more than a dozen hits in Britain including "Tears" which topped the UK charts in 1965, selling over a million copies.

Filmgoers to enjoy Noruz with new movies

A R T TEHRAN — Seven Iranian films have been selected to premiere at Iranian theaters ahead of the Iranian New Year celebration, Noruz, which will begin on March 20, the Screening Council of the Culture Ministry announced on Monday.

The films will hit the theaters across the country on Wednesday.

Director Hadi Mohammadian's animated movie "The Elephant King", Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian's drama "Lottery", Alireza Davudnejad's "Ferrari", Ebrahim Hatamikia's "Damascus Time" and Mehran Ahmadi's directorial debut "Confiscation" are among the selected films.

Also included are the two comedies "Vespiary" by Borzu Niknejad and "Khargiush" by Mami Baghbani.

"The Elephant King" is about Shadfil, a funny baby elephant who must quickly find the courage to be the successor to his father as the leader of the elephants.

The story of "Lottery" revolves around trafficking in Iranian women to Arab countries.

"Ferrari" tells the story of Golnar, a young ambitious girl who moves from a remote Iranian town to Tehran just to pose with a luxurious Ferrari for photos.

"Damascus Time" tells the story of an Iranian pilot and his son as copilot who are seized by the Daesh forces in Syria when they are in the country to deliver a cargo of humanitarian relief supplies to people in a war-torn region.

The story of "Confiscation" starring Reza Attaran is set in the 1970s. It is about a man who works for SAVAK, the Shah's Intelligence service.



Director/actor Mehran Ahmadi acts with a number of actors in a scene from his directorial debut "Confiscation".

"Seventh Period" set up at Fajr to raise schoolchildren's social awareness



A poster for the 36th Fajr International Film Festival

A R T TEHRAN — The Fajr International Film Festival has added a new section titled "Seventh Period" to the 36th edition of the event, which intends to heighten schoolchildren's social awareness, the organizers announced on Monday.

A lineup of movies from Iran and world cinema will be screened at several theaters in Tehran from April 17 to 25 in collaboration with the Tehran Municipality and the Ministry of Education.

Experts will brief the students on the films before screening, and they will also receive basic criticism education that will provide them an opportunity to write reviews, the best of which will be awarded by the organizers.

However, the organizers did not publish the film's titles.

Parents are also allowed to watch the films along with their children.

The 36th Fajr International Film Festival will be held in Tehran from April 19 to 27.

Publisher delays paperback of latest Alexie book

NEW YORK (AP) — The publisher of Sherman Alexie, who faces multiple allegations of sexual harassment, is postponing the paperback of his latest book.

Hachette Book Group had planned to release the paperback of his memoir "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me" in April. Hachette told The Associated Press on Sunday that the date had been pushed back indefinitely and that the change was made at the author's request.

Alexie, one of the country's best known authors, issued a statement earlier this month acknowledging wrongdoing. Last week, he declined a literary honor the American Library Association had awarded him for "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me," which came out in 2017. The library association had given him the Carnegie Medal for nonfiction, a \$5,000 prize.

"We were surprised and troubled to hear the allegations that have recently emerged, and are concerned about the distress this situation has caused so many," Hachette said in a statement. "We're encouraged that Sherman Alexie has apologized to those he has hurt and has dedicated himself, as he's said, to becoming 'a healthier man who makes healthier decisions.'"

Hachette has published some of Alexie's most acclaimed work, notably his young adult novel "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian," winner of the National Book Award in 2007 and required reading in many



In this Oct. 10, 2016, file photo, author and filmmaker Sherman Alexie speaks at an event at Seattle's City Hall. Alexie's publisher, Hachette Book Group, is postponing the paperback of his latest book. Hachette told The Associated Press on Sunday, March 11, 2018, that the date has been pushed back indefinitely and that the change was made at the author's request. (Elaine Thompson, File AP) Photo

schools. Hachette plans to keep his previous work in print, but did not immediately comment on whether it would release any future books. None are currently scheduled. Alexie's agent, Nancy Stauffer Cahoon, has not responded to numerous requests for comment.

Alexie is one of several authors who have faced harassment allegations recently. James Dashner, author of the million-selling "Maze Runner" novels, was dropped by his agent and by his publisher, Penguin Random House. Jay Asher of "13 Reasons Why" fame also was dropped by his agent.

Vocalist Mohammad Motamedi to perform "My Mother Persia" with Antalya orchestra



ŞEF **ALEXANDER RAHBARI**
 TENOR **MOHAMMAD MOTAMEDİ**

27 NİSAN 2018, CUMA 20:30
AKM, ASPENDOS SALONU

A poster for the Antalya State Symphony Orchestra with Mohammad Motamedi in Antalya

A R T TEHRAN — The Antalya State Symphony Orchestra has invited Iranian vocalist Mohammad Motamedi to accompany his fellow conductor of the orchestra, Ali (Alexander) Rahbari, in a concert, during which Rahbari's suite "My Mother Persia" will be performed.

The performances will be organized at Aspendos Hall in Antalya on April 27, the organizers have announced.

Partly inspired by "O, Iran", a

composition by the prominent musician and composer Ruhollah Khaleqi, the suite is composed of seven movements, each dedicated to one prominent Persian musician.

Mohammadreza Shajarian, Hossein Alizadeh, Hossein Dehlavi, Mostafa-Kamal Purtorab, Ruhollah Khaleqi and Rahmatollah Badiei are the musicians commemorated in the suite. Rahbari has also commemorated his mother, Hamdam, in the suite.

Artist Ai Weiwei unfazed by China ending presidential term limits

SYDNEY (Reuters) — China's removal of presidential term limits, effectively letting President Xi Jinping hold office for life, will have no impact on its culture, artist Ai Weiwei said on Monday, as he unveiled a giant artwork in Sydney depicting asylum seekers.

Ai, one of China's most high-profile artists and political activists, has become a vocal campaigner on migration as the number of people forced from their homes - largely by violence and war - has reached a record 65 million.

In Sydney, Ai presented his 60-metre (197-ft)-long inflatable raft, carrying about 300 oversized human figures, a day after China removed the term limits from its constitution, raising concerns about a return to strongman rule.

"China has always been an imperial state," Ai, 60, told the Australian Broadcasting Corp in an interview.

"It doesn't matter if it's communist, now capitalism. It's a fatalistic society, so (if) it changes leader or not, the system and the culture always stays the same."

First designed for the National Gallery of Prague, Ai's "Law of the Journey" is made from the rubber used by vessels carrying refugees across the Mediterranean Sea. Installed on Cockatoo Island, a former shipbuilding site, it will serve as the centerpiece of the Sydney Biennale, running from Friday to June 11.

Ai said the location was appropriate because of Australia's controversial policy of detaining unauthorized boat arrivals in camps in the Pacific island nation of Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus



Chinese artist Ai Weiwei stands in front of his artwork consisting of a 60-metre rubber raft installation titled "Law of the Journey" which includes around 300 figures representing refugees, during a media call for the Biennale of Sydney located in the industrial precinct of Cockatoo Island in Australia, March 12, 2018. (Reuters/ David Gray)

Island.

"Australia's refugee record is quite poor, internationally," he added.

"There's no excuse for any kind of policy (that) should not consider protecting basic human rights."

The artist, who helped design the stadium of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games but was arrested in 2011 following criticism of the ruling Chinese Communist Party, said he was not concerned the changes could bring a regime with "no end".

"Life is getting better," he said.

"So many youngsters study outside. The ideas to respect very basic human values are becoming more and more important for a society to maintain competition."