



Rouhani raises concern with humanitarian crisis in Yemen **2**



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HAPPY NEW YEAR



Turkish troops occupy Syria's Afrin



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Rouhani: We won't make concessions on national interests

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** Iranian president has underlined his country's determination to continue efforts to establish regional stability and have constructive interaction with the world, saying the U.S. and its allies are not able to prevent Tehran from meeting its national interests.

stability in the region as an important goal and we hope to gain good success in establishing stability and security in the region and our relations with the world next year," Hassan Rouhani told reporters in Tehran on Sunday after a cabinet meeting.

Iran's mineral exports up 6% in 11 months yr/yr

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran **d e s k** exported \$8.4 billion of minerals during the 11-month period ended on February 19, with six percent rise from the figure of the same period of time in the previous year, according to Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

As IMIDRO announced, the weight of minerals exported in the said time fell three percent to 58.099 million tons, IRIB news reported on Sunday.

Putin on track for win in Russia polls

INTERNATIONAL **d e s k** Russians voted in a presidential election on Sunday that was expected to give Vladimir Putin an easy victory, but his opponents alleged officials were compelling people to come to the polls so that a low turnout does not tarnish the win.

Opinion polls give Putin, the incumbent, support of around 70 percent, or nearly 10 times the backing of his nearest challenger.



ARTICLE

By Masoud Asadollahi
Political analyst

De Mistura sports a big double standard

Two months after the onset of the Turkish military invasion of the Afrin district in northwestern Syria which has left many Kurds wounded and many displaced from their towns, villages and farms, all of the sudden Staffan De Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Syria, has decided to show up but not to support Syrians, but to back terrorist armed groups in Syria's Eastern Ghouta.

The Syrian envoy has brought up the armed group's request for talks with the Russian forces and his agreement over withdrawal of Takfiri terrorists from Jabhat al-Nusra and the Eastern Ghouta and called on the Syrian government to bow down to the terrorist groups and put a halt to the attacks on the armed groups.

What's pitiful is that De Mistura forgets the Kurds in Afrin and didn't call on the Turkish army to cease its aggression and invasion of the region.

De Mistura's double standard and discriminatory stance on supporting the Eastern Ghouta's terrorist armed forces and turning a blind eye to the Afrin region has to do with the Syrian's army advances in the Eastern Ghouta and the liberation of 70 percent of the region, which has provided an opportunity for Syrians to seek refuge with the Syrian government.

De Mistura admitted that the armed groups have targeted civilians of Damascus, Hamah, Daraa and Idlib in their attacks. Prior to Syrian advances, the West and the Arab supporters of the terrorists, in the context of massive propaganda, claimed that the civilian population of Ghouta was massacred by the Syrian army.

However, truth was told when scenes of the massive escape of Syrians to freed suburban areas and their interviews with the Arab media revealed that the armed terrorists were taking people hostage and using them as human shields.

De Mistura is apparently trying to keep the remaining armed groups intact, but he has failed to mention the massacre of civilians in Afrin by the Turks.

The "double standard" policy by the UN special envoy for Syria and the West in Syria stands as a clear testimony to the lies being disseminated about human rights, freedom and democracy for the Syrian people.

Deteriorating environment is waiting for the right decisions

By Maryam Qarehgozlou

TEHRAN — Did you know if you're 41 or younger you've never experienced a normal climate, not even once? This was shared on Years of Living Dangerously, an American documentary television series focusing on global warming, Instagram page on March 6.

The last time it was cooler than the 20th century average was in 1976 when Gerald Ford was President of the United States. The first Star Wars movie had just started filming and Steve Jobs had just founded Apple computer in his garage.

If you were born in the 1980's, you grew up in the warmest decade ever recorded. That is until the 1990's, where every year was warmer than the 1980's average. And each decade has been

hotter than the last, right up until today. If you're in your teens, almost every year of your life has been one of the hottest years ever recorded. 17 of the 18 hottest years on record have occurred since 2001. This is just the beginning. What may seem "normal" today will soon feel anything but. These are #climatefacts share widely.

In Iran, things are no different than the other parts of the world, the truth is that the climate change is affecting the whole world to different extent and in some cases to the extremes.

However, climate change is most certainly not the only reason for the looming environmental crises in Iran. Water shortage, air pollution, sand and dust storms, wetlands' drainage, the threatened biodiversity are all to some extent connected to climate change one way or another,

but it would be unfair to ignore the role of human interference as well as mismanagement and shortsighted policy making in exacerbating the current condition.

Iran's Department of Environment (DOE) is the main organization in charge of environment protection by overseeing and supervising other bodies and the way they are treating it.

It may not be wise to hold one single organization guilty of all the environmental predicaments, but the organization must be accountable for the detrimental effects of the flawed policies which are endangering human health and the environment.

Below is the DOE's chief answers to some controversial environmental issues which has concerned the environmental activists and the public over the past years. **→12**

New American-Russian conflict: A confrontation beyond Cold War

By Jack Anderson

MODERN DIPLOMACY — The conflict between the White House and Grand Kremlin Palace, which by far is more dangerous and intense than that of the Cold War era, seems to have reached its peak.

The 2008 Russo-Georgian War was a clear instance of Russian military confrontation with one of the allies of the United States.

The Russo-Georgian War was a war between Georgia, Russia and the Russian-backed self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia and Georgia were both formerly constituent republics of the Soviet Union.

During the battle, Russians troops drew very close to Tbilisi, Georgia's capital, forcing Mikheil Saakashvili, former president of Georgia who was a

U.S. ally to surrender. Then, the dialogue between Georgia (U.S.) and Russia began at two levels. On the surface, were the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) special moves for expansion to the East and the adoption of military configurations in the Baltics. However, the underlying agenda for the U.S. was to bring down Russia's political system through its neighbors like Ukraine.

Today, we are witnessing the power struggle between Russia and the U.S. that has certain properties.

The tension between Moscow and Washington, as mentioned, is rising, and both states more than ever before have been boasting their power to the extent of elimination of the other.

Failed plans such as "Anti-Proliferation: to limit the expansion of nuclear weapons technology"

and Nuclear Disarmament: to reduce the total number nuclear devices in existence, ideally down to zero," are clear examples of the conflict.

NATO plays a pivotal role in the recent dispute between the two states. In the summer of 2017, NATO troops held a large scale defensive drill, "Iron Wolf 2017", on the border separating Poland and Lithuania, to deter Russian aggression.

In response, Russia conducted Zapad 2017 military drills with Belarus in September of the same year in Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad bordering Poland and Lithuania. It was Russia's largest exercise since the Cold War with 12,700 troops in the drills.

In 2017, Russia tested its new hypersonic missile, 3M22 Zircon, an anti-ship missile with five times the speed of sound. **→7**



© Tehran Times/ Majid Asgarpour

Tehran Times celebrates New Year

Staff and management at the Tehran Times held a celebration on March 17, four days before Noruz holidays.

The two-week holiday starts on March 21 at the beginning of the spring concurrent with the earth's rebirth. Many take the opportunity to take trips and visit the family and friends.

The holidays culminate in nature's day when everybody spend the day out picnicking as a wonderful end to the joyous occasion.



PERSPECTIVE

By M.A. Saki
Deputy editor-in-chief

End the crazy war on Yemen

On March 26, 215, a coalition of Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia, launched a military air campaign against the Houthi rebels in Yemen. Exactly seven days from now marks three years since the Saudis started pounding Yemen.

The military operation, codenamed "Storm of Resolve", was expected to immediately restore the government of President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi which had been toppled by the Houthis.

When I saw the films of the Saudi first air attacks on the Yemenis, I was thinking that these poor people need economic help not a foreign invasion.

Even in peacetime the country faced huge challenges. Before the war only four percent of the land was arable. It faces extreme water shortages.

Now after three years, the result of the war has been nothing but indescribable famine, disease, destruction, death, etc.

The civilian casualties and the sufferings of the entire Yemeni nation are a testimony to this bitter fact that human life has no value in the Saudi politics. In April 2017, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said Yemen was facing "a tragedy of immense proportions". Guterres also said, "We are witnessing the starving and the crippling of an entire generation."

The war in Yemen is an instance of war crimes. A concrete example is the case of Abdullah al-Ibbi, a Yemeni man who lost 27 family members in an air strike. Starving an entire nation also constitutes an example of war crimes.

The matter is not that solely the Saudis are villain and the Houthis are saint. Both have killed innocent people but the degree of the crimes are not comparable at all.

Sadly, some other Arab countries have become accomplice in this human tragedy. These countries have been involved in the war either through intimidation or bribery, depending on their size. **→13**

The next issue of the **Tehran Times** will be published on April 3

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Jahangiri: House arrest on vote rigging claimants to be lifted next year

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri said on Sunday that the house arrest against opposition leaders who claimed vote rigging in the 2009 presidential election would be resolved in the upcoming Iranian New Year, which begins on March 21. “The Secretariat of the Supreme National Security Council has taken good actions to end the house arrest and, God willing, this will happen in the next year,” Jahangiri said. The remarks came after the Deputy Majlis Speaker Ali Motaahari said top security and intelligence authorities “broke their promises” regarding the house arrest, which they had said would be lifted by the end of the current Iranian year.



Zarif cancels meetings due to illness

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has canceled all his scheduled meetings on Saturday and Sunday due to his illness, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said. Qassemi said due to the foreign minister’s illness which forced him to be hospitalized for several hours, he had to cancel his meetings, including one with his Omani counterpart Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, who was in Tehran for talks with top officials.

Alawi, who was heading a politico-economic delegation in Tehran, wished good health for Zarif in a phone call on Sunday, IRNA reported.



Qassemi: No bright future for nuclear deal on the horizon

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi says he does not predict a bright future for the Iran nuclear deal in the upcoming Iranian New Year.

Due to the unwise measures and destructive approach taken by the Trump administration regarding the nuclear deal, a difficult year can be expected in this regard with no bright outlook on the horizon, Qassemi said in an interview with the Hamshahri daily published on Sunday.

“Nonetheless, we have no concerns in this regard as we rely on our domestic capabilities, consensus and national unity around the country’s national interests,” he remarked.



Guardian Council defines term ‘statesman’ but still vague on gender

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Abbasali Kadkhodaei, spokesman of the Guardian Council, said on Saturday that the council has defined the term “statesman” for presidential candidates, however the term gender and age still kept undefined, IRNA reported.

Under Article 115 of the Constitution, the president has to be selected from among “religious and political statesmen” who are Iranian by blood.

In recent years, a hotly debated issue has turned out to be whether women can run for presidency.

The authority to interpret the Constitution is vested in the Guardian Council. Interpretative decisions require a three-quarters majority.



Remains of 4 fallen soldiers found in eastern Iraq

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Remains of four Iranian soldiers have been unearthed in eastern Iraq near the border with Iran, an Iraqi official has said.

Iranian search team could find bodies of four soldiers who were killed during Iraqi invasion of Iran in the 1980s, said Heidar al-Mandelavi, IRNA reported on Sunday.

He said that the Iranian search team will continue to look for other bodies in the area near the border. He added that the team, which entered the area in February with the permission of the Iraqi government, halted the operation on the occasion of the Iranian New Year (starting on March 21).



Ahmadinejad’s trusted confidant arrested

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Esfandiar Rahim-Mashaie, a close confidant of former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was arrested on Saturday evening for investigation, judicial authorities said.

According to the Office of Prosecutor General of Tehran, Rahim-Mashaie, the former presidential chief-of-staff, has been arrested by the police with a warrant issued by the office, Tasnim reported.

A few days earlier, Rahim-Mashaie had set fire to a court verdict sentencing Hamid Baghaei, another figure in Ahmadinejad’s trilateral alliance, to imprisonment.

Ahmadinejad appointed Rahim-Mashaie as first vice president in 2009 until Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ordered his dismissal. He served as Ahmadinejad’s presidential chief of staff from 2009 to 2013.

Rouhani raises concern with humanitarian crisis in Yemen

Oman dismisses concerns on Iran’s missile program

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – The Iranian president has raised concern with the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the war-hit Yemen, calling for an immediate ceasefire in the war in the country.

Hassan Rouhani made the remarks in a meeting with the visiting Foreign Minister of Oman Yusuf bin Alawi on Sunday.

“The humanitarian situation in Yemen is critical and highly alarming,” Rouhani stated, expressing hope that cooperation between Tehran and Muscat would help bring about a cessation to the situation.

“Today Iran and Oman bear a great burden concerning regional issues. They should put their experiences in the service of development of peace and stability in the region. The more insecure and unstable the region, the more damage regional countries will suffer,” Rouhani remarked.

For his part, bin Alawi appreciated Iran’s efforts to help regional peace, saying, “The conflict in Yemen will bring about nothing but misery and chaos.... We should do what we can to stop the killing of people in that region as soon as possible so that humanitarian aid find their way to the people.”



Oman has been acting as an intermediary between Iran and the West. Analysts say his talks with officials in Tehran most probably focused on the nuclear deal which faced strong opposition by U.S. President Donald Trump, Iran’s missile program, and the conflicts in

Syria and Yemen.

■ **Muscat dismisses concerns on Iran’s missile program**

The night earlier bin Alawi met with Majlis speaker Ali Larijani, saying that Iran has an inalienable right to pursue its defense strate-

gies, rejecting concerns about Tehran’s missile program.

Some countries are afraid of Iran’s defense and missile policies, while there is no reason for such a fear, Oman’s chief diplomat noted, according to Tasnim.

The Omani minister also stressed that amid the current critical situation in the region, Iran has the right to military power to ensure its security.

Bin Alawi further stressed the need for a political settlement of the regional conflicts, urging concerted action against terrorism.

For his part, Larijani deplored the new, fabricated concerns over Iran’s missile program, saying the Islamic Republic has developed such technology since 30 years ago.

Moreover, he added, Iran has never launched a single missile to attack any other country.

The parliament speaker also reiterated that Iran has been supporting Syria and Iraq in the war against terrorism at the request of their own governments.

Larijani also called for the expansion of trade ties between Iran and Oman.

Bin Alawi arrived in Tehran on Friday for talks with Iranian officials.

Republican senator expects Trump to pull out of nuclear deal

Republican U.S. Senator Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he expects President Donald Trump to pull out of the Iran nuclear agreement in May.

“The Iran deal will be another issue that’s coming up in May, and right now it doesn’t feel like it’s gonna be extended,” Corker told CBS’ “Face the Nation” in an interview

broadcast on Sunday.

“I think the president likely will move away from it unless... our European counterparts really come together on a framework. And it doesn’t feel to me that they are,” he said.

Britain, France and Germany have proposed fresh EU sanctions on Iran over its ballistic missiles program and its

approach to the Syrian crisis in a bid to persuade Donald Trump to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal.

The nuclear agreement signed between Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (Britain, France, the U.S., China, and Russia) in July 2015. The deal, endorsed by the UN Security Council, went into force in January 2016.

Commander: Iran in best security condition

Commander of the Iranian border guards has underlined his forces’ high vigilance against enemies’ moves at border areas.

“Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran enjoys the best security conditions and it is considered as a strong and impenetrable fortress,” Qassem Rezayee said, addressing a ceremony in the northwestern city of Ardebil on Sunday.

The brigadier general stressed that the Iranian border guards monitor enemies’ moves along bordering areas, and said during the Noruz (Iranian New Year which starts on March 21) holidays his forces will double efforts to foil hostile plots against the country.

Earlier this month, a senior Iranian intelligence ministry official announced that the country’s security forces have



thwarted several plots and attempts by 30 terrorist groups other than the ISIL.

“In addition to the ISIL, measures of 30 terrorist groups have been foiled by the Iranian security forces in the past few years,” the deputy intelligence minister for anti-terrorism operations said in the Southern province of Fars.

“Over 30 armed terrorist groups have had on agenda actions to foment insecurity in the country and distort people’s tranquility in the past few years,” he added.

The deputy minister also underlined that although the ISIL’s rule over certain regional states has ended, more vigilance is needed to confront the terrorists and their supporters’ new plots.

(Source: Fars)

Tehran dismisses speculation on Omani FM’s visit

Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson quashed rumors that Omani Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah’s visit to Iran has something to do with U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis recent trip to Oman.

“Oman is an independent state that has very good relations with many world coun-

tries,” Bahram Qassemi added, stressing that bin Alawi’s trip to Iran has nothing to do with Mattis’s visit to Oman or with the developments surrounding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Tasnim reported.

The top Omani diplomat is visiting Iran “according to a previous plan and in line with

the enhancement and deepening of bilateral ties,” Qassemi added.

Hailing Oman’s contribution to regional peace and stability, the Iranian spokesperson said bin Alawi’s visit revolves around issues related to economic cooperation between the two countries.

Iran and Oman share age-old and close

diplomatic, economic, and parliamentary ties.

Oman’s Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said played an important role in facilitating the early stages of nuclear talks between Iran and the Group 5+1 (Russia, China, the U.S., Britain, France and Germany), which led to the landmark nuclear deal known as the JCPOA in July 2015.

Rouhani: We won’t make any concessions on our national interests

1 → On Friday it was reported that Britain, France and Germany had proposed fresh EU sanctions on Iran over its ballistic missiles and its role in Syria’s war, in a bid to persuade Donald Trump to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal.

Trump delivered an ultimatum to the European signatories of the deal on January 12 saying they should agree to fix what he claims “terrible flaws” in the nuclear deal otherwise he would refuse to extend U.S. sanctions relief on Iran. The deadline falls on May 12.

The European trio’s joint paper was sent to European Union capitals on Friday to sound out support for such sanctions as they would need the support of all 28 EU member governments.

“We will have a constructive interaction with the world irrespective of what the U.S., ill-wishers and a number of little regional states want or don’t want; we will not make any concessions on our national interests under any circumstances and we will safeguard our national interests, national security

and national expedience,” Rouhani asserted.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also struck a defiant note towards Washington on Friday saying, “If the United States makes the mistake of pulling out of the JCPOA, it will definitely be a painful mistake for the Americans.”

The JCPOA is the formal name of the nuclear deal.

In relevant remarks last Sunday, First Vice-President Es’haq Jahangiri played down the threats by the U.S. and its allies to roll back the sanctions against Tehran, stressing that his country has devised special plans to counter such pressures.

“If the Westerners do a crazy thing and roll back the sanctions, we should protect the economy. Of course, we are trying, through talks, not to allow the Americans to do anything they want,” Jahangiri said while addressing a forum in Tehran.

“If they do anything, Iran has plans for the rainy and difficult days, and the best document that we have to counter such pressures is the resistance economy,” he added.

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – A member of the central council of the Servants of Construction Party has criticized the Rouhani administration, saying the executive branch is not President Rouhani’s birthright.

“Mr. Rouhani is responsible for a legal organization called the government (executive branch), which is not his birthright,” Mohammad Atrianfar told Mehr in an interview published on Sunday.

Atrianfar said the nation’s demand is that the president adopts the best approaches to serve the country. “This is the most important



criticism that can be expressed about Mr. President.”

Moscow not committed to possible anti-Iran sanctions: envoy

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Russia’s ambassador to Tehran Levan Dzhangaryan has said that Moscow will not be committed to possible new sanctions against Iran by European countries and the United States.

The comments by the ambassador came after Britain, France and Germany, three partners to the nuclear deal, are seeking to impose sanctions on Iran for its missile program to encourage U.S. President Donald Trump to stay in the nuclear agreement.

“We stress once more that Russia will not participate in talks between three European countries and the U.S. and we will not be committed to those countries’ agreements and opposes sanctions,” Dzhangaryan said in an interview with Tasnim news agency published on Sunday.

He also said no one would benefit from new anti-Iran sanctions.

On Trump’s threats to withdraw from the deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the

ambassador said, “If we think wisely, there’s no need to exit the nuclear deal. One who thinks he can benefit from this is wrong.”

Emphasizing that the JCPOA benefits all sides, the Russian ambassador said European countries have the same stance but have no choice.

■ **‘Russia condemns BBC’s intervention in Iran’s affairs’**

In another interview with IRNA published on Sunday, Dzhangaryan said the BBC Persian’s programs are a blatant intervention in Iran’s internal affairs

Moscow condemns such intervention, he added.

He pointed to the CIA-backed coup d’etat of 1953 against then Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, saying the U.S. and Britain repeatedly intervene in other countries’ internal affairs.

Ambassador Dzhangaryan also expressed satisfaction with Tehran-Moscow ties, saying relations between the two countries have developed in different areas, including the political field.

a much bigger role in the second term of President Rouhani.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Atrianfar urged the Rouhani administration to avoid blaming the previous administration for its problems.

“They should try and overcome their shortcomings, make use of their capabilities and observe governmental bodies’ weaknesses,” he remarked.

However, he said the administration’s achievements outweigh its shortcomings, stressing that in order to draw a fair conclusion, one must take the status quo and its requirements into consideration.

Assad visits army positions in eastern Ghouta

Syrian army gives Takfiri militants in Harasta ultimatum to withdraw by mid-afternoon

Syrian President Bashar Assad Sunday visited army positions in Syria's eastern Ghouta, the president's Telegram account said.

"In the line of fire in eastern Ghouta ... President Assad with heroes of the Syrian Arab army," a caption said next to photographs of Assad in a crowd of men in military clothing, some perched on top of tanks.

Meanwhile, the Syrian army has given foreign-sponsored Takfiri terrorists operating inside Harasta town of the militant-held Eastern Ghouta enclave to withdraw till 3 p.m. local time (1300 GMT) on Sunday.

The report came shortly after Syria's official news agency SANA reported that thousands of civilians, whom extremists were using as human shields to slow down the progress of government forces and their allied fighters from popular defense groups, have managed to leave Eastern Ghouta.

The report noted that more than 5,000 civilians, mostly children and women, depart the area through humanitarian corridors set up by the army troopers.

The evacuees were reportedly provided with basic commodities upon arrival at Syrian army posts before being transported to temporary accommodation centers.

This is while Major General Vladimir Zolotukhin of the Russian peace and reconciliation center in Syria said more than 25,000 people have fled besieged Eastern Ghouta region in single day.

Zolotukhin said they left on Sunday through the town of Hamouria, located about 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) east of Damascus city center.

Separately, Syrian army soldiers have started an operation to comb Saqba town, located 7 kilometers east of central Damascus, of hidden explosive devices planted by Takfiri militants in the area.

Syrian government forces are now pursuing



ing the remnants of terrorist organizations in the towns of Kafr Batna and Saqba in the southern outskirts of Eastern Ghouta.

The Syrian army said recently it had captured 70 percent of Eastern Ghouta, after splitting the area into sections to facilitate the battle against various militant groups there.

Eastern Ghouta, a besieged area on the outskirts of Damascus which is home to some 400,000 people, has witnessed deadly violence over the past few days, with foreign-sponsored terrorists launching mortar attacks on the Syrian capital in the face of an imminent humiliating defeat.

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

the country.

■ **Russia: 20,000 residents left Syria's Ghouta**

Elsewhere, Russia says more than 20,000 people left Eastern Ghouta on Sunday, using one of the four humanitarian corridors set up to enable safe passage out of the Syrian capital's suburb.

The Center for Reconciliation in Syria which is run by Russia's Defense Ministry made the announcement, saying the evacuation took place in the town of Hammouriye, Interfax news agency reported.

Since humanitarian corridors were set up, more than 68,000 people have left Eastern Ghouta, the center added.

Russia has set up the passageways with Syria's help to contribute to a United Nations Security Council UNSC resolution, which came

into force last month mandating a ceasefire in the country.

Syria and Russia have cornered foreign-backed militants in the countryside as part of their campaign to liberate civilians holed up there and end militant attacks from the suburb on Damascus.

During their advances in the area, Syrian forces have uncovered workshops used to make chemical weapons. The Syrian military has also intercepted several arms and ammunition cargoes heading to Eastern Ghouta.

On Friday, civilians fleeing through the Hush Nasri corridor described in an interview with AFP news agency how militants were preventing them from leaving the area and using them as human shields.

(Source: agencies)

ASEAN, Australia leaders press Myanmar over Rohingya crisis

Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been grilled by world leaders over her inaction regarding the persecution of the minority Rohingya Muslims in her country.

Suu Kyi has been under intense global criticism for her public rejection of a brutal military crackdown that has forced nearly 700,000 of the Muslim-minority Rohingya to flee Myanmar's Rakhine State for Bangladesh since August last year.

That campaign of state-sponsored violence originally began in late 2016.

Suu Kyi, who arrived in the Australian city of Sydney on Saturday to take part in a three-day special meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), was ostracized by other ASEAN members for her brazen denial of atrocities against the minority Rohingya community in Myanmar, which the United Nations says bears the "hallmarks of genocide".

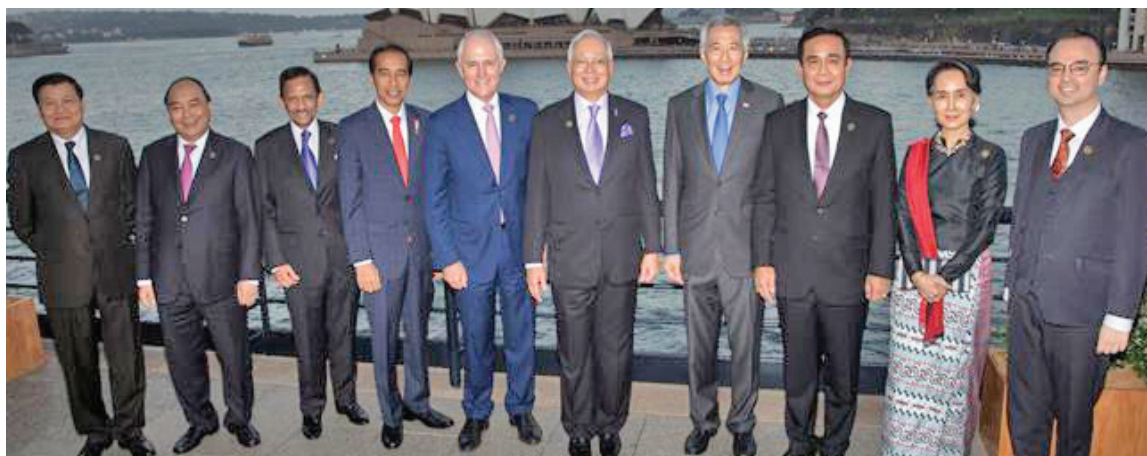
The Rohingya crisis has sparked rare tensions within the bloc, with members demanding outside intervention to end the crisis.

The ASEAN members, namely, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, who used to take pride in the existing political harmony in the group, have been at loggerheads with Myanmar over the mishandling of the Rohingya crisis.

Malaysia and Bangladesh, who have borne the brunt of the problems resulting from the Rohingya's displacement, have been most vocal in their criticism of Myanmar. The two Muslim-majority countries have taken a pincer approach against their Buddhist-dominant neighbor, exerting increased pressure to end the crisis.

■ **'No longer a domestic issue'**

Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak insisted to his



Southeast Asian neighbors that the Rohingya crisis was no longer a domestic issue.

"Because of the suffering of Rohingya people and that of displacement around the region, the situation in [Myanmar's] Rakhine State and Myanmar can no longer be considered to be a purely domestic matter," he said.

"In addition, the problem should not be looked at through the humanitarian prism only, because it has the potential of developing into a serious security threat to the region," Razak added.

He said it was high time the international community made a joint effort to resolve the crisis.

"We discussed the situation in Rakhine State at consid-

erable length today," Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said at the closing press conference on Sunday. "It's certainly an issue that has been discussed and it is fair to say... very constructively, in our meeting."

Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who is this year's ASEAN chair, acknowledged the region's concerns about the ongoing plight of the Rohingya.

He hinted that an international body bigger than ASEAN — possibly the United Nations Security Council — was needed to achieve a forceful solution to the Rohingya crisis.

"It is of concern for all ASEAN countries, and yet ASEAN is not able to intervene and to force an outcome," Lee said. Both Turnbull and Lee said that they would back efforts to reach a long-term solution to end the crisis and that they supported humanitarian efforts to help those displaced.

Suu Kyi has not commented publicly since arriving in Australia on Saturday for the summit, but is scheduled to take questions at a Tuesday media event.

Myanmar's military, with support from the government and Buddhist mobs, has launched a deadly crackdown against Rohingya Muslims residing in the western state of Rakhine.

Only in its first month of the clampdown, which has been described by UN experts and prominent rights group as "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide," some 6,700 Rohingya Muslims were killed, including more than 700 children, according to Doctors without Borders.

■ **Lawyers in Australia seek to prosecute Aung San Suu Kyi**

Meantime, a group of Australian human rights lawyers has filed a private prosecution application against Myanmar's de facto Leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, over her country's treatment of Rohingya minority group.

"We have launched a private prosecution application in the Magistrate's Court of Victoria accusing Aung San Suu Kyi of crimes against humanity, specifically the crime of deportation and forcible transfer of people," human rights lawyer Alison Battison told Al Jazeera on Friday.

The application claims that the conduct of Aung San Suu Kyi, who is in Australia for the ASEAN summit, "was committed knowingly as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population".

The Myanmar leader is also accused of not using her authority to stop these attacks and failing to submit her matter to any competent authority for investigation.

(Source: agencies)

Chemical weapons experts heading to Britain in Russia spy case

May to Russia: Britain won't tolerate threat to Britons



Britain is to target wealth linked to the Kremlin in response to the poisoning of a former spy, foreign minister Boris Johnson said on Sunday ahead of a visit by international chemical weapons experts.

"Where people have obtained wealth by corruption and where we can see a link with the Kremlin, with Vladimir Putin, it may be possible to have unexplained wealth orders and other sanctions on those individuals," Johnson told BBC's Andrew Marr Show.

Former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia are in a critical condition after being exposed to a nerve agent in the English city of Salisbury on March 4, leading Britain to expel 23 Kremlin diplomats.

Technical experts from Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will visit Britain on Monday to collect samples of the nerve agent used in the attack.

"These will then be dispatched to highly-reputable international laboratories selected by the OPCW for testing with results expected to take a minimum of two weeks," a Foreign Office statement said.

Johnson said the government was considering something similar to the United States "Magnitsky Act" which was adopted in 2012 to punish Russian officials accused of human rights violations.

The act imposed a visa ban and froze the assets of Russian officials implicated in the death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, a tax fraud whistleblower who died in Russian custody in 2009.

Johnson accused the Russians of "smug sarcasm and denial" in response to the accusations, and said the international community was behind Britain.

Moscow's "malign, disruptive behavior" internationally was the reason why allies were "inclined not to give Russia the benefit of the doubt," he added.

However, the minister faced awkward questions over a tennis match he played with the wife of former Kremlin minister Vladimir Chernukhin, in return for a £160,000 (\$223,000) donation to his Conservative Party.

Also on Saturday, Russia's ambassador to the European Union, Vladimir Chizhov, said Moscow "had nothing to do" with the attack, accusing Johnson of "acting in an inappropriate manner" by pointing the finger at Putin.

"Russia has stopped production of any chemical agents back in 1992," he told Marr, the day after Moscow expelled 23 British diplomats in a tit-for-tat measure.

But the Foreign Office dismissed the claim, saying it had "information indicating that within the last decade, Russia has investigated ways of delivering nerve agents likely for assassination."

"And part of this program has involved producing and stockpiling quantities of Novichok," a statement said.

Chizhov also appeared to suggest that Britain itself may have been the source of the chemical agent.

"When you have a nerve agent, you check it against certain samples you have in your laboratories," he said.

"And Porton Down, as we now all know, is the largest military facility in the UK that has been dealing with chemical weapons research - and it's actually only eight miles from Salisbury."

Johnson called the accusation "satirical", adding it was "not the response of a country that really believes itself to be innocent."

British newspapers on Sunday said the government was looking to pass emergency legislation to make it easier to seize assets in Britain acquired with dirty Russian money.

It is also planning to make it harder for Putin allies to travel and to target the finances of oligarchs living in Britain.

The Sunday Times said the government had warned power companies to strengthen their cyber defenses over fears that Russia could attempt to cause a blackout.

■ **Britain won't tolerate threat to Britons**

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Theresa May has warned Russia that Britain will not tolerate any move that threatens the life of Britons.

May made the remarks at the Conservative Party's Spring Forum in central London amid rising tensions between London and Moscow over the alleged poisoning of a former Russian double agent in Britain.

"Many Russians have made this country their home. And those who abide by our laws and make a contribution to our society will always be welcome," May said.

"But we will never tolerate a threat to the life of British citizens and others on British soil from the Russian Government," she added.

On March 7, British authorities announced that former spy Sergei Skripal, 66, and his 33-year-old daughter, Yulia, had been hospitalized after being found unconscious on a bench outside a shopping center in Salisbury.

British police attributed the critical illness of the two to a nerve agent developed by the former Soviet Union, and the British premier accused Moscow of being responsible.

May said that "it is Russia that is in flagrant breach of international law and chemical weapons convention."

The prime minister has expelled 23 Russian diplomats in response to the incident.

"We will freeze Russian state assets wherever we have the evidence that they may be used to threaten the life or property of UK nationals or residents," she said after the incident.

The Kremlin, which repeatedly denied any involvement in the poisoning, said Saturday it was also expelling 23 British diplomats in retaliation for London's "provocative" measures.

It later shut down the British Council, a registered charity that uses education and culture to spread British soft power internationally.

(Source: agencies)



Pre-Qualification Public Announcement For NICICO Fertilizer Complex Project Tender rounds



National Iranian Copper Industries Co.

National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) intends to hold tender rounds for NICICO Fertilizer Complex Project. It hereby invites interested, qualified and reputable EPCF Companies (Holding/ JV / Consortium) for pre-qualification. The projects that will subsequently be tendered will be awarded under Iranian laws, rules and regulations.

For pre-qualification documents and related information such as procedures, criteria and evaluation mechanisms, please refer to www.nicico.com. Applicants shall provide a hard copy as well as electronic files of all required documents and information to the following address up to May 1st 2018.

Address: National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO)

No. 21612, Vali-e-Asr Ave, Tehran, Iran.

Post Code: 1511813311 **P.O.Box:** 15115-416

Tel: (+9821) 82138384 **Fax:** (+9821) 88102823

Email Address: firozshahi_a@nicico.com

**The final list of pre-qualified applicants will be published on 12th May 2018 at
www.nicico.com**

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	95819.6
IFX	1090.67

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	48,1900 rials
EUR	58,530 rials
GBP	68,470 rials
AED	13,500 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	62.41/b
Brent	66.05/b
OPEC Basket	62.24/b
Gold	\$1,315.20/oz
Silver	\$16.37/oz
Platinum	\$954.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Energy min. in Brasilia to attend 8th edition of World Water Forum

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, heading a delegation, left Tehran for Brasilia on Sunday to attend the 8th edition of the World Water Forum which is running from March 18 to 23, IRNA reported.

The World Water Forum is the world’s biggest water-related event and is organized by the World Water Council (WWC), an international organization that brings together all those interested in the theme of water.

Its mission is “to promote awareness, build political commitment and trigger action on critical water issues at all levels, to facilitate the efficient conservation, protection, development, planning, management and use of water in all its dimensions on an environmentally sustainable basis for the benefit of all life on Earth”.



Exports of Iranian goods to Russia to double in 2 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Exports of Iranian products to Russia will be doubled within the next two months, the chairman of Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce announced.

Asadollah Asgaroladi also said that the value of trade between the two countries has reached \$2.2 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (ending on March 20), adding Iran’s exports to Russia has been more than Russia’s exports to Iran, IRIB news reported on Sunday.

Dubai awards \$348m of contracts for new power plants

Dubai Electricity & Water Authority confirmed that it awarded contracts worth 1.28 billion dirhams (\$348 million) to build four substations at the same time to increase the capacity and efficiency of its electricity and transmission networks, the utility said in an emailed statement. The projects were allocated to:

- Grid Solution SAS got a 315 million dirhams contract to build the Canal Garden Station, which is scheduled to be completed by February 2020.
- Siemens was given the Dubai South station substation deal, worth 323 million dirhams, which will be built within the Dubai World Central project, and is scheduled to be done by March 2020.
- A 305 million dirhams construction contract for the Dubai North station was awarded to Al Fanar Co. to meet growing load demand for new substations, which are being built to expand the infrastructure in and around Dubai Airport. It is expected to be completed by January 2021.
- The 339 million dirhams construction contract for Shams station was awarded to ABB Ltd., and is scheduled for finalization by December 2020.

(Source: Bloomberg)

New German finance ministry pushes free trade at G20 meeting

Germany’s new finance minister Olaf Scholz warned on Sunday that protectionism could harm future economic prospects and said Germany would continue talks to dissuade the United States from imposing planned punitive steel and aluminum tariffs.

Scholz told reporters en route to his first meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors that he would underscore the importance of free trade for the global economy when he meets U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Monday.

The world economy is growing together “and it should stay together” said Scholz, a member of the Social Democrats, junior partners in Chancellor Angela Merkel’s coalition government.

Free trade had a decisive role to play in securing future economic growth, Scholz said, adding, “That’s why it would be difficult if protectionism played a bigger role.”

Scholz said Germany had a “clear position” on the planned U.S. tariffs, and hoped further discussions with U.S. officials could help avert a looming trade war with the European Union.

(Source: Reuters)

Muscat urges rial-based trade with Tehran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — According to Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah cutting reliance on foreign currencies and using Iranian and Omani rial in trade transactions between the two Persian Gulf countries is one of the major requirements to enhance mutual banking and commercial ties, IRNA quoted the official as saying.

During his Saturday meeting with the Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Valiollah Seif in Tehran, the Omani minister said that Iran and Oman have the advantage to play a

role in each other’s oil, gas and petrochemical markets and development of such relations needs expansion of common banking ties.

He also called for preparation of operational and practical plans as well as creation of joint accounts.

The Omani top diplomat, leading a delegation, arrived in Tehran on Friday to hold talks with Iranian officials on development of common ties and regional issues.

Seif, for his part, addressed the issue of the presence of Omani banks in Iran noting that “besides its firm political and economic



Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Valiollah Seif (L) and Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah met in Tehran on Saturday.

ties with Iran, Oman can act as an exports hub in the region as well as a center of international banking relations for the country.”

The CBI governor underscored bilateral

banking ties as the prerequisite for any further economic ties with Oman.

Seif also welcomed establishment of the two countries’ banks in each other’s lands.

Iran poised to host 12th World Chambers Congress in 2021

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Vice Chairman Pedram Soltani voiced Iran’s readiness for hosting the 12th edition of World Chambers Congress in 2021, the portal of ICCIMA reported on Sunday.

In a meeting with Director of World Chambers Federation (WCF) at the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Anthony Parkes, who was in Tehran to evaluate conditions and facilities of the Iranian capital for hosting the congress, Soltani called hosting the congress a significant event for Iran specifically under its current economic conditions and cooperation with the world.

“Announcing tendency to host this congress sends a positive message from Iran to the world and reflects our country’s potentials and facilities,” he added.

The WCF official for his part, expressed content about his trip to Tehran adding that the city is for sure one of the suitable options for hosting the congress in the Middle East region and Africa.

Moving from region to region around the globe on a biennial basis, the WCC is the only international forum for chamber leaders and



ICCIMA Vice Chairman Pedram Soltani (L) and Director of WCF at the International Chamber of Commerce Anthony Parkes meeting at ICCIMA place

business professionals to share best-practices, exchange insights, develop networks and address the latest business issues affecting their communities. The prestigious event brings together over 1,000 delegates from more than 100 countries, making it an ideal and unique platform to foster positive development, cooperation and the advancement of bold initiatives.

The 8th World Chambers Congress in Qatar, 2013 was the last Congress to be held in the Africa and the Middle East region. Vying for the chance to showcase their nation’s chambers as well as their country’s appeal and potential, the finalists looking to co-organize the 12th World Chambers Congress in 2021 are: Dubai Chamber of Commerce; Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce (ECCSA);

Brazil fuel imports to fall from record as Petrobras cuts prices

Brazil fuel imports are set to fall from a record as the country’s state-owned oil company lowers prices in a bid to regain market share.

Petroleo Brasileiro SA, which owns 13 out of the 16 refineries in the country, cut diesel prices by 47 percent and gasoline by 38 percent at the refinery gate since January. As a result diesel imported from the U.S. and gasoline from Europe arrives at higher prices than the locally-produced fuels.

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The phasing-out of subsidies attracted foreign companies to Brazil. Glencore Plc, Mercuria Energy Trading SA, Trafigura Beheever BV, PetroChina Co Ltd and Vitol SA are some of the names who set up shop in the Latin American country to try to grab a bite of the market. Earlier this month China National



Petroleum Corp., which controls PetroChina, agreed to buy a 30 percent stake in Brazil’s fourth-largest fuel distributor TT Work. The increasing competition reduced Petrobras’s market-share in fuel imports.

Diesel imports by third parties fell from 1.56 million cubic meters (about 10 million barrels) in November 2017 to 680,000 cubic meters in the fourth quarter of last year through Febru-

ary, according to Petrobras’s annual results report). Petrobras’s overall market share of petroleum products in sales fell to 74 percent last year from 97 percent in 2015 amid growing competition from foreign importers. Its share of the import market into Brazil fell to 4.3 percent from 84 percent in 2015, according to Brazilian government data.

Petrobras is seeking to regain market share and made some progress in February, Jorge Celestino, Petrobras’s refining director, said during the fourth-quarter earnings conference call. Oil-processing should improve in coming months, he said.

Petrobras declined to make additional comments for this story. Higher rates at refineries won’t completely shut the doors for importers, says Mara Roberts Duque, a New York-based oil & gas analyst at BMI Research. Petrobras has failed to build more refineries over the years to help meet growing domestic demand, she says.

“Given a lack of downstream capacity growth, we do expect fuel imports will increase by 2 percent this year,” Roberts Duque said. While Petrobras will continue to be the main supplier of fuels to the domestic market, trading companies are going to lose market share.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Bitter experience of Chinese investor with Iranian contractor

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Recently China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (known as Sinopec) which is the main contractor in developing Iran’s Yadavaran oilfield (shared with Iraq in Iran’s southwestern region of Karoun) has claimed that an Iranian company caused them several hundred millions of dollars of financial damage under two EPCC contracts.

The Tehran Times followed the story and it turned out that Sinopec was right and a series of unfortunate events had led to a bitter experience for the foreign company in Iran.

Such unprofessional acts of misconduct in part of some Iranian companies are going to create an atmosphere of distrust among foreign investors reducing willingness for participation in Iranian projects.

■ Sinopec’s account of the events: A bitter experience

As Sinopec Corporation’s legal representative Jyu Yongjun told the Tehran Times, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) awarded the first phase of Yadavaran oilfield development project to Sinopec in 2007 and four years after finalizing the deal, in 2011, the Chinese company signed two engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning (EPCC) deals, worth about \$190 million with an Iranian-based international company, called Khalkhal Dasht. As per the deals, the Iranian company was going to install wellhead facilities and construct pipelines for the field as a subcontractor.

The parties agreed that the contracts would be executed under the Iranian law and in case of any conflict in the implementation, it would be settled in Singapore International Arbitration Centre based on the International Chamber of Commerce Court of Arbitration (ICC) rules.

“When months after signing the deals no significant progress was seen in the project, it had become evident for Sinopec that the Iranian company lacked professional capability in financial management, project implementation, and quality control and it also didn’t have the skilled employees necessary for the execution of the projects,” Yongjun told the Tehran Times.

According to the official, despite two separate notices which Sinopec issued in June and July 2011, asking Khalkhal Dasht to make necessary amendments, the mentioned company not only didn’t make any amendments but also violated the terms of the international arbitration clause in the contract, in September 2014 they filed three lawsuits in Tehran’s Court of Justice against Sinopec without notifying the company or the ICC.

According to the filed lawsuits, they had appealed for revocation of the international arbitration term in the contracts, asked for the release of the guarantees and claimed an extra payment for additional work done aside from their contractual obligations.

Apparently, following the legal actions taken, in January 2015, the Iranian company stopped implementing the deals and left the projects incomplete; which had a very negative effect on the progress of the entire Yadavaran field’s project.

In late 2014, Tehran Court of Justice invited both parties to attend the first hearing session for the cases.

“Sinopec could not attend the hearing, because a person who had nothing to do with the company signed and received the court notice in place of Sinopec, in fact the company wasn’t aware of the lawsuits at the first place,” Yongjun said.

He further explained that Khalkhal Dasht managed to mislead the judges in the hearing and also court of appeals in Tehran by providing unofficial and inaccurate translations of the contracts and claiming that Sinopec is an Iranian company.

Consequently, in January 2015, Tehran Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Khalkhal Dasht Company in two of its lawsuit against Sinopec and later on, Khalkhal Dasht also managed to persuade the judges about the third lawsuit (which was paying extra for works done in addition to the obligations) and once again based on inaccurate evidence, the court sentenced Sinopec to a payment of \$100 million in compensation for the additional works done beside the contractual obligations.

According to the company’s representative, in February 2015, Sinopec informed Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani, the head of Iranian Judiciary system who is also the country’s top judge, about the misconducts of the Tehran court and after presenting the related evidences, in March Larijani ordered to invalidate the Tehran court’s rulings. However despite all these efforts, Tehran court went through with the previous rules.

Asked about whether Sinopec pursued this issue in any international court of law, the official explained that in accordance with the condition for the referral of disputes to ICC, Sinopec filed a lawsuit against Khalkhal Dasht in the International Chamber of Commerce Court of Arbitration and in April 2017, the ICC confirmed the validity of the International arbitration terms in the contracts, stating that the arbitration term is binding for both parties.

“Sinopec has sent the original version and

the correct translation of the international arbitration clause and terms of the governing law for prominent lawyers in Iran, which all confirmed the validity of international arbitration and its compliance with Iranian law,” Yongjun said.

But, the story didn’t end here, Khalkhal Dasht filed a new lawsuit against Sinopec claiming that they had provided the Chinese company with a \$66 million loan which Sinopec didn’t pay back. Of course, Sinopec presented legal documents to the court which showed that the money had been transferred to a bank account abroad which was introduced by the Iranian company so that they could buy equipment, therefore upon the provided evidence the court dismissed Khalkhal Dasht’s claims and ruled in favor of Sinopec in this case.

■ How the story ends!

What is important in this account is not just that Khalkhal Dasht actions has prevented the implementation of a very important oil project in the country, but also the fact that such contractual violations will not only result in financial damages to foreign investors, but also put the country’s investment environment at risk and consequently have a negative effect on Iranian market’s status quo among the interested trade partners.

In particular, the revocation of the contract terms regarding the condition of international arbitration in this case is very disturbing for foreign investors which could seriously undermine their confidence and trust.

The Tehran Times and Sinopec hope that Iran’s judiciary system will put a stop on Khalkhal Dasht misconducts and make them amend for this types of activities which seriously threatens the country’s foreign investment environment.

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The Iraq death toll 15 years after the U.S. invasion

March 19 marks 15 years since the U.S.-UK invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the American people have no idea of the enormity of the calamity the invasion unleashed. The U.S. military has refused to keep a tally of Iraqi deaths. General Tommy Franks, the man in charge of the initial invasion, bluntly told reporters, “We don’t do body counts.” One survey found that most Americans thought Iraqi deaths were in the tens of thousands. But our calculations, using the best information available, show a catastrophic estimate of 2.4 million Iraqi deaths since the 2003 invasion.



The number of Iraqi casualties is not just a historical dispute, because the killing is still going on today. Since several major cities in Iraq and Syria fell to Islamic State [ISIL] in 2014, the U.S. has led the heaviest bombing campaign since the American War in Vietnam, dropping 105,000 bombs and missiles and reducing most of Mosul and other contested Iraqi and Syrian cities to rubble.

An Iraqi Kurdish intelligence report estimated that at least 40,000 civilians were killed in the bombardment of Mosul alone, with many more bodies still buried in the rubble. A recent project to remove rubble and recover bodies in just one neighborhood found 3,353 more bodies, of whom only 20 percent were identified as ISIS fighters and 80 percent as civilians. Another 11,000 people in Mosul are still reported missing by their families.

Of the countries where the U.S. and its allies have been waging war since 2001, Iraq is the only one where epidemiologists have actually conducted comprehensive mortality studies based on the best practices that they have developed in war zones such as Angola, Bosnia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Kosovo, Rwanda, Sudan and Uganda. In all these countries, as in Iraq, the results of comprehensive epidemiological studies revealed 5 to 20 times more deaths than previously published figures based on “passive” reporting by journalists, NGOs or governments.

Two such reports on Iraq came out in the prestigious The Lancet medical journal, first in 2004 and then in 2006. The 2006 study estimated that about 600,000 Iraqis were killed in the first 40 months of war and occupation in Iraq, along with 54,000 nonviolent but still war-related deaths.

The U.S. and UK governments dismissed the report, saying that the methodology was not credible and that the numbers were hugely exaggerated. In countries where Western military forces have not been involved, however, similar studies have been accepted and widely cited without question or controversy. Based on advice from their scientific advisers, British government officials privately admitted that the 2006 Lancet report was “likely to be right,” but precisely because of its legal and political implications, the U.S. and British governments led a cynical campaign to discredit it.

A 2015 report by Physicians for Social Responsibility, Body Count: Casualty Figures After 10 Years of the “War on Terror”, found the 2006 Lancet study more reliable than other mortality studies conducted in Iraq, citing its robust study design, the experience and independence of the research team, the short time elapsed since the deaths it documented and its consistency with other measures of violence in occupied Iraq.

The Lancet study was conducted over 11 years ago, after only 40 months of war and occupation. Tragically, that was nowhere near the end of the deadly consequences of the Iraq invasion.

In June 2007, a British polling firm, Opinion Research Business (ORB), conducted a further study and estimated that 1,033,000 Iraqis had been killed by then.

While the figure of a million people killed was shocking, the Lancet study had documented steadily increasing violence in occupied Iraq between 2003 and 2006, with 328,000 deaths in the final year it covered. ORB’s finding that another 430,000 Iraqis were killed in the following year was consistent with other evidence of escalating violence through late 2006 and early 2007.

Just Foreign Policy’s “Iraqi Death Estimator” updated the Lancet study’s estimate by multiplying passively reported deaths compiled by British NGO Iraq Body Count by the same ratio found in 2006. This project was discontinued in September 2011, with its estimate of Iraqi deaths standing at 1.45 million.

Taking ORB’s estimate of 1.033 million killed by June 2007, then applying a variation of Just Foreign Policy’s methodology

from July 2007 to the present using revised figures from Iraq Body Count, we estimate that 2.4 million Iraqis have been killed since 2003 as a result of our country’s illegal invasion, with a minimum of 1.5 million and a maximum of 3.4 million.

These calculations cannot possibly be as accurate or reliable as a rigorous up-to-date mortality study, which is urgently needed in Iraq and in each of the countries afflicted by war since 2001. But in our judgment, it is important to make the most accurate estimate we can.

Numbers are numbing, especially numbers that rise into the millions. Please remember that each person killed represents someone’s loved one. These are mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, sons, daughters. One death impacts an entire community; collectively, they impact an entire nation.

As we begin the 16th year of the Iraq war, the American public must come to terms with the scale of the violence and chaos we have unleashed in Iraq. Only then may we find the political will to bring this horrific cycle of violence to an end, to replace war with diplomacy and hostility with friendship.

(Source: truthdig.com)

The 2006 study estimated that about 600,000 Iraqis were killed in the first 40 months of war and occupation in Iraq, along with 54,000 nonviolent but still war-related deaths.

Nationalistic fervor rising in Greece, Turkey

By Sarah Souli

Two Greek soldiers tracking footprints on the Turkish-Greek border crossed into Turkey on March 1. Greece insists that the young soldiers had accidentally strayed into a Turkish military zone due to heavy snowfall that had impaired their vision. Turkey, however, arrested the pair on espionage charges.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and his Syriza government are taking a somewhat subdued approach to the issue of the soldiers, agreeing in an internal Cabinet meeting that Turkey, a NATO ally, would “sooner or later” drop the issue instead of exploiting it further. Athens, and the European Union by extension, is not interested in escalating tensions with Turkey beyond rhetoric.

But the arrest and detention of the two Greek soldiers is only the latest in an ongoing saga between the two countries. Tensions have been particularly high since Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s historic, albeit controversial, visit to Athens last November. The Turkish president spoke of revising the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which delineates the Turkish-Greek border and is a cornerstone of the two countries’ peace agreement.

Relations have particularly deteriorated since Athens refused to extradite eight Turkish soldiers accused of involvement in the failed 2016 coup. In January, the Greek Supreme Court ruled that the soldiers would be unlikely to receive a fair trial in Turkey. Turkey was furious, but Ankara expressed willingness to exchange the two Greek soldiers for the eight Turks, a negotiation Tsipras resoundingly refuses.

Turkey and Greece have been at odds over a string of territorial issues — land, sea and air — for decades. The so-called dog fights over the Aegean, where Greek and Turkish airplanes violate each others’ airspace, have continued. In a single day in February, Turkey violated Greek airspace over 30 times. The same month, Turkish and Greek coastguard vessels collided near the Imia islands; Ankara claims it was accidental.

“Turkey is provoking and violating Greek and EU waters,” Greek Defense Minister Panos Kammenos said after the incident.

While security experts agree there is no plan on the Turkish side to stage an actual offensive on Greece — indeed, Turkey’s foreign ambitions lay to its southern border — the deepening tensions between the two countries are emblematic of Erdogan’s increasingly confrontational foreign policy, and the ramifications are being felt in Greece.

“What we’ve seen in the Aegean and with the detention of the two soldiers is symptomatic of something larger in Turkey, rather than being specifically related to Greece. We



Greek President Prokypis Pavlopoulos (R) meets Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the Presidential Mansion in Athens on 7 December, 2017.

Turkey and Greece have been at odds over a string of territorial issues — land, sea and air — for decades.

have seen the same brinkmanship in Afrin and in taking nationals of Germany and the United States hostage. In that sense the two Greek soldiers are in the same pattern,” Gareth Jenkins, an Istanbul-based political analyst, told Al-Monitor by phone.

And the ongoing escalation of political rhetoric between Greece and Turkey has recently played itself out in one of the most peculiar of places: Kinaros, a tiny Greek island that is one of the 18 islets the Turkish government has publicly claimed belongs to Turkey.

Kinaros is home to only one person, Irini Katsotourhi. Last week, in light of Katsotourhi losing her state bonus — but also in light of her being the sole resident on an island Turkey is trying to lay claim to — the Hellenic Entrepreneurs Association (EENE) “adopted” the widow, assuming all her financial and medical needs.

EENE likened the septuagenarian Katsotourhi to a Spartan at the Battle of Thermopylae, a reference to the ancient war when Greek Spartans led a brave, but ultimately failed, resistance to the much stronger Persian army. From the Greek perspective, the historical parallel, now

aimed toward Turkey, still stands.

“The need to defend our national interests concerns all of us. The call is for national conscience, vigilance and decisive contribution and generosity, to each one’s ability,” EENE stated. Though Katsotourhi has been elevated to something of a national hero in Greece, the news did not reach the local Turkish press.

Nationalistic fervor is running high on both the Greek and Turkish sides. The naming dispute between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) has stoked nationalistic feelings across Greece, resulting in large-scale protests. Over the weekend, right-wing Greek groups burned the Turkish flag in a public demonstration. Ibrahim Kalin, spokesman for Erdogan, likened the act to a hate crime and demanded the arrest of the Greek protesters.

Such events have forced the Syriza government into an awkward position of maintaining diplomacy with Turkey while seeking help from the EU and NATO, and publicly declaring that it will defend its national borders. Opposition parties have taken advantage of Syriza’s delicate situation by taking a more hard-line, nationalistic approach on both the FYROM and Turkish issues.

Meanwhile in Turkey, over the last two to three years, Erdogan has “adopted a very Turkish nationalist stance,” Jenkins said. Citing Turkey’s economic woes and the depreciation of the lira, he noted that Erdogan is perpetuating a sense of importance on these issues to distract from domestic tensions. “I don’t think this is part of a calculated strategy. Rather, [Erdogan] sees this as an opportunity to strengthen his nationalistic Turkish muscle,” he added.

However, as Turkey becomes an increasingly volatile state actor, it has become difficult to separate Erdogan’s posturing from possible action — and though it might not be specifically directed at Greece, as Turkey’s closest EU neighbor, Greece will undoubtedly feel whatever shockwaves come from Turkish foreign or domestic policy. It remains to be seen how — or if — the EU and Turkey will be able to reconcile at a summit in the Black Sea port city of Varna on March 26.

“I think we are getting close to a breaking point,” Jenkins said. “It can’t go on like this indefinitely — but when and how this will break I don’t know.”

(Source: Al Monitor)

South Africa sings in the anti-corruption chorus

The prosecution of a former president on corruption reflects a global trend among many democracies to end impunity and ensure equality of law.

The list keeps getting longer, and for good reason.

On March 16, Jacob Zuma of South Africa became the latest current or former leader of a democracy to be charged with corruption. He now joins many other leaders — in nations from South Korea to Brazil, Israel to Argentina — who have recently faced prosecution because of rising calls to end a culture of impunity in high places.

With many countries embracing autocracy, every victory against a corrupt elected official can help ensure transparency and accountability in democratic states.

Zuma, who was forced to step down as president last month by the ruling African National Congress (ANC), faces charges related to a government arms deal in the late 1990s, before he was elected. For years he was able to fend off the charges, which only helped send a message that anyone in government can be a law unto themselves rather than to constitutional principles, such as equality before the law.

His political downfall came in large part from a robust



combination of players committed to honest government in South Africa, such as civic activists, investigative journalists, and key prosecutors and judges. They all helped expose Zuma’s alleged self-enrichment. Ordinary citizens also began to see a connection between ANC corruption and their own economic woes.

The public upwelling against the ANC has forced the

new president, Cyril Ramaphosa, to make a bold promise: “This is the year in which we will turn the tide of corruption in our public institutions.”

With the ANC’s popularity in decline, Mr. Ramaphosa knows he must unite the nation through a vigorous anti-graft campaign, starting within his own party. If he can shore up enough political capital, he might be able to achieve difficult reforms, such as equitable land distribution.

The other side of the argument, however, is that the “rainbow nation” of the late Nelson Mandela has a recent history of balancing harsh justice with necessary mercy for ex-rulers. South Africa is famous for its attempt to use a “truth and reconciliation commission” to offer leniency for those who confess their apartheid-era wrongdoing. Ramaphosa could be tempted to pardon Zuma — if he is convicted — to prevent potential violence among Zuma’s ethnic base of Zulus in KwaZulu-Natal province.

But first the trial must proceed, and only then can South Africans send a yet another message to their leaders about the best standards of justice for the nation. Their values, not just their leaders, are at stake.

(Source: The CSM)

What ‘law and order’ means to Trump

By Chris Hayes

Donald Trump is not subtle. While normal political language functions through implication and indirection, Trump luxuriates in saying the quiet part loud. But in doing so, Trump exposes what drives the politics of the movement he commands. That is most evident in the way he talks about crime and punishment.

No president since Richard Nixon has embraced the weaponized rhetoric of “law and order” as avidly as Trump. “When I take the oath of office next year, I will restore law and order to our country,” he said during his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention in 2016. “I will work with, and appoint, the best prosecutors and law enforcement officials in the country to get the job properly done. In this race for the White House, I am the law and order candidate.”

Time and again, the president denounces “illegals” and “criminals” and the “American carnage” they wreak on law-abiding Americans. He even advised an audience of police officers to rough up suspects they were arresting.

Yet this tough-guy stance disappears when the accused are in the president’s inner circle. In defending Rob Porter, the

White House senior aide accused of abuse by both of his ex-wives, the president wondered whatever process due to process while praising a man accused of giving his wife a black eye. (Mr. Porter denies the abuse.)

It’s no surprise that Trump’s critics pounced. Where was this concern for due process, they asked, when the president and his supporters chanted “Lock her up” about Hillary Clinton, who hadn’t even been formally accused of a crime? Where was his devotion to due process when he called for the Central Park Five to be executed, and then, after their exoneration, still maintained that they were guilty?

As tempting as it is to hammer Trump for his epic hypocrisy, it is a mistake. The president’s boundless benefit of the doubt for the Rob Porters and Roy Moores of the world, combined with off-with-their-heads capriciousness for immigrants accused of even minor crimes, is not a contradiction. It is the expression of a consistent worldview that he campaigned on and has pursued in office.

In this view, crime is not defined by a specific offense. Crime is defined by who commits it. If a young black man grabs a white woman by the crotch, he’s a thug and deserves to be roughed up by police officers. But if Donald Trump grabs a white

woman by the crotch in a nightclub (as he’s accused of doing, and denies), it’s locker-room high jinks.

This view is also expressed by many of the president’s staff members, supporters and prominent allies. During the same week that the White House chief of staff, John Kelly, repeatedly vouched for Rob Porter’s integrity, Kelly also mused that hundreds of thousands of unauthorized immigrants who did not fill out the paperwork for DACA protections had refused to “get off their asses.”

A political movement that rails against “immigrant crime” while defending alleged abusers and child molesters is one that has stopped pretending to have any universalist aspirations. The president’s moral framework springs from an American tradition of cultivating fear and contempt among its white citizens against immigrants, indigenous people and people of color, who are placed on the other side of “the law.” It’s a practice that has taken on new strength at a time when many white people fear they may be outnumbered, outvoted and out of time.

This is the opposite of what we like to tell ourselves is the traditional American civic creed: one symbolized by a blindfolded Lady Justice who applies the law without

fear or favor to whoever may come before her. It is one of Trump’s most insidious victories that he has given his supporters permission to drop any pretense of insisting that their actions and views should conform to this principle.

If all that matters when it comes to “law and order” is who is a friend and who is an enemy, and if friends are white and enemies are black or Latino or in the wrong party, then the rhetoric around crime and punishment stops being about justice and is merely about power and corruption.

And this is what “law and order” means: the preservation of a certain social order, not the rule of law. It shouldn’t have taken this long to see what has always been staring us in the face. After all, the last president to focus so intensely on law and order, Richard Nixon, the man who helped usher in mass incarceration, was also the most infamous criminal to occupy the Oval Office. The history of the United States is the story of a struggle between the desire to establish certain universal rights and the countervailing desire to preserve a particular social order.

We are now witnessing a president who wholly embraces the latter. America can have that kind of social order, or it can have justice for all. But it can’t have both.

(Source: The NYT)

‘Saudis starving Yemen to install a puppet regime in Sana’a’

TEHRAN (FNA) — Political analyst Riaz Karim says the main objective of Saudi Arabia and its allies is to bomb and starve the Yemeni population, to force them into submission and finally install a puppet government in Yemen to achieve their geopolitical aspirations.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, Riaz Karim slammed the Saudi-led coalition for using food as a weapon of war against the Yemeni people in pursuit of its aggressive objectives, and said American and British governments have the ability to bring an end to the war on Yemen but they won't because they are making profit out of the war.

Dr. Karim also added that the United Nations is not doing enough to stop the war due to its fears of losing the funding they receive from the Saudi.

Riaz Karim holds a PhD from Harvard University. He is the director of Veritas Centre for Strategic Studies in London. Dr. Karim has been interviewed by many international news outlets such as RT English and Press TV.

FNA has conducted an interview with Riaz Karim about the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen and the possible motives behind the war imposed on the poor country by Saudi Arabia and its western allies.

Below you will find the full text of the interview.

■ What do you think about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Yemen caused by the Saudi war and blockade on the country? What are the Saudis' objectives in their war on Yemen?

A: I can tell you categorically that Yemen is a humanitarian black hole. What Saudi Arabia is doing in there with its allies like the US, UK, and France is that they are using the scorched-earth strategy.

There is so much destruction everywhere. Food is being used as a weapon of war. It is absolutely inhumane; Yemen is on the brink of collapsing. And when I say that, it probably doesn't hold that much weight. But I can tell you the situation in Yemen is absolutely vexatious.

With Cholera cases surpassing one million and Diphtheria (DPT) cases on the rise, coupled with existing waterborne diseases such as Dengue Fever, Malaria and Dysentery have brought Yemen to its knees.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), threshold for malnutrition is 12% whereas Yemen has recorded as much as 31%, but the mainstream media will not report this besides the rest of the world has the Ostrich Syndrome that means we bury our heads in the sand and hope it will go away. For those people I have news, this will only get worse unless we collectively do something now!

At this point the main objective of Saudi Arabia and its allies is to bomb and starve Yemen into submission and install a puppet government in order to effectuate their geopolitical aspirations.

■ It seems that the Saudis expected an easy-to-win combat when they first stepped into the war. What do you think is the cause of Saudi Arabia's continued failure in Yemen?

A: Saudi Arabia in itself neither has the personnel nor the expertise of fighting any wars, it is entirely dependent on other countries for both, but they do have the money and since we live in a world where greed surpasses compassion anywhere, anytime, countries are queuing up to have a piece of the Saudi Pie.

In contrast the Yemeni people are the fighters of Arabia, history tells us that they managed to defeat the Egyptians and Ottoman Empire and we shouldn't forget that they are fighting in their own terrain besides history and the war in Iraq has taught us that airpower alone cannot win wars and even today



after 3 years of bombardment and blockade Saudi Arabia's woes still continue the way things are going, they can't win this war neither can they get out of it with their reputation intact.

■ Why do the US and UK continue to supply Saudi Arabia with arms despite international criticism about civilian casualties?

A: Remember those "experts" who sit today in Riyadh's war rooms as children are sent to slaughter. Remember whose weapons and military know-how have been spent towards the killing of Yemen.

If Saudi Arabia should be held accountable - not that we are holding our breath, it should not stand alone in the booth of the accused — the United States and the United Kingdom have a lot to answer to. I would actually argue that in this particular case, guilt lies not with those who pulled the trigger (after all, it is in the nature of the scorpion to sting) but those who provided a steady flow of fire power.

But then again it is in the nature of capitalists to turn a profit. Money they say has no smell. Money they say is an end in itself, and its call should never be denied. Who could in fact refuse the powerful song of al-Saud billions? Who indeed? This is the reality of capitalism. The bloodshed you see on your screen is what our democracies bought, and what our global institutions are powerless to denounce. What happens when the bloodshed hits closer to home? What happens when war capitalists decide to train in your back garden and turn your children into target practice?

Silence will muzzle your outrage. Silence and one good dose of political impotency. We still speak of war crimes as if we could really punish the offenders. We speak of Yemen today as if we were serious about offering solace to those in mourning. Yemen should have taught you that our world system is broken, actually not broken, but rather sold-out.

Silence today has a price, but we simply chose not to face uncomfortable realities. Why? Because admitting to an injustice would force us to enact reparation — and this requires actual courage.

The kind of courage Yemen has demonstrated as the world firmly looked away. But guilt is not a burden the kingdom should bear alone. Guilt is still more pronounced in London and Washington since it is there, in those corridors of power that Yemeni lives were forfeited.

If cluster bombs were used it is because the US and UK sold them to Riyadh. If Yemen has been starved under a humanitarian blockade it is because the United Nations has allowed it; if children have died it is because British experts signed off on it.

Blaming the kingdom will achieve little by way of reparation; it is our broken institutions which need to be challenged, and

redressed. If not, there will be many more innocent children to cry over in the future.

■ Why have the international organizations, particularly the UN, remained passive in the face of the ongoing Saudi atrocities?

A: Following 35 months of violence, engineered starvation and a blatant media blackout, Yemen's suffering has risen to the surface — one hot bubbling shame, the one conflict few have dared discuss for fear of financial repercussions.

I realize that truth and honesty are hard commodities to come by, but let's momentarily try them on for size and see how they fit. Let's see if we can stomach the reality the people of Yemen have had to live under as the global community chose to avert its gaze.

Yes, a school was bombed and children were butchered. Yemen was violated and scarred beyond the tolerable and the comprehensible. What else is new? Yemen has died a thousand deaths already, and none have come to its rescue.

Yemenis have pleaded, argued and debated for 18 months, calling for inquiries, calling for a humanitarian corridor, calling on the international community to heed the cries of a nation caught in the fires of war. The world answered by way of deafening silence.

As you look on in disgust to the charred bodies of innocent school children realize that such barbaric attacks have become Yemen's daily bread. Since March 25, 2015, when Saudi Arabia unilaterally declared war on Yemen, an entire nation has been subjected to unfathomable abuses — so unfathomable in fact that the United Nations even kept mum to avoid facing the consequences of such human rights abuses.

I remember still how quickly UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon had to reinstate Saudi Arabia after labeling it a war criminal in its annual Children and Armed Conflict report. I remember how an allegedly impartial party was brought to a standstill after Riyadh threatened to withdraw its financial contributions.

If you want to find out who is guilty, silent or ignorant all you have to do is follow the money and it will become very clear very quickly.

■ The Saudi-led coalition has recently increased its airstrikes on Yemen. These airstrikes have mostly killed Yemeni civilians, including thousands of women and children. What do you see as the reason for the airstrikes targeting civilians?

A: Once again Saudi Arabia and their allies are ratcheting up the attacks on civilian targets in the hope that the people will have enough and rebel against the resistance to side with the Saudis who can then become their saviors.

■ What do you think about the future of the war?

A: The US and the UK have the ability to bring an end to the war in Yemen but they will not do it because they stand to make a profit from this war, the UN stands spineless to be able to do anything for the fear of losing their funding and that puts the possibility of ending this war in a complete quandary.

Yemen is in the throes of a conflict that has ravaged more than just its infrastructure, civilians, military and otherwise, Yemen is quite simply being bled dry of its people so one kingdom could manifest those political realities it once dreamed up. Yemen's barren land, its destroyed villages and silenced streets all testify to the horrors that befell a nation whose ambition was merely to rise independent within the confines of its sovereignty.

"Yemen is not the forgotten war of the decade; Yemen is the unspoken shame of our generation".

New American-Russian conflict: A confrontation beyond Cold War

1 → Clearly, Moscow's objective is to challenge NATO and the U.S. naval and military capabilities. However, on a larger scale, Russia intends to frighten the U.S. and the EU and create a sense of fear and insecurity through boast of power, a sense of "warning that a war is on the way." Obviously, here NATO will change the balance of power to the benefit of Russia.

On the other hand, the recent decision by the U.S. and NATO members in the establishment of two command centers in America and Germany against Russia, and enhancement of NATO and U.S. nuclear weapons in German's territory, reveal Washington's long-term military strategy against Moscow.

The concerns have put Washington's and NATO's at an alert level for a possible military attack on Moscow.

Despite recent warnings from influential political figures like former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev, the late and ongoing conflicts between the U.S. and Russia can lead to a condition far more grim than the Cold War era. In this mayhem, factors such as "multiplicity of actors," "increasing the rate of international actors' vulnerability," "modernizing nuclear weapons," will enhance the cost of the new confrontation between Washington and Moscow.

Iraqi politician raps U.S. attempt to dismantle PMU



TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Leader of an Iraqi political group denounced the U.S. attempts to dissolve the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (aka PMU or Hashd al-Shaabi) as part of a hostile plot to sap Iraq's military strength.

In an interview with Tasnim, Qais al-Khazali, secretary general of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, said Washington has repeatedly tried to dismantle Hashd al-Shaabi in order to deprive Iraq of its trump card in the military sphere that has been gained with the victory over the Daesh (ISIL) terrorist group.

He called for efforts to protect the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units as an official military force.

The cleric also stressed that the war on Daesh has unified all Iraqi groups, including Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds, noting that ethnic tensions have greatly declined in the Iraqi society after the fight on terrorism. Warning against plots to foment despair in Iraq and discourage people from attending the upcoming election, Khazali said Iraq could carry out reforms once the political parties abandon or at least minimize their demands for a share of power.

Iraq's parliament has approved May 12 as the date for holding national elections despite calls to delay the vote until the return of nearly 3 million people displaced by the fight against Daesh.

The over three-year-old fight against Daesh has left most of the areas in northern and western Iraq in ruins, and poor public services have exacerbated the situation.

The elections will be the fourth since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

U.S., UK are gutting Yemen for Saudi, heading into dangerous waters

TEHRAN (FNA) — The US-backed, Saudi-led war of aggression against Yemen has reached the 1,000-day mark, with millions of civilians on the brink of starvation and reeling from indiscriminate airstrikes on schools, hospitals, markets and mosques.

With more than 17,000 people killed in the often-overlooked conflict, according to the World Health Organization, and millions more are on the brink of famine, the pressing question is why the United States and Britain are still involved in this failed war?

Despite bogus reports by "fakestream" media in the West, this near-three-year conflict is not a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia, nor is it a real war between former President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and the Houthi Ansarullah resistance movement. It's a war of choice by Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Israel against the people of Yemen based on regional designs.

Indeed, it is the illegal military invasion of Hadi's backers - a Saudi-led coalition of Arab states supported by the US, Britain, Israel and others that has drawn the most vehement international criticism and condemnation. UN aid agencies and rights groups allege war crimes have been committed by the Saudis and their junior partners in crime, which also embroils the United States, Britain, and Israel.

To that end, the US and Britain have been intimately involved in prosecuting the war, supplying weapons, logistical help and diplomatic support to their longtime regional vassal Saudi Arabia and its coalition, which also includes the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan and Sudan. Besides selling weapons to the Saudis, American and British military advisers have provided training and intelligence and the US has helped refuel coalition jets — with diplomatic support at the UN, of course.



Saudi airstrikes have repeatedly hit civilian targets as well - indiscriminate attacks that the UN Human Rights Council says are war crimes - despite sophisticated weaponry and Western intelligence. Of course, Saudi Arabia and its partners deny the charges, with its UN ambassador claiming that his country exercises "the maximum degree of care and precaution to avoid civilian harm." It even holds a seat at the Human Rights Council because the US government says so.

Nevertheless, the civilized world can and should push for Washington and London to face action for aiding and abetting the Saudi war crimes in this unjustified campaign. After all, a UN-backed ruling in 2013 found that practical assistance, encouragement, or moral support is enough to establish liability for London and Washington.

UN officials and legal officers at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have also maintained that Western governments are not neutral actors in Yemen and are therefore bound by international human rights laws. In their words: "Examples of violations of a state's neutrality include supplying war materials, engaging its own military forces, supplying military advisors to a party to the armed conflict, or providing or transmitting military intelligence on behalf of a belligerent."

Under International law and the UN


Charter, this also should be more than enough for the sound minds in Washington and London to agree to end the illegal war and lift the inhumane blockade to prevent civilian suffering and starvation. Lest they forget, the charity Save the Children estimates hunger and disease could kill at least 50,000 Yemeni children this year. Worse, nearly a million children are suffering starvation.

It just doesn't help for American and British officials to distance themselves from civilian casualties, claiming that they have no involvement in the choice of airstrike targets and are not engaged in direct combat. They are both heading toward dangerous waters and it's beyond dispute. Their support consists of everything that is needed to gut Yemen and turn it into a safe haven for terrorists. They play a direct role in coalition targeting, and hence are accountable for civilian casualties. Even some US lawmakers agree. They criticize the blockade, saying the Trump administration never encourages Saudi Arabia "to separate the humanitarian piece from the military piece."


In any case, it's not that difficult to prosecute the US or the UK at the International Criminal Court in The Hague despite their massive pressure against any ICC investigation. From a legal point of view, their direct support makes a solid legal case. Saudi Arabia should also be taken to the ICC for what they are doing; and they are the ones directly perpetrating these war crimes.

The ICC can and should overcome strong opposition from Saudi Arabia, the United States and Britain to launch an investigation which is long overdue, knowing fully well that although the US is not signatory to the ICC, and although Britain is, a successful legal action is still the surest and the quickest way possible to end the terrible humanitarian situation in Yemen.

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America must ask more of its NATO allies

By John R. Deni

The president's 2019 budget proposes a 30 percent increase — to \$6.5 billion — for the European Deterrence Initiative, a program that pays for deployments of U.S. military units in Europe, exercises, and training events, and other initiatives designed to deter Russia and reassure allies. As part of the bargain with those allies, however, Washington is insisting that they show the same level of commitment.

Cajoling allies into more equitable burden-sharing — something every U.S. administration has attempted since the mid-1960s — or making America's commitment to Article 5 conditional on allies paying their fair share — something unique to then-candidate Donald Trump in 2016 — historically hasn't worked well.

Instead, the United States should focus on leveraging other aspects of its role within the alliance in order to get allies to spend more on defense, share burdens fairly, and maintain democratic norms at home.

Even though European allies have spent billions

of Euros, deployed tens of thousands of troops, and suffered nearly nine hundred combat deaths supporting the U.S. war in Afghanistan, the Trump administration has focused single-mindedly on the issue of equitable burden-sharing. In truth, most European militaries are today under-resourced, under-manned, and ill-equipped for post-ISAF security challenges. Most NATO allies in Europe can and should spend more on defense and security.

Arguably as important, but apparently of less concern to the current administration given the burden-sharing mantra of top U.S. officials, is the rise of illiberal governance in Turkey, Poland and Hungary. Over the past few years the ruling parties of these U.S. treaty allies have each undermined democratic institutions, consolidated power and authority, and curbed the independence of non-governmental organizations and civil society.

Increased defense spending

One way of incentivizing increased defense spending and/or a greater commitment to democracy and human rights would be to condition U.S. military deployments or other activities under the European

Deterrence Initiative on allied behavior. The more an ally spends on defense, resurrects judicial independence, or promotes civil society, the more American military goodies it would receive in the form of troop deployments, exercises, and so forth.

Unfortunately, this approach smacks of the same Article 5 conditionality that presidential candidate Donald Trump pitched in 2016 — “good” allies get the promise of U.S. boots on the ground and protection while “bad” allies get uncertainty.

Among European allies, conditionality creates the very instability that the NATO treaty was designed to eliminate in the first place, ultimately undermining U.S. security and economic well-being. Meanwhile, U.S. conditionality toward European allies raises questions in Moscow about what Americans are willing to fight and die for, opens the door for Russia's revisionist adventurism, and ultimately leads to strategic instability, none of which are in the interest of the United States.

Luckily, there are better options for achieving U.S. goals than through European allies. When it comes to defense spending, commonly held security threat

perceptions — especially among policymakers and informed elites — are vital. This means continuing to break down barriers to intelligence-sharing with our allies, an especially difficult feat given the American propensity for over-classification.

Washington should also leverage allies' desire for prestige, and the domestic political rewards that come with it. Political leaders everywhere relish being perceived as carrying weight in international circles, as having the respect of other leaders, and as being able to bring home the bacon when it comes to shared multinational resources.

Models of democratic government

For instance, the United States could work within NATO to permit only allies who are meeting spending targets or who are models of democratic governance to host alliance summit meetings. These meetings are expensive and challenging to organize and run, but they are often highly sought after by NATO's members for the prestige and attention they bring.

Similarly, alliance member states strive, often aggressively, to have their generals and admirals assigned to NATO positions. Washington should

insist that the majority of NATO slots be filled with officers from those countries that are meeting spending targets, or from those countries that are not backsliding when it comes to democracy and human rights.

Finally, all of the allies covet NATO-funded infrastructure. Construction of or upgrades to NATO-related facilities like headquarters, airfields and port facilities brings prestige as well as jobs.

Washington should work through NATO to ensure the alliance situates new infrastructure and facilities in those member states that have good track records when it comes to meeting defense spending targets or promoting democracy and good governance at home. Similarly, upgrades to existing facilities ought to be tied to continued adherence to the same objectives.

Obviously, all of these steps would need to be carefully weighed against operational requirements for the defense of Europe. Nonetheless, they are practical carrots and sticks the United States can use to promote important allied objectives, without resorting to conditionality and undermining strategic stability. (Source: nationalinterest.org)

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دفت: ۲۸۱۴۱ - ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴

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Here’s how much yoga it takes to truly see results

By Erin Kelly

Scrolling through Instagram, it seems like everyone you know is nailing single-arm balances and handstands (in front of a mountain or on a picturesque beach, no less). But for those of us who aren’t hardcore about the practice, simply holding downward dog can be challenging.

The good news: You don’t have to be the most flexible person in the room to reap the benefits of practicing. Still, you may wonder what good the occasional yoga class is doing for your body and mind. Well, let out an om: You don’t need to hit the yoga studio every day (or even at all) for significant benefits, both physically and mentally.

Reasons to roll out the mat

Whether you’re aiming for the flexibility of a gymnast or just a calmer mind, yoga has immeasurable benefits. Physically, yoga has been shown to improve flexibility, posture, and balance; strengthen bones; and increase muscle strength.

There are plenty of overall health perks too: Research shows that yoga can decrease inflammation, boost immune system function, and improve symptoms associated with chronic health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. The practice can also do wonders for your mental health and mood, reducing depression, stress, and anxiety. But can an average person actually reap these benefits, or do you have to spend half your salary on unlimited access to a yoga studio to see a change?

The short road to happiness

First things first: “We know from exercise that the more you do, generally the more benefits you get,” says William J. Broad, a science writer and author of *The Science of Yoga*. “Yoga is no different. Practicing once a week is good. Practicing three to four times per week would be better.”

But just like yoga pants, one size doesn’t fit all. Loren Fishman, M.D., a back pain specialist who studied yoga and uses it in his rehabilitative practice, believes that even one minute spent in practice can be enough to reset someone’s outlook: “One minute in meditation can have a frustrated, angry, terrible-feeling person feeling resourceful, kind, and fun,” he says.

While this way of thinking probably won’t lead to Cirque du Soleil-level moves, that



doesn’t mean you won’t see—or feel—results.

“Practicing yoga once a week gives you a time every week to focus on your breathing, which in turn, allows you to be present,” says Heidi Kristoffer, a yoga instructor at The Movement. “Being in the present moment gives you a total time-out from the rest of the world and resets your system.”

Physically, a one hour yoga class won’t tout the same calorie-blasting effects as 60 minutes of cardio. But it will increase your blood flow, get your oxygen moving, and, “get any stuck parts of your body ‘unstuck,’” Kristoffer says. “If you commit to a weekly practice, depending on the class you take, your flexibility will improve over time, leading to fewer injuries, and you will experience toning in all of your muscles,” Kristoffer says. “Not to mention a stronger core, which leads to less back pain.”

What the research says

Studies back up these claims: One found that a single yoga class for inpatients at a psychiatric hospital had the ability to significantly reduce tension, anxiety, depression, anger, hostility, and fatigue. Another found that twelve weeks of either once- or twice-weekly hatha yoga classes were equally effective in treating lower back pain. And if you’ve been ditching yoga to make time for a more sweat-centric workout, know that

research shows yoga is just as healthy for your heart as taking a cycling class.

Of course, if you don’t have time for a 60-minute class every week, smaller increments of yoga outside a studio can work wonders too: Just 10 minutes of yoga before bed can help you sleep better. Additionally, a recently released 10-year study of 700 participants found that just 10 minutes of yoga per day is enough to see improvements, at least when it comes to preventing osteoporosis and strengthening bones. (Think about it this way: Ten minutes is less than 1 percent of your day.)

So if you can’t get to a yoga class, don’t sweat it. Another study found that the frequency of an individual’s home practice was a better predictor of positive health than how often they attended classes or how long they practiced. At-home participants also reported more positive mindfulness and well-being, healthier BMIs, better sleep, and even healthier food choices.

Yoga class

It’s clear yoga has mental and physical benefits that can be enjoyed by anyone with just a few minutes. But since there are so many different kinds of yoga, there’s no general rule to determine exactly how much yoga one person needs to see physical results. However, age may play a factor, Broad says.

“I would argue that a 20-something person who is in their prime of life and reasonably good shape needs less yoga to sustain their practice than someone in their 50s or 60s,” Broad says. One study analyzing the effects of yoga on women over 50 found that practicing asanas (yoga postures) even once a week led to an increase in the mobility of spinal joints and flexibility of the hamstring muscles.

Of course, if you want to evolve your practice and nail those mountain-top handstands, you should practice yoga several times per week, says Amanda Murdock, a yoga instructor and founder of the Murdock Movement. “If you practice several times a week, you will see longer-lasting benefits, such as better range of motion and flexibility, reduction in stress over sustained periods of time, and better posture, to name a few. You’ll also obviously see faster [physical] results.”

While you’ll benefit in the short term (feeling more open, better digestion, better sleep), a single yoga class per month will essentially have you starting from scratch each time you walk on the mat, Murdock says. It can be difficult to listen to your body when you are trying to figure out what you are doing in the class.

That’s why she recommends getting on your mat at least one day a week to become familiar with your body and to become aware of how you feel after practice versus before practice—which can become a powerful motivator to practice more often. It doesn’t have to happen in a studio (or even on a real mat), but the frequency can help you be in tune with what your body needs at the time.

“Yoga is a lifelong practice,” Murdock says. “That’s why yoga is much more than just a workout. It’s the mind-body connection and awareness that make a yoga practice powerful, beneficial, and sustainable.”

The takeaway

The verdict’s in: Just one class can deliver some of the mind-body benefits of yoga. Still, to truly reap the physical and mental benefits and improve your practice, it’s better to block off an hour for class at least once per week. Even if you can’t, once you know the fundamentals of the practice, do a little bit every day at home, Broad recommends. “My own personal mantra is, ‘A little bit often is much better than a lot every once in a while,’” he says.

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

The story of your life and the power of memoir

By Matthew Solan

I play poker in a weekly game hosted by an 80-year-old man named Mort. During a recent game, I noticed a stack of composition books, scribbled-over yellow pads, and Bic pens spread over his dining table.

What was he up to? Mort said he had lost his sense of purpose and identity, so he turned to something he knew a lot about—his life story—and began to write his memoirs.

Mort’s reaction is quite common among older adults, as is his response. As people age, they may begin to feel irrelevant to those around them, especially their families, which often leads to low self-esteem, greater isolation, and a higher risk of depression.

But engaging yourself in an endeavor like writing your memoirs can be rewarding for you and others.

“You would be surprised at how interested your peers and family members are in your stories and personal history,” says Brendan Kearney, Vitalize 360 Wellness Coach at Harvard-affiliated Hebrew SeniorLife. “You have a unique firsthand account of your culture and history that others don’t, and leaving a recorded history of your life can be an important gift to both you and your descendants.”

Words of wisdom

Writing your memoirs offers many benefits beyond simple storytelling. For instance, they can be an opportunity to pass along specific wisdom and life lessons. “Even if you write about parts of your life that you have never told anyone because they were unhappy or painful memories, revisiting them can show others the strength it takes to overcome life barriers when they face their own,” says Kearney.

The actual writing aspect also can be a therapeutic tool as you explore issues that may still trouble you. A study published in the March 2018 JAMA Psychiatry found that writing about a specific upsetting memory was just as effective as traditional cognitive processing therapy in treating



Writing about a specific upsetting memory was just as effective as traditional cognitive processing therapy in treating adults with post-traumatic stress disorder.

adults with post-traumatic stress disorder.

A walk down memory lane

Where should you begin your life story? You don’t have to follow a straight year-by-year account. Instead, Kearney recommends creating a timeline of your life based on the places you have lived. “Begin with writing about your homes,” says Kearney. “Think about the house you grew up in, or the first house you owned. The places you’ve lived often invoke a wealth of visual memories and long-forgotten stories that

are tied to those places.”

Another way to trigger ideas is to look through photo albums. Focus on a single picture and write about the story behind it. Or use writing prompts, by asking yourself questions such as, “One of my fondest memories of my best friend was ...”; or “The time I was happiest or most scared was ...” Or write about your favorite hobbies or sports.

The write stuff

Writing can be tough for some people. Here are some strategies to help you find your rhythm.

- Write at the same time each day to establish a routine. Choose a specific time to write, whether it’s in the morning while you drink coffee, or before bed, or any time in between.
- Write for a set period. In the beginning, set a timer and write for 10 to 15 minutes. Gradually extend the time to 20 minutes or longer.
- Don’t worry about spelling and grammar. Your writing is about record keeping and not publication, so write the way you speak, and don’t focus on correcting mistakes.
- Use a recorder. If you aren’t comfortable writing, then record your stories on a tape recorder or your smartphone. There are many speech recognition programs that can convert audio into text documents, such as Sonix, InqScribe, and Dragon NaturallySpeaking.
- Try writing longhand. Research has found that hand-writing, especially in cursive, can activate parts of the brain associated with short- and long-term memory. The slower process also can help improve attention and information processing, since you have to focus on forming letters and words.
- Look for writing groups. Some community centers offer memoir-writing workshops that can offer further support and give you a chance to share your writing with other people. Or reach out to friends about forming your own writing group.

(Source: [health.harvard.edu](#))

Seven ways ... to manage irritable bowel syndrome

Irritable bowel syndrome may be inherited. It is linked to oversensitive nerves in the gut, causing debilitating pains and cramps among other symptoms. But there are ways to manage it and reduce its impact on your life.

Consider medication

Speak to your doctor about what is recommended for your particular type of IBS. If you have IBS with constipation (IBS-C), then laxatives could help. These range from osmotic laxatives, which increase water inside the colon, to cathartic laxatives, which stimulate the colon walls, although the latter may not be effective long-term. If you have IBS with diarrhea (IBS-D), then over-the-counter medications such as loperamide can help control your symptoms.

Try probiotics

Research has suggested that changes in gut flora may trigger IBS by increasing inflammation and altering digestive motility. For some people, probiotics—available in capsules, powders and yoghurts—can alleviate symptoms, balancing gut flora by inhibiting the growth of disease-causing bacteria,

slowing down bowel movements and fighting inflammation.

Move to a high-fiber diet

If you have IBS-C or IBS-D, then increasing dietary fiber with fruit, vegetables, beans, whole-grain breads and cereals may relieve symptoms. High-fat meals can cause problems by inducing vigorous colon contractions more rapidly than usual, which can trigger cramping and diarrhea. However, IBS has quite a wide spectrum and only one in six IBS patients experience improvements from this diet.

Take exercise

Research has suggested that 30 minutes of exercise, such as walking at a moderate pace, five days a week can significantly help to ease common symptoms such as constipation and abdominal cramps.

Reduce your stress levels

Stress is widely thought to trigger IBS, partly because of the neural connections between the brain and the gut, and any external stressors make the mind more aware of painful colon spasms. IBS may be an auto-immune disorder, and

the immune system is heavily affected by stress.

Keep a food diary

IBS patients have different triggers, so keep a daily diary of all the foods and drinks that make your symptoms flare up. If you experience bloating, you may want to try eliminating gas-producing foods such as resistant starch (found in cold potatoes and bread), beans, cruciferous vegetables such as cabbage, and carbonated drinks. Fructose, found in sweet vegetables and fruit, can also trigger diarrhea, gas and bloating in IBS sufferers, and it is worth remembering that one in 10 IBS sufferers are lactose intolerant, so minimizing dairy products can provide relief. Caffeine can make diarrhea worse, so limit coffee and tea to three cups a day.

Try peppermint oil

Studies have shown that peppermint oil may be effective in reducing the severity of abdominal cramps and spasms, bloating and the intensity of bowel movement urgency and pain when passing stools, particularly in patients with IBS-D.

(Source: [The Guardian](#))

‘The 5th Dementia’ uses music as medicine



By Laura Klairmont

Carol Rosenstein’s husband, Irwin, was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in 2006. Three years later, he was diagnosed with dementia.

With the progressive nature of the diseases, Irwin had ups and downs. Medication caused him to experience hallucinations. As his condition worsened and the couple grew increasingly isolated, Rosenstein said she could feel Irwin slipping away.

“Every day was like a roller coaster ride,” Rosenstein said. “When a terrible disease befalls a family, even your close friends don’t know what to say. It feels like you have leprosy because people don’t want to come near.”

June 2014 was a particularly difficult period for the couple, when Irwin was not responding well to medications. Then something seemingly miraculous happened: Rosenstein heard him playing the piano.

Irwin had played saxophone and piano throughout his life. But this was the first time she heard him play in the eight years since his diagnosis. Rosenstein observed that he seemed more aware, responsive, energetic and communicative.

“I was at my wit’s end, and finally something positive happened,” she said. “The music actually resurrected him.”

Rosenstein contacted a doctor to tell him what was happening. “He told me that I was watching music change brain chemistry,” she said. “Playing the piano caused him to release dopamine, and that was giving him the lift. ... I realized that no medications were more powerful than music.”

Science does show us today that playing a musical instrument is like a full body workout for the brain.

The experience led Rosenstein to start a band for Irwin and other people who have neurodegenerative diseases.

“We needed to get some musical buddies so we could all party together,” she said.

The band called itself The 5th Dementia.

“They were having so much fun playing music and socializing. ... And people were jumping on to get involved,” Rosenstein said. “We never looked back.”

Since 2014, her nonprofit, Music Mends Minds, has created 20 bands across the country that have improved the quality of life for more than 200 people.

CNN’s Laura Klairmont spoke with Rosenstein about her work. Below is an edited version of their conversation.

■ After starting The 5th Dementia, what inspired you to turn this experiment into a nonprofit?

A : It didn’t take long before I recognized that we were on to something really grand. So, Music Mends Minds was born. We’re in the business of creating bands in different cities where we can find people with neurodegenerative diseases who love to play music and are ready to jump on and have a good time.

Bands practice once or twice a week. (It’s) a safe zone for patients, for caregivers, for family members and for the entire public to come to a rehearsal and feel the magic of music and change their moods. Everybody is high on life after a rehearsal. We also organize concerts a couple of times a year for all the bands. The concerts bring great pride to our musicians and singers and offers them an opportunity to shine again.

We’re jamming all over the country. We’ve reached patients that were lost and lived without music and then we introduced them to the magic of music, and they in turn came alive and have an extension on life.

■ As your husband’s dementia progresses, what are some of his daily struggles and how has playing music helped?

A : People with dementia recognize that what they could do yesterday, they’re having difficulty doing today, even if it’s just articulating their wishes. They get tongue tied, their vocabulary is not accessible to them, and it’s very frustrating.

In Irwin’s case, it’s moving quite quickly now. His cognition is deteriorating. Irwin’s conversational ability is deteriorating quite rapidly. And as a spouse, you recognize it because your conversational buddy is not able to articulate like he’s been doing for over 30 years. And of course, I turn away and I’m heartbroken, because the reality is not pretty. But you have to be a rock and you keep on keeping on. We’re making every day count.

Science does show us today that playing a musical instrument is like a full body workout for the brain. It pushes natural neurotransmitters. Until science gives us a cure, we have natural medication available by playing music. The music has had such an impact on Irwin. It makes him more conversational and happier and more functional. The music resurrected him.

■ Your work isn’t just helping the band members. How do their loved ones benefit as well?

A : Rosenstein: Living with a spouse with dementia is a difficult journey. Loneliness is something very real in a household where there’s neurodegenerative disease. We are so close to all our members and their families. For caregivers to be able to socialize and make new, strong friendships, to love and hug and cry together is such a blessing.

We are no longer alone on this journey. We all understand the trials and tribulations confronting all of us, and there’s no explanation that anyone needs to give because we’re all in the same boat. We find that this program is a powerful support group. We create extended new families, and we’re just rocking. We sing at the tops of our lungs and just feel blessed that there’s music in our lives.

(Source: CNN)

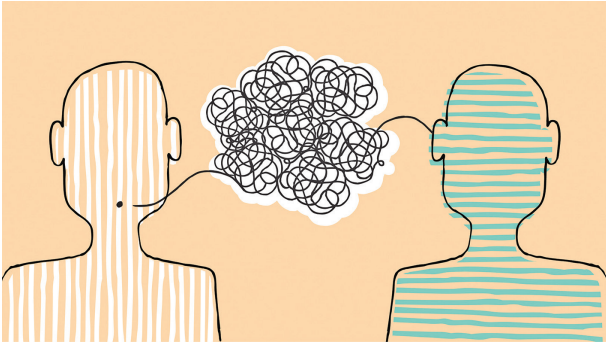
Technology is damaging our ability to feel empathy

After a long day, you can find me curled up with my blankets over my head, in a dark room, almost immune to the world.

From my perspective however, I am very much involved with the world. My phone or laptop screen is lighting up the darkness. My Twitter feed is trying to convince me to spend a dollar to help the local animal shelter, a YouTube advertisement is compelling me to buy cupcakes for homeless people, and Instagram shows me my friends' good and bad moments.

But do these actions have any consequences other than chronic neck pain? Yes, and they are damaging society's sense of empathy.

Empathy is not to be confused with sympathy which is defined as feeling sorrow for another person's misfortune.



Rather empathy is being able to understand and share feelings with others. Start Empathy, a nonprofit organization, began as part of the change-maker schools campaign to spread worthwhile traits to younger generations through education.

They have defined empathy as, "the ability to grasp the many sides of today's complex problems and the capacity to collaborate with others to solve them; it means being as good at listening to the ideas of others as articulating your own; it means being able to lead a team one day and participate as a team member the next."

Because empathy solves problems before they arise, it is important to maximize our outlets that increase these actions, and technology use is sadly not one of them.

I do recognize technology use is important for today's institutions. We can spread news around the world in a matter of minutes and make informed decisions using the internet. But, do these outlets foster empathetic actions? They are helpful in other ways, yes; but with overuse and mistreatment, this tool becomes destructive.

For example, being informed about the war in Afghanistan does not give you the right to say, "I know exactly how each soldier feels because I know every detail about the war." This extreme example shows how information is important to our opinions, but too much screen time ruins our ability to live in the real world and experience the problems we read about online.

From my perspective in bed, I am becoming aware of worldly issues that are presented by news outlets and apps. I am connecting with friends and family over social media that let me see, almost disturbingly, every detail of their life.

I feel I am empathetic because I know what the people of the world are going through. I believe I understand. In society these simple beliefs give a false security of being empathetic and through this context we are damaging the way we see the legitimate world.

In real life, these could be serious experiences that result in bodily harm. Yet, we learn to ignore feelings of empathy because we have a screen to hide behind — plus, it is not affecting us personally.

Not only are we losing empathy by becoming desensitized and creating false security, we are becoming isolated through excessive technology usage. When we create virtual friendships; we destroy the want for actual human interaction.

Face-to-face communication generates empathy more often than persuasive arguments over the internet. Time magazine's Belinda Luscombe did a study on this subject.

She noticed that empathy withdraws when technology use is persistent, saying, "Instead of fostering real friendships off-line, e-mail and social networking may take the place of them — and the distance inherent in screen-only interactions may breed feelings of isolation or a tendency to care less about other people."

(Source: wvgazettemail.com)

NASA astronaut explains how seeing planet Earth from space changed his perspective on life

When we recently interviewed astronaut Scott Kelly for Business Insider's podcast "Success! How I did it," he said the experience changed him personally, as well.

"I think it makes you a more empathetic person," he said. "More in touch with humanity and who we are, and what we should do to not only to take care of the planet but also to solve our common problems, which clearly are many."

Kelly retired in April 2016, after returning home from a 340-day trip aboard the International Space Station. It was his fourth and longest mission in space, and he was able to share the experience with the public using the internet. This included uploading some stunning photos that offer a small glimpse into his point about what it's like to see the entirety of Earth.

■ He explained:

"The planet is incredibly beautiful, breathtakingly beautiful. Having said that, parts of it are polluted, like with constant levels of pollution in certain parts of Asia. You see how fragile the atmosphere looks. It's very thin. It's almost like a thin contact lens over somebody's eye, and you realized all the pollutants we put into the atmosphere are contained in that very thin film over the surface. It's a little bit scary actually to look at it.

"And then you realize looking at the Earth, that despite its beauty and its tranquility, there's a lot of hardship and conflict that goes on. You look at the planet without borders, especially during the day. At night you can see countries with lights, but during the daytime it looks like we are all part of one spaceship, Spaceship Earth.

"And we're all flying through space together, as a team, and it gives you this perspective — people have described it as this 'orbital perspective' — on humanity, and you get this feeling that we just need to work better — much, much better — to solve our common problems."

"I think it's a privilege to do it, and I think it changes people for the better, having that experience," he said.

(Source: businessinsider.com)

Dropping technology and returning to the great outdoors

"Dinner's ready, it's time to come in." "But Mom, just five more minutes!"

Do you remember playing outside until dark, hearing your parents call for you to come home and not wanting to go inside? Fast forward 20 years. Does it seem as though your child is always inside watching TV, playing video games or accessing social media on their phone?

In the last two decades, childhood outdoor play has decreased while indoor play has increased. This has taken a toll mentally and physically on today's youth.

Spending less time outdoors has contributed to a rise in childhood obesity and the decline of creativity, concentration and social skills.

The National Wildlife Federation states the average American child spends as little as 30 minutes in unstructured outdoor play each day and more than seven hours each day in front of a screen, compared to three hours a day in 1995. In our expanding world of technology, it is extremely difficult for children to get away from electronics.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends parents monitor screen time for children ages 1-18 and never allow it to replace healthy activities - particularly sleep, social interaction and physical activity.

Too much screen time affects children in the following ways:

- Children who consistently spend more than four hours per day on a screen are more likely to be overweight.
- Children who watch violent TV shows



or play violent video games are more likely to display aggressive behaviors or fear the world around them.

• Children can be influenced by TV and video game characters that often display risky behaviors such as smoking and drinking.

So, what are the benefits of dropping technology and heading outside?

Evidence demonstrates the many benefits nature has on children's psychological and physical well-being. Recent studies have shown the necessity of spending time outdoors to reduce stress, increase creativity, and improve physical health and concentration.

Is technology impacting my child's social and communications skills?

This year we've been hearing more from the technology industry about the potential consequences of children over-using devices such as tablets and smartphones. It's no longer just experts in children's health who believe that technology could negatively impact conversation and social interaction.

Audiologists have expressed concerns that repeated misuse of personal tech at loud volumes could damage children's hearing. Meanwhile, speech-language pathologists have said their primary concern is that excessive use of devices is replacing conversation and human interaction. If left un-addressed, 68 percent of the communication experts polled by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association said, they foresee widespread tech overuse as a communication "time bomb" that could irreparably damage the communication skills for generations to come.

We asked Lisa Rai Mabry-Price, M.S., CCC-SLP, associate director of school services from ASHA, to tell us more about these issues.hs1tech18

■ Can you elaborate on this communication "time bomb"?

ASHA started sounding the alarm 10 years ago about noise-induced hearing loss that could result from listening

to mp3 players with ear buds or headphones at too-loud volumes — and for too long. However, it's not just about teens blasting music anymore. As tablets and other devices have become more popular with very young children — who may be watching TV shows or using apps with headphones — the risk of hearing loss is especially troubling. Even mild hearing loss can interfere with speech and language development and future academic success.

Speech and language development is dependent upon verbal interaction through talking, singing, reading, and playing through basic everyday interactions. Whether it's children using a device on their own, or a parent too tied up on the phone to be a child's communication partner, this is potentially problematic. It's an area where we are just starting to see research, but it goes back to how we know that speech and language skills develop — and that's through human interaction.

Social communication skills are also in jeopardy due to tech overuse. These skills are developed and honed through daily interaction and include knowing how to take turns during a conversation, using facial expressions, changing

the way you speak based on the listener — such as how you talk to a baby versus an adult — and making appropriate eye contact. Such personal interactions are limited as children passively view a screen.

■ What would you consider over-usage?

Screen time should be limited to one hour of high-quality programs a day for children ages 2 to 5 and further restricted for children under age 2, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. It's important to watch for signs of overuse such as limited or lack of communication with others, lack of physical activity, interrupted sleep, or even vision problems.

What's most important is that there is dedicated time for communication and interaction: device-free dinners to foster family conversation and bonding, bedtime reading, and a device "curfew."

Technology can open the door to many educational opportunities if parents are sharing the experience with their children and guiding them along the way. Parents also need to model tech habits for their children such as taking breaks and leaving the phone in a separate room to avoid jumping at every notification.

(Source: philly.com)

Bitcoin value struggles to regain momentum after slump



The value of bitcoin has held reasonably steady in recent weeks following its rocketing value over Christmas and jittery plummet back to earth in January and February, as governments and central banks around the world continued to raise the specter of future regulation.

The volatile cryptocurrency's value has shifted wildly ever since mid-December - when it hit a record high of more than \$19,850 (£14,214) - with frequent heavy drops and speedy recoveries.

Bitcoin's value plummeted again shortly before Christmas, dropping by almost \$2,000 (£1,449) in just an hour at one point, and almost slipping below the \$11,000 mark (£7,970).

It then bounced back, before tumbling again in mid-January, recovering again, and plummeting at the start of February before levelling out for the rest of the month and into early March.

Aside from the looming prospect of regulation, a series of high-profile thefts have also had a hand in the sudden rapid dips in value bitcoin and its rivals have experienced - the most recent of which was a failed raid on the Binance cryptocurrency exchange.

Recent goings-on have demonstrated just how quickly things can change for investors.

It is worth \$8,480 (£6,091) as of Friday afternoon, down considerably on the recent high of \$11,640 (£8,414)

it achieved last week, according to the Coinbase exchange.

Its value is actually up 1.98 per cent on this time yesterday but down by 8.77 per cent week-on-week and 7.79 per cent over the last month.

Bitcoins rise last year meanwhile led to increasing amounts of interest in other digital currencies, such as ethereum, litecoin and ripple XRP - all of which have performed well recently - and more and more people are now looking to invest in digital currencies.

However, there are serious fears that bitcoin has created a bubble that could burst at any moment.

Numerous financial experts have advised potential investors to avoid getting involved with bitcoin, and the US Securities and Exchange Commission has told people to "exercise caution" and be wary of scammers.

But others have speculated that it could eventually rise towards the \$1m (£724,549) mark.

Bitcoin has no central bank and isn't linked to or regulated by any state.

An anonymised record of every bitcoin transaction is stored on a huge public ledger known as a blockchain.

However, transactions made with the cryptocurrency are irreversible, which makes investors in bitcoin attractive targets for cybercriminals.

(Source: Independent)

Climate change promotes the spread of mosquito and tick-borne viruses, say scientists

Spurred on by climate change, international travel and international trade, disease-bearing insects are spreading to ever-wider parts of the world.

This means that more humans are exposed to viral infections such as Dengue fever, Chikungunya, Zika, West Nile fever, Yellow fever and Tick-borne encephalitis.

For many of these diseases, there are as yet no specific antiviral agents or vaccines.

Global warming has allowed mosquitoes, ticks and other disease-bearing insects to proliferate, adapt to different seasons, migrate and spread to new niche areas that have become warmer.

Arthropod-borne viruses

These are the findings of a JRC report that aims to raise awareness about the threat posed by the spread of arboviruses (arthropod-borne viruses).

These mosquitoes thrive in urban settings due to the lack of natural predators and the ready availability of food and habitats in which to procreate.

They have existed in Africa and Asia for many years and are now becoming more and more widespread.

They have recently become established in some European countries and the Americas, largely as a result of international travel and trade.

Their alarming spread poses a problem for public health. They are difficult to eradicate - their larvae can survive for months, even in suboptimal humidity and temperature conditions.



The tick-borne encephalitis virus (TBEV) has been found in several European countries, including Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden and, more recently, the Netherlands.

One of the more recently reported vectors for the virus, the Dermacentor reticulatus tick species, is rapidly spreading through Europe. It has a high reproduction rate, is cold resistant and can live underwater for

One of the more recently reported vectors for the virus, the Dermacentor reticulatus tick species, is rapidly spreading through Europe.

FDA challenges cigarette makers with giant nicotine cut

For the first time, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has proposed slashing nicotine — you know, that highly addictive ingredient in cigarettes — to negligible, nearly non-addictive levels. FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb announced on Thursday the start of regulatory actions he said would decrease smoking rates in the U.S. from 15 percent to 1.4 percent.

Gottlieb said previous efforts to curb smoking, though “aggressive,” still result in 480,000 American deaths each year.

“In fact, cigarettes are the only legal consumer product that, when used as intended, will kill half of all long-term users,” Gottlieb said in a statement.

Tobacco companies’ move

It’s a move tobacco companies will almost certainly fight, but one that public health experts believe is far overdue.

“Cigarettes have no place in society any longer,” said Desmond Jenson, a senior law attorney at the Public Law Health Center, in an interview.

“If cigarettes were invented today, no country in the world would allow them to be sold.”

The FDA, however, is still a ways away from actually ordering tobacco companies to dramatically lower nicotine levels in cigarettes. They’ve formally issued an “advance notice of proposed rulemaking,” which is an initial effort in creating actual regulatory rules.



“It’s the first step of a long process that will take years,” said Jenson. “While it’s important, the devil is in the details.”

For instance, the final rules should include other “combustible products,” said Jenson, like pipe tobacco and cigars.

“If the FDA only regulates cigarettes, the potential benefit of the rule would be diminished by some other people switching to other combustible products,” he explained.

Following Gottlieb’s announcement, the New England Journal of Medicine promptly published a public health report estimating the future societal effects from cutting nicotine levels in

cigarettes. If nicotine levels remained as they are, researchers estimated that by 2100 around eight percent of the adult U.S. population would still smoke cigarettes, as other intervention programs and educational efforts would gradually lower the number of projected smokers.

But if the FDA nicotine rules were enacted, the researchers found smoking levels would drop to less than two percent, although they note inherent uncertainty with projecting novel smoking regulations.

Lower nicotine content

“Our model indicates that enacting a regulation to lower the nicotine content of cigarettes to minimally addictive levels in the United States would lead to a substantial reduction in tobacco-related mortality, despite uncertainty about the precise magnitude of the effects on smoking behaviors,” the authors wrote.

“I do not expect them to roll over and accept this regulation,” said Jenson. “Obviously the industry is very huge and powerful. Their ability to fight FDA regulation has been largely successful.”

For instance, in 2011 the FDA attempted to institute a graphic warning label on cigarette boxes, similar to the intentionally disgusting images of tar-coated lungs on packaging in Europe. But U.S. tobacco companies successfully fought this effort in court.

(Source: Mashable)

Researchers find space radiation is increasingly more hazardous

It might sound like something from a science fiction plot - astronauts traveling into deep space being bombarded by cosmic rays - but radiation exposure is science fact.

As future missions look to travel back to the moon or even to Mars, new research from the University of New Hampshire’s Space Science Center cautions that the exposure to radiation is much higher than previously thought and could have serious implications on both astronauts and satellite technology.

The “radiation dose rates from measurements obtained over the last four years exceeded trends from previous solar cycles by at least 30 percent, showing that the radiation environment is getting far more intense,” said Nathan Schwadron, professor of physics and lead author of the study.

“These particle radiation conditions present important environmental factors for space travel and space weather, and must

be carefully studied and accounted for in the planning and design of future missions to the moon, Mars, asteroids and beyond.”

Galactic Cosmic Rays

In their study, recently published in the journal Space Weather, the researchers found that large fluxes in Galactic Cosmic Rays (GCR) are rising faster and are on path to exceed any other recorded time in the space age. They also point out that one of the most significant Solar Energetic Particle (SEP) events happened in September 2017 releasing large doses of radiation that could pose significant risk to both humans and satellites.

Unshielded astronauts could experience acute effects like radiation sickness or more serious long-term health issues like cancer and organ damage, including to the heart, brain, and central nervous system.

In 2014, Schwadron and his team predicted

around a 20 percent increase in radiation dose rates from one solar minimum to the next. Four years later, their newest research shows current conditions exceed their predictions by about 10 percent, showing the radiation environment is worsening even more than expected. “We now know that the radiation environment of deep space that we could send human crews into at this point is quite different compared to that of previous crewed missions to the moon,” says Schwadron.

The authors used data from CReTER on NASA’s Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO). Lunar observations (and other space-based observations) show that GCR radiation doses are rising faster than previously thought.

Quieting of solar activity

Researchers point to the abnormally long period of the recent quieting of solar activity. In contrast, an active sun has frequent sunspots, which can intensify the sun’s magnetic

field. That magnetic field is then dragged out through the Solar System by the solar wind and deflects galactic cosmic rays away from the solar system - and from any astronauts in transit.

For most of the space age, the sun’s activity ebbed and flowed like clockwork in 11-year cycles, with six- to eight-year lulls in activity, called solar minimum, followed by two- to three-year periods when the sun is more active. However, starting around 2006, scientists observed the longest solar minimum and weakest solar activity observed during the space age.

Despite this overall reduction, the September 2017 solar eruptions produced episodes of significant Solar Particle Events and associated radiation caused by particle acceleration by successive, magnetically well-connected coronal mass ejections.

(Source: spaceref.com)

World’s Top Coal Producers, Importers and Exporters in 2017 Named: IMIDRO

Top 10 countries in the field of production, import and export of coal in 2017 were introduced, the Public Relations Dept. of Iranian Mines & Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) reported.

Statistics show that China remained top coal production country in the world in 2017, in which, this Asian country could produce three billion and 520 million tons of coal last year.

In general, People’s Republic of China managed to stand at first rank in terms

of production of minerals in the world, followed by United States and India respectively.

United States managed to produce 715 million tons of coal in last year while India produced 712 million tons in the same period, standing at the 2nd and 3rd ranks respectively.

Australia also produced 567 million tons coal in 2016 and became fourth leading producer of coal in the world after China, United States and India, IMIDRO opined.

In this period, Germany, Poland and Kazakhstan produced 176, 172 and 111 million tons of coal respectively and stood at from 8th to 10th ranks respectively.

With the annual growth of 6.1 percent, China was introduced as top and leading importer of coal in the world.

Statistics showed that China managed to import 271 million tons of coal in the previous year (ended March 20, 2017).

India is the second importer of coal in the world in 2017 and managed to retain its production volume as compared to a

ZARSHURAN Gold Mine Deposit receives IMS certificate

ZARSHURAN Gold Mine Deposit managed to receive Integrated Management System (IMS) certificate, the Public Relations Dept. of the Iranian Mines & Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) reported.

Given the above issue, ZARSHURAN Gold Mine Deposit received ISI 1400:2015, ISO 9001:2015, BSOHSAS (Occupational Health and Safety Assurance System) 18001:2007 and

HSE (Health, Safety and Environment) certificate, HSE (Health, Safety and Environment) certificate and Environmental Management System certificate.

It is worth mentioning that ZARSHURAN Gold Mine Deposit is busy active in the country as the largest producer of gold bullion in the country. The activity of this giant project was accelerated in the 11th government

dubbed “Hope and Prudence”.

It should be noted that construction operation of ZARSHURAN Gold Mine Deposit started in 2011 and presently, Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization is the major shareholder of this industrial and production unit.

All 100 percent stocks of this company belongs to IMIDRO, the report concluded.



Existence of new form of electronic matter

Researchers have produced a ‘human scale’ demonstration of a new phase of matter called quadrupole topological insulators that was recently predicted using theoretical physics. These are the first experimental findings to validate this theory.

Researchers have produced a “human scale” demonstration of a new phase of matter called quadrupole topological insulators that was recently predicted using theoretical physics. These are the first experimental findings to validate this theory.

The team’s work with QTIs was born out of the decade-old understanding of the properties of a class of materials called topological insulators. “TIs are electrical insulators on the inside and conductors along their boundaries, and may hold great potential for helping build low-power, robust computers and devices, all defined at the atomic scale,” said mechanical science and engineering professor and senior investigator Gaurav Bahl.

The uncommon properties of TIs make them a special form of electronic matter. “Collections of electrons can form their own phases within materials. These can be familiar solid, liquid and gas phases like water, but they can also sometimes form more unusual phases like a TI,” said co-author and physics professor Taylor Hughes.

TIs typically exist in crystalline materials and other studies confirm TI phases present in naturally occurring crystals, but there are still many theoretical predictions that need to be confirmed, Hughes said.

One such prediction was the existence of a new type of TI having an electrical property known as a quadrupole moment. “Electrons are single particles that carry charge in a material,” said physics graduate student Wladimir Benalcazar.

(Source: Science Daily)

Scientists have found a way to use graphene as ... hair dye

Graphene is definitely a wonder material – you can use it to make filthy water drinkable, feed it to spiders to make the strongest material on Earth, or hit it with a bullet to turn it into diamond.

The newest application for graphene isn’t quite as world-changing, but it’s still pretty amazing – making ‘chemical free’ black hair dye.

The researchers behind this feat claim that it’s a less damaging way to color hair, which makes sense when you understand how regular hair dye works.

When you dye the hair, you actually have to open those scales with chemical compounds in order to deposit the dye inside.

“Your hair is covered in these cuticle scales like the scales of a fish, and people have to use ammonia or organic amines to lift the scales and allow dye molecules to get inside a lot quicker,” says senior author Jiaxing Huang, a materials scientist at Northwestern University.

This is why the more the hair is dyed, the more damage it can potentially do, leaving your locks dry and brittle.

Instead of penetrating the hair, graphene actually just coats it, in the same way that wash-out dyes do. But the difference is that the graphene hair colour stays in long enough to be considered permanent – at least 30 washes.

“Imagine a piece of paper. A business card is very rigid and doesn’t flex by itself. But if you take a much bigger sheet of newspaper - if you still can find one nowadays - it can bend easily. This makes graphene sheets a good coating material,” Huang says.

When comparing graphene to other temporary hair dye particles, such as carbon black or iron oxide, there’s basically no competition, according to the team.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Link between dad’s age and offspring lifespan in birds

The chromosomes of finches born from older fathers have traits associated with a shorter life expectancy than the finches conceived by younger dads, revealed a new study published online in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B. The findings may help researchers better understand the association between father’s age and children’s longevity in humans.

Researchers looked at the telomeres of zebra finch embryos



conceived by either young or older male finches. Telomeres are often referred to as the “caps” at the end of our DNA. They protect our chromosomes from damage during cell division. Telomere length is a good indication of longevity, as when they get too short cells that can no longer function properly.

In the study, the team bred 32 middle aged female zebra finches with 16 four month old males and then 16 four year old males. The Scientist reported. The birds typically live between five to eight years, so these were considered older males. Breeding resulted in a total of 139 eggs. The eggs were incubated for several days before the researchers analyzed the embryos inside.

Analysis of the embryos revealed an association between a father’s age and telomere length in the embryos’ chromosomes. Embryos fathered by older finches had telomeres that were 10 percent shorter than those of embryos fathered by the four day old finches, The Scientist reported.

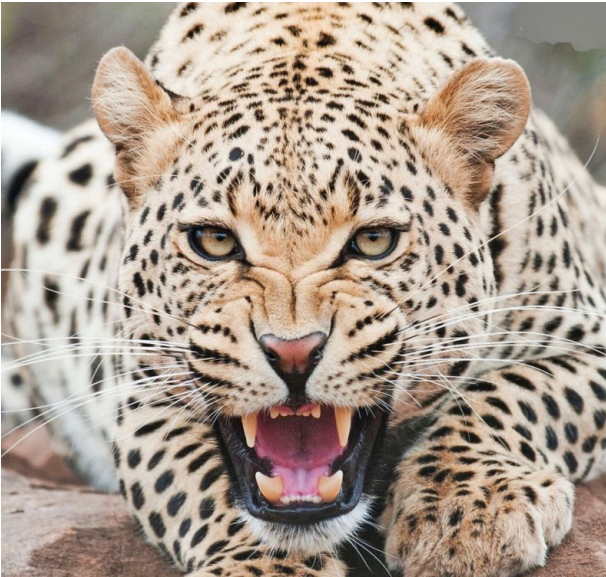
To further investigate the effect that parental age had on offspring longevity, the team then bred 44 pairs of birds with different age combinations. For example, age combinations included young females bred with older males and older females bred with older males. The offspring of these matches were then followed and their age of death documented.

(Source: Newsweek)

Insurance compensates for damages done by leopards

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — The damages caused by leopards to 59 individuals bearing losses in 11 provinces have been compensated through insurance, said Ali Teymouri, the Department of Environment’s deputy director for hunting and fishing, Mehr reported.

In an attempt to coordinate measures to save the endangered Persian leopard, a policy has been taken since March 2016 by a domestic insurance company and the Department of Environment covers the losses both animals and human beings sustain due to being attacked by leopards.



The Persian leopard is listed as Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List; the population is estimated at fewer than 871–1,290 mature individuals and considered declining.

According to the Department of Environment, 156 leopards have been killed in Iran from 2005 to 2014, nearly 20 leopards a year. Studies indicate that currently there are less than 500 leopards nationwide.

The Persian leopard was most likely distributed over the whole Caucasus, except for steppe areas. During surveys conducted between 2001 and 2005 no leopard was recorded in the western part of the Greater Caucasus; it probably survived only at a few sites in the eastern part. The largest population survives in Iran.

Leopards are more abundant in the northern part of the country. During surveys conducted between 2002 and 2011, they were found in 74 protected and non-protected areas, of which 69 percent are located in northern Iran.

They are mainly found in the Alborz and the Zagros mountain ranges and throughout the northwestern region, which crosses these mountain chains. The Hyrcanian forests located in the north and along the Alborz mountain chain are considered as one of the most important habitats for leopards in the country.

Persian leopards are mainly threatened by poaching, depletion of their prey base due to poaching, human disturbance s, habitat loss due to deforestation, fire, agricultural expansion, overgrazing, and infrastructure development.

In Iran, primary threats are habitat disturbances followed by illegal hunting and excess of livestock in the leopard habitats. The leopards’ chances for survival outside protected areas appear very slim.

LEARN ENGLISH

Dealing With Rising Production Costs

Giovanni: There are **no two ways about it**. We have to **raise prices**.

Melanie: We can’t. We already raised prices earlier this year. Doing it again risks **alienating** our customers.

Giovanni: What else can we do? Our production costs have risen nearly 15 percent. We’ve tried **absorbing** them and **offsetting** them, but nothing has worked. Our **profit margin** continues to **shrink** and we don’t have any other choice.

Melanie: What about lowering the quality of our **raw materials**? We could use a cheaper **supplier**.

Giovanni: That’s a **sure way** to lose customers. If we start **cutting corners** on quality, our customers will **leave in droves**.

Melanie: What if we **discontinue manufacturing** some of the less popular items? That should save us some money.

Giovanni: Not enough. We either raise prices or stop production **altogether**.

Melanie: There is one other option.

Giovanni: What?

Melanie: We could reduce our **workforce**.

Giovanni: You mean fire people? That’s **off the table**!

■ Key vocabulary

no two ways about something: used to say that something is definitely true, especially something unpleasant

raise price: to increase the price

alienate: to do something that makes someone unfriendly or unwilling to support you

absorb: if something absorbs changes or costs, it accepts them and deals with them successfully

offset: if the cost or amount of something offsets another cost or amount, the two things have an opposite effect so that the situation remains the same; to counterbalance or compensate

profit margin: the difference between the cost of producing something and the price at which you sell it

shrink: to become or to make something smaller in amount, size, or value

raw material: substances which have not been treated

supplier: a company or person that provides a particular product

a sure way to do something: certain to happen, succeed, or have a particular result

cut corners: to take shortcuts; to save money or effort by finding cheaper or easier ways to do something

leave in droves: leave in large numbers

discontinue: to stop doing, producing, or providing something

manufacture: to use machines to make goods or materials, usually in large numbers or amounts

altogether: used to show that you are referring to the total amount

workforce: all the people who work in a particular industry or company, or are available to work in a particular country or area

off the table: it has been decided that a particular factor is not negotiable in a debate or bargain thus it is considered off the table

(Source: *eslpod.com*)

Deteriorating environment is waiting for the right decisions

1 →

■ Revision of national protected areas a dynamic process

Inquired by the Tehran Times about the recent directive adopted by the Supreme Council of Environment on revision of national protected areas Issa Kalantari, DOE’s chief has said that increasing or decreasing the national protected areas is a “dynamic process”.

Kalantari went on to say that less than three thousandths of the protected areas, including 24 regions, are decreased and there will be suggestions for increasing the areas as well.

The laws are not “God’s words” that cannot be modified, it’s been forty years since the laws have been adopted and now, with regard to the population growth, the law was bound to change, he highlighted.

There are towns located in protected areas and the residents need to know what they should do, the revision of the protected areas won’t cause any problems and is advantageous too, he added. “The environment belongs to the people and we should be concerned with the public welfare and causing difficulties for thousands of people because of the environment is not our strategy.”

The DOE chief who has always been quoted as saying to care about sustainable development most certainly knows that protected areas can often play a major role in the implementation of sustainable development activities by providing major direct and indirect benefit to local and national economies, having major scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and spiritual value and protecting the genepool necessary for meeting human needs, for example in agriculture and medicine.

Many protected areas worldwide are often home to communities of people with tradi-



tional cultures and irreplaceable indigenous knowledge of natural history who would never cause any harm to the nature. Changing the status of a protected area to unprotected won’t change anything for the residents as they have been trained for years to live in harmony with the nature.

On the contrary the unprotected areas are more prone to sustain damages by unsustainable mining, logging, and agricultural activities and in general brutal exploitation.

■ Science, expertise road to sustainable development

DOE chief is very well-known for his deep concerns about the depletion of water resources and water shortage in the country. Underlining the fact that we are consuming way over the carrying capacity of the enable

water resources Kalantari suggested that insisting on being self-sufficient in agriculture sector is the country’s undoing.

Lower than average precipitation in the country, flawed policies of the past four decades, not accepting the importance of expertise and scientific approaches to tackle the environmental issues, and ignoring the true potential of the manufacturing sector are preventing us from moving towards sustainable development, Kalantari regretted.

■ Tilapia farming not detrimental

The environmentalists’ concerns for tilapia farming is nothing new worldwide as the topic is being debated over the past few decades.

Tilapia, which is native to lakes in Africa is the common name for nearly a hundred species of cichlid fish. It is known in the food

business as “aquatic chicken” because of its easy breeding and bland taste. The amount of omega-6 acids in tilapia outnumbers the beneficial omega-3s by a factor of 2 to 1, which some nutrition experts believe that this ratio can increase the risk of heart disease.

On the other hand known as an invasive species tilapia is notorious for having adverse effects on the environment because if the farm fish escape their pens, water pollution and spread of disease to wild fish can be expected.

However, the environment top official explained that tilapia farming in Iran is only allowed in desert areas where there is actually no rivers over a radius of 500 meters, such as Yazd province in central Iran.

He further noted that the animal species framed in Iran does not pose any threats to human health and that “creating job opportunities is high on agenda for the current administration and we cannot prevent people from doing their jobs for such excuses.”

Of course people are free to choose what to eat and what not to eat and it is best to do our research and make sure if a product is healthy or not.

■ Making decisions

The environment is of course degrading and it is not easy to determine the real cause. And in fact there is no single cause. For one, according to a study by World Wildlife Fund climate change could wipe out half of all plant and animal species from the Amazon rainforest by 2100.

The earth is sending out warnings it is still waiting for all of us, either those one of us who throw trash in the forests or make a fire in the wild while picnicking or those who are making decisions and setting policies to make the right choice and protect it.

Athletes, artists launch campaign to reduce road accidents

SOCIETY d e s k

TEHRAN — A group of famous Iranian athletes and artists have initiated a campaign titled ‘please_stay_alive’ with the aim of cutting road accidents and fatalities.

A few short clips have been prepared and participants in the campaign shared them on their accounts in social media to raise public awareness about dangers of careless driving, Fars reported on Sunday.

Also, every participant in the campaign is required

to invite 3 of their friends and colleagues so that this movement can gain a louder voice and a better impact.

Many Iranians take a trip during the two-week Noruz holidays, starting on March 21, however, considerable number of accidents and fatalities in this period is recorded every year.

Unfortunately, around 250 individuals lost their lives and some 22,000 got injured last year in road accidents during Noruz.



8th World Water Forum kicks off in Brazil

Brazil is hosting the world’s largest event on water-related issues: the 8th World Water Forum. The event was designed in a participatory way since the closure of the seventh edition, in South Korea, in 2015.

About 1500 institutions in around 100 countries participated in this preparatory process with expressive social participation, a milestone in the history of the Forum.

The Forum brings together in Brasilia representatives from more than 170 countries – scientists, government officials, parliamentarians, judges, people involved, NGOs, researchers and ordinary citizens – to exchange experiences, analyze problems and seek solutions related to the conscious use of water throughout the planet.

The World Water Forum seeks to bring, above all, education and environmental awareness. Bring water to the agenda of the ordinary citizen. The intention is that the Forum will transform the political discussion on water, raise the concern with the subject. For this, it is necessary that all sectors of society engage and participate in the event.

Brazil has a lot of fresh water, but it is distributed unevenly. The region with the

largest water supply (North) is the least populous, and where there is the highest concentration of the population (south-East), water is limited.

Access to clean and safe water and to basic sanitation are not privileges. They are basic human rights recognized by the United Nations, since 2010. However, at different scales, water scarcity is a global reality that forces governments, companies and citizens to think of solutions so that water does not end up compromising all human activities and even life on the planet.

These issues reinforce the importance of hosting the Forum in Brazil. 89 exhibitors, about 1,300 speakers and over 45 thousand people will be gathered in Brasilia to participate in around 300 sessions, debates and side events, all related to water.

The Citizen Village is one of the innovations of the Brazilian edition of the Forum. Film screenings, interactive experiences and lots of information on the sustainable use of water aim to involve ordinary citizens of all ages with the theme of water. The programming will be extended through the night with presentations, entertainment and cultural.

Additionally, the Village has a solutions market, a space that will showcase the solutions to water issues, which have been selected from all over the world.

The World Water Forum is the world’s biggest water-related event and is organized by the World Water Council (WWC), an international organization that brings together all those interested in the theme of water. Its mission is “to promote awareness, build political commitment and trigger action on critical water issues at all levels, to facilitate the efficient conservation, protection, development, planning, management and use of water in all its dimensions on an environmentally sustainable basis for the benefit of all life on Earth”.

Founded in 1996 with its permanent headquarters in the French city of Marseille, the World Water Council is an international multi-stakeholder platform organization bringing together nearly 400 institutions from every horizon, from nearly 70 countries around the world. By providing a platform to encourage debates and exchanges of experience, the World Water Council aims to reach a common strategic vision on water resources

and water services management amongst all stakeholders in the water community.

In the process, the Council also catalyzes initiatives and activities, whose results converge towards its flagship product, the World Water Forum. The World Water Forum contributes to the dialogue of the decision-making process on water at the global level, seeking to achieve the rational and sustainable use of this resource. Given its political, technical and institutional scope, one of the Forum’s main features is the open, democratic participation of actors drawn from different sectors, making it an event of the greatest importance on the international agenda.

The World Water Council organizes the Forum every three years together with the respective host country and city. To date, there have been seven editions of the World Water Forum, in different countries, on four different continents. In 2014, Brazil’s candidature to host the event was successful and Brasilia was selected as the host-city for the event. Accordingly, in 2018, Brazil is hosting the 8th edition of the World Water Forum. It will be the first time the event is held in the Southern Hemisphere.

(Source: *worldwaterforum8.org*)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ ب

Intercepting smuggled goods at Iranian airports grow 11-fold

Intercepting smuggled goods at the Iranian airports grew 11-fold in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year, starting March 20, compared to the same period last year, the airports police chief said. Hassan Mehri made the remarks over a press conference held on Tuesday, IRNA news agency reported.

“A network of drug dealers who hid 20 kilograms of opium in food warmers to smuggle them out of the country to Australia were caught at Imam Khomeini airport recently,” he highlighted.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he warned the passengers not to accept packages from strangers at the airport as there might be some illegal goods hidden inside them.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“dermato-, dermat-”

■ **Meaning:** skin

■ **For example:** Do you need to see a *dermatologist*?

PHRASAL VERB

Geek somebody up

■ **Meaning:** to encourage someone to try harder

■ **For example:** The team needs a captain who can geek them up a bit.

IDIOM

Bored to tears

■ **Explanation:** if you find something so dull and uninteresting that it makes you sad enough to cry, you are bored to tears

■ **For example:** I could see that my son was bored to tears by the historical documentary.

افزایش ۱۱ برابری کشفیات پستی در فرودگاه‌ها

به گزارش خبرگزاری ایرنا رئیس پلیس فرودگاه های کشورحسن مهری روز سه شنبه در نشست خبری از افزایش ۱۱ برابری کشفیات محموله های پستی در چهار ماه امسال نسبت به مدت مشابه سال گذشته خبر داد.

مهری خاطرنشان کرد: اعضای یک باند مواد مخدر که ۲۰ کیلو مواد مخدر تریاک را به مقصد استرالیا در دستگاه های گرمکن غذا جاسازی کرده بودند در فرودگاه حضرت امام خمینی (ره) دستگیر شدند.

رئیس پلیس فرودگاه کشور در توصیه به مسافران، گفت: مسافران به هیچ عنوان باری را از افراد غریبه در فرودگاه به عنوان امانت نپذیرند چرا که ممکن است اشیاء ممنوعه در آن جاسازی شده باشد.

Putin on track for win in Russia polls

➔ Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region, alleged Kremlin meddling in the United States presidential election, and Moscow's bombing campaign in Syria, have been condemned in the West. But for most people at home, they have only burnished Putin's reputation as a strong leader.

A row with Britain over allegations the Kremlin used a nerve toxin to poison a Russian double agent in a sleepy English city - denied by Moscow - has not dented Putin's standing.

The biggest headache for Putin's campaign was the possibility many voters, including Putin supporters, would not bother to come to the polls because they felt the outcome was already a foregone conclusion.

Putin opponents alleged employers with close ties to the state were ordering staff to go and vote, and send back evidence.

A low turnout would diminish Putin's authority within the ruling elite, which is founded in large part on his ability to mobilize the public behind him.

Turnout was at 34.7 percent by 1235 GMT, official data showed.

The first politician in years to challenge the Kremlin's grip on power, Alexei Navalny, is barred from the race because of a corruption conviction he says was fabricated by the Kremlin. He is calling for a boycott of the election, saying it is an undemocratic farce.

Navalny's headquarters said activists sent out to monitor the vote reported people being bussed to polling stations by their employers.

"We would call this the 'shuttle bus election'," Ivan Zhdanov, a Navalny aide, told a briefing.

A day of voting across Russia's 11 time



zones began at 2000 GMT on Saturday on Russia's eastern edge, in the Pacific coast city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. Voting will run until polls close at the westernmost point of Russia, the Kaliningrad region on the Baltic Sea, at 1800 GMT on Sunday.

The majority of voters see no viable alternative to Putin: he has total dominance of the political scene and state-run television,

where most people get their news, gives lavish coverage of Putin and little airtime to his rivals.

Many Russians believe he has restored stability after the chaos that ensued after the Soviet Union collapsed.

A March 9 survey by state-run pollster VTsIOM gave Putin, who was first elected president in 2000, support of 69 percent. His nearest rival Pavel Grudinin, the Communist

Party's candidate, was on just 7 percent.

Ella Pamfilova, head of the commission organizing the vote nationwide, has said any fraud will be stamped out.

She said those already alleging the election was rigged were biased and peddling "Russophobia", echoing a line used by the Kremlin to describe Western criticism of Russia.

(Source: Reuters)

Turkish troops occupy Syria's Afrin

By staff & agencies

Turkish forces and their Syrian rebel allies swept into the northwestern Syrian town of Afrin on Sunday, raising their flags in the town center and declaring full control after an eight-week campaign to drive out Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/Yekîneyên Parastina Gel) forces.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkish troops and their militant allies have entered the Syrian city of Afrin and taken control of its center after Kurdish militia pulled out.

"Units of the Free Syrian Army, which are backed by Turkish armed forces, took control of the center of Afrin this morning at 8:30 am (0530 GMT)," Erdogan said on Sunday.

A spokesman for the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA) militants said they entered Afrin shortly before dawn, from the north, east and west of the town, and did not encounter any resistance.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights



(SOHR), however, said fighting was ongoing inside the city, where Turkish forces and allied militants have seized some neighborhoods.

The neighborhoods of Ashrafieh and Jamiliyyeh are

allegedly now under the control Turkish troops. Erdogan said the center of Afrin was "entirely under control" and Turkish flags had been raised in the northern Syrian town.

An FSA spokesman said the militants were combing the streets and the houses after militants of the YPG pulled out.

According to SOHR, over 280 civilians have been killed since the Turkish offensive began on January 20.

Ankara launched the operation after the United States said it sought to create a 30,000-strong force near the Turkish border in Syria with the help of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces militant group which is mainly comprised of YPG fighters.

Turkey has threatened to expand its operation as far as the nearby city of Manbij, where American forces are stationed.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, however, said on Tuesday that Ankara and Washington were to oversee the withdrawal of the Kurdish militants from the city.

Ex-CIA Chief John Brennan to Trump: America will triumph over you

The former director of the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in a venomous tweet, accused the U.S. President Donald Trump of political corruption and warned, "America will triumph over you."

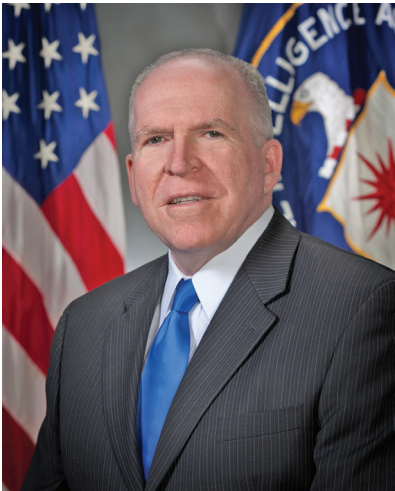
John Brennan's biting two-sentence statement came in response to a Friday evening tweet in which the president celebrated the ouster of FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) deputy director Andrew McCabe.

"When the full extent of your venality, moral turpitude, and political corruption becomes known, you will take your rightful place as a disgraced demagogue in the dustbin of history," he wrote. "You may scapegoat Andy McCabe, but will not destroy America... America will triumph over you."

Brennan served under former president Barack Obama from 2013 to 2017. Since he left his post, he's been critical of the president on his response to the hurricane recovery in Puerto Rico and on his recent decision to impose tariffs on aluminum and steel, among other decisions.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who often is at odds with Trump, fired McCabe amid a review of the FBI's investigation of Hillary Clinton's private email server while she was secretary of state.

Trump called McCabe's firing a "great day for the hardworking men and women of the FBI." McCabe, the president claimed, "knew all about the lies and corruption



going on at the highest levels of the FBI!"

Brennan tweets sparingly and usually only to make a statement about current affairs. After Trump announced tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, Brennan issued another abrasive tweet.

"You show an amazing albeit unsurprising ignorance of how technology, automation, and the attendant evolution of economics and societies have transformed the world," he said in response to a Trump tweet on March 7. "Your simple minded policies — imposition of tariffs — have the potential to seriously damage our future prosperity."

(Source: USA Today)

Czechs mull moving embassy under Israeli pressure

The Czech Republic is under pressure from Israel to follow in the United States steps and move its embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds (Jerusalem), Israel's Channel 10 has reported.

The broadcaster cited a classified cable by Israel's Ambassador to Prague Daniel Meron, saying that Israeli pressures following decisions from the U.S. and Guatemala to move their embassies have made the Czech Republic more open to following suit.

Prague "has begun a quiet internal staff evaluation to examine the possibilities and risks regarding the transfer of its embassy," the cable written to the Israeli foreign ministry last week said.

The decision will ultimately be made by Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis, who is seen as particularly risk averse, Channel 10 said.

The U.S. President Donald Trump recognized Israel's claim to al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its so-called "capital" last December, and set in motion a frozen plan to relocate the American embassy there.

The announcement triggered an international storm and later that month, more than 120 countries voted at the United Nations General Assembly in favor of a resolution calling for the United States to drop the recognition.

Czech President Milos Zeman has strongly backed Trump's decision and drawn praise from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which wields considerable influence in Wash-



ington's policies.

According to the Lidové noviny newspaper, Zeman who in December announced his intention to relocate the embassy from Tel Aviv now wants to speed up the process.

The Czech Foreign Ministry, however, has objected to the relocation following consultations with its European counterparts, the report said.

Palestinians want East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of their future state. Trump's decision prompted Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas to announce that he would no longer regard Washington as a party to Middle East peace talks.

(Source: Press TV)

Iraqi forces capture senior ISIL leader near Mosul

Iraqi forces have captured a fugitive Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group ringleader, who used to hold a "prominent" post within the Takfiri terrorist outfit.

Iraqi News website said the terror kingpin was captured in the al-Shaiqara village, north of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, the capital of Nineveh Province.

The terrorist leader used to function as the Takfiri group's "police chief" for Nineveh, collecting the revenues of its members.

Mosul, once ISIL's so-called headquarters, was liberated last July, upon which the ringleader went into hiding in the Badush mountains in the province's town of Tal Kaif.

ISIL unleashed a campaign of bloodshed and terror in Iraq in 2014, overrunning vast swathes in lightning advances in the northern and western parts of the country. Iraqi Army soldiers and allied fighters then launched operations to eliminate ISIL and retake lost territory.

ISIL's territorial rule in Iraq came to an end in December 2017, when Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced an ultimate victory against the Takfiris.

Ever since, the Iraqi military and its allies have been combing the country for the group's remnants.

(Source: Press TV)

Sri Lanka lifts state of emergency as ethnic tensions subside

Sri Lanka's president announced he has lifted the nationwide state of emergency that was imposed after communal clashes resulted in the deaths of three people.

The latest series of violence began on March 4, after a Buddhist Sinhalese man was beaten to death by a group of Muslim men following a traffic accident in Teledeniya town in Kandy.

Several dozen people were wounded in the riots, in which mobs vandalized mosques and scores of Muslim homes and businesses.

"Upon assessing the public safety situation, I instructed to revoke the State of Emergency from midnight yesterday," President Maithripala Sirisena said on Twitter.

The measure was imposed on March 6 after police failed to control the riots and the military was deployed. Internet access was also blocked across the country.

Police have arrested the suspected instigators of the riots.

The United Nations condemned the string of anti-Muslim attacks in Sri Lanka last week.

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.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

China urges U.S. to 'correct mistake' on Taiwan

China has called on the United States to "correct its mistake" after the United States President Donald Trump approved rules allowing top-level U.S. officials to travel to Taiwan to meet their Taipei counterparts.

The U.S. representatives can already travel to democratic Taiwan and Taiwanese officials occasionally visit the White House, but meetings are usually low profile to avoid offending China.

The Taiwan Travel Act, which the president signed on Friday following its passage through Congress, encourages visits between the U.S. and Taiwanese officials "at all levels".

Washington cut formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 1979 in favor of Beijing under the "one China" policy. But it maintains trade relations with the island and sells it weapons, angering China.

China regards Taiwan as a renegade province and has long stated its desire for reunification.

The Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said the bill's clauses, while not legally binding, "severely violate" the "one China" principle and send "very wrong signals to the 'pro-independence' separatist forces in Taiwan".

"China is strongly opposed to that," Lu said in a statement on Saturday. "We urge the U.S. side to correct its mistake, stop pursuing any official ties with Taiwan or improving its current relations with Taiwan in any substantive way," he said.

In a separate statement, the Chinese defense ministry spokesman Wu Qian said the act "interferes in China's internal affairs".

China urges the U.S. to "stop pursuing any U.S.-Taiwan military ties and stop arms sales to Taiwan, so as to avoid causing serious damage to the bilateral and military relations between China and the U.S., and to the peace and stability in the Taiwan strait", the statement said.

(Source: The Guardian)

Philippines' Duterte calls for mass withdrawal from ICC

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte on Sunday called for other signatories of the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court to join his country in withdrawing from the treaty.

Duterte's comments during a speech to graduating cadets at the Philippine Military Academy in northern Philippines comes after ICC prosecutors last month opened a preliminary examination into the president's "war on drugs", which has led to the death of thousands since it began in July 2016.

The Southeast Asian nation last week notified the United Nations secretary-general of its decision to withdraw from the ICC because of what the outspoken Philippine leader called "outrageous" attacks by the United Nations officials and violations of due process.

"I will convince everybody now under the treaty to get out, get out," Duterte said. "It is not a document that was prepared by anybody, it's EU-sponsored."

About 4,000 Filipinos have been killed by police in the past 19 months in a brutal crackdown that has alarmed the international community. Activists believe the death toll is far higher.

Police say those thousands of deaths were during legitimate anti-drugs operations in which the suspects had violently resisted arrest.

(Source: AFP)

End the crazy war on Yemen

➔ status, or geographical location. Unfortunately, even some non-Arab rulers were bribed by Saudi rulers to express verbal support for the war on Yemen.

Attacks against one group (Houthis) in favor of another (Hadi's supporters) has also been deepening divisions among the already divided Yemeni society.

Even there is a hidden rivalry between Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the war in Yemen. According to reports, Saudi Arabia backs Hadi while the UAE is closely aligned with the separatists in south Yemen which was a separate country until 1990.

As the war in Afghanistan instilled extremism and terrorism, the conflict in Yemen has also been giving new life to extremism in the Arabian Peninsula. Now, taking advantage of the chaotic situation, terrorists linked to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and rival affiliates of Daesh (IS) have been capturing territory in south Yemen and carrying

out deadly attacks.

The war on Yemen is senseless, aimless and futile. It will fail to realize the Saudi goals. The coalition has not been able to gain a considerable victory against Houthis who are mostly in north Yemen.

If the Soviets with much greater military power could have won the war against the Afghan rebels in the 1980s or if the U.S. and NATO, now after 17 years, could have defeated the Taliban, now Saudi Arabia could be hopeful that it would bring the Houthis to their knees.

This failure is despite the fact that the United States and Britain have been providing intelligence and logistical support, including aerial refueling, for the coalition.

Even suppose that the Saudi-led coalition wins the war against the Houthis and installs the Mahdi government, then how could that government survive when a proportionate segment of the population is

against his rule!

Saudi Arabia can no longer look at its southern poor neighbor as an inferior and punish it if a considerable number of its population defy Riyadh's orders.

Summarily speaking, the Yemen war is a quagmire for the Saudis. They are just funneling petrodollars to the pockets of the military-industrial complexes in the U.S. and Britain to buy more arms including fighter jets to destroy the remaining homes, schools, hospitals, and bridges in Yemen.

The current bigoted and headstrong family who rules Saudi Arabia must end this stupid war. The longer the war lasts the more humiliating it would prove for the Saudis. The only way forward is to create a situation for dialogue among the warring sides and help establish an inclusive national unity government in Yemen, though Riyadh is fearful of a government in its southern neighbor which represents all people with different political persuasions.

Vincenzo Nibali wins Milan-San Remo



The cyclist known as “The Shark” has added another title to his name, winning the longest professional one-day cycling race. The 2014 Tour de France champion timed his late attack to perfection to seal the victory.

With a daring solo attack delivered to perfection, Vincenzo Nibali won the Milan-San Remo classic on Saturday after holding off the sprint specialists over 291 kilometers.

With seven kilometers to go, Nibali accelerated away from the pack on the final climb of the 294-kilometer (183-mile) race. Using his outstanding descending skills, the Italian opened up a 13-second gap that proved enough to win by a bike length and secure the first of five top one-day races - Milan-San Remo, Tour of Flanders, Pris-Roubaix, Liege-Bastogne Liege and Tour of Lombardy.

The Italian had time to raise his arms in celebration before crossing the line in a time of 7 hours, 18 minutes, 43 seconds, becoming the first Italian to win the race since 2006.

Caleb Ewan of Australia crossed second and Arnaud Demare of France finished third, both with the same time as Nibali.

(Source: AP)

Germany coach Joachim Löw gives Marco Reus some time off

Germany coach Joachim Löw has left the oft-injured Marco Reus out of his squad for the Spain and Brazil matches. These are Germany’s last two friendlies before he must has to name his provisional World Cup squad.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the squad that Germany coach Joachim Löw announced on Friday was the absence of Borussia Dortmund’s Marco Reus (pictured above), who is hoping to take part in his first major international tournament after missing the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 European championship through injury.

In a statement posted on the German Football Association’s (DFB) website, Löw indicated that he wanted to give the injury-prone attacker the time off in the hope that it would help him be fit when the tournament kicks off in June.

“With Marco, it’s important to us that he is brought to the top level carefully and without further pressure and that he gains in stability,” the coach said. “This includes first and foremost that he is symptom-free and fit and over a longer period of time, regularly plays and trains, finds his rhythm and thus gains confidence.”

2014 hero also left out

Also left out of the squad was Reus’ Dortmund teammate, Mario Götze, who scored Germany’s World Cup-winning goal in Brazil four years ago. Löw didn’t comment on why he had left Götze out, but the midfielder has been out of form of late, and the fact that he wasn’t named to the squad makes it look like his participation at the World Cup in Russia is far from a sure thing.

Strikers Sandro Wagner, Mario Gomez and Timo Werner are also part of the 26-man squad for the matches against Spain in Düsseldorf on March 23 and Brazil in Berlin four days later. Gomez and Wagner in particular will be looking to use the chance to make the case for their inclusion in the roster for the World Cup.

There are no uncapped players in the squad for the friendlies, which sees Cologne defender Jonas Hector return to the fold after a long injury lay-off.

Marc-Andre ter Stegen, Bernd Leno and Kevin Trapp are the goalkeepers in the absence of the still injured No. 1, Manuel Neuer.

(Source: DW)

Cavendish avoids serious injury after heavy crash in final stages of Milan-San Remo



Mark Cavendish has avoided serious injury after crashing heavily into a bollard during the final 10km of the Milan-San Remo on Saturday.

The Team Dimension Data rider came off his bike headfirst and landed hard on his back - team doctor Jarrad van Zuydam later tweeted: “Yes, Cav is okay.

“No serious injuries, details to follow from the team. He even managed to preserve his sense of humour.”

Cavendish was making his return after fracturing a rib in a fall on the opening stage of the Tirreno-Adriatico ten days ago.

Speaking ahead of the Milan-San Remo, the 32-year-old said: “After crashing in Tirreno I’m obviously not in any sort of condition to win Milan-San Remo.

“But having been able to train enough through the pain over the last few days I feel like I can go in support of my teammates.”

Cavendish, who won the Milan-San Remo in 2009, was also forced to withdraw from the Abu Dhabi Tour last month after sustaining concussion and whiplash in a fall.

The Milan-San Remo was won by Italy’s Vincenzo Nibali in a time of seven hours 18 minutes 43 seconds.

The FIVE reasons Brazil superstar Neymar ‘wants to quit Paris Saint-Germain’

Neymar has only been at Paris Saint-Germain for seven months after his world record move but is already searching for the exit door this summer.

The Brazilian superstar is fed up with a series of on-the-pitch annoyances in Ligue 1 and the off-the-field logistics of his Parisian side.

In fact, Neymar has FIVE key reasons for wanted to escape his PSG hell and has been telling friends, according to Brazilian media outlet UOL Esporte.

The former Barcelona forward is currently injured having damaged his foot against Marseille last month, leaving him with a fight to be fit for the World Cup this summer.

And the French top tier’s heavy treatment of him is his biggest frustration - with Neymar suffering the brunt of an average 5.2 fouls a game in the division, compared to the 3.2 he received in La Liga.

The second reason is heavily linked to this, with Neymar angry at the lenient refereeing in France.

With Neymar seeing himself as a target for opposition defenders he feels he should be protected by officials - although the fleet-footed winger saw red in November for angrily reacting to being hacked down.

He told Esporte Interativo: “I think it was exaggerated, yes. And unfair. I spent the whole game getting enough [rough treatment]. I have many marks on my body.”

Neymar’s major goal is to be voted the greatest player in the world but is worried the low standard of Ligue 1 will see him overlooked for the top gongs.

Reason four is the poor state of pitches around France, which Neymar reckons is causing long-term problems to his body.

PSG players have long complained about the long grass and holey turf and have called on the French FA to make sure there is a high standard of turfs used.

Neymar’s fifth, and final, complaint is aimed at PSG - as he is angry by having to drive by coach long distances to away games, rather than take planes.

His ire is extended by the amount of time the club spend at hotels before matches rather than jetting in and out for just the match.

Neymar has demanded a £1m-a-week contract extension at PSG and is eyeing up a return to Spain through Real Madrid.

Van Gaal: Heynckes can become a Bayern Munich god



Louis van Gaal believes Jupp Heynckes would become a Bayern Munich legend if he retires at the end of the season.

Heynckes is currently enjoying his fourth stint as Bayern head coach, having taken over from the sacked Carlo Ancelotti in October.

The 72-year-old has made a huge impact on Bayern’s fortunes, with the club 17 points clear of second-placed Schalke at the top of the Bundesliga, with a DFB-Pokal semi-final and Champions League quarter-final coming up.

Heynckes only has a contract until the end of the season, however, and Van Gaal - who won three trophies during a two-year stint as Bayern boss between 2009 and 2011 - claims the 72-year-old should call time on his career in May.

“If Jupp stops in the summer, it would be very reasonable, and I cannot imagine him going on and on when he turns 73,” Van Gaal told the Bild am Sonntag.

“It’s always better to quit at the peak of his career, if he does after this season then he is a god in Bavaria.

“Heynckes makes the difference with his personality, his philosophy and his behaviour to the players.”

Van Gaal was sacked by Bayern in April 2011 - his tenure at the club marred by a tumultuous relationship with president

Uli Hoeness.

But despite reaffirming his dislike for Hoeness, Van Gaal acknowledged that Bayern have gone from strength to strength under the former Germany international’s stewardship.

“Heynckes is the leader of this team, although Uli Hoeness always thinks he is the leader of FC Bayern, but that’s not the case, because the leader is always the coach,” Van Gaal said.

“Although I could not work with Uli, I have to say that he and [Karl-Heinz] Rummenigge are doing a fantastic job at Bayern and have a great chance of winning the Champions League.”

Dutchman Van Gaal has been out of work since leaving Manchester United in 2016, but the ex-Ajax, Barcelona and Netherlands boss insists he is in no rush to return to management.

“Having coached Ajax, Barcelona, the Netherlands, FC Bayern and Manchester United like I did, it is difficult for any offer to be interesting,” he continued.

“I like my life the way it is at the moment, although I do not rule out that I will be a coach again. I have already rejected offers from World Cup participants, most recently also a €25million offer from China.”

(Source: Four Four Two)



■ Messi throws Neymar friendship aside

Lionel Messi has reportedly told former team-mate Neymar not to use Barcelona in order to get a better contract at Real Madrid.

The pair struck up a strong friendship during their four years together at the Nou Camp and that bond is said to have remained despite Neymar’s world-record move to PSG last summer.

The duo remain in regular contact, with transfer speculation often their main topic to discuss, according to the report in the Sunday Express.

However, the latest talk in Spain suggests that Messi has delivered a ‘warning’ to Neymar as rumours over a potential move to Real for the Brazilian gather pace.

Jose Mourinho says his side were ‘scared to play’



Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho said his players were “scared to play” and questioned their “personality” in the FA Cup win over Brighton.

Romelu Lukaku and Nemanja Matic scored to put United into a record-equaling 29th FA Cup semi-final.

Mourinho said his side deserved the win and was happy with the result, which was “better than the performance”.

He said: “We didn’t play as I wanted them to play; we didn’t play as I prepared the team to play.”

Mourinho added: “We deserved to win, clearly - we had the match under control - but we didn’t play well. Sometimes there is a contradiction between what you work on in the past two days and what you did on the pitch.

“That is more frustrating than the result. Once more I wasn’t happy with the connection in the build-up. I blame everybody.”

Mourinho was criticised for an unadventurous approach after United were eliminated from the Champions League by Sevilla on Tuesday.

He then attracted more controversy by suggesting immediately afterwards that being knocked out in the last 16 was “nothing new for the club”.

Mourinho responded to that criticism with an extraordinary 12-minute defence

of his methods and record at a news conference on Friday, during which he reeled off a list of statistics and added that he was not afraid of his responsibilities.

Then, when addressing the written press during the second half of the conference, he referred to “idiots”, “idealists” and “the dictionary of life” in an impassioned speech.

The performance against Brighton was hardly any better than the one against Sevilla - although the result was an improvement.

United only had two shots on target - scoring with both - while Brighton had 14 efforts on goal, and Mourinho made clear his displeasure afterwards.

He said: “A few other guys, I saw them scared to play. I cannot say much more. It is a relation with personality, is a relation to trust, is a relation to class.

“When the sun is shining and everything goes well, you win matches, you score goals, everything goes in your direction, every player is a good player and wants to play and wants the ball and looks amazing and is confident.

“When it is dark and cold, and in football that means a period of bad results or a bad result, not everybody has the confidence and personality to play really.

(Source: BBC)

Morocco plans to spend \$15.8 billion if it gets 2026 soccer World Cup

Morocco has proposed using 14 stadiums and budgeting to spend 15.8 billion dollars on infrastructure if it wins the right to host the World Cup soccer finals in 2026, the country’s bid committee announced at a news conference on Saturday.

But Morocco will not build any new stadiums for the tournament, preferring to renovate and modify existing venues and add temporary capacity to others, said candidature chairman Moulay Hafid Elalamy, who is also a government minister.

The North African country is up against a joint bid from Canada, Mexico and the United States when world soccer governing body FIFA’s member countries decide in Moscow on June 13 who will host the tournament eight years from now.

Saturday’s news conference revealed details of Morocco’s bid book, which was presented to FIFA on Friday, with the central theme being making their football infrastructure sustainable after the tournament and keeping down construction costs.



At least five stadiums, termed legacy modular stadiums and with largely temporary capacity, will be downscaled after the finals to meet the specific needs of their local communities. Casablanca and Marrakech will both have

two stadiums with other venues being the capital Rabat, Agadir, El Jadida, Fez, Meknes, Nador, Ouarzazate Oujda, Tangier and Tetouan.

“The World Cup is a national priority for our government and that is why it has guaranteed the required investment in our exciting and innovative stadium plans,” added Elalamy.

“Our beautiful and welcoming nation offers players and fans something very special with just one timezone, one currency and all host cities are within a 550km radius from Casablanca, meaning limited travel and simple logistics.

“All host cities are also all located within an hour’s drive of an airport, so players and fans need only focus on the one thing that matters most – football.”

Morocco bid unsuccessfully to stage the 1994, 1998, 2006 and 2010 World Cups. The country was second to the U.S. in ‘94, behind France in ‘98 and just lost out to South Africa for the 2010 finals, the only time the event has been held in Africa.

(Source: Reuters)

Team Melli will make Iranians proud in World Cup



BY Engin Firat

We all hope the best for Team Melli, but the Reality shows that according to World rankings, Group B is considered the hardest group in World Cup 2018 held in Russia.

And Iran will face very motivated Rivals. Spain and Portugal are responsible for the past three European titles and Spain wants to come back to the Top, while for Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo it will be his last chance to make a real impression at a World Cup. Morocco qualified for the first time after 20 years.

For the first time Iran, will play in back to back World Cups. I am sure, like always Iran will play a good organized Defense Football and with quick counterattacks. Team Melli has with Alireza Jahanbakhsh , Mehdi Taremi, Karim Ansarifard, Kaveh Rezaei and Sardar Azmoun perfect Counterattack Players. Therefore I am sure that Iran will be dangerous in all World Cup Games and will find enough goal opportunities. But I am not sure if the

Defense has enough individual Capacity on this Level.

Therefore the results of Team Melli will depend very much on the individual defense mistake rate. The World Cup can be a big Chance for Players like Azmoun, Rezaei or Saman Ghoddos, who are playing in Europe, to get offers from Top Teams.

Matches:

- June 15: Morocco v Iran, St Petersburg ; June 19: Portugal v Spain, Sochi
- June 20: Portugal v Morocco, Luzhniki Stadium, Moscow ; Iran v Spain, Kazan
- June 25: Iran v Portugal, Saransk ; Spain v Morocco, Kaliningrad

The Rivals :

Analyzing Portugal or Spain seems to be not necessary. But the way Portugal played on the Road to Russia, we can say that Portugal seem to be stronger now then at Euro 2016. For example, Milans André Silva and Bernardo Silva had great Performance at their Clubs and also in general the team has more alternatives. They have a good mix of very

experienced and young talented Players. In Brazil 2014 and France 2016 Spain had disappointing results but qualified brilliantly for Russia 2018.

Even if the main Squad is similar, with the new Coach Lopetegui Spain is back to its successful football. Especially Morata and Isco made the offense of Spain much more dynamic and dangerous.

Morocco qualified for the 2018 World Cup for the first time in 20 years. Morocco displayed an united Team with a good organized Defense. The individual Quality of the Players are mostly in Defense like Juventus's Mehdi Benatia. The offence belongs to the Form of Hakim Ziyech and Belhanda. These two Players are the Brain of the Offence. Who stops them, stops Team Morocco.

Result:

For Iran to proceed from the group, will be very difficult, because Spain and Portugal are Top Teams in the World. But I think it will not be an easy task for them to beat Iran. Therefore I am sure that Team Melli will make Iran proud with positive football.

I will return to Iran after Noruz: Marco Octavio

S P O R T S **d e s k** Marco Octavio Simoes Barbosa (or simply Marco Octavio) says he will come back to Iran after Persian New Year (Noruz).

Marco Octavio returned for a fourth stint in charge of Team Melli in August 2017 but media reports suggest that he parted company with Iran Football Federation ahead of Persian Beach Soccer Cup.

Octavio first took charge of Iran in 2007, before returning for further spells in 2010 and 2012, with the coach having taken Iran to two FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup quarter-final in 2013 and 2015.

Octavio replaces Mohammad Hossein Mirshamsi as Iran boss after he ensured a third-place finish at this year's FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in The Bahamas.

"I am very motivate to start preparation for New Year. I will have a meeting with the clubs' coaches for apply competitive training



methods and tactics. We will start our camps to prepare for the next World Cup qualifying

very soon," Octavio told Tehran Times. I miss all of my Iranian players and my

friends, the Brazilian added.

Asked him it seems you quit your job, Octavis answered, "No, it's not true. Iran's federation has given me some vacation to solve some family problems."

Team Melli have to prepare for the 2019 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup.

The 2019 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup will be the tenth edition of the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup, the premier international beach soccer championship contested by men's national teams of the member associations of FIFA. Previous editions before 2005 were not governed by FIFA and were held under the title Beach Soccer World Championships.

Overall this will be the 20th edition of the World Cup since its establishment in 1995. This will be the fifth tournament to take place under the biennial basis; the World Cup now takes place once every two years, after taking place annually between 1995 and 2009.

Masoud Shojaei invited to Team Melli after seven months

S P O R T S **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team midfielder Masoud Shojaei has been invited to Team Melli after more than seven months.

Shojaei was left out of Iran squad from early August after playing against an Israeli club with Panionios in UEFA Europa League. Iran does not recognize Israel and bars its athletes from competing against participants from the country.

Carlos Queiroz has named his 28-man team for two warm-up matches against Tunisia and Algeria and Shojaei has been included in the team.

Iran squad

Goalkeepers: Alireza Beiranvand (Persepolis), Rashid Mazaheri (Zob Ahan), Amir Abedzadeh (Maritimo), Hossein Hosseini (Esteghlal)

Defenders: Jalal Hosseini (Pesepolis), Vouria Ghafouri (Esteghlal), Saeid Aghaei (Sepahan), Milad Mohammadi (Akhmat Grozny), Morteza Pouraliganji (Al Sadd), Ramin



Rezaeian (K.V. Oostende), Rouzbeh Cheshmi (Esteghlal),

Mohammad Reza Khanzadeh (Padideh), Pejman Montazeri (Esteghlal)

Midfielders: Omid Ebrahimi (Esteghlal), Ehsan Haji Safi (Olympiacos), Saeid Ezatollahi (Amkar Perm), Ali Karimi (Sepahan), Saman Ghoddos (Östersunds FK), Masoud Shojaei (AEK Athens), Ali Gholizadeh (Saipa)

Forwards: Mehdi Taremi (Al Gharafa), Alireza Jahanbakhsh (AZ Alkmaar), Mehdi Torabi (Saipa), Sardar Azmoun (Rubin Kazan), Karim Ansarifard (Olympiacos), Kaveh Rezaei (Charleroi S.C.), Reza Ghoochannejhad (Heerenveen), Vahid Amiri (Persepolis)

Iran prepare for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, where they have been drawn with Spain, Morocco and Portugal in Group B.

Team Melli will open the campaign with a match against Morocco at Saint Petersburg on June 15.

Iran, meanwhile, face Spain in Kazan on 20 June before meeting Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal in Saransk five days later.

PyeongChang 2018: Closing Ceremony praises record-breaking Games

After 10 action-packed days of sports, the Paralympic flame was extinguished.

The PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games came to an end in a blaze of fireworks on Sunday (18 March) with a festive Closing Ceremony held at the PyeongChang Olympic Stadium. The event broke innumerable records, with more athletes from more countries competing, more media and broadcast rights holders attending, and more tickets sold than at any previous edition of a Winter Paralympics.

Moreover, 26 out of the 49 delegations won at least one medal, beating the mark set at Lillehammer 1994, with a record number of 20 taking gold.

The evening began with the playing of the South Korean national anthem and the hoisting of the country's flag.

It was followed by Korean Folk song 'Arirang' to reminiscence the moments of joy and sorrow during the Winter Paralympics, and recognised the effort and contribution

made by the Para athletes, Gangwon Province residents, volunteers and staff.

Every delegation was again received with a wave of applause. In a symbolic handover, the Paralympic flag was given to Chen Jin-ling, the mayor of Beijing, the host city of the Paralympic Winter Games in 2022.

In his speech, the President of the PyeongChang 2018 Organising Committee Lee Hee-beom mentioned Nordic skiers Sin Eui Hyun, who won South Korea's first ever gold in the Winter Paralympics, and USA's Daniel Cnossen to represent all Paralympians.

"Touching stories of human victory drama showcased by Para athletes through these Games will be remembered forever in our hearts," said President Lee.

"PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games connected the world as one, and South and North Korean athletes also raised together the Paralympic Torch.

"Paralympic Flame, as it may extinguish,

will bring together the world forever in a spirit of peace far beyond the Korean Peninsula."

International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons' final speech made reference to world-renowned physicist and author Stephen Hawking, who passed away on Wednesday (14 March).

"One man who had a dream was the late Professor Stephen Hawking, a genius of a man, a pioneer and inspiration to us all. At the London 2012 Paralympic Opening Ceremony, Hawking noted that we are all different and that there is no such thing as a standard or run of the mill human being. "He urged us all to "Looks at the stars, and not at our feet."

"And, over the last 10 days the stars have shone brightly here in PyeongChang. While Hawking tested the limits of his imagination, Paralympians, you have once again pushed the boundaries of human endeavour. Your logic defying performances have focused the

world not on what holds you back, but on what motivates and pushes you forward."

The Closing Ceremony also included the official presentation of the Whang Yoon Dai Achievement Award for New Zealand's alpine skier Adam Hall and Finland's Nordic skier Sini Pyy, the two Paralympians who were considered to best exemplify the spirit and values of the Games.

Marie Bochet, Rudolf Klemetti and Birgit Skarstein, the three IPC Athletes' Council winter representatives elected during the Winter Paralympics, were introduced, and a flower presentation was made to all the volunteers who participated in the event.

The Bae Hui Gwan Band, which is made up of musicians with impairments, then took to the stage preparing for the final act when it was joined by South Korean pop star Ailee. The PyeongChang Olympic Stadium became a great party to the delight of the home crowd.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Petrochimi win WABA League Basketball title

TEHRAN — Petrochimi of Iran ruled the FIBA Asia Champions Cup 2018 WABA Qualifier after beating hosts and defending champions Al Riyadi, 83-53, in the Final in Beirut, Lebanon.

Mike Harris exploded for Petrochimi in the final and led the way with game-high 37 points as well as 12 rebounds.

Behemoth Hamed Haddadi also added 8 points and 14 rebounds. With the win Petrochimi avenged losing to Al Riyadi in last year's Final in Amman and in the Semi-Final of the FIBA Asia Champions Cup 2017 in Chenzhou, China.

This victory completed for Petrochimi a dominant 3-game sweep of the competition.

The Iranian team had already beaten Sarreyet Ramallah of Palestine on the first day of the tournament before narrowly edging past Al Jaish from Syria.

This result propel Petrochimi to the FIBA Asia Champions Cup 2018 first round.

(Source: asia-basket.com)

Mohamed Salah on his way to Messi's level, says Klopp

Jurgen Klopp suggested Mohamed Salah is on the way to being compared with Lionel Messi after scoring four times in Liverpool's 5-0 rout of Watford.

Salah also created another goal for Roberto Firmino in a devastating display amid snow flurries and freezing conditions at Anfield.

Asked in his post-match press conference if Salah could be mentioned in the same sentence as five-time world player of the year Messi, Reds boss Klopp said: "I think Mo is on the way.

"I don't think Mo or anybody else wants to be compared with Lionel Messi - he is the one who has been doing what he's been doing for what feels like 20 years or so. The last player I know who had the same influence on a team performance was Diego Maradona.

"But Mo is in a fantastic way, that's for sure. As it always is in life, if you have to have the skills you have to show that constantly and consistently, and he is very good. He helps us a lot.

"The boys love playing together with him, he loves playing with them so it's good. He gave us a good four goals. I think that's quite exceptional and another good performance.

"We had to cope and deal with difficult conditions tonight. It was slippery. Everybody suffered but not Mo in that situation. That is really special."

Watford offered little aside from a dipping free-kick from Roberto Pereyra that hit the bar when they were already 3-0 down.

But the result never seemed in doubt after Salah opened the scoring in the fourth minute as Liverpool bounced back from defeat at Manchester United in style.

Klopp said: "I am really happy about the result, of course, but also the performance because I knew after we made the analysis of Watford's last game, against Arsenal, how difficult it can be to play them.

"They lost that game 3-0 but it was so close, football games can go like this, but in the end we really saw what could happen tonight if we let them do what they wanted to do. And we didn't in very difficult circumstances, so I'm really happy."

(Source: Sky Sports)

Lukaku: We have to buy new players every year



Romelu Lukaku says it is important for Manchester United to keep strengthening by making new signings next season.

The Belgian striker was one of the players signed by Jose Mourinho following his arrival at the club in a bid to reinvigorate the side following a few lean years.

Nemanja Matic, Victor Lindelof and more recently Alexis Sanchez have all arrived for big money this season.

However, Lukaku has backed his manager's recent claims that the squad is not strong enough to win major titles, following their exit from the Champions League this week.

United did manage to secure their place in the semi-finals of the FA Cup but are well off the pace set by runaway Premier League leaders and close rivals Manchester City.

According to Lukaku, the club will again invest heavily in order to make manager Jose Mourinho happy.

He said: "We are Manchester United, we have to improve every year and I know that a lot of players, a lot of good players, will come in next season. That's for sure.

"That is something I look forward to, in order to improve the squad, and what the manager also looks forward to because next year we have to win.

"We will have to try and win as many trophies as we can."

Lukaku added though that he felt United were almost strong enough as a unit to be able to realistically claim some silverware, although he did feel Champions League opponents Seville were somehow a better side.

He added: "I don't believe we are really that short of being able to compete in the big competitions.

"We knew immediately after the game against Seville that we weren't good enough, so we accept the criticism."

(Source: Foxsportsasia.com)

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Films from 12 countries to go on screen in Fajr’s Eastern Vista

A R T
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TEHRAN — The 36th Fajr International Film Festival will screen movies from 12 countries in Eastern Vista, a section dedicated to Asian filmmakers.



چشم‌انداز سینمای کشورهای آسیایی و اسلامی
پانوراما از فیلم‌های کشورهای آسیایی و اسلامی



A poster for Eastern Vista at the 36th Fajr International Film Festival

Films from China, Vietnam, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Georgia, Palestine, Japan, Kuwait, Syria, Kazakhstan, India and Mongolia will be selected for the category. A jury of four Iranian and foreign cineastes will judge the films competing in this section. The 36th Fajr International Film Festival will be held in Tehran from April 19 to 27.

Iranian photographers honored at Gran Tour Delle Colline

A R T
d e s k

TEHRAN – Several Iranian photographers were honored with awards at the 22nd Gran Tour Delle Colline, the International Circuit of Digital Images held in the Italian capital Rome, the organizers announced on Sunday.



“Space Ship” by Saeid Mohammadzadeh won the Special Environment Award, while “Khara Desert2” by Amin Dehqan received the Special Landscape Award. Mohammad-Ali Mataei received a Silver Medal as his “Sport8” won an honorable mention. Akram Niksefat Zendedel also received an honorable mention for her “Smokey Eyes”. The Circolo Fotografico Arno (Arno Photographic Club) in Rome is the main organizer of the competition.

Rockefeller’s Picasso could be part of biggest art collection ever sold

PARIS (Reuters) — A rare Picasso once owned by Gertrude Stein is part of an art trove belonging to the Rockefeller dynasty that could raise half a billion dollars this year, in what auctioneer Christie’s says could be the most valuable sale ever of a private collection. Ten works on display at Christie’s in Paris, including the Picasso and a Monet, represent a small fraction of the 1,600 lots once owned by billionaire banker David Rockefeller and his wife Peggy that will go under the hammer in May for charity. “We’re talking probably north of 500 million dollars which will make it the most valuable collection sale of all time, and the most valuable charity sale of all time,” Christie’s auctioneer Jonathan Rendell told Reuters TV. The showpiece of the collection is Picasso’s “Young Girl with a Flower Basket”, painted in 1905 and acquired by the artist’s friend and collector, the American novelist Stein. Rockefeller and a group of collectors purchased Stein’s art in 1968, drawing lots for the works they would keep. The Picasso masterpiece hung on the wall of Rockefeller’s library for decades and Christie’s expects it to fetch between 90 and 120 million dollars. Also on sale is a small painting of an apple which Picasso gave Stein as a Christmas gift in 1914 after she told him of her disappointment that her brother Leo had held onto a Cezanne still life of apples when they split up their own collection. The proceeds of the sale will go to charities including Harvard University and the Museum of Modern Art. Rendell said he anticipated the works would likely be bought by private collectors, though some could end up in museums. The sale will take place at New York’s Rockefeller Center in May. David Rockefeller, a former CEO of Chase Manhattan bank and grandson of the oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller, died last year at the age of 101.

Iranian musicians to perform with Italian orchestra in memory of Gioachino Rossini

A R T
d e s k
TEHRAN — Three Iranian musicians from the National Orchestra have been invited to accompany a performance of Italy’s Emilia Romagna Concerti during a concert arranged to commemorate the 150th anniversary of composer Gioachino Rossini’s death. Violinists Danial Jurabchi and Arash Jame and viola performer Hodayun Hashemzadeh will perform Rossini’s “Petite Messe Solennelle” at the Basilica of Saint’ Apollinare in Classe, an important monument of Byzantine art near Ravenna on March 28, Iran’s Rudaki Foundation announced on Sunday. The performance will be conducted by maestro Paolo Olmi who conducted a joint concert by the Young Musicians European Orchestra and the Tehran Symphony Orchestra during the 32nd Fajr International Music Festival in Tehran in January 2017. The Young Musicians European Orchestra and the Tehran Symphony Orchestra also gave a joint performance at the Pala de André Center in Ravenna in July 2017.



Conductor Paolo Olmi (C) poses with the Emilia Romagna Concerti in an undated photo. (Photo by Angelo Palmieri)

IRIB launches iFilm 2 to entertain Persian-speaking nations



A logo of iFilm 2
A R T
d e s k
TEHRAN – Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting officially launched iFilm 2 on Saturday to air Iranian TV films and series for Persian-speaking nations. An iFilm 2 pilot channel has been in operation since February, broadcasting a large number of Iranian film productions across Afghanistan and Tajikistan. “Having cultural, civilizational and historical affinities with Afghanistan, Tajikistan and other Persian-speaking nations in the Central Asian illustrates the necessity of launching the channel,” iFilm 2 director Nasser Hajazifar told the Persian service of MNA on Saturday. The 24-hour channel has selected the motto “A Friend of Families”. Hajazifar said that the channel will broadcast productions with “an appropriate content” in comparison with Turkish and Western TV series. He also added that the difference in the Persian dialects being used in the region would not make it difficult for the nations to understand the language of films and series. Earlier in September 2010, IRIB launched three channels of iFilm in English, Arabic and Persian.

Academy of Motion Pictures chief accused of misconduct



Motion Picture Academy President John Bailey speaks at the Foreign Language Film nominees cocktail reception in Beverly Hills, California, U.S., March 2, 2018. (Reuters/David McNew)
LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — The president of the Academy of Motion Pictures, the body that hands out the Oscars, is being investigated for sexual misconduct, Hollywood trade publications reported on Friday. Two weeks after the annual Oscars ceremony, the Hollywood Reporter and Variety reported that the Academy had received three claims of sexual harassment against John Bailey, and had begun an investigation. They cited unidentified sources and did not give details. A representative for Bailey did not reply to a request for comment. In a brief statement, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said in a brief statement that it “treats any complaints confidentially to protect all parties. “The Membership Committee reviews all complaints brought against Academy members according to our Standards of Conduct process, and after completing reviews, reports to the Board of Governors. We will not comment further on such matters until the full review is completed.” It did not mention Bailey. Dozens of high-profile men have been fired or have resigned from their jobs in politics, media, entertainment and business after facing accusations of sexual misconduct, including Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein. Weinstein has denied having nonconsensual sex with anyone. Bailey, 75, a married movie director and cinematographer who worked on films like “The Big Chill” and “American Gigolo”, was elected president of the Academy in August 2017. The issue dominated Hollywood’s long awards season and the March 4 Oscar ceremony was marked by jokes, speeches about female empowerment and pledges to end harassment in the industry. Under Bailey’s leadership, the Academy’s board of governors last October expelled Weinstein as a member. It later drew up a code of conduct for its 8,000 members and developed an online form for them to submit claims of misconduct on the grounds of behavior, gender, race, age, and religion. According to the guidelines, claimants must supply evidence of alleged behavior and an accused person has 10 days to respond. Bailey told the annual luncheon for Oscar nominees in February that the 90-year-old Academy was reinventing itself with programs committed to inclusion and diversity.

Tiburon festival to screen six films from Iran



Amir Jafari (L) and Shaqayeq Farahani act in a scene from “Conditional Release” by Hossein Shahabi.
A R T
d e s k
TEHRAN – Six Iranian films will go on screen at the Tiburon International Film Festival running in the American city in California from April 20 to 27. One of the films is “Conditional Release” by Hossein Shahabi that is about a convict, who is released after a long period in prison. “Azar”, “Manicure” and “Limit” are also among the films. Mohammad Hamzei’s debut, “Azar” tells the story of Azar, who, on a dusty motocross track, is as confident, capable and deeply committed as she is to the fledgling pizzeria that she runs with her husband, Amir. Director Arman Fayyaz’s short film “Manicure” is about a young woman who committed suicide and is being carried for burial to the holy tomb of the village, but the fanatical villagers, after discovering she has manicured fingernails, refuse to bury her. “Limit” by Javad Darai, which puts the spotlight on the problems faced by the physically challenged in society, has so far won awards at several international awards. Also included are the shorts “Tulsa” by Parviz Shojaei and “Zona” by Tufan Nahanqodrati.

Barbra Streisand says no #MeToo moment marred her life



Streisand gives Hillary Clinton Big Shout-Out during Barclays Center concert
LOS ANGELES (AP) — Barbra Streisand said she’s never suffered harassment but has felt abused by the media. During a tribute to Streisand’s decades of TV music specials and other programs, producer and long-time admirer Ryan Murphy queried her about her career, the #MeToo movement and her aversion to interviews. “Never,” she replied when asked if she had been sexually mistreated. “I wasn’t like those pretty girls with those nice little noses. Maybe that’s why.” She acknowledged the power of protests against gender inequality sweeping through Hollywood and society. “We’re in a strange time now in terms of men and women and the pendulum swinging this way and that way, and it’s going to have to come to the center,” Streisand said during Friday’s Paley Center for Media event held at a packed theater. Her reluctance to talk to news outlets is based on years of what she called inaccurate reporting, including one story that claimed she has an “awards room” at home dedicated to her Oscars, Emmys and other trophies. But it was the late TV journalist Mike Wallace who came in for the sharpest criticism. Streisand said that when she was a young star (and before Wallace joined “60 Minutes”), he asked her hurtful questions during a TV interview and she called him afterward to complain. But on a subsequent show, Wallace told viewers who’d objected to his treatment of Streisand that she “loved” the interview, according to the star. “I thought, I don’t know what date rape is, it’s terrible ... but it was such a violation,” she said. “Why lie?” Streisand said she demands control in her work but only in service to her art that’s included directing, acting and producing TV movies, among them 1995’s “Serving in Silence: The Margarethe Cammermeyer Story”. Murphy (“Glee,”?American Horror Story”), who admitted to being nervous as he began his one-on-one conversation with the star of “Funny Girl” and award-winning TV specials dating back to 1966’s “Color Me Barbra,” said he owed his career to her. “People talk about Barbra as the greatest female star. I say, no, that’s not enough,” Murphy said, calling her a groundbreaker for those who don’t fit the mold. “She was a touchstone, a beacon I followed my entire life. The tribute, which kicked off the 35th annual PaleyFest LA television festival at the Dolby Theatre, was capped by the presentation to Streisand of the 2018 PaleyFest Icon award.