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On the occasion of Caspian Sea Day **12**

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Iranian cultural delegation to attend Beijing book fair **16**

Iran renews call to end Yemen crisis



© Tehran Times/Mohammadreza Abbasi

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif meets UN Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed (L) in Tehran, August 12, 2017.

Nuclear company tasked to develop research reactors

POLITICS TEHRAN — Nuclear Power Production and Development (NPPD) Company of Iran is now tasked to design, construct and utilize research reactors in line with the goals and missions of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI).

The news was announced on Saturday in an order by Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri to AEOI chief Ali Akbar Salehi.

Reinstated as the AEOI chief on Thursday, Salehi is one of the main figures in the historic nuclear agreement aimed to settle the long-standing dispute with the West over Iran's nuclear program.

Under the July 2015 nuclear agreement, which was signed between Iran and six world powers, the EU and E3+3 countries and international participants will engage in joint projects with Iran, including through IAEA technical cooperation projects, in the field of peaceful nuclear technology, including nuclear power plants, research reactors, fuel fabrication, agreed joint advanced R&D such as fusion.

In January, the AEOI announced that it had started injecting uranium hexafluoride (UF6) into advanced domestically-manufactured centrifuge machines, known as IR-8, to launch an important phase of the country's research and development plans.

The AEOI noted that Iran's research and development plans will continue incessantly in all sectors of peaceful nuclear activities, including uranium enrichment, in order to supply fuel for research reactors.

Panetta: Biggest crisis facing U.S. since Cuban Missile Crisis

Former United States Defense Secretary Leon Panetta warned of the gravity of the situation between the U.S. and North Korea, saying, "we're dealing with probably the most serious crisis involving a potential nuclear war since the Cuban Missile Crisis."

Tensions between the United States and North Korea have been heightened this week as leaders from both countries have touted their military capabilities. On Friday, President Donald Trump sent a clear message to North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un, stating that he "will truly regret it and he will

regret it fast," if he carries out an attack on Guam or a U.S. ally.

"If he utters one threat in the form of an overt threat ... or if he does anything with respect to Guam, or any place else that is an American territory or an America ally, he will truly regret it and he will regret it fast," Trump said while on his 17-day working vacation in New Jersey.

This statement was not dissimilar to his remarks earlier in the week following threats from North Korea that the county was preparing a plan to strike the U.S. territory of Guam. **→13**

Nuclear deal to promote Iran-Britain ties: envoy

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The international nuclear deal between Iran and world powers has paved the way for ties between Britain and Iran to flourish, London's ambassador to Tehran Nicholas Hopton said on Saturday.

Hopton made the remarks in a meeting with Esmaeil Jabbarzadeh, governor of East Azarbaijan province, in Tabriz, IRNA reported. The ambassador also renewed his country's

full commitment to the nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), to which England is a signatory.

He also expressed happiness on his participation in President Hassan Rouhani's inauguration on August 5 and the endorsement of the president on August 3 by the Supreme Leader.

The envoy also expressed hope for the clearing of banking hurdles, adding that he will expedite his activities for the development of ties with Iran.

In addition, Hopton praised steps taken by Tabriz for economic growth, saying his country is willing to send an economic delegation to Tabriz as Iran is seeking to deepen ties with different countries.

Despite having the closest ties with the U.S. among the European countries, England has defended the nuclear deal. It has been critical of the Trump's administration approach toward the nuclear agreement.

U.S. dollar falling steadily. One reason? Donald Trump

The value of the dollar index, which tracks the dollar against six major global currencies, has fallen about 10% since January.

One reason? Donald Trump. Analysts trace the dollar's surge in the first months of 2016 to his win, which fuelled expectations of tax cuts or infrastructure investment - spending expected to drive demand for the dollar.

Now they say the retreat shows traders recalculating, as Mr Trump's economic agenda stalls. The dollar, which surged in 2014 as the U.S. economy gained strength, is hardly in danger territory. The index is running just a bit lower than it was a year ago.

But key U.S. economic data was weaker last year. So what's behind this year's decline?

Things are looking up in Europe. In some ways, this is a good news story, driven by a better economy in Europe.

The euro lost ground against the dollar in

2014, when central bankers adopted a stimulus program, while the US started to move away from stimulus policies.

Now, as the Eurozone economy improves and the European Central Bank eyes an end to the stimulus, the currencies are starting to move closer together. The election of pro-EU Emmanuel Macron in France in June contributed to confidence in the Euro.

The Euro's gain is the dollar's loss. A Euro is now worth more than \$1.17, up more than 10 cents since the end of last year.

Investors are reacting to political turmoil in America.

But this isn't just a European story.

The dollar has lost ground against many other currencies, including the Japanese Yen, the Mexican peso and the Swedish Krona. Even the British pound, which plunged after the Brexit vote, has regained some of its pow-

er against the dollar in recent months. (It's now valued at about \$1.30, up from \$1.22 in March.)

An ongoing investigation into ties between Russia and the Trump campaign has cast a shadow over his administration. And alarm over Mr Trump's erratic statements and foreign policy clashes - including with North Korea this week - has also increased.

Expectations about interest rates and the U.S. economy also play a role. Rising interest rates are traditionally linked to stronger currencies, since higher rates attract investment.

The U.S. central bank has raised interest rates four times since December 2015, and conventional wisdom calls for another in December. But Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen said recently that even supposing future hikes, interest rates are likely to remain historically low for some time.

(Source: BBC)

ARTICLE
By Mehdi Sepahvand
Tehran Times journalist

The rising 'Empire': global, genuinely Persian

The American fear of a rising Persian Empire resurfaced one more last week as former secretary of state Henry Kissinger warned President Donald Trump that a power vacuum after the demolition of ISIS will definitely put Iran in a one-on-one situation to score a new Persian Empire.

I have already argued how Kissinger is partaking a folly that was established in previous years, and, nonetheless, how Iran transforms regional crisis into something of use to it much differently than for it to qualify as an empire proper.

Here I intend to take my argument a step further by establishing how the rising Iran is turning into a pivotal point of difference between the Old and New worlds, therefore showing how this fear of a rising empire surfaces.

"Persian empires were always known entities—feared, envied, hated, admired, but never a strangers or unknown. These same Persians and Persophilia becomes a peculiar attraction to Europeans... during the Renaissance and Enlightenment modernity. There is not a single period from antiquity to modernity in which Europeans have not known or referenced Persians and invariably marked their Persophilia," observes Hamid Dabashi, an Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York City, in his latest book "Iran: the Rebirth of a Nation".

Building on the back of a revolution now 40 years old, as well as the trauma of a national purgatory the aftermath of a democratic participation in presidential elections eight years ago, the Iranian nation is today both and none of these experiences at the same time, seeking a better self-in-the-world who revises itself according to latest developments day in day out. **→2**



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Impressive dressage event mesmerizes spectators

A dressage rider is seen galloping with his horse in a dressage event in Isfahan, August 11, 2017.

During the event, the rider and the horse essentially become one as they perform a series of predetermined movements as if telepathically.

Upwards of 100 horses of different breeds participated in the competition, mesmerizing a huge numbers of spectators.

Nobel laureates in mercy plea to Saudi king over young protesters' executions

Ten Nobel Peace Prize winners, including Northern Ireland activist Mairead Maguire, are appealing to the House of Saud regime's king and crown prince to show mercy and halt the executions of 14 young people for participating in protests in 2012.

In a letter they said staying the executions would "correct a great injustice".

The laureates said the 14 were convicted and sentenced in a mass trial "based on the actions of the worst defendant", arguing that several would never warrant the death penalty.

They also accused the Saudi regime authorities of coercing confessions and reportedly subjecting the protesters to physical force.

The 14, all minority Shia Muslims, face execution for protests and violence against security forces.

Among them is Mujtaba al-Sweikat, who was detained at a Saudi airport on his way to the United States to attend Western Michigan University.

The laureates said al-Sweikat was 18 when he was arrested on charges including supervising a group on Facebook and photographing the demonstrations.

Their letter said al-Sweikat's shoulder was broken while his confession was being coerced.

Others facing execution include Ali al Nimr, charged with setting up a Blackberry page named The Liberals and posting photos of the demonstrations and inviting people to participate; Munir Adam, a partially deaf and blind 20-year-old; and two others who were juveniles, the laureates said. The Nobel laureates said that in court, the defendants repudiated their confessions.

The letter also said that during the appeal process, the allegations of physical coercion were reportedly not investigated, which it said would violate both international law and Muslim Sharia law if true.

The American Federation of Teachers has urged the United States President Donald Trump to demand that the House of Saud regime halt the execution of al-Sweikat and the 13 others. **→13**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Kazakh president bestows Iran's nuclear chief with medal of honor

POLITICS TEHRAN — Nursultan Nazarbayev, the president of Kazakhstan, has bestowed a medal of honor on director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Ali Akbar Salehi.

The medal was given to Salehi on Saturday in a ceremony on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and to appreciate Iran for having held nuclear talks in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the YJC reported.

Kazakhstan was represented by its Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyuly in the ceremony.



Rouhani orders merger of free zones council

POLITICS TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani has ordered the merger of the Free Zones Supreme Council into the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, a parliamentarian has said.

Mohammad Reza Pour-Ebrahimi, head of the Majlis Economic Committee, told Mehr on Saturday that the merger was one of the tenets of the 6th development plan that must have been accomplished in the current Iranian fiscal year (March 21, 2017 to March 20, 2018).



Supreme Leader's office in Saudi Arabia reopened

POLITICS TEHRAN — Two weeks after Iranian pilgrims arrived in Saudi Arabia to attend the Hajj rituals, the Supreme Leader's Hajj Office in the Kingdom was reopened with the participation of the head of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization Hamid Mohammadi, ISNA reported.

The Iranian office was closed two years ago following the suspension of diplomatic relations between Tehran and Riyadh.



Rouhani's approach toward Pakistan-Iran security appreciable: MP

POLITICS TEHRAN — The chairperson of the Pakistan Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs has said Islamabad highly appreciates Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's attitude towards the security of Pakistan.

In an exclusive interview with IRNA published on Saturday, Senator Nuzhat Sadiq said that it is significant for Pakistan that in his meeting with Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani, Rouhani reiterated that "Iran regards Pakistan's security as its own."

"We are very happy on the re-election of President Rouhani because it will not only give more strength to Iran-Pakistan ties but to Pakistan also," she said.



VP congratulates Singapore on national day

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri on Saturday congratulated Singapore on its national day, according to the government's official website.

A day earlier, Iranian Ambassador to Singapore Javad Ansari met with that country's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on the occasion of their national day.

During the meeting, Hsien Loong expressed thanks for a similar letter by President Hassan Rouhani, where he had hoped for further development in bilateral relations.



Iran wins 2nd place in Sea Cup 2017

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Joshan missile boat, which represented the Iranian Navy, came second after gaining 234 points at Sea Cup competition held within the 2017 International Army Games.

The crews of the Azerbaijani and Russian warships shared the first place with 245 points, while the Kazakh Saryarka gunship garnered 227 points and came in third, Fars reported on Saturday.

As many as 300 personnel were involved in the Sea Cup 2017. The competition was held in three stages — artillery firing, ship damage control, ship crew skills and rescue contest.

Zarif outlines policy priorities in parliamentary hearing

Two priorities are economic diplomacy and stronger ties with neighbors

By Hadi Haghshenas

TEHRAN — Economic growth and better relations with neighbors will form the core of Iran's foreign policy over the next four years, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told a parliamentary hearing on Saturday.

"In our foreign policy, we will emphasize economic diplomacy since we believe foreign ministry should be at the service of economic growth and people's livelihood," IRNA quoted Zarif as saying.

"And secondly, relations with neighboring countries should be upgraded."

The top man for the country's foreign policy apparatus was making the comments in a meeting with members of the parliamentary Omid (Hope) bloc, a body mainly composed of reformist-minded lawmakers.

Zarif has been reintroduced to lead the post by recently sworn-in President Hassan Rouhani. Parliamentary hearings come before the next week's vote of confidence to Rouhani's roster of ministerial picks.

During his first tenure, Zarif was commissioned with breaking a decade-long deadlock with the West over Tehran's nuclear activities.

Efforts to resolve the standoff changed the course of confrontation to one of compromise in 2015 as Tehran and six world powers forged an agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

It gave Iran relief from all nuclear-related sanctions in exchange for rolling back its nuclear activities.



"At the wake of the nuclear deal billions of foreign investment have poured into the country," Zarif pointed out.

Iran will need an annual foreign investment of \$650 trillion rials (about \$17 billion) to meet the goals of a master plan - 6th development plan - that outlines the country's progress in the years 2017 to 2022. The plan stipulates that Iran's economic growth should stand at 6.8 percent.

As the first major investment by an international energy company since sanc-

tions were eased last year, Iran signed a formal contract worth \$5 billion with Total SA to develop its share of the world's biggest natural gas field.

A turbulent Middle East and the antagonistic U.S. government, however, have made an economic rebound quite challenging for Iran.

Regional markets are negatively influenced by the political standoff between Riyadh and Tehran among others.

In July, an Iranian economy official

lamented that Saudi Arabia is sabotaging Iran's target markets, citing rivalry between the two.

"Saudi Arabia tries to swing the balance in Iran-dominated markets in its favor by injecting money into these markets," the Donyaye Eghtesad daily quoted Mohammad Reza Ansari, a trustee member of the International Consultants and Contractors Association of Iran (ICCA), as saying.

Ansari also spoke of reluctance shown by certain Iraqi ministries to enter partnership with Iranian engineering firms due to the Saudi lobbying.

Ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and the Qatari row have also been detrimental.

The lawmakers questioning Zarif on foreign policy issues urged structural changes to the ministry to make it more economy-savvy.

"We expect the appointment of ambassadors with political and economic backgrounds," Mehdi Moghadasi, who represents Arak, said.

Mostafa Kavakebian, a Tehran representative, grumbled that there is no "serious will" to implement the tenets of a document on economic diplomacy.

Mahmoud Sadeghi, another lawmaker from Tehran, urged Zarif to brief the parliamentary bloc on details to streamline the ministry.

Zarif faces limitations to pursue his agenda autonomously.

Under Iran's Constitution, Leader and parliament have overriding powers in defining foreign policy.

Iran renews call to end Yemen crisis

By Mohammad Homaeifar

TEHRAN — On Saturday, Iran renewed its call for steps to end the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

The calls was made as Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met the visiting UN Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Zarif underlined the need for an end to the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen and called for efforts to find a political solution for the country's crisis.

Cheikh Ahmed arrived in Tehran on Saturday to meet Zarif and other Iranian officials, including Zarif's deputy for Arab and African affairs, Hossein Jaber Ansari.

This is the second visit of Cheikh Ahmed to Iran since the Yemen crisis started unfolding in March 2015.

During his meeting with Jaber Ansari, the two sides underlined the need to provide humanitarian aid for Yemeni people who are facing famine under Saudi Arabia's siege.

The UN envoy also briefed Jaber Ansari on the latest humanitarian situation in Yemen and said his recent consultations are aimed at reviving efforts to resolve the crisis through political channels.

Jaber Ansari, for his turn, expressed concern over



Cheikh Ahmed (L) and Hossein Jaber Ansari

Iran's deputy foreign minister says the UN can succeed in its efforts to resolve the Yemen conflict only if it acts without bias and tries to win the trust of the warring sides.

the situation in Yemen and voiced Tehran's support for UN efforts to end the crisis.

He noted that the UN can succeed in its efforts only if it acts without bias and tries to win the trust of the warring sides.

Since the beginning of Saudi-led aggression against Yemen in March 2015, the country has been grappling with a humanitarian disaster.

Saudi Arabia's military campaign was launched with the aim of eliminating the Yemeni Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstalling the Yemen's former President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, who has close ties with the Saudis.

Failing to achieve either of its goals, Riyadh has not stopped bombing Yemeni targets, creating a protracted conflict which led to the killings of over 12,000 Yemenis and the destruction of the poor country's infrastructure.

Riyadh is backed by Washington and London in its aggression against Yemen, receiving bulk of weapons from the two.

The aggression is also accompanied by a Saudi-led naval and aerial blockade, which has taken a heavy toll on Yemen's infrastructure and led to a cholera epidemic in the Arabian Peninsula.

Tehran, Baghdad set to ink MOU on Arbaeen pilgrimage

POLITICS TEHRAN — Tehran and Iraq will soon sign a memorandum of understanding during the visit to Tehran of Iraqi Interior Minister Qasim al-Araji.

"We sign a memorandum of understanding with Iran's interior minister at the end of the negotiations in Tehran," the Iraqi minister told IRNA before leaving Baghdad to Tehran on

Saturday.

Reportedly, Tehran insists on the opening of the Khosravi border crossing which lies northeast of Baghdad, an issue Baghdad resists for security concerns.

Annually, Iranians pour into Iraq's Shi'ite holy site in Karbala since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The pilgrimage, known as Arbaeen,

marks the end of a 40-day mourning period that commemorates the seventh century death of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).

More than three million Iranians are estimated to flock to Karbala this year, thirteen percent of whom are planned to pass through the Khosravi border crossing.

Currently, Iranian pilgrims use three crossing borders of Mehran, Shalalmech, and Chazabeh to enter neighboring Iraq.

Iran and Iraq, which fought a war in the 1980s, enjoy closest ties after the ousting of the Saddam Hussein regime. Iran was the first country which rushed to the help of Iraqis as the Islamic State ravaged through the country in 2014.

The rising 'Empire': global, genuinely Persian

➔ Asking any Iranian how they relate to these two seminal national experiences (and lesser ones scattered in time), you would find in their answer a surprisingly objective outlook that means to rectify and improve upon the self.

This comes with a genuinely self-confident nature that is to be found in the history of Europe, with their experiences of the Renaissance, Enlightenment, the two world wars, etc., who seek a re-birth of the self right from the ashes of yesterday, much different from the, let's say, American experience to leave everything behind and look for a new world order after rid of all those unwanted, bothersome people.

The difference between Iran and Europe on one hand and America on the other may therefore be summarized as where they seek change. America is all about a new world order through an apocalyptic event that either wipes them out or installs them above everyone else, whereas the other two are about a new self. The formation of the European Union can provide the best example to this in the case of Europe.

This kinship between the two old peoples found a however comic manifestation last week on the Iranian parliament floor where some dozen lawmakers started capturing soon-to-go-viral self-

ie pictures with EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini while she was more or less unaware of or unprepared for the pictures. Mogherini was not the only high-ranking invitees there, President Hassan Rouhani's inauguration, yet the way she arouse the desire of togetherness, however in a bizarre way to the point of being rejected by the entire political and social spectrum in the country, was quite noteworthy.

Today, as the United States is spreading the fear that a new Persian Empire is rising, latest in a series that has included hate-mongering dramatizations such as through Hollywood in the movie "300", Europe is generally seeing a promised land of peace in Iran within a restive Middle East.

Trump's vows to "tear" the nuclear deal have not yet moved back far in time to be forgotten. On the other side of the Atlantic, however, Europeans are pushing giant economic deals with Iran, alongside recognizing the country's role in a to-be peaceful Middle East after the ISIS crisis.

Looking at it from another angle, Iran is playing it smarter even than Russia, which is on guard against both Europe and the U.S. Iran is growingly turning into a point of difference between the Old and New worlds, breaking the "West and the rest" binary. While the EU remains faithful to its Perso-

philia to the benefit of its own - to reduce the flow of war refugees from Syria and elsewhere in the region, find a good market of 90 million population and a trade hub for a bigger 400-million population, and so on - the pragmatist Washington, having cut their umbilical cord with their mother long ago, seek the destruction of a burgeoning nation by whatever it takes, be it by allying with Saudis to balance Iran in Syria, the same Saudis whose son set the American "nation" "under attack" at the turn of the century, or by catastrophizing developments in Syria into imagined precursors to a rising Persian Empire a la mode "300", forgetting (or wanting others to forget) in the meantime, that this has not been established when power vacuum ensued U.S. retreat in Afghanistan or Iraq in recent past.

As Washington thinkers are engaged in replacing Persophilia with Irano-phobia, assuring the world of a rising Xerxes that will shed blood to high heavens, the world are giving themselves the chance to consider a growing-up Zarathustra figure to descend the Damavand and speak of what the world has long lost and dearly cherishes, a self-in-the-world that ceases to be so taken by a black-and-white image of things and instead tries to embrace new horizons and make new bonds by reviewing and reorienting itself.

In call with Trump, China's Xi urges restraint over North Korea

China's President Xi Jinping said there needs to be a peaceful resolution to the North Korean nuclear issue, and in a telephone call with the United States President Donald Trump he urged all sides to avoid words or action that raise tensions.

Xi's comments came hours after Trump warned North Korea that the U.S. military was "locked and loaded" as Pyongyang accused the U.S. leader of driving the Korean peninsula to the brink of nuclear war.

The Pentagon said the United States and South Korea would proceed as planned with a joint military exercise in 10 days, an action sure to further antagonize North Korea.

In a statement, China's foreign ministry said Xi told Trump that a peaceful resolution to the North Korean nuclear issue was essential, and urged calm.

"Concerned parties must exercise restraint and avoid remarks and actions that escalate tensions on the Korean peninsula," it cited Xi as saying.

In their phone call, Trump and Xi "agreed North Korea must stop its provocative and escalatory behavior," the White House said in a statement, and reiterated their mutual commitment to denuclearize the Korean peninsula. It added the relationship between Trump and Xi was "extremely close" and "will hopefully lead to a peaceful resolution of the North Korea problem."

Trump, vacationing at his Bedminster, New Jersey, golf resort, earlier took to Twitter to warn North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un that U.S. "military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded, should North Korea act unwisely".

Again referring to Kim, Trump added, "If he utters one threat ... or if he does anything with respect to Guam or any place else that's an American territory or an American ally, he will truly regret it, and he will regret it fast."

In remarks to reporters after a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, Trump said the situation with North Korea was "very dangerous and it will not continue".

He added, "We will see what happens. We think that lots of good things could happen, and we could also have a bad solution."

Despite the tough rhetoric, Trump insisted that "nobody loves a peaceful solution better than President Trump."

South Korea's presidential Blue House said in a statement on Saturday the United States and China were



working to resolve the North Korea crisis, and it hoped the two leaders' phone call "will be able to resolve the peak of tension and act as a catalyst for the situation to move on to a new dimension."

■ Trump to Guam: "you're safe"

Guam, the Pacific island that is a U.S. territory and home to a U.S. air base, a Navy installation, a Coast Guard group and around 6,000 U.S. military personnel, posted emergency guidelines on Friday to help residents prepare for any potential nuclear attack.

North Korean state news agency KCNA said on Thursday the North Korean army would complete plans in mid-August to fire four intermediate-range missiles over Japan to land in the sea 18 to 25 miles (30 to 40 km) from Guam.

Japan's government decided to deploy its Patriot missile defense system to four locations in the west of the country, media reported. No one at Japan's defense ministry was available to comment on Saturday.

The governor of Guam, Eddie Baza Calvo, posted a video on Facebook of himself speaking with Trump. "We are with you a thousand percent. You are safe," Trump told Calvo.

Washington wants to stop Pyongyang from developing nuclear missiles

that could hit the United States. North Korea sees its nuclear arsenal as protection against the United States and its partners in Asia.

Trump said he was considering additional sanctions on North Korea, adding these would be "very strong." He gave no details and did not make clear whether he meant unilateral or multilateral sanctions.

U.S. officials have said new U.S. steps that would target Chinese banks and firms doing business with Pyongyang are in the works, but these have appeared to be put on hold to give Beijing time to show it is serious about enforcing new United Nations sanctions.

■ Back channels

Trump said he did not want to talk about diplomatic "back channels" with North Korea after U.S. media reports that Joseph Yun, the U.S. envoy for North Korea policy, had engaged in diplomacy for several months with Pak Song Il, a senior diplomat at Pyongyang's UN mission, on the deteriorating ties and the issue of Americans imprisoned in North Korea.

But Daniel Russel, until April the top U.S. diplomat for East Asia, said this so-called New York channel had been a relatively commonplace means of communication with North Korea over

the years, and was not a forum for negotiation.

"It's never been a vehicle for negotiations and this doesn't constitute substantive U.S.-DPRK dialogue," he said, using the acronym for North Korea's formal name, Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Both Moscow and Berlin expressed alarm over the rise in rhetoric over North Korea, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged Pyongyang and Washington to sign up to a joint Russian-Chinese plan by which North Korea would freeze missile tests and the United States and South Korea would impose a moratorium on large-scale military exercises. Neither the United States nor North Korea has embraced the plan.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said there is no military solution, adding that "an escalation of the rhetoric is the wrong answer."

As the rhetoric has ratcheted up, South Koreans are buying more ready-to-eat meals for emergency use, and the government aims to expand nationwide civil defense drills planned for Aug. 23. Hundreds of thousands of troops and huge arsenals are arrayed on both sides of the tense demilitarized zone between the two Koreas.

(Source: Reuters)

64 U.S. lawmakers warn Trump over N. Korea rhetoric

More than 60 United States Democratic lawmakers have expressed their "profound concern" over U.S. President Donald Trump's threatening rhetoric about North Korea, insisting that any military attack "must be debated and authorized by Congress."

In a letter, 64 House Democrats urged Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to make sure Trump's rhetoric is met with the "utmost caution and restraint."

"These statements are irresponsible and dangerous, and also senselessly provide a boon to domestic North Korean propaganda which has long sought to portray the United States as a threat to their people," read the letter which was spearheaded by Rep. John Conyers of Missouri.

The warning came after Trump said the U.S. would respond with "fire and fury" to any threat from North Korea.

North Korea carried out two tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles last month. Pyongyang claimed that its latest missile, test-fired on July 4, can deliver a "large, heavy nuclear warhead" to the U.S. continent.

North Korea responded to Trump's rhetoric by threatening to attack the American Pacific island territory of Guam. On Thursday, Trump said his original statement "wasn't tough

enough."

The congressmen said such statements had dramatically increased tensions with North Korea and raised the specter of nuclear war.

They further warned that Trump would be held responsible by Congress and the American people if a "careless and ill-advised miscalculation results in conflict that endangers our service members and regional allies."

■ Trump rhetoric could trigger WWII

Meanwhile, James Clapper, former director of National Intelligence, said he feared the president's rhetoric could "spiral" out of control into a global conflict.

"It's somewhat reminiscent to me of the history of World War I and how the world kind of blundered into that," Clapper said in an interview with CNN.

"I hope people learn from history and don't repeat that. I don't think we are there yet. I think there is still time for other measures, sanctions, diplomacy and all those kind of things," the former spy master warned.

Clapper said the U.S. and North Korea could "blunder" into global military conflict as they exchange escalating hostilities.

■ U.S. forces 'stand ready'

The White House said in statement early

on Saturday that U.S. military forces "stand ready" to safeguard Guam following North Korea's threat.

The statement added that Trump had "re-assured" Guam Governor Eddie Calvo that the U.S. military would "ensure the safety and security of the people of Guam, along with the rest of America."

The U.S. president also spoke with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping by phone to discuss rising tensions over North Korea, it said. "President Trump and President Xi agreed North Korea must stop its provocative and escalatory behavior."

Xi for his part urged Trump to avoid "words and deeds" that would "exacerbate" the already-tense situation and seek a political settlement to the standoff, according to the Chinese foreign ministry.

"Concerned parties must exercise restraint and avoid remarks and actions that escalate tensions on the Korean peninsula," it cited the Chinese president as saying.

Trump has called on China to pressure North Korea to halt its nuclear program. But China says it alone cannot compel Pyongyang to change course.

(Source: agencies)

East Asia economies, the first victims of a U.S.-Korean war

BY M.H. Goodarzi

Journalist

In recent days, the world has witnessed a rise in verbal tensions between North Korea and the United States. The tensions between North Korea and the United States have always existed since the Korean War in the 1950s, but the rising tension, which began with North Korea's missile tests about two months ago, appears to be new. Now the risk of a war on the Korean Peninsula has risen more than ever.

In fact, the reason for the tough tone of North Korean officials is because of new sanctions on the country's weak economy by the United Nations Security Council, and somewhat blocking some of its foreign exchange earnings. A large portion of the North Korean revenues comes mainly from exports of products such as coal to China. This has led North Korean officials to develop their nuclear and ballistic programs.

On the other side, Donald Trump is following a foreign policy quite different from his predecessor Barack Obama. The departure of the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement, limiting the entry of six countries' nationals to the United States, the withdrawal of the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the launch of a missile attack on Syria can be seen as evidences of the difference between Trump and Obama. Trump's remarks in response to Pyongyang's threats about targeting Guam seem to show that the Republican president is reckless enough to start a military conflict with North Korea.

However, the conflict between the United States and North Korea will automatically bring South Korea into play. In fact, one of the war scenarios between the United States and North Korea could begin with North Korea's invasion of South Korea. This would lead to the U.S. reaction as a Seoul ally, and a total war on the Korean Peninsula would take place after more than 60 years. The war could even lead to a change in the North Korean system.

In addition to the irreparable damage that can be inflicted on the affected countries, the outbreak of the conflict can seriously affect the East Asian economies. The war situation in the region will be more costly for South Korea. The closure of the merchant route from Busan port will cause problems in exporting Korean goods and will greatly affect the economy of the country.

North Korean attacks from air and ground on a large scale will destroy the resources and infrastructure in South Korea, which, even in the case of short-term warfare, it will take a long time to compensate.

The traffic congestion in Eastern Asia can cause a lot of problems for other countries in the region, especially Indonesia, Malaysia and China due to their particular shape and island status. In this context, the role of China is very important for other Asian countries, especially in Central Asia and the Middle East, because of its breadth and access to other parts of Asia.

However, given the current situation, it seems that the United States and North Korea are as far away as possible to avoid getting entangled in a war which its results are not clear; and in the coming days the two countries may agree to find a way to avoid war although Kim Jong-Un and Donald Trump are unpredictable leaders.

IMIDRO
IRANIAN MINES AND MINING INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT
AND RENOVATION ORGANIZATION

شرکت توسعه منابع انرژی بر پارسیان جنوب
S.P.E.I.D.C
South Parsian Energy Intensive
Industrial Development Company



Request for Proposal Construction of Power Plant, Substations and Transmission Lines in PEISEZ Based on Build, Operate, Own (BOO)

South parsian Energy-intensive Industrial Development Company, intends to invite and pre-qualify investors and assess the qualifications of investors for financing, management, engineering design, construction operations, maintenance, commissioning, procurement, installation and operation of power plant and transmission facilities with the following specifications:

- Installation and operation of power plant and transmission facilities in PEISEZ based on BOO
- Tender authority: Parsian Jonoub Energy-intensive Industrial Development Company
- Total installed capacity: 4300 MW
- Commercial operation period: 30 years
- Land allocation: annual lease
- Price: maximum rates equal to Ministry of Power rates
- Technology applied: Priority with combined cycle, co-generation of heat and power
- Priority selection of bidders: Parties that do not seek guaranteed power, water and steam purchase
- Project is based on BOO
- Project location: Parsian Energy-intensive Industries Special Economic Zone in Hormozgan Province, City of Parsian
- Capacity phases:

Planned Schedule	Total Installed Capacity (MW)
20/03/2020	500
20/03/2025	1000
20/03/2028	2000
20/03/2031	4300

Parsian Jonoub Energy-intensive Industrial Development Company hereby invites all investors with financial & technical resources and appropriate executive background to purchase the qualification document (RFQ) within a maximum of 30 days from the date of this advertisement from the address below:

Address:
Rah Shahr Consulting Engineers
No. 3, Hoshyar Alley, Dr. Shahidi St., Haghani Expressway, Vanak Sq., Tehran, Iran
Tel: +98 21 8217 2240 Fax: +98 21 8888 3868

Syria liberates last ISIL stronghold in Homs

The Syrian army and its allied forces have flushed out the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists from their last stronghold in Syria's sprawling central province of Homs.

Syrian media reported on Saturday that the key town of al-Sukhna had been completely purged of ISIL terrorists.

Footage that circulated on social media showed Syrian soldiers firing celebratory gunfire and showed the terrorists' deserted arms caches and hideouts in the town.

Sukhna is some 50 kilometers away from the border separating Homs from the neighboring Dayr al-Zawr Province. The latter is the last territory in the country where ISIL maintains relatively substantive presence.

The government has also had its forces enter Dayr al-Zawr from the south.

Separately, Press TV's Syria correspondent Mohamad Ali reported from the northwestern city of Suwayda that the army had managed to reach the border with Jordan for the first time since 2011, when militancy began in Syria.

The successful operations liberated a 30-kilometer-long stretch of land along the frontier.

Press TV's reporter said the government had now regained control over many border outposts and blocked militant infiltration points on the common border.

The Syrian army liberated the northwestern city of Aleppo late last year, delivering the heaviest blow to the militants since the onset of the crisis.

(Source: SANA)

NEWS IN BRIEF



ICCIMA to dispatch trade delegation to Croatia next month

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) will send a trade delegation to Croatia from September 20 to 22, ICCIMA portal announced.

The delegation to be led by ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafe'i will comprise businessmen active in tourism, ship building, foodstuff, wood industries, energy, petrochemicals, medical and pharmaceutical industries, banking and insurance, information and communication technology (ICT), construction, railway and car industries.



Istanbul to host exclusive exhibition of Iranian goods in late Oct.

ECONOMY TEHRAN — CNREXPO Istanbul will host exclusive exhibition of Iranian goods from October 25 to 28, ILNA reported on Saturday.

The exhibition will be held by Iran International Exhibition Company, a state-run body running under the country's Ministry of Industry.

As reported, companies active in a wide range of fields such as energy, oil and gas, petrochemicals, auto and auto parts, air industry, food, agricultural products, mining industry, building materials, home appliances, banking services, tourism, textile, transportation and etc. are to take part in the event.

Iran and Turkey plan to boost their trade cooperation and increase their bilateral trade volume up to \$30 billion per annum and by holding such exhibitions the two countries try to hit the set target.

August, when all the traders take off and drama hits the markets

By Oliver Renick, Brian Chappatta, and Liz McCormick

Maybe people should pick another month to go away. Again it's August and markets are teetering, this time as President Donald Trump threatens war on North Korea. No more sleepy VIX, no more tiny swings in stocks and junk bonds, good-bye to \$500 billion from global equities.

Tom di Galoma said he'd be at work this weekend except he's flying to Argentina, leaving others to staff desks if needed at Seaport Global Holdings, where he's a managing director. At Advisors Asset Management in Monument, Colorado, Scott Colyer says nobody's break has been canceled -- yet. Asked what the market will be looking at next week, Guy Lebas is succinct.

"Vacation," says the chief fixed-income strategist at Janney Montgomery Scott in Philadelphia. "We'll probably take our cue from the geopolitical drama, which is almost impossible to trade from a practical point. But nonetheless it will be a bigger driver at this point."

You wouldn't know it from today, but it's been just about the worst week all year. European stocks fell the most since Trump's election and U.S. junk bonds had the biggest drop since March. Turbulence surged, pushing the CBOE Volatility Index up 50 percent and briefly above 16 for only the second time in 2017.

Playground game

"We're trying not to do any fear-trading," Colyer said. "I'm not sure people are taking these threats very seriously because North Korea has been making them for years. We have a president who maybe likes to play the playground double-dare game but the underlying pinnings to the market are incredibly strong."

Why is August so rough? For equities, it's the worst month for volatility, with the VIX rising an average 12 percent over its 31 days. In 2011, the S&P 500 alternated between gains and losses of at least 4 percent for four days in August, something never seen in 88 years of data. Two years ago the S&P 500 posted its worst six-day drop since 2011.

Ernie Cecilia, the chief investment officer at Bryn Mawr Trust in Pennsylvania, says valuation in the stock market is on the minds of clients as much as war. It's a dicey time now that earnings season is over, not much fundamental news breaks and the Federal Reserve is unwinding. He's glued to his screens.

"This is a 24-7 business, we're all connected. Ask my wife and she'll say, 'Oh, you're working again,'" Cecilia said. "There's always a risk of headlines coming into the weekend that won't be well received by the market and the risk of that is growing. We're dialed in, but we're not nervous."

Bunker building

Even though this week's volatility pales in comparison to past Augusts, it's harder than ever to get a break from it these days, says Richard Sichel, senior investment adviser at Philadelphia Trust Co.

"If I could do away with anything it'd be the tweeting," Sichel said by phone. "We already have a 24-hour news cycle and the middle of the night tweets by the President have exacerbated that. I'm sure all the proper diplomacy is taking place but the tweeting does create higher tension."

It's also created a whiff of gallows humor.

"I'd better start building my bunker," Ian Winer, director of equities at Wedbush Securities Inc. in Los Angeles, said jokingly when asked about his weekend plans. The truth: "I'm going to relax on the beach. We're not seeing anybody de-risk their portfolios because they're worried."

Joe Sowin, head of global equity trading at Highland Capital Management in Dallas, said discussions of geopolitical risk have become more frequent, but the firm hasn't made any major shift in its portfolios. The uptrend in equities is still intact, and with the VIX where it is, the market looks OK to him.

"There is still no immediate sign of U.S. planning an attack," Sowin said. "I have a trading system at home that I can log in to. Will I be logging in Sunday evening? Yes. Do I expect large swings in the market Sunday night? No."

(Source: Bloomberg)

Norway's DNO submits Iran's oilfield development study results

ENERGY TEHRAN — The Norwegian oil and gas company, DNO, submitted the results of its study on development of Changouleh oilfield in western Iran to Iranian National Oil Company (NIOC) on Saturday, Shana reported.

The Norwegian company, which is focused on the Middle East-North Africa region and the North Sea, had signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with NIOC for conducting development study on the oilfield in last November.

In a meeting held in Tehran to submit the study results, Jeroen Regtien, the chief operating officer of DNO, said: "After signing the MOU in last November we set up an expert team and tried to offer an innovative plan for development of this oilfield."

NIOC Deputy Managing Director for Engineering and Development Gholamreza Manouchehri for his part expressed hope that this study project will lead to more cooperation between the two companies.

Changouleh, discovered in 1999 but never developed, is estimated to hold more than two billion barrels of oil-in-place.

Iran has signed MOUs also with Thailand's state-run PTTEP and Russia's Gazprom Neft in last December on conducting development study on this field.



DNO Chief Operating Officer Jeroen Regtien (R) submitting results of development study on Iran's Changouleh oilfield to NIOC Deputy Managing Director for Engineering and Development Gholamreza Manouchehri

Iran's SEO, India's SEBI ink MOU on bilateral co-op

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on mutual cooperation and technical assistance.

The MOU was signed by SEBI Chairman Ajay Tyagi and SEO Head Shapour Mohammadi in Mumbai on August 10, the official website of SEBI announced.

The objective of the MOU is to strengthen cross-border cooperation in the area of securities regulations. It will facilitate mutual assistance, contribute towards efficient performance of the supervisory functions, and enable effective enforcement of laws and regulations governing the securities markets.

Also as IRNA reported on Saturday, based on this MOU Iran's bitumen to be sold to India though a protocol to be finalized between the mercantile exchange bodies of the two countries. It will delete the brokers and bring more clarity in setting the price.

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SEO Head Shapour Mohammadi (R) and SEBI Chairman Ajay Tyagi shaking hand after signing a co-op MOU in Mumbai

Tehran hosting 1,278 companies in intl. building expo

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's 17th International Exhibition of Building and Construction Industry (Iran Confair 2017), with participation of 1,278 Iranian and foreign companies, started operation on Saturday.

According to IRNA, some 887 Iranian and 391 foreign companies are taking part in the four-day event, which

is going on at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, IRNA reported.

Being inaugurated in the presence of Iran's Minister of Labor and Welfare Ali Rabiee, Iran Confair is attended by 31 countries across the globe including Spain, Italy, Germany, England, Canada, Austria, Ukraine, Belgium, Portugal, Taiwan, Denmark, and Russia.

Iran to hold exclusive food exhibit in Qatar in mid-Sept.

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's International Exhibition Company is to hold an exclusive exhibition on Iran's foodstuff in Qatar in mid-September, IIRB news reported on Saturday.

As reported, the exhibition will kick off on September 10 and will wrap up on September 13 in the capital city of the Arab country, Doha.

After some Persian Gulf Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia cut relations with Doha on June 5, Iran started to ship fruits and vegetables to the country.

"We will continue sending such cargos while there is still request from the Qatari side," Iran Air spokesman Shahrokh Nooshabadi said at the time.

Modest rise in U.S. consumer prices may delay Fed rate hike

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — U.S. consumer prices rose slightly in July as higher food costs were partly offset by falling prices for a range of other goods, suggesting benign inflation that could persuade a cautious Federal Reserve to delay raising interest rates until December.

But with the labor market near full employment and economic growth accelerating, analysts expect the U.S. central bank will announce a plan to start unwinding its massive bond portfolio at its policy meeting next month.

"We believe the Fed will focus on the balance sheet in September, foregoing another rate hike until December," said James Bohnaker, an economist at IHS Markit in Lexington, Massachusetts. "The inflation outlook will not change drastically anytime soon."

The Labor Department said its Consumer Price Index edged up 0.1 percent last month after being unchanged in June. That lifted the year-on-year increase in the CPI to 1.7 percent from 1.6 percent in June.

Economists had forecast the CPI rising 0.2 percent in July and climbing 1.8 percent

year-on-year.

Stripping out the volatile food and energy components, consumer prices gained 0.1 percent for the fourth straight month. The so-called core CPI rose 1.7 percent in the 12 months through July and has now increased by that margin for three consecutive months.

Despite the modest gain in consumer prices, which came on the heels of a drop in producer prices in July, many economists continue to share the Fed's conviction that transitory factors were holding back inflation.

Fed Chair Janet Yellen told lawmakers last month that "some special factors," including prices for mobile phone plans and prescription drugs, were partly responsible for the low inflation readings. Mobile phone prices continued to decline in July, falling 0.3 percent.

Prices of U.S. government debt initially rose on the inflation data, but pared gains after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said there was a Russian-Chinese plan to defuse tensions between the United States and North Korea.

The dollar .DXY was trading lower

against a basket of currencies, while U.S. stocks rose.

Fed's Conundrum

The Fed has a 2 percent inflation target and tracks a measure that has been stuck at 1.5 percent since May.

Inflation remains tame despite a tightening labor market, a conundrum for the central bank as it contemplates tightening monetary policy further.

The Fed is expected to outline a program to start offloading its \$4.2 trillion portfolio of Treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities at its Sept. 19-20 policy meeting.

It is expected to raise interest rates in December, though such a move would depend on future inflation data. The Fed has raised borrowing costs twice this year.

"One-time factors that have slowed inflation will gradually dissipate," said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial Services in Pittsburgh. "Stronger wage growth as businesses compete for scarce workers will also contribute to higher inflation in the second half of this year and in 2018."

Food prices rose 0.2 percent last

month, driven by a surge in the cost of meat, fish, eggs, fruits and vegetables. Food prices were unchanged in June. The cost of food consumed at home increased 0.2 percent.

Consumers also paid more for prescription drugs, whose prices jumped 1.3 percent after increasing 1.0 percent in June. Prices for apparel rose 0.3 percent after four straight monthly declines. While gasoline prices were unchanged after tumbling 2.8 percent in June, electricity prices rose 0.4 percent.

Rental costs maintained their upward trend last month. Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence rose 0.3 percent after advancing by the same margin in June.

The cost of new motor vehicles fell 0.5 percent, the biggest drop since August 2009 and the sixth consecutive monthly decline, amid slumping demand.

Low inflation is a relief for many Americans who have seen their paychecks barely increase in recent years. In another report, the Labor Department said inflation-adjusted average hourly earnings increased 0.7 percent in the 12 months through July, slowing from June's 0.9 percent gain.

Dollars ends week on soft note as inflation report disappoints

The dollar finished the week in the red on the back of weak July inflation figures, as well as new comments earlier Friday from President Trump warning North Korea against threatening the U.S. or its allies.

The President continued that America's military forces were "locked and loaded" in case of an armed conflict.

The consumer-price index climbed 1.7% on the year versus expectations of 1.8% and the June figure of 1.6%. Core inflation excluding food and energy came in at 1.7%, in line with estimates and June numbers.

The ICE Dollar Index DXY, -0.34% which measures the greenback against a basket of six rival currencies, dipped into negative territory following the data release, but picked up some steam, sliding to 93.0840, down from 93.460 earlier on Friday. On the week, the index shed 0.4%.

Low inflation numbers have kept investors as well as the Federal Reserve on their toes, as disappointing numbers weighed on the possibility that the Fed could raise interest rates again or more aggressively.

The bearish reading today "could be another major blow to the dollar's outlook," according to Konstantinos Anthis, researcher at ADS Securities, before the inflation release. "Unfortunately for dollar bulls today's inflation report is more of a risk event for the buck rather than an opportunity to pick up pace."

A softer reading would mean fresh trouble as it would remind investors that inflation remains well below Fed's tar-



get and suggest that a December rate hike might not be that likely after all," he said.

"The dollar had picked up over the past days amidst the scramble for safety," Neil Mellor, chief currency strategist at BNY Mellon said, adding that the winning streak was brought to an end by the disappointing CPI numbers earlier that gave way to a stronger euro.

The euro EURUSD, +0.4162% spiked on the back of the release, buying \$1.1821, up from \$1.1774 late Thursday in New York, while the pound GBPUSD, +0.2543% briefly jumped to \$1.3009, compared with \$1.2978 on Thursday. Both currency pairs retreated from their initial highs earlier on Friday. On the week, the euro gained 0.4% against the buck, while sterling dipped 0.3%.

The euro EURGBP, +0.1543% also continued to strengthen against the Brexit-ridden pound, with one euro buying £0.9088, compared with £0.907 late on Thursday. Brexit refers to Britain's exit from the Europe Union. This week, the euro gained 9.5% versus the pound.

"Sterling is under an enormous amount of pressure," Mellor said. "We've seen very few [euro-pound] closes at this level."

The pair was last in £0.9 territory in November 2016. The OECD outlook said the U.K. was en route for slowing growth earlier this week as uncertainties about the post-Brexit economy remain.

Aside from U.S. data, the tensions between U.S. and North Korea remained a key focal point. President Donald Trump raised the stakes on Thursday, saying his earlier threat to unleash "fire and fury" on North Korea "maybe wasn't tough enough."

Additionally, China weighed in on the standoff, warning in an editorial in state-run Global Times that Beijing will intervene if the U.S. strikes first against North Korea.

That helped to push up currencies perceived as safer assets, like the Japanese yen and Swiss franc. The dollar US-DJPY, -0.01% fetched ¥109.18, slightly up from ¥109.20 on Thursday, while the Swiss franc CHFUSD, +0.0832% bought \$1.0393, up from \$1.0389. The dollar-yen pair lost 1.4% this week, and the franc added 1.1% over the same period.

(Source: The Marketwatch)

Moallem Insurance Company Holds Grand Marketing Conference in Tehran



Moallem Insurance Company (MIC) held a huge international conference on Thursday and Friday with about 800 agencies from across the country and many other invitees.

In his opening speech, MIC CEO Mohammad Ebrahim Tahsiri said the company has named the current fiscal year one for marketing development and customer satisfaction as a show of care for customers.

During the two-day event, Paul Archer and Markus Kramer taught the audience successful marketing and branding techniques.

Paul Archer is a specialist in selling and helps clients to improve their sales, their sales coaching and improve customer engagement. He has worked with clients who want to boost production from their B2B sales teams, their face to face B2C teams, telephone based inside sales teams. He is a Master Practitioner in NLP, a qualified sales coach, author and a member of the Professional Speaking Association. His style is energetic and inspiring and

all of his workshops and events are packed full of practical sales ideas that can be used the very next day.

Kramer has more than two decades of expertise in helping Aston Martin (Global Chief Marketing Officer), Harley-Davidson (Marketing Director EMEA), Ferrari (Consulting) as well as companies such as Mazda and Honda to take their fascinating brands to more people in more places around the world.

MIC WAS established in 1994 with a prior registered name of "Export and Investment Insurance Company (EIIC)" with participation and partnership of insurance industry of Iran and banking system for the purpose of developing export activities and providing credit insurance coverage against available risks. After assignment of main part of the share of the "export and investment insurance company (EIIC)" and in the bases of shareholder's decision making, the name of company changed to "Moallem insurance company (MIC) In July 2007.



Interview with Paul Archer:

Q: Is it your first time in Iran?

A: I have been here on a few occasions. The first visit was ten years ago. Which was business and then I came back a couple times after that as well. So I've been around, addressing a sales training sessions here in Iran and so we can move ahead to sales training itself.

Q: Do you think there are global standards to help better marketing that you would share with your Iranian audience or do you think local and cultural factors play a role?

A: Yes that's a great question and there's always gonna be cultural situations. Iran is a very unique. Some culture. Some people you work in a certain way so to bring in ideas from the UK, US, Western Europe they may not work.

We bring in some ideas on the net that you guys changed them adapt them make them what feel best with the culture.

But the other thing is which I'm beginning to learn more and more is we can then adapt our ideas to fit your culture. But again in the end of the day, it is a world we live in how individual countries anymore nearly embracing everybody else now in this globalization.

Q: Are you familiar with how successful marketing education has been in Iran? Do you think conferences are enough or do you think launching schools and institutes is necessary for a country like Iran?

A: Very good point again you making that I'm conferences. You can bring in somebody from abroad you pay flights and things is not going to bring the support that we can educate seven hundred people in the room. You can only get so much education done with seven hundred. The best thing to do is to allow teachers in Iran to be educated in the same areas that we are, so what we call train the trainer.



Interview with Markus Kramer:

Q: Is it your first time in Iran?

A: I've been here four times. Yeah, there have been similar events as well.

Q: Do you think there are global standards to help better marketing that you would share with your Iranian audience or do you think local and cultural factors play a role?

A: I'm going to say two things here, and one is yes there are global concepts. That their Iranian colleagues in their marketing can learn. So there are concepts that the Iranian colleagues in marketing should know in general. Businesses can benefit from what predecessors have passed down.

The second thing I would also ask them not to make the mistakes that many brands have done, they don't have anything to waste. There's a lot to be learned from predecessors, frame-

works and how to create desirability. I think you have an opportunity not to repeat the mistakes.

Competition is not okay to the point where you start to make promises and then don't deliver on it. It will result in the loss of trust.

And if you have to be the team to do it is built businesses with integrity in your cultural context. Use it as an advantage. Nothing worse than losing trust. At the end the customer doesn't trust you because you have promised too many things and it happens a lot in the West. So that's one of the things I would recommend. Be careful not to repeat that mistake.

Q: Are you familiar with how successful marketing education has been in Iran? Do you think conferences are enough or do you think launching schools and institutes is necessary for a country like Iran?

A: Actually conferences convey the things that is needed to be known. Yeah. Here people in Iran need to know the business.

As for conferences like this, yeah well firstly I think it's a great way. And to bring up the audience the notion that education in this particular field. Can be a big enabler I think. Absolutely the right thing to do.

Dr. Tahsiri Reveals:

■ Unification Plan Underway for All Offices of Moallem Insurance Company



The grand marketing gathering of Moallem Insurance Company was kicked off in the presence of more than 770 representatives and supervisors of Moallem Insurance Company.

Dr. Tahsiri Chief Executive of Moallem Insurance Company was the first speaker who welcomed participants and said: "Naming this year after marketing development and increasing satisfaction of customers indicate the significance of insurance industry."

He called on insurance activists of the country to make their utmost efforts in line with attracting and penetrating into the insurance market independently.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he also revealed the unification plan for all offices at Moallem Insurance Company.

Turning to post-sanctions era, he said: "After the landmark nuclear deal inked between Iran and P5+1, giant steps were taken in the country, so that IRISL managed to be linked to the international shipping system in a way that the company succeeded in receiving insurance coverage, worth \$1 billion."

Q: What areas has MIC been more successful than others?

A: We have good packages in all areas. In latest ranking we came eighth. We have devised our policies to make improvements in all areas

Q: Most important strategy for B2B and B2C services?

A: Right now we have a number of certificates at the international level. We want to go forward in all areas and cover as much as we can. We are developing our baskets in a unified way in order to have suitable offers for all customers.

Senior Advisor to Managing Director of Moallem Insurance Company:

■ Public Relations Dept. Is Considered as Manifestation of Brand of Organization



Taking advantage of existing capacities and capabilities, Moallem Insurance Company has rolled its sleeves in order to get lion's share at the insurance market of country.

Hashemi, senior advisor to the managing director of Moallem Insurance Company announced the above statement on the sidelines of 1st grand marketing gathering of Moallem Insurance Company, attended by the chief executive of IRISL, senior offi-

cial of Cultural Activists Reserve Fund, senior managers of the Central Insurance of Iran.

Turning to the important activity of Public Relations Department, he said: "Public Relations Department in any organizing is a clear manifestation of function of any economic enterprise which can establish cooperation and interaction with other companies."

In response to a question on the most important development in insurance marketing, he said: "The most important development in marketing is this that we should be able to say new statement. If an organization could induce insurance packages and creative ideas to its representatives with organizing conferences, it naturally will be able to attract potential addresses."

It is about five years that the company has managed to organize sales and marketing workshops for its representatives, he maintained.

In the end, he said: "Public Relations Dept. of any organization is so important that it can establish interaction with the other companies and organizations in line with materializing most objectives."

■ Representatives of Moallem Insurance Co. to Be Graded



From now onwards, representatives of Moallem Insurance Company will be ranked according to the actualization of sales, collection of demands and claims, ratio of compensation and indemnity, risk management, etc.

Kaveh Ghazi, Market Development and Planning Deputy Office of Moallem Insurance Company announced the above statement on the sidelines of grand marketing gathering of Moallem Insurance Company which was held in IRIB Conferences Center in the presence of both domestic and foreign insurance activists.

It is a matter of regret to say that Moallem Insurance Company has not deservedly been progressed in both sales and marketing network, he said, adding: "Effective steps have been taken in this regard in order to promote level of the company in the country"

Moallem Insurance Company should be ranked among top five insurance companies in the country, he said, adding: "For this purpose, the company should strengthen its sales and marketing sector."

In the end, he said: "Moallem Insurance Company intends to hold a series of sales festival for its sales representatives, based on which, efficient and competent representatives will be provided with incentives."

■ Insurance Industry Lags behind Effective Influence in Economy



Maintaining and strengthening the country's reliance capacity within the framework of resistance economy for the establishment of equilibrium in acceptance and transfer of reinsurances is of the other important strategic programs of the insurance industry.

Mohammad Saeedi Chairman of the Board of Directors and Managing Director of Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) announced the above statement.

Speaking at the 1st grand gathering of marketing of Moallem Insurance Company, he said: "Insurance industry has always been considered as one of the development indicators in the country and companies affiliated to this industry, as one of the most important economic enterprises, can backup and support other institutions."

Undoubtedly, insurance industry plays an important role in boosting and booming economy of the country, he said, adding: "Undoubtedly, country will incur irreparable damage in abnegation of insurance industry."

Today, integration of global markets has greatly helped improve financial markets and the insurance industry is not exception to this rule, so that this industry has progressed very rapidly, he maintained.

Unfortunately, insurance industry of the country, as compared with the situation of insurance in other parts of world, does not have a desirable situation and effective planning should be made in this regard, he observed.

On the other hand, the significant gap of this industry with the average global level indicates that insurance industry of the country has not been developed deservedly, he said, adding: "Given the above issue, it can be said that insurance industry of the country has lagged behind the influential penetration to the active arenas in the field of industry and economy."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director of IRISL said: "In sea sector, lack of familiarity of Iranian insurers to the risks and hazards related to the marine transport operation and protocols related to the sea security and also active presence of foreign insurance companies of country as well as lack of inclination of insurance companies and the insured to fulfill direct negotiations with the companies active in the field of marine transport fields caused that foreign insurance companies took over and surpassed Iranian rivals in the field of presenting full insurance coverage to their customers."

In other words, international sanctions imposed on Iran also incurred irreparable damage to the backbone of Iran's insurance industry greatly, he highlighted.

Presently, we have managed to clinch separate agreements at the unsparing efforts of responsible insurance officials in the country, he opined.

■ Marketing, Principle of Competition Game: Alipour



Marketing skills determine the rule of competition game in today's world.

Seyyed Mohammad Alipour Secretary General of Iranian Insurers Syndicate announced the above statement and said: "Marketing skills determine the rule of competition in the contemporary world of

today."

"We need to be smart about the market and this will be achieved if we equip ourselves with the latest scientific knowledge of the world," he maintained.

He pointed to the highlights of marketing skill in contemporary world of today as follows:

- Speed of information flow requires to be smart in our business.

- Effective marketing requires having good knowledge of self, environment, our product and also requirement of customer.

- Marketing is not just the task of one unit in an organization, rather, all units of the organization should regulate their activity with the marketing considerations.

- Consecutive evaluation is of smart requirements in marketing.

- Marketing is the rule of competition game.

- Undoubtedly, the insurance companies will succeed in their activity which avoid unprincipled competitions.

■ Moallem Insurance Company Pays 23.30% Dividend



Moallem Insurance Company deposited equivalent to 23.30 percent dividend to the account of the insured individuals of life and investment insurance in the current Iranian calendar year in 1395 (ended March 20, 2017).

Saeed Givehchi Manager of Moallem Insurance Company for Life Insurance announced the above statement.

Speaking on the sidelines of Grand Marketing Seminar of Moallem Insurance Company, which was held in the presence of international professors and lecturers at the Conferences Hall of IRIB Center, said: "Before announcing the topmost life insurances, it should announce that you are the deserved and honorable individuals for this insurance company."

Giant steps have been taken in Moallem Insurance Company, he said, adding: "Partnership in interests of the company for the insured of the life and investment insurances in the past Iranian calendar year in 1395 (ended March 20, 2017) has been taken into consideration."

Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God and at the unsparing support of senior managers of the company, "we managed to pay suitable insurance premium for the sixth consecutive year to the holders of life insurances of the company," he maintained.

According to the regulations, approved in the Central Insurance of Iran (CII), 16, 13 and 10 percent insurance premium has been determined in the 1st, 2nd and 4th years respectively.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the manager of the company added: "Benefitted from the most experienced and expert financial deputy office, Moallem Insurance Company managed to take advantage of opportunities and distribute 7.30 percent more than the guaranteed dividend among the insured individuals."

With due observance to the said issue, Moallem Insurance Company managed to pay dividend as much as 23.30 percent to the reserve account of the insured individuals registered in life and invest-

ment insurance, he said, adding: "Accordingly, the SMS if depositing dividend will be sent to the attention of all the insured individuals."

Moallem Insurance Company has managed to pay the maximum actual dividend to the insured among other insurance companies, Givehchi added.

■ Vice Chairman of Board of Directors: Calling for Strengthening Marketing System in Moallem Insurance Company



In the past, 85 percent of insurance market was at the disposal of the government but now, the share has reached to 40 percent.

Dr. Kord Zanganeh Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Moallem Insurance Company announced the above statement on the sidelines of organizing the grand marketing gathering of the company and said: "Effective training and educational programs have been considered at the company. Approaches should be changed. Under such circumstances, the company will be promoted deservedly."

As mentioned in above, public sector was ruling insurance market of the country while share of private sector was negligible in this regard, he maintained.

In the end, he said: "Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, the company will have active presence in the international markets."

■ Planning Deputy of Educationalists Reserve Fund Praises Salient Performance of Moallem Insurance Co.



In a grand marketing seminar of Moallem Insurance Company, held in IRIB Conferences Hall, Dr. Saeed Na'eb Planning Deputy and Development of Educationalists Reserve Fund expressed his special thanks on the unsparing and unflinching efforts of chief executive and members of the Board of Directors of Moallem Insurance Company.

He voiced readiness of his company to broaden cooperation and collaboration with Moallem Insurance Company.

This Fund covers 90% of educationalists and cultural activists in the country, he said, adding: "With its 842 active members, the Fund is considered as a linking bridge with 13 million students."

In the end, he said: "Benefitted from the most experienced manpower, the insurance company could present insurance services to a great number of people in the country."

Libya's pleas for Italian help unlikely to solve migration issue

By Justin Salhani

In attempts to face down the myriad militias in the fractured country that is modern Libya, the UN-recognized government of Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj is looking to partner with one of its former colonial occupiers: Italy.

The Sarraj-led government has communicated with Italian authorities in an attempt to counter human smugglers, but the fragile government is being forced to walk a very fine line between accepting much-needed international assistance and upsetting its population.

"Starting in 1911, and particularly in the 1930s, Italy's actions on Libyan soil were hideous," Jalel Harchaoui, a Ph.D. candidate in geopolitics at Paris 8 University and a frequent commentator on Libyan affairs, told Al-Monitor. "And it is true that one century is a short amount of time for those types of historical memories. The latter are still vivid in Libyan minds, no question about it."

Italy colonized Libya in 1911 and stayed in the country until 1947. Their stay was largely defined by Italy's fascist regime that committed a number of atrocities, starting with a massacre in Tripoli, the capital, in 1911. During this period, Italy also persecuted Arabs, Berbers and Jews in North Africa.

Recalling Italy's troubled colonial history has also morphed into a tactic for figures competing with Sarraj for control of Libyan territory. Gen. Khalifa Hifter, who controls large swathes of Libya's eastern territory and is primarily backed by Egypt, has tried to turn the Libyan population against Sarraj using this tactic.

Libya's legitimate representatives

It has forced Sarraj to engage in doublespeak at times. Sarraj and Hifter both claim to be Libya's legitimate representatives and have held peace talks in Paris as recently as July. Sarraj, who enjoys UN legitimacy, wrote a letter to Italy on July 23. In it, he requested Italian assistance in stopping refugees and migrants from boarding ships from Libya to Italy. The Italians duly accepted Sarraj's request. Only five days later, however, Sarraj denied he ever requested Italian naval ships to enter Libyan waters, according to Stratfor website. "Later that same day, al-Sarraj and the Italian Interior Minister Marco Minniti discussed possible Italian assistance and managed to overcome domestic resistance in Libya," Stratfor reported.

"[Stopping the boats to Europe] is clearly not a priority for the Libyans, and it explains why the Italian naval mission can be used by people like Hifter to make some propaganda and delegitimize Sarraj as the puppet of the former colonizers," Mattia Toaldo, a Libya expert and policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, told Al-Monitor. "So Sarraj is in a difficult place: He needs to give Italy something in exchange for the legitimacy that he receives from Rome as from no other capital, but he can't be appearing to give in to foreign demands."

Migrant issue

Italy has a national election next year, and the so-called "migrant issue" could be a major election swing. So far this year, more than 94,000 new arrivals have landed on Italy's shores. The number surpasses figures for 2016 and 2015, according to the International Organization for Migration. Should the current government stop new arrivals from coming, it could be a major boost to the ruling Democrat Party led by Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni.

But it could also backfire, as groups like Human Rights Watch (HRW) have warned Italy that it could be implicated in human rights abuses. "The Italian navy deployment in Libyan waters could effectively lead to arbitrary detention of people in abusive conditions," said Judith Sunderland, HRW's Europe and Central Asia associate director. "After years of saving lives at sea, Italy is preparing to help Libyan forces who are known to detain people in conditions that expose them to a real risk of torture, sexual violence and forced labor."

At least one security expert said the European Union should form a naval rescue unit for migrants and refugees. "The root causes of migration have to be addressed on the ground; there is no way around it," Sebastian Bruns, the head of the Center for Maritime Strategy and Security at the Institute for Security Policy at the University of Kiel, said in an interview with German outlet Deutsche Welle. "All the efforts produced by the marine units, private NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] or Frontex are merely fighting the symptoms."

The Libyans, meanwhile, want to curb migration to Italy because most refugees and migrants pay fees to smugglers. The refugees and migrants also directly or indirectly via smugglers pay militias for safe passage. The money bolsters these militias, who are outside of the government's control. Effectively, the road to Europe through Libya is funding Libyan instability.

"Smugglers and the informal economy are the 'anti-state' in Libya: They thrive on the illicit trade of government-subsidized goods and with their militias block the building of a modern state," Toaldo said. "With this respect, anyone who fights against the smugglers will find allies in Libya. The problem is that, despite the official rhetoric, it is very clear that Italy's and Europe's interests in Libya are more immediate: Curb migration flows."

The Libyan government of Sarraj seems to believe that Italian naval vessels will deter future attempts to get to Italy. But even if that happens to be the case, Libya still has a major issue on its hands.

"Paradoxically, this balancing act will be even more complex should the current policy manage to curb flows," said Toaldo. "From the Italian point of view, this could be a game changer and bring the flows gradually close to zero, but from the Libyan point of view, this creates two problems: What's to be done with the migrants who get stuck in Libya? Secondly, what will the smugglers do if they stop irregular migration? Their other activities are petrol smuggling and drugs and arms trafficking. But many in Europe think that we will cross that bridge when we get there."

Libya is walking a fine line. On the one hand, they would do well to take power out of the hands of smugglers and local militias. But, as history has shown, European assistance is often self-serving, and in an election year, Italy may not be looking for sustainable solutions in their former colony.

(Source: Al Monitor)

We're all about to die in a third world war caused by Trump and Kim

By Mark Steel

If we're to cease as a species in nuclear destruction, it will at least be heartening to know that it was caused by two of the most ridiculous people who ever lived.

Science fiction stories in which the world ends usually involve ferocious dictators who stand on tanks and roar about mighty empires, but this will be like getting wiped out by Keith Chegwin and the bloke off the Yorkshire Broadband advert.

It's as if we found out the dinosaurs didn't become extinct because of a massive meteor striking the Earth, but when a clumsy stegosaurus got his fin caught in a tree, and all the others tripped over him and couldn't get back up again.

Trump's team are good at the threats, so his Defense Secretary James Mattis said if North Korea doesn't comply with American demands, it will face the "end of their regime and destruction of its people".

So not only will they kill the entire population, but they'll end the regime as well, even if the sneaky North Koreans try to keep the regime going without any people by putting squirrels in charge.

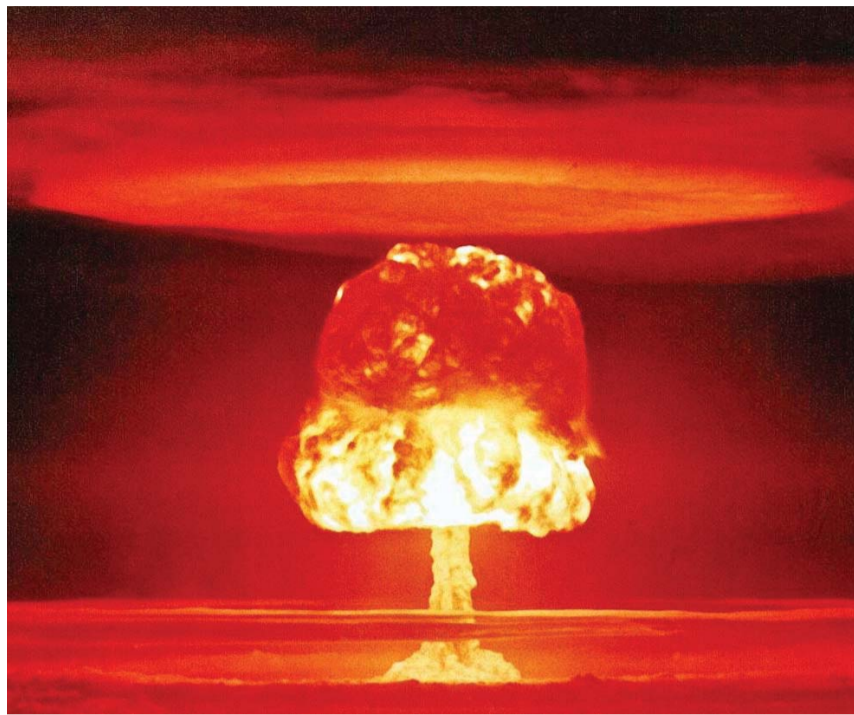
The North Koreans retaliated by saying: "This is extremely getting on the nerves of the artillerymen of the army." So this is another side of our annihilation we can look forward to: the North Korean press statements will sound like the instructions you get with a Korean kettle.

We'll be told North Korea's Great Leader has issued an ultimatum to U.S. forces that goes: "Place army unit persons much here and there but not here to prevent loading capsule B engaging much with exploding sprocket."

Trump's own speech was to warn of "fire and fury", and a "devastating onslaught, the likes of which the world has never seen".

Cage-fighters advertising

This isn't a political conflict; it's the press conference of cage-fighters advertising their title fight. Next week Trump and Kim Jong-un will be behind a desk wearing shades as Trump screams: "I'm gonna whack your goddam North Korean ass, fat boy, your north side ain't never



Trump's learning the presidential trick of picking global fights with people he describes as evil when he wasn't bothered about their existence a few months ago.

gonna meet your south side again, you'll be split along every one of your 38 parallels, you pussy!"

And Kim Jong-un will shout back: "When we place bombing module D to radioaction sprinkle Alaska destruction, then smiling wiped off orange face!"

Then security guards will hold them both back and we'll be reminded we can watch the whole event, known as "Judgment Day", for £11.95 on pay-per-view.

In Trump's defense, many people have grumbled that he hasn't been behaving like a proper U.S. president, and that by threatening a war at exactly the same time as his popularity has plummeted, he's doing exactly what all the others do.

To become truly presidential, he'd have to launch a war against North Ko-

rea for not scrapping its missiles, then it would have to turn out they didn't have any in the first place.

He's learning the presidential trick of picking global fights with people he describes as evil when he wasn't bothered about their existence a few months ago. Before his election he said he had little interest in North Korea, and was annoyed that the U.S. was paying for bases in South Korea and "getting nothing back".

To be fair, it sounds as if he wasn't certain why a country has military bases, and called the army in to tell them: "We've spent billions on aeroplanes and guns and you haven't shown a profit once in 50 years. Put a golf course on that aircraft carrier or I'll shut you down."

One of the difficulties is, because the

U.S. has told so many stories in the past to justify a war, there's no way of knowing how much of what they say about North Korea's nuclear weapons is true.

Trump told us in April: "We are sending an armada. Very powerful." But this armada turned out to be travelling away from North Korea, which doesn't carry quite the same threat. If Trump had been in charge of the D-Day landings, he'd have assembled all the ships on the South Coast, and then instead of heading for France, asked the navy to carry the boats inland to Croydon.

Maybe he'll do this with nuclear missiles, putting out a tweet that says: "Bad dictators very bad! We launch huge missile big explosions. Amazing! Fabulous!" Then he'll blow up a cats' home in Florida.

So we're told the North Koreans can now send their missiles "halfway round the world". Is that accurate? If it is, this is a real worry because with a three-dimensional object such as the Earth, if you can go halfway round the world, that means you can bomb anywhere in the world - doesn't it? What would be the point in developing a missile that could go all the way round the world, unless the North Korean plan is to send them right round the Earth to back where they started and bomb themselves?

The Pentagon has also told us the missiles will be ready "by the middle of the month". So they're not ready yet but will be by next Tuesday. They must be putting in a digital radio and an air fresher as these ones are the deluxe models.

According to the news we receive, however, half their missiles have been duds. It's possible the North Korean missiles can only be launched if they're stood up at the end of a garden in a milk bottle.

When he became President, Trump said: "I would be prepared to talk one-on-one with Kim Jong-un", and the main hope must be that they do this, and agree to a swap. Every six months, we in the West get the Great Leader, and they get Trump. No one will notice the difference, and we'll all live happily in peace.

(Source: Independent)

Angela Merkel's secret to election success

By Nina Schick

Political upset and change -- the twin themes dominating Western politics of late -- have led to Britain's voting to leave the EU, the election of Donald Trump and, most recently, in Emmanuel Macron's ascendancy to the Elysée Palace in France.

Anything but the status quo everywhere, it seems. Well, nearly everywhere.

Six weeks ahead of Germany's national elections, Chancellor Angela Merkel launches her bid for reelection this weekend in Dortmund, a small city in Germany's industrial heartland and the country's most populous state.

Unlike other deeply polarizing elections in Europe (and the U.S.), don't expect this one to get too heated. There will be no fire and brimstone from Merkel: she will run a calm -- maybe even bland -- campaign.

Posters for Merkel's Christian Democratic Party (CDU) give a hint as to what's likely to follow. "Enjoy the summer now, and make the right choice in the fall," one of them tells voters, with a picture of a smiling young woman lying in a field.

So can Merkel be stopped?

It seems unlikely. She has won seven straight votes since she was first elected to parliament in 1990. And she will almost certainly win a fourth term as Chancellor in September, marking over a decade in power, and bucking the trend seen in other Western liberal democracies.

Her most recent approval rating, released on Thursday by Infratest Dimap, suggests that a whopping 59% of Germans think that "Mutti" is doing a good job. Other leaders would kill for numbers like these. For Merkel, there's room for improvement: it's 10% down from last month.

What about her competition? At the moment it looks likely it'll be blown out of the water.

Martin Schulz -- leader of the center-left Social Dem-



What's Merkel's big secret? Being Angela Merkel. That means staying cool, calm and pragmatic, even in the face of the most difficult circumstances.

ocratic Party (SPD) and former president of the European Parliament -- promised to shake things up when he entered the political fray earlier this year, hoping to unseat Merkel.

At first his campaign dealt in emotional political rhetoric and seemed to be making headway. Column inches were filled with articles about "the Schulz Effect" as the SPD was neck-and-neck with Merkel's CDU in some polls.

And then it fell flat. The SPD made big losses in three regional elections that serve as bellwether of the national vote, including a painful defeat in North-Rhine-Westphalia, a traditional SPD heartland and the state that Dortmund happens to call home.

The task ahead seems nearly impossible now for the SPD. "The SPD is Burning," read an editorial in the respected German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* last week.

What's Merkel's big secret? Being Angela Merkel.

That means staying cool, calm and pragmatic, even in the face of the most difficult circumstances. Don't forget that she has weathered numerous crises in the last few years.

At the height of the eurozone crisis (remember those tense hours ahead of the 2015 "Greferendum," when Yanis Varoufakis jetted back and forth to Brussels, and it looked like Greece would be thrown out of the common currency?) it was Merkel who spent political capital to keep the bloc together.

Then there was the Ukraine crisis -- catalyzed by Russian President Vladimir Putin's particularly boisterous brand of nationalism -- which saw Merkel take the lead in placing EU sanctions on Moscow, despite Germany's close economic links to Russia.

Merkel's biggest "wobble" came during the 2015 migration crisis, when over a million refugees and asylum seekers came to Germany, forcing temporary border controls and heated public debate, domestically as well as internationally. As her approval ratings tumbled, some (mostly Anglo-Saxon) commentators were overzealous in predicting her imminent demise and the hijacking of German politics by the right-wing and anti-immigrant AfD party.

And yet, she persisted, telling Germans that "we will manage."

And that's the thing: they believe her -- much to the disbelief of some political observers. In this increasingly unstable world, German voters want their capable manager to remain in post. They want her to protect what matters to them most: the economy, and the European Union.

And in Germany there is no cause for great alarm. The economy is doing well, unemployment is at a low, and even the refugee crisis seems to have abated (for now).

Germans don't want a political revolution. So why would they take a risk?

(Source: CNN)

Democracy is Rwanda's losing candidate

Paul Kagame has held the reins of power in Rwanda since 1994, when his forces ousted the Hutu-led government that oversaw the slaughter of 800,000 Tutsis and others.

Since that bloody beginning, Kagame's notable success in turning Rwanda around has raised hopes among not only his supporters but Western governments that, beyond healing divisions at home, he could be a ray of hope in a continent long troubled by authoritarian rulers.

But his election to a third term last week with a ludicrous 99 percent of the vote, against two opponents, is further evidence that despite Kagame's achieve-

ments, he has all the makings of yet another strongman going through the motions of democracy.

Rwanda's political opposition is all but eliminated, its news media silenced. The United States State Department cited "irregularities observed during voting" on Aug. 4. Elections in Rwanda have become little more than rubber stamps for Kagame's perpetual presidency. Kagame has done everything possible to make sure balloting "will just be a formality," as he put it last month. And a 2015 constitutional amendment paves the way for Kagame to remain in office until 2034.

Unlike others in Africa who use simi-

lar tactics to stay in power, Kagame has delivered real progress -- economic growth, reductions in poverty and maternal mortality, progress in education and a business-friendly environment with low corruption and low crime.

Some of those gains may be exaggerated, however, and lower crime levels have come at a terrible price.

Last month, Human Rights Watch published an alarming report on the summary executions of suspected petty thieves by the Rwandan military, police, security units and even civilians encouraged by local authorities. Rwanda knows too well what can happen when the rule

of law breaks down and citizens take justice into their own hands.

Meanwhile, world leaders have also been lulled into willful amnesia concerning the mass killings of Hutus in Congo in which Kagame's forces were implicated after he took power.

His supporters abroad do Rwanda's people no good by remaining silent on Kagame's authoritarian behavior, with citizens fearful to speak their minds, run for political office or go about their business. As well as the country is doing, the dark side of Kagame's success story makes Rwanda no model for the developing world.

(Source: The NYT)

Gaza three years after the war: Ten critical observations

By Mohammed Samhour

Three years ago this summer, on July 8, Israel launched the deadliest attack on the Hamas-run Gaza Strip; the third in less than six years. The war lasted 51 days on end and left in its wake an unprecedented human carnage and caused massive destruction to Gaza's already frail economy and failing infrastructure. Three years later, Gaza has not recovered. If anything, things have gotten worse; much worse. So grave Gaza conditions are at present that the U.N.—which in 2012 warned that unless urgent actions are taken to reverse course, the whole place could be “unlivable” by the year 2020—has lamented in a new report that the situation has deteriorated faster than previously projected, and Gaza has already passed the threshold of “unlivability.”

Below are ten critical observations on the ever-deepening crisis that has engulfed the Gaza Strip for over a decade now.

1. Three years after the war, the main underlying factors that brought all aspects of life in Gaza to a near breaking point on the eve of the last war—namely, the suffocating Israeli blockade, now entering its 11th year; the intra-Palestinian political rift; and the prolonged closure of Egypt-controlled Rafah crossing—continue to wreak havoc and cause mounting hardships. Worse, post-war attempts to give Gaza a breathing space all failed to provide the much-needed respite: donor-funded reconstruction, despite reported progress in the rebuilding of destroyed houses and infrastructure, is still running behind schedule; reconciliation talks to bridge the Palestinian chasm are going nowhere; and the Palestinian Government of National Consensus (formed just few weeks before the war) is still unable to govern in Gaza. Hamas, on the other hand, despite its current political and financial misfortune caused mainly by changes in regional political dynamics, is still



in de facto control in Gaza.

2. Donors are still not fully delivering on the pledges made at the October 2014 Cairo Conference on Reconstructing Gaza three years after the war. Israel continues to restrict/delay the entry of the much-needed construction (and other) materials through its application of the vaguely-defined “dual-use list” system, where a large number of goods are viewed as having both civilian and military use. The largely inefficient and much criticized Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism—brokered by the U.N. to facilitate post-war rebuilding—had made rebuilding efforts more complicated. By the end of 2016, the latest data available suggests that only half of the \$3.5 billion donor pledges have been disbursed, with close to two-thirds of the disbursed funds allocated outside recovery and reconstruction plans as defined by the \$3.875 billion Palestinian

government's Detailed Need Assessment program. As a result, the program remains grossly underfunded. Today, 33,000 people who had their homes totally destroyed by the war continue to be internally displaced, and over 6,700 of severely destroyed houses still lie in ruins.

3. The statistics on socioeconomic conditions in Gaza are very bleak and alarmingly troubling. More families are languishing in poverty which currently consumes 39 percent of the population, increasingly becoming food insecure, and relying more and more for their basic survival on foreign handouts which at present sustain 80 percent (or 1.6 million) of Gaza population. More adults, especially the educated youth, are joining the already long unemployment lines, desperately looking for jobs that do not exist. At 41 percent overall jobless rate, with youth unemployment estimated near 60 percent, the situation is extremely precarious. More worryingly still, international efforts to sustain the unsustainable in Gaza are proven difficult to succeed, with conditions deteriorating at a much faster rate than the ability of donor funds to halt their downward spiral.

4. Basic infrastructure in Gaza is currently on the verge of a total collapse. Power blackouts are hovering around 20 hours a day due to largely politicized electricity shortages that severely disrupt the provision of all vital public services, and further frustrate the recovery of an economy buffeted by three wars and a devastating blockade. Over 95 percent of groundwater in Gaza is unfit for human drinking, and is only available for six to eight hours every three to five days. Approximately 110 million liters (110,000 cubic meters) of raw and partially treated sewage are poured daily into the Mediterranean Sea, contaminating 73 percent of Gaza's 42 km (26 miles) coast. Donor-funded projects to rehabilitate Gaza's crumbling infrastructure are routine-

ly delayed, either due to insufficient funds or to problems emanating from continued Israeli restrictions on the entry of technical experts, essential equipment and parts; or both.

5. Gaza's two million people, meanwhile, are growing annually by 3.3 percent. Over 65 percent of the population is under the age of 25. Its labor force is increasing by 4.5 percent a year, with an estimated 35,000 young adults entering annually the job market; a number that is expected to go even higher each year due to the young nature of Gaza population. The economy, however, is not creating jobs, and has been virtually stagnant since 2006; with average annual real G.D.P. growth over the 2006-2016 period not exceeding 1.44 percent. Real per capita income in Gaza, as a result, has been on a declining path since 2006. Output growth of at least five percent a

Syria faces new threat: Al Qaeda affiliate Hayat Tahir al-Sham seeks to unite radical terrorist formations

By Anna Jaunger

While the Syrian Arab Army backed by allied forces is conducting a successful counter-terrorism operation along the Euphrates River, Al Qaeda Hayat Tahir al-Sham continues to strengthen in the south of the province of Idlib. And furthermore, the militants intend to become ‘moderate opposition’.

This is confirmed by the fact that nowadays Hayat Tahir al-Sham fighters are campaigning to unite all radical formations of the province under its authority.

According to sources of Inside Syria Media Center, several large radical organizations Idlib have already joined Hayat Tahir Al-Sham.

On August 3, 2017, the representatives of Hizb al-Islami al-Turkistani, the Turkistan Islamic Party in Syria,

agreed on temporary cooperation with Hayat Tahir al-Sham in the city of Jisr al-Shughur.

Besides, leaders of Suqour al-Sham also signed an agreement on cooperation with Hayat Tahir al-Sham at the meeting in the town of Ariha.

According to the Syrian Arab Army's High Command, most likely, this will be followed by a renaming of the extended terrorist group. According to it, this is necessary for militants to turn their terrorist group in a ‘moderate opposition group’. Such a rebranding will allow Hayat Tahir al-Sham fighters to participate in the political process in Syria.

It is also likely that if a state decides to support such a group openly, it may not fear accusations of links with terrorists, since assistance will be provided to a new “moderate” organization.



Three years after the war, Gaza remains a war-torn territory; a man-made disaster; an open-air prison, isolated and besieged from all sides. Its economy is crushed; its two million people are traumatized and abandoned; and its civilian infrastructure and basic services are largely dysfunctional.

year is thus needed just to absorb the new entrants to the job market. More G.D.P. growth will be required to reduce chronic unemployment, recoup lost income, and improve standards of living.

6. Gaza's private sector where jobs and income should be created, however, is currently incapacitated due to a crippling decade-long blockade, and the losses sustained during the war that caused extensive and widespread damage to its productive assets. Furthermore, one-third of Gaza's farm land, and more than half of its Oslo-agreed fishing waters—both are unilaterally declared by Israel as no-go/risk zones—are still off-limits to Gaza economic use. Severe restrictions on imports and exports have driven some Gaza firms out of business, forced others to relocate to neighboring Arab countries, while those that remained open are operating well below capacity. Isolated and cut off from supply chain, their fight to stay in business is compounded by chronic deficits in electricity, fuel, and water supplies, and by an odd regulatory environment caused by the decade-long internal Palestinian political split that looks increasingly permanent with each failed round of reconciliation talks.

7. Three years after the war, only 3 percent of the estimated \$602 million recovery needs of Gaza's private sector have been met; a sum that is too meager to launch the desperately needed economic upturn which remains an unattainable goal. Under Gaza's excessively harsh conditions, long term development is not even on the map. Worse still, incremental stopgap international interventions to save what remained of Gaza businesses after years of continued decline are hardly making a tangible dent in Gaza's private sector's grim conditions, except perhaps to maintain their basic survival, and to prevent or delay a total collapse of the battered economy.

8. Three years after the war, thus, Gaza remains a war-torn territory; a man-made disaster; an open-air prison, isolated and besieged from all sides. Its economy is crushed; its two million people are traumatized and abandoned; and its civilian infrastructure and basic services, both social (mainly healthcare and education) and physical (energy, water, and sanitation) are largely dysfunctional. For years, the international community has been providing Gaza with vital humanitarian assistance in an at-

tempt to mitigate the continued worsening of socioeconomic conditions and to help Gaza's trapped and impoverished population survive their predicament. And yet, crucial as foreign aid has been, Gaza living conditions continue to deteriorate much faster than expected, as the latest U.N. report made clear.

9. To pull Gaza back from the abyss, a fundamental change in policy is now urgently needed to address Gaza's deepening calamity; a new approach within which the short-term intervention measures, humanitarian or otherwise, represent only one component, not the whole gamut. In this alternative holistic approach, Gaza needs to be looked at as a strategic development project, not as a humanitarian burden. Given the scale of Gaza's ongoing predicament, continuing with the current failed approach is no longer possible, and will only lead to more hardships (read: higher unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity rates; more failing infrastructure; dwindling quality of basic social services, including education and healthcare; continued environmental degradation; and deepening institutional decay) with wider serious consequences on all fronts.

10. For any new approach to succeed, however, the overall political setting related to the Gaza question must be resolved, and the right conditions for recovery and long term development need to be put in place. Without this, nothing of a lasting positive impact can ever be achieved. Yet, very little has been done so far to address the underlying political/structural root causes of Gaza's continued misfortune (namely, the crippling Israeli blockade and the decade-long intra-Palestinian divide); and the prospects for that to happen any time soon do not look promising, either. Fast forward a few years down the road, trying to predict the future of the Gaza Strip under unchanging political conditions is certain to be an extremely unpleasant exercise. And when the U.N. is already warning of an impending implosion, then time is quickly running out—in fact, it has already run out. That should give all those with high stakes in the future of the embattled Palestinian coastal enclave, including the Palestinians themselves, a moment for a serious and moral pause. Unfortunately, we are not there yet.

(Source: Middle East Institute)

Why Saudi war on Yemen is seen as U.S. state terrorism

By Christina Lin

The U.S./Saudi war on Yemen is now in its third year, and the indiscriminate Saudi bombing campaign has destroyed much of the country's infrastructure, left thousands dead and millions starving in a man-made famine, and triggered a cholera epidemic that has infected almost half a million people.

On July 23, the International Committee of the Red Cross warned that more than 600,000 people were expected to contract cholera in Yemen this year.

Most Americans are not aware of their country's role in this war on the Middle East's poorest country, but the Yemenis know very well that Washington supplies the weapons and sponsors the Saudi bombing campaign responsible for their suffering. In the capital Sanaa, anti-American graffiti are plastered on walls throughout the city screaming “U.S.A kills Yemeni people,” and they see the war as not just as a Saudi war, but as a U.S. war on their country.

On July 19, the U.S. Public Broadcasting Service Program Frontline aired a brief documentary titled “Inside Yemen” to look at the impact of the war on the country. In May, a few days after the PBS crew arrived, there was a large demonstration in Sanaa called “Say No to American Terrorism”. The crew captured powerful images of people condemning U.S. aggression against their country.

According to the documentary, the rally was in response to the arrival of U.S. President Donald Trump in Riyadh, where he announced his intention to approve a U.S.\$110 billion arms package for the Saudis to continue their bombing campaign.

Saudi forces have targeted farms, food facilities, water infrastructure, marketplaces, and even the port of Hudaydah, where most of the humanitarian aid had been entering the country, and the Yemenis just want an end to the slaughter and destruction of their country. Nearly 19 million people require assistance, with 7 million facing famine.

The PBS crew noted that although the Yemenis could clearly see they were Americans, there was no hostility, as the population placed the blame not on them but on the U.S. government. One protester explained that he respected America, but the

Some members of the U.S. Congress have been actively shedding light on their country's complicity in this humanitarian disaster, spearheaded by Republican Senator Rand Paul, Democratic Senator Chris Murphy, and Ted Lieu, a Democratic congressman from California.

purpose of the rally was “to express our outrage against the United States policy”. Ordinary Yemenis just wanted the world to be aware of what is actually going on in their country.

Their cries have not gone unheeded. Some members of the U.S. Congress have been actively shedding light on their country's complicity in this humanitarian disaster, spearheaded by Republican Senator Rand Paul, Democratic Senator Chris Murphy, and Ted Lieu, a Democratic congressman from California.

On June 13, the Senate voted on a bipartisan bill to halt a new \$510 million arms package to Saudi Arabia, but it was defeated by a narrow margin of 53-47. Despite the loss, the vote reflected an increasing level of Senate opposition to

Saudi arms sales, compared with a similar measure in September last year that failed 71-27.

Back in September, while some members of Congress were convinced about their reasons for dissent, it seemed that the senators who approved the arms package were ignorant about what they were rubber-stamping or even knew much about Yemen.

For example, when asked why they voted against blocking the deal, some senators cited concern that the Strait of Hormuz would be threatened if Houthi rebels took over Yemen, apparently confusing Oman with Yemen. The Strait of Hormuz actually separates Iran and the Omani Peninsula, whereas Yemen is hundreds of kilometers to the southwest and borders the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Nonetheless, Senator Murphy was encouraged by the increasing dissent this June and noted:

“Today's vote total would have been unthinkable not long ago, but Congress is finally taking notice that Saudi Arabia is using U.S. munitions to deliberately hit civilian targets inside Yemen.”

Meanwhile, Rand Paul railed against senators “talking about making a buck while 17 million people are threatened with famine.”

Lieu, who since August 2016 has been protesting against U.S. complicity in Saudi war crimes, also recently issued a statement on the House of Representatives' passage of his amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2018. The Lieu amendment requires the Pentagon to report to Congress on whether Riyadh and coalition partners are abiding by their commitments in Yemen, and on July 14 the House finally voted to defund U.S. military support for the Saudi war on Yemen.

However, Yemen continues to collapse under the non-stop Saudi aerial bombardment, with Riyadh blocking access by journalists and humanitarian organizations.

Jamie McGoldrick, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator in Yemen, has warned that because of the lack of media coverage the UN had been unable to raise even 30% of the funding it needs to deal with the crisis.

While the devastation and famine in Yemen have been largely ignored in the U.S. press, the British Broadcasting Corporation on September 22, 2016, published an article and video that provided a small peek into the human misery and suffering, especially of Yemeni children.

Despite this, McGoldrick laments that “Yemen is very much a silent, forgotten, I would even say a purposefully forgotten emergency.” (Source: Asia Times)

On August 3, 2017, the representatives of Hizb al-Islami al-Turkistani, the Turkistan Islamic Party in Syria, agreed on temporary cooperation with Hayat Tahir al-Sham in the city of Jisr al-Shughur.

Trump's apocalyptic threats demand a moral case for disarmament

By Daniel José Camacho

Martin Luther King Jr once said: "When scientific power outruns moral power, we end up with guided missiles and misguided men." Now, it appears Donald Trump might be the man who makes us pay for our country's moral gap.

Trump has rekindled fears of war and nuclear strikes by threatening North Korea, saying: "They will be met with 'fire and fury' like the world has never seen." True to form, Trump's words flew out of his mouth without much thought or preparation. In turn, the North Korean government has threatened to fire missiles near the U.S. territory of Guam.

It's easy to understand why Trump is potentially one of the worst people to be in charge of our nation's nuclear codes. Yet the problem runs much deeper. Trump's apocalyptic threat is a reminder that we need to revive the moral argument for disarmament and against militarism.

If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, then the

road to this moment has been paved with the consensus of the foreign policy establishment. Both neocons and hawkish Democrats have pushed for an aggressive posture that has U.S. special operations forces operating in 137 countries. U.S. defense spending consistently dwarfs the rest of the world.

Approaching spiritual death

King also said: A "nation that continues year after year to spend more on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death." Based on our record, it looks like this nation has been beyond spiritually dead for some time.

Before Trump, the Obama administration brokered more weapons sales than any other administration since the World War II. Although Hillary Clinton campaigned on strong gun control, the state department under her leadership exhibited little restraint when it came to selling arms.

In this environment, it's not surprising that efforts for

nuclear disarmament have largely been abandoned. The former U.S. secretary of defense William Perry describes the ways in which progress in this area has been lost; now he, and many others, argue that the risk of nuclear catastrophe is greater today than during the Cold War.

King was someone who acutely understood the danger of American militarism and nuclear weapons. In his 1967 Christmas Sermon on Peace, he said: "If somebody doesn't bring an end to this suicidal thrust that we see in the world today, none of us are going to be around, because somebody's going to make the mistake through our senseless blundering of dropping a nuclear bomb somewhere."

Recovering King's political vision can help us today. He prophetically warned that there would be consequences for our country's "moral and spiritual lag" behind its material power. He saw all life as interrelated and caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.

King's moral framework understood that the stability of

our "world house" required a revolution of values. The tripartite and intersecting evils of racism, capitalism and militarism would not be dismantled if profit motives and property rights were considered more important than people and the planet. Trump's xenophobic policies, giveaways for the wealthy, and belligerent temperament exemplify this.

Violent conflicts and war

As long as war remains a business profiting a few, peace will remain a low priority. The problem is not simply Trump or the preceding presidential administrations, but an entire system that profits from violent conflicts and war.

The former president Dwight D Eisenhower understood this when he described the grave implications of the "military-industrial complex" in his 1961 farewell address. According to him: The "total influence - economic, political, even spiritual - (of an immense military establishment and arms industry) is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the federal government." **→13**

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How to speak up with confidence: 6 little-known secrets

By Faheem Omar

You had something to say, but as usual, nobody listened.

It's irritating, right?

They seemed to write you off the second you opened your mouth. Worse than that, they barely even acknowledged you were there.

And it happens every time.

You know you have great ideas and opinions worth listening to, but nobody ever seems to take you seriously. So half the time you don't even bother speaking up any longer, afraid you'll make a fool of yourself. Again.

You'd think the only way to get over it is to just accept reality and move on, right?

You'd be dead wrong!

Speaking up with confidence is a lot easier than you might think.

Just apply the following six tips to stop people from pushing the mute button on you ever again.

1. Stop trying to sound smart

Wanting to sound smart is perfectly natural – you'd definitely want to come across as someone who knows what they're talking about, right?

But many people mistakenly believe that to do so you need to whip out some cryptic jargons and complex words nobody's even heard of.

In the real world, you'd be surprised to know that people just want clarity.

Using language you're comfortable with helps you organize your flow of thoughts more easily, since you won't have to worry about which fancy synonym to use for this word or that word.

On the other hand, trying to find the right words to sound smart all the time will cause you to pause, hesitate, and even trip up while speaking.

2. Use criticism as your springboard

Nobody enjoys being criticized – it's harsh, painful, and most of the time uncalled for.

But if you want to make a lasting impression in a conversation, you must not back down the second someone deals some nasty verbal blows.

If you don't take it personally, criticism is a great opportunity to advance your argument.

I know what you're thinking – "Don't take it personally? Easier said than done," right?

Fortunately, a neat little process will help you handle it like a pro.

First and foremost, defuse the tension. You'll find that many times people just want to dish out insults disguised under constructive criticism purely to vent. You want to show your critic empathy and understanding by saying, "So what you're saying is (repeat



Using language you're comfortable with helps you organize your flow of thoughts more easily, since you won't have to worry about which fancy synonym to use for this word or that.

their criticism here)."

Now this is your opportunity to capitalize.

Follow up by saying, "I can see why you might think of it that way, but I probably haven't explained my point clearly." This gives you a second chance to advance your idea.

Lastly, you want to exit gracefully by expressing appreciation. A fair warning – you'll need a lot of guts to pull this off. Say something like, "Thanks for the feedback, though; it gives me some food for thought."

3. Give voice projection a go

Having to repeat what you said simply because you weren't loud enough can be quite a bother, and at times just plain awkward.

You'll often be left paralyzed with the fear that even after having repeated your words a second time with a louder voice, the other person's still giving you the I-still-didn't-hear-what-you-said look.

A practical exercise can help you avoid this situation.

Voice projection is simply imagining your listener twice as far away from you. You then adjust your voice volume to fit that imaginary scenario. Just be sure not to imagine your listener too far away; otherwise, you'll be screaming.

You'll need some time to fully master this practice, so you'll want to test it out with family or close friends first before applying it elsewhere.

4. Adopt a strong posture

It's no secret that the way you pose your body affects how confident others perceive you to be. But most people ignore the enormous impact posture can have on the way you feel about yourself.

Amy Cuddy has researched this phenomenon and explained how it works in her famous TED talk.

She asked one group of participants in her experiment to take a high-power pose before undergoing a stressful interview. The interviewer was an intimidating guy trained to keep his face blunt and emotionless throughout the whole thing – uncomfortable much?

The other group was asked to take powerless poses (i.e., slouched shoulders, folded arms, lowered head, etc.) before the interview.

She then took DNA swabs from the participants after the interview.

Results from the power posers showed a spike in testosterone levels – the hormone that makes you feel dominant and powerful. The powerless posers, however, showed increases in cortisol levels – the hormone that makes you more stress-reactive.

These internal changes that each group experienced are intriguing. The participants' sense of self-perception was directly affected after the interview despite faking their poses. So you may want to try out power posing even it feels unnatural to you.

5. Have a sip of water

This one may surprise you.

You'd assume, for the most part, that confidence is a mental concept and has sparingly few things physical to it.

But truth be told, you can do quite a few physically-oriented things to ramp up your confidence and get your ideas noticed, and moistening your throat is one of them.

The human voice is an amazing toolbox. If you use the tools correctly, you can craft amazing rhetoric. But like all tools, it needs good maintenance. And that's why you should always have a bottle of water with you.

The vocal cords can dry out quickly, especially in nerve-racking situations, and that often leads to a jittery voice – something you definitely want to avoid if you want to come across as confident.

6. Give your mouth a helping hand

I'm sure it must have happened to you – that awkward time you were wrestling to find the right words to convey your message, but then your mind gave up on you and left you feeling like an idiot.

Say goodbye to those days, and say hello to two convenient sidekicks that'll help you out of that sticky situation.

They've actually been with you the whole time, staying close at hand to repel your word-wrestling woes and keeping your communication fluency in a safe pair of hands.

Guessed it yet?

That's right. Your hands are your best sidekicks for your mouth.

Start using them while you talk to explain those tricky little ideas you just can't seem to find the right words to describe. You'll appeal to your listener's other sensory perceptions and give them a physical interpretation of your message.

Pretty handy, right?

Now voice your opinion, once and for all.

Having your opinions ignored all the time can hurt like a ton of bricks, especially when you know you've got ideas worth listening to.

But consistent application of these little-known techniques can definitely give that much-needed boost to making your mark in a conversation.

Imagine people paying attention to your confident voice the instant you open your mouth.

They're giving your input the respect and appreciation it deserves.

You know that whatever you'll say, you won't make a fool of yourself again. Pretty awesome, right?

If that's a scenario you'd like to make a reality, try applying these six points the next time you go to speak.

You might just disable those mute buttons permanently.

(Source: goodlifezen.com)

Can food really help you in preventing Alzheimer's?

For decades, doctors have been saying that what you eat affects the health and functionality of your heart. Today, there is more and more evidence showing that the same is true about the health and functionality of your brain. Research done at the Rush University Medical Center tested a diet plan the researchers created and named it the MIND diet may reduce the risks of Alzheimer's for individuals by 53%. The study showed that even patients who did not follow the diet perfectly but at least followed 60% of it reduced their risk of Alzheimer's disease by a third. Diet is one of the many factors that play a huge role into who gets a disease and who does not. While genetics, smoking, alcohol intake and exercises all play a role, diet is the most critical factor, and it needs to be taken seriously.

Another study published in the Alzheimer's and Dementia journal studied 900 people between the age of 58-98. The participants underwent numerous neurological tests and filled out a food questionnaire. The study found that patients who closely followed the MIND diet had cognitive functions of people who were eight years younger. So to answer the question, can foods help you prevent Alzheimer's? Yes, they can!

The MIND diet combines certain elements from diets that have been proven to work. MIND stands for Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay. This diet, however, differs from those two in a few ways that are significant and have been proven to be more effective in reducing the risks of Alzheimer's disease.

Leafy vegetables

MIND recommends that each person should serve themselves adequately with green leafy vegetables such as spinach, kale, and broccoli. The study found that these vegetables contain high levels of vitamin and C amongst other nutrients needed for a healthier brain. If you do not want to eat them daily, at least two servings a day will provide great brain benefits.

The study recommends that you consume a salad and at least one other type of vegetable, leafy or not, daily to enhance your brain's health.



You are what you eat, and your heart, skin and brain health will show if you have been eating healthy foods with the required nutrition.

Nuts

According to the MIND diet, nuts are incredibly important in brain health. They contain healthy fiber, fats, and antioxidants that help to lower bad cholesterol. In turn, you reduce your risks of getting heart diseases. Other than that, they contribute to keeping your brain and body active throughout the day and thus reducing the risks of Alzheimer's disease. Researchers recommend that you eat nuts at least five times each week.

Berries

These might be the only fruit that the diet recommends strongly. According to the scientists, blueberries have one of the most important proponents that are needed to protect your brain. When looking at the effect of food on cognitive health, berries have shown significant changes in the way people behave if they eat them twice a week. If you want to reduce the

risks of Alzheimer's disease in the long term, you need to ensure that you eat all types of berries regularly.

Beans

Whether you love them or not, you cannot do away with beans from your diet. Many researchers will tell you that these have high fiber and proteins level. If you are on a weight loss diet, these are great because they have low-calorie levels. They also have certain nutrients and vitamins that are critical for your brain's health. If you are looking to have better cognitive health when you are older, you need to ensure that you include beans in your diet at least three times a week.

Whole grains

Unlike processed grains, these are packed with nutrients that are critical for your brain to function properly. They do not contain chemicals or preservative and are therefore also beneficial in reducing the risk of certain types of cancers. In relation to reducing the Alzheimer's risks, these are what you need. In fact, the MIND diet deems them as crucial. One should ensure they get an adequate serving of whole grains at least three meals a day.

Fish

Both the Mediterranean diet and the MIND diet recommend that you take fish regularly. Fish contains omega three fats that are great for your brain's health. Care homes in Maidstone will usually recommend that you eat fish at least twice a week to keep your brain sharp and healthy. Unlike the Mediterranean diet, however, MIND does not recommend you eat fish every day. According to the researchers, twice a week is enough to keep your brain healthy and working.

Conclusion

Achieving optimum brain health is not rocket science. It mainly depends on what you choose to eat and how often you stick to a healthy diet. You are what you eat, and your heart, skin and brain health will show if you have been eating healthy foods with the required nutrition.

(Source: goodlifezen.com)

3 simple moves that fight knee and hip pain

By Jenna

If you're like us, you've probably never paid your ankles much attention. But it turns out they can make a big difference in how you feel. "Over the years, thanks to inactivity, our ankles tend to lose flexibility and range of motion," says Bruce Mack, cofounder of MBSC Thrive Functional Training.

When your ankles aren't able to achieve the 360-degree range of motion they're meant to, your knees (stabilizing joints that's main job is moving back and forward) are forced to take on side-to-side motion. "Not only can this cause pain in the knee itself, but when your knee is out of whack it can also lead to hip pain," says Mack. "Everything is connected. When a joint isn't working as it should, the rest of the body suffers."



Luckily, rehabbing those creaky ankles is incredibly simple. "Ankle mobility is something you can reprogram, kind of like software," says Mack.

Doing these 3 simple corrective movements at least 3 times a week can build your range of motion and increase flexibility.

1. Rocking Squat

Get into the bottom of a squat position with your feet shoulder width apart, hands together in front of your chest and elbows pressing against your inner knees. Lean your weight to one side (A), then rock back to the other side (B). Continue rocking side-to-side for 30 seconds.

2. 3-Point half kneeling mobility work

Start in a half-kneeling position in front of a wall (you can hold a foam roller for balance is needed), front knee bent at 90 degrees and over ankle (A). Keeping your front heel on the floor, lean your weight and hips forward until front knee touches the wall (B). Hold for 5 seconds, then return to starting position. Repeat the move 2 more times, first angling the knee to the right and then to the left.

3. Soft tissue work for bottom of feet with tennis ball

Grab a tennis ball and place it under your foot while in a standing position. Roll the tennis ball up and down the foot. When you find a sensitive area, hold the ball there for a few seconds and add a little more pressure with your body weight. Aim for 30-60 seconds on each foot.

(Source: prevention.com)

3 reasons that quarter-life crisis you're having right now is good for you

By Susie Moore

Being divorced at 23 is not very aspirational. Nor is it common. A decade ago, I was the only one in my peer group at that age with a failed marriage. But now, with the gift of hindsight, I can see that what felt like an unbearable experience was one of the greatest turning points of my life.

If you're in the middle of a crisis or feel a deep sense of discontent, you can take some solace in the fact that something good is very likely on the way. Here's why.

1. Contrast is useful.

A breakup. A fallout with a friend. Getting fired. What do these things show us? What we truly want. A bad relationship sparks our desire for a healthy, loving, constructive one. A fight or confrontation with a friend or colleague allows us to value peace in our day-to-day lives. Losing a job gives us an opportunity to consider what it is that will make us happy at the next stage in our career. Contrast inspires new, fresh exploration and desires.

2. Crisis demands evolution.

A few years ago my friend Di was hospitalized for exhaustion. No one was surprised (except her). She'd been traveling the world nonstop, opening new stores for the retail chain she worked for.

Often, the universe will do for us what we will not do for ourselves. An unexpected illness will halt our workaholic. We'll get laid off a job that's been chipping away at our soul for years. An argument with a roommate might fuel our confidence to live alone or even move to a new city. A crisis is often the cornerstone of anyone going to the next level in their lives.

In crisis, we are forced to pause. To reflect. To make a choice. Painful as it is, the story always ends with a fuller version of you. Nobody shrinks to new heights. We expand through struggle, because nothing good happens within our comfort zone.

3. You build resilience.

No one is excited to improve their resilience through suffering. I'm not in line for my next traumatic life experience to build my inner strength. But nobody escapes life without hard moments. And allowing that suffering to develop our inner strength and compassion is entirely up to us.

As Sheryl Sandberg says in her bestselling book *Option B*, "You are not born with a fixed amount of resilience. Like a muscle, you can build it up, draw on it when you need it. In that process, you will figure out who you really are—and you just might become the very best version of yourself."

There's nothing like a crisis to make us evaluate our lives. Spiritually speaking, suffering is our greatest teacher. Ask yourself, "What can I learn from this? What is this revealing to me?" And in your toughest moments of pain, "How can I see this situation differently?"

The fortune within the misfortune may arise sooner than you think. (Source: greatist.com)

Dagestani bank offers \$100m to Iran health tourism

TOURISM TEHRAN — Republic of Dagestan's Elbin Bank aims to invest \$100 million in Iran by constructing a health tourism township near the city of Ardebil in northwest of the country, IRNA reported on Friday.

Elbin Bank Managing Director Abdullah Amrov signed a preliminary agreement in Moscow on Thursday with Ali Lotfi, the representative of Ardebil Medical Sciences Housing Co-operative as the operator of the project.



People revel in a hot water spring near Sareyn in Ardebil province.

Under the agreement, a center named Taisiz Sabalan will be constructed in an area between Ardebil and the famous Sareyn spa hub, which is best known for its healing hot springs.

"We are willing to invest in Iran so that our customers will benefit from services of Taisiz Sabalan health center," Amrov was quoted as saying by IRNA.

"A delegation will be dispatched to Iran in the near future to lay the grounds for development of the project," he added.

Under another pact signed on the same day, Elbin Bank has been committed to promote handicrafts and other products made by units affiliated with the Welfare Organization of Iran through holding sales exhibitions at the bank.

Ardebil and its surrounding areas are also known for high-quality honey as well as a wide variety of handicrafts including carpets and rugs.

Undaunted by tensions, Chinese tourists flock into North Korea

DANDONG, China (Reuters) — Undeterred by escalating tensions between Pyongyang and Washington rattling nerves globally, a steady stream of tourists from China each morning passes through the immigration checkpoint at the border trading hub of Dandong.

Greeting them on the North Korean side are dozens of tour buses, collecting them for itineraries ranging from a day in neighboring Sinjiu to a week visiting North Korea's main cities, including the capital Pyongyang.

"We're curious. We want to see how they live," Xu Juan said on Thursday before crossing the Yalu River, which marks the border between the two countries. Xu was traveling with friends and family from Hangzhou, in eastern China.

"I just want the sense of nostalgia, to see a country that is poor, like (China was) when I was young," said a man in his early 50s, from Jilin province, declining to give his name.

Few expressed concern over the North's persistent missile tests in recent months, which led the United Nations Security Council on Saturday to impose tough new sanctions against Pyongyang.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Itsukushima Shinto Shrine

The Island of Itsukushima, in the Seto inland sea of Japan has been a holy place of Shintoism since the earliest times.

The first shrine buildings here were probably erected in the 6th century. The present shrine dates from the 13th century but is an accurate reflection of the 12th century construction style and was founded by the most powerful leader of the time, Taira no Kiyomori.

A UNESCO World Heritage site, the property covers 431.2 hectares on the Island of Itsukushima, and the buffer zone (2,634.3 ha) includes the rest of the island and part of the sea in front of Itsukushima-jinja.

The buildings of Itsukushima-jinja are in the general tradition of Japanese Shinto architecture, in which a mountain or natural object becomes the focus of religious belief to be worshipped from a shrine, generally constructed at the foot of the mountain.



People visit the gate of the Itsukushima-jinja in Japan at low tide.

The harmoniously arranged shrine buildings in the property are located on the sea and the scenery, with a trinity composed of the man-made architecture in the center, the sea in the foreground, and the mountains in the background, and have become recognized as a Japanese standard of beauty.

The sites reveal great artistic and technical skill and are unique among extant shrine buildings in Japan.

(Source: UNESCO)

Centuries-old caravanserais ceded to private sector

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Two centuries-old caravanserais in Semnan Province, north central Iran, were ceded to the private sector by auction late last week with the aim of making the best use of such centuries-old heritage sites, CHTN reported on Wednesday.

The caravanserais were handed over to private investors for a span of 20 years under contracts for restoration, maintenance and operation, said Hossein khajehbid-Derakhti who presides over the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department.

Named Damghan Shah Abbasi Caravanserai and Miyandasht Caravanserai, the properties are owned by the Revitalization and Utilization Fund for Historical Places (known by its Persian acronym Saabta).

A scheme initiated by the Saabta lays out opportunity for privately-owned businesses to run certain old structures in order to be maintained and repurposed into hotels, traditional restaurants or lodging places.



A view of Miyandasht Caravanserai in north central Iran

The country is home to many old mansions and historical buildings, which can buttress its budding tourism and hospitality sectors if managed appropriately and refurbished properly.

Iranian tourist arrivals to Russia rise 9% in H1

TOURISM TEHRAN — The number of Iranian travelers who visited Russia during the first half of 2017 has witnessed 9 percent year-on-year growth, according to Rostourism - Russia's Federal Agency for Tourism.

"The demand for trips to Russia has been growing all over the world. In the first six months of 2017, Chinese tourists made 32% more trips to Russia as compared to the same period in 2016. The number of trips made by Japanese tourists grew by 14%, while Iranian tourists made 9% more trips," TASS quoted Rostourism Chief Oleg Safonov as saying on Wednesday.

Roughly 67,000 Iranians visited Russia in 2016, a solid growth of 72 percent compared to a year earlier, Russia Beyond the Headlines reported in April.

On March 28, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his Russian



counterpart Vladimir Putin inked a visa-free agreement for tourist groups in Moscow. Based on the agreement tour groups of 5 to 50 people heading to Russia from Iran or vice versa will be granted a visa-free stay of up to 15 days.

Back in June, Iran's tourism chief Zahra Ahmadipour urged the need to achieve a balance between the inbound and outbound tourist flows that currently exist between the two neighboring countries.

Number of Iranian tourists in Turkey reaches 3-year high

According to statistics released by the Culture and Tourism Ministry regarding tourism over the last six months, the number of Iranian tourists in Turkey has exceeded 1 million, reaching the highest level in the last three years.

This figure is expected to exceed 2 million by the end of the year.

As the recession seen in Turkey's tourism sector begins to give way to dynamism, the statistics released by the Culture and Tourism Ministry point to the number of Russian and Arab tourists, as well as Iranians, increasing dramatically.

The number of tourists who came to Turkey from Iran in the past six months has exceeded 1 million, breaking a three-year record. Also, the number of Iranian tourists has soared by 17 percent compared to last year.

Secretary General Cetin Gurcun of the Turkish Travel Agencies Association (TURSAB) stated that Turkey is an important destination for Iranians, asserting that "Iranians feel very close to our

country because of our historical ties. This is especially due to the high-quality services provided in our hotels, which are held to the highest standards. Turkey has become a tourism paradise for people from Iran. Also, Iranians like to arrange travel plans with a wide range of agencies, travelling to Istanbul, Antalya and even to Van. It is expected that the number of Iranian tourists will continue to rise steadily and exceed 2 million. This figure will rise further when the problem regarding charter flights is resolved."

Van named favorite destination among Iranians
Necdet Takva, the president of the Van Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, "We have made Van attractive for Iranian tourists through promotional activities that we have carried out through coordination with tourism agencies in Iran. We know that 90 percent of the tourists that come to Van are Iranians.

(Source: Daily Sabah)

First Venice and Barcelona: now anti-tourism marches spread across Europe

With the continent sweltering under a heat-wave nicknamed Lucifer, tempers have been boiling over, too, as a wave of anti-tourism protests take place in some of Europe's most popular destinations.

Yet, as "tourism-phobia" becomes a feature of the summer, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has defended the sector, calling on local authorities to do more to manage growth in a sustainable manner.

The focal point for much of this has been Spain, which had a record 75.6 million tourists last year, including 17.8 million from the UK. In Barcelona, where tensions have been rising for years over the unchecked surge in visitors and impact of sites such as Airbnb on the local housing market, Arran,

the youth wing of the radical CUP (Popular Unity Candidacy), have been filmed slashing the tires of rental bicycles and a tour bus.

An Arran spokesperson told the BBC: "Today's model of tourism expels people from their neighborhoods and harms the environment." Spanish prime minister Mariano Rajoy described the group as "extremists".

There have also been protests in Mallorca and San Sebastián, where an anti-tourism march is planned for 17 August, to coincide with Semana Grande - a major festival of Basque culture.

Other demonstrations have taken place across southern Europe. Last month in Venice - which sees more than 20 million visitors



Messages against tourism in Oviedo, northern Spain.

(Photo: Alberto Morante/EPA)

a year and has just 55,000 residents - 2,000 locals marched through the city, voicing anger at rising rents and the impact of huge cruise ships and the pollution they cause to

the city's delicate environment.

Speaking to the Guardian, UNWTO secretary general Taleb Rifai said the rise in anti-tourist sentiment is "a very serious situation that needs to be addressed in a serious way". If managed correctly, he added, tourism can be the "best ally" to conservation, preservation and the community.

"It should not be given up for the sake of mismanagement," he said. "Ensuring that tourism is an enriching experience for visitors and hosts alike demands strong, sustainable tourism policies, practices and the engagement of national as well as local governments and administrations, private sector companies, local communities and tourists themselves." (Source: The Guardian)

How the heat in Europe is affecting travel

A relentless heat wave across much of Europe is making travel difficult and uncomfortable for hotel owners and their guests.

"There's been a high pressure dome reaching from Spain throughout Eastern Europe," said Jonathan Erdman, a senior digital meteorologist for the Weather Channel.

"It's been persistent with very little cloud cover and has been camped out over most of the summer in Spain, Italy, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia and Romania." The intensely hot weather, which began in Italy and the Balkans in the spring, has brought European temperatures to highs in the low 100s, dropping into the 80s only in the evening, he said.

The latest "State of the Climate" global report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, published in July, said that January to June was the hottest such period on record in parts of Western Europe, including Spain, Portugal, far southern France and Sicily. "According to Spain's meteorological agency, AEMET, a record high in the country was set on July 13 - 47.3 degrees Celsius [117.1 Fahrenheit] - in Montoro," Mr. Erdman said.

"The heat has gone on day after day after day in cities with lots of buildings and concrete and not many parks," said Mr. Erdman, who recently experienced it firsthand on a multicity European tour. "There's no break at night. You open a window hoping for a cool breeze, but you're standing in front of a hair dryer."

Nat Hake, from Denver, was recently in Berlin "in a very nice four-star hotel" but found the heat "fairly unbearable inside the rooms, which of course don't have AC."

"I knew that going in," he said. "But when I called to ask for a fan, the person at the front desk said, 'Yes, I know fans are standard in American hotels, but that's just not how it works here in Europe.'" Mr. Hake did not get a fan.

"I'm in my final leg of a six-week backpacking trip through the Balkans and Italy, 12 cities in eight countries. The heat is brutal!" Stephanie Craig, who lives in Philadelphia, said in an email.

"When I booked accommodations, I didn't consider air-conditioning," she said, "but I've been pleasantly surprised. Every hotel I've stayed at has had air-conditioning. Of the 12 hotels and hostels I've stayed in during the heat wave, nine had air-conditioning and two had enough fans for every room. Only one place did not have either available."

"The heat wave practically ruined my time in Venice, a city where it's either hard or expensive to escape the heat," she added. "I've been staying cool by doing more of my sightseeing in the early morning or evening, booking individualized walking tours where we can change plans at the last minute if we need to, and getting taxis when it's too hot to walk. Plus, tons of gelato."

"American travelers are accustomed to air-conditioning in the warmer months," said Chelsea Hudson, from Morristown, N.J. "I recently traveled to Athens, Greece, and I expected the weather to be warm. On our first couple of days there, the temperature reached 107 degrees. Even the Acropolis was closed due to the heat wave." Her hostel had air-conditioning units in its windows, "but because it was so hot and all guests were

running their units, we experienced power shortages. We got very lucky because a group of us were able to stay in the basement where it was extremely cool. With one fan, we were perfectly fine."

Hotel owners say they too are coping as best they can. Jaime Armero owns a nine-room hotel in Requiada, Spain, La Tejera de Fausto, built in a former tile factory that isn't air-conditioned. He relies instead on the building's two-foot-thick stone walls to insulate rooms from grueling temperatures.

"It's always hot in Spain," he said. "Our location is 3,000 feet up, so it gets really hot during the day, but the evenings are cool." At his home in Madrid, though, Mr. Armero relies on air-conditioning. "In Madrid it was nearly 104 degrees. You couldn't survive it without air-conditioning."

Ingrid Koeck, one of three owners of Torel Palace, a 28-room hotel in Lisbon, has been cooling down guests' rooms before they arrive.

"We have air-conditioning in all rooms and common areas, but we have two old buildings from the turn of the 19th century, so we have to take specific precautions," she said. "We also provide extra fans, close the shutters, offer plenty of cool water and have an outdoor pool."

She counsels her guests, already visiting a hilly city that requires much walking, to adjust by slowing down and touring in the cooler mornings or evenings. "It's already a challenge," she said, "and in this heat they can't manage. Take it easy! Sit down! It should be quality time. You don't want to need a holiday from your holiday."

(Source: The New York Times)

Scientists reveal how goldfish make alcohol to survive without oxygen

Scientists at the Universities of Oslo and Liverpool have uncovered the secret behind a goldfish's remarkable ability to produce alcohol as a way of surviving harsh winters beneath frozen lakes.

Humans and most other vertebrate animals die within a few minutes without oxygen. Yet goldfish and their wild relatives, crucian carp, can survive for days, even months, in oxygen-free water at the bottom of ice-covered ponds.

During this time, the fish are able to convert anaerobically produced lactic acid into ethanol, which then diffuses across their gills into the surrounding water and avoids a dangerous build-up of lactic acid in the body.

The molecular mechanism behind this highly unusual ability, which is unique among vertebrates and more commonly associated with brewer's yeast, has now been uncovered and is published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

■ Muscles of goldfish

The international team has shown that muscles of goldfish and crucian carp contain not just the usual one, but two sets of the proteins normally used to channel carbohydrates towards their breakdown within a cell's mitochondria - a key step for energy production.

While one set of these proteins ap-



pears very similar to that in other species, the second set is strongly activated by the absence of oxygen and shows a mutation that allows channeling of metabolic substrates to ethanol formation outside the mitochondria.

Further genetic analyses suggest that the two sets of proteins arose as part of a whole genome duplication event in a common ancestor of goldfish and crucian carp some 8 million years ago.

Dr. Michael Berenbrink, an evolutionary

Further genetic analyses suggest that the two sets of proteins arose as part of a whole genome duplication event in a common ancestor of goldfish and crucian carp some 8 million years ago.

physiologist at the University of Liverpool, said: "During their time in oxygen-free water in ice-covered ponds, which can last for several months in their northern European habitat, blood alcohol concentrations in crucian carp can reach more than 50 mg per 100 millilitres, which is above the drink drive limit in these countries."

■ Devoid of oxygen

"However, this is still a much better situation than filling up with lactic acid, which is the metabolic end product for other vertebrates, including humans, when devoid of oxygen."

Lead author Dr. Cathrine Elisabeth Fagernes, from the University of Oslo, said: "This research emphasizes the role of whole genome duplications in the evolution of biological novelty and the adaptation of species to previously inhospitable environments."

The "ethanol production allows the crucian carp to be the only fish species surviving and exploiting these harsh environments, thereby avoiding competition and escaping predation by other fish species with which they normally interact in better oxygenated waters."

"It's no wonder then that the crucian carp's cousin the goldfish is arguably one of the most resilient pets under human care."

(Source: *EurekAlert*)

Infant ape fossil skull illuminates humankind's remote past

The lemon-sized fossil skull of an infant nicknamed Alesi that inhabited a Kenyan forest about 13 million years ago is offering a peek at what the long-ago common ancestor of people and all modern apes may have looked like.

Scientists on Wednesday announced the discovery of the most complete extinct ape skull fossil ever found, allowing them to study such characteristics as its brain cavity, inner-ear structure and unerupted adult teeth beneath the roots of its baby teeth.

With its small snout, the skull resembles that of a gibbon, a small ape found in Asia. But the balance organ inside its inner ear differed from gibbons and suggested Alesi's species moved through trees more cautiously and had shorter arms than gibbons, which swing through trees with acrobatic ease.

■ Modern apes

The skull may answer a long-standing question about the origin of the lineage that led to people and modern apes such as chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans and gibbons, indicating their common ancestor evolved in Africa, not Eurasia, the scientists said.

Many fossils depict the evolution that has unfolded since the narrower lineage that led to people split from chimpanzees, our closest evolutionary cousins, 6 to 7 million years ago.

Our species, *Homo sapiens*, appeared approximately 300,000 years ago in Africa.

Fossils more than 10 million years old that could illuminate the evolution of the common ancestors of people and modern apes are rare, often just scrappy teeth and jaw bones.

■ Over the moon

"I appreciate just how difficult it is to find something like this. So when we found this, I was over the moon. I still am over the moon," said paleontologist Isaiah Nengo of New York-based Stony Brook University's Turkana Basin Institute and California's De Anza College.

The name Alesi derives from "ales," meaning "ancestor" in the local Turkana language.

It belonged to a new species called *Nyanzapithecus alesi* that was closely related to the common ancestor of people and modern apes although that ancestor likely was even older, University College London paleontolo-



gist Fred Spoor said.

Alesi's teeth and fully developed bony ear tubes showed its kinship to modern apes. Growth lines on the adult teeth showed Alesi was one year and four months old at death. The researchers, who could not determine its sex, said Alesi may have perished in a volcanic eruption.

(Source: *Reuters*)

NASA has big plans for AI on Mars and beyond

Imagine an interstellar probe where the spacecraft can pick its own orbit, take its own pictures, and send probes down to the surface of a far-away planet without human help. Or imagine a mission that hitchhikes on a comet, scanning the sky and picking out the most interesting targets among millions of locations without guidance from engineers back on Earth sitting in a control room.

These are two examples of how NASA hopes to use artificial intelligence. As far-fetched as the concept sounds, the agency is already using AI in missions on both Earth and Mars. And there are other missions in the works that could see AI exploring icy moons in search of life.

This bot-friendly future stands counter to some of the fuss in the press this past week, after Facebook shut down an experiment because two artificially intelligent bots began communicating in a shorthand language instead of English. Many in the media portrayed the bots as coming up with their own language.

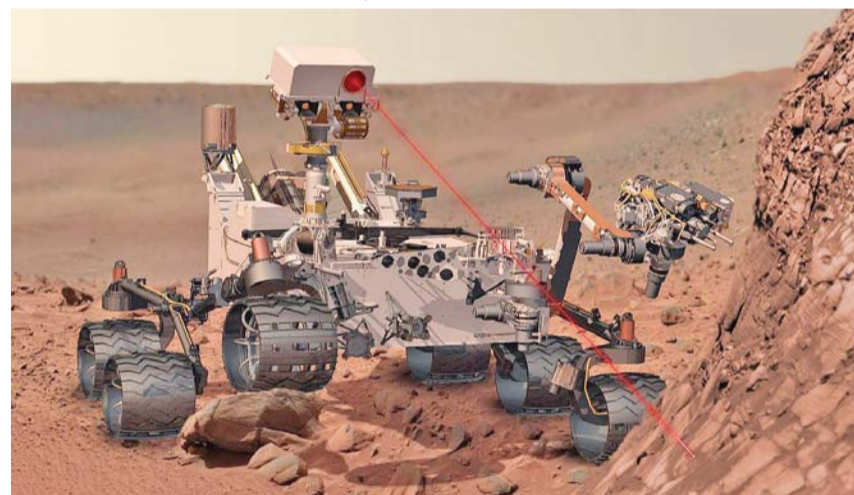
■ Reality more subtle

NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Steve Chien says that the reality is more sub-

tle: The bots were not rewarded for using English, so they just sought out the most efficient route possible to communicate with one another. NASA, he added, takes robot safety very seriously. Space station astronauts occasionally work alongside Robonaut 2, a simple machine that can flip switches and do other menial tasks. In the future, he said, NASA astronauts could work with more intelligent robots on Mars, with the robots scouting sites and telling humans the most interesting locations to survey.

"NASA is very risk-adverse [about crewed missions]," said Chien, who is technical group supervisor of the artificial intelligence group at JPL. "It's a high-profile mission, and with a crewed program there's even more of an obsession with safety than with robotic ones — as there should be."

When thinking of autonomous robots working in space, a person might recall scary examples from movies — HAL from "2001," for instance. But AI robots are already working in space, and these are all helpful bots — more like GERTY in the 2009 film "Moon," which works alongside astronaut Sam Bell on a lunar colony.



■ Mars rovers

Have you heard of NASA's Mars rovers? Well, they're equipped with artificial intelligence, which makes some decisions independently — a useful feature since communication between a rover and Earth might take 20 minutes because of the vast distance.

The most famous example is the Curios-

ity rover, which has an automatic targeting system that helps direct its cameras — and its laser — at rocks and other objects that the system considers worthy of inspection.

A more primitive version was installed on the older Opportunity and Spirit rovers — and Opportunity is still running 13 years after landing on Mars.

(Source: *seeker.com*)

'Breakthrough' penny-sized nanochip pad is able to regrow organs and heal injuries

Scientists have hailed a "breakthrough" technology capable of regrowing damaged organs and healing serious wounds with the single touch of a penny-sized pad.

The new device uses nanochips to reprogram skin cells which then generate any type of cell necessary for medical treatment.

The non-invasive procedure takes less than a second and in laboratory trials was found to restore the function of badly damaged blood vessels within days.

With this technology, we can convert skin cells into elements of any organ with just one touch

A small electric current then fires DNA into the skin cells, converting them into the specific building block cells of any other part of the body, such as arteries, or even organs like the heart.

■ Reconstructive surgery

It promises to transform the chances of patients in need of complex reconstructive surgery, as well as those whose organs are prematurely aging.

The U.S. researchers who created the technology say it could even be used as a weapon against neurological diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

They believe it will be possible to reprogram skin cells to harvest brain cells in a peripheral part of the body, such as the arm, which can then be injected into the brain.

The team at Ohio State University have successfully trialed TNT on pigs and mice, with a reported success rate of 98 percent.

In one experiment, blood flow in the severely injured leg of a mouse was restored in less than a week after the pad reprogrammed skin cells to create vascular cells.

"With this technology, we can convert skin cells into elements of any organ with just one touch," said Dr. Chandan Sen, who led the study.

■ Stem cell therapies

Unlike stem cell therapies, TNT would require no laboratory-based procedures ahead of use, meaning it

could be implemented in everyday healthcare setting, such as a GP surgery.

Because the new reprogrammed cells are produced under the guidance of the patient's own immune system, there is no need for the immunosuppressant drugs that can be necessary when biological matter is transplanted.

The technique relies both nanotechnology-based chips designed to deliver the genetic cargo to adult cells in the body, as well as the specific biological information which will determine how to "By using our novel nanochip technology, injured or compromised organs can be replaced," said Dr. Sen.

"We have shown that skin is a fertile land where we can grow the elements of any organ that is declining."

TNT extends the concept known as gene therapy, which has been known about for some time, however the big difference is how the DNA is delivered into the body.

(Source: *The Telegraph*)

The terrifying way our universe will end — and when

Our universe is racing toward its destruction as we speak. The end is not going to be especially pleasant, but when that end will happen is still a point of contention amongst cosmologists.

Everything has a beginning and an end — including our universe. But what will the end of everything we know look like, and when will it happen?

Let's start with the area we know best — our Solar System. One billion years from now the sun will be 10% brighter than it is today.

This will raise the surface temperature on Earth, causing oceans to evaporate faster, and extinguishing most, if not all, life on Earth.

Right now, the Milky Way galaxy is locked in a gravitational dance with a nearby galaxy called Andromeda. The two galaxies are racing toward each other at 250,000 mph and will collide less than 5 billion years from now.

From 5 to 8 billion years, the sun's nuclear furnace will undergo a dramatic shift, causing it to expand to enormous size and engulf Mercury, Venus, and possibly Earth. But our sun isn't the only thing expanding — so is the entire universe.

If the expansion continues to accelerate, then in 100 billion years, the gap between galaxies will be growing so fast that light from distant galaxies will no longer reach us.

(Source: *Business Insider*)

Researchers used CRISPR to manipulate the social activities of ants

Researchers hope to find out more about the biochemistry of disorders affecting socialization, having successfully provoked asocial behavior in ants.



Researchers have used the CRISPR technique to manipulate the social activities of ants for a study that will be published in *Cell*. Two independent teams knocked out the *orco* (odorant receptor coreceptor) gene in entire colonies of ants, which negated their ability to perceive pheromone signals they use to communicate.

Without those cues, they began to exhibit asocial behaviors like leaving the safety of the nest and declining to aid efforts to hunt for food.

Ants possess a whopping 350 genes for odorant receptors, but as they all need to liaise with the *orco* gene to be effective, they could all be knocked out at once. The two teams chose different ants based on two distinct strategies for proliferating this edit among the colony.

One group chose a species that has no queens, instead procreating using unfertilized eggs that mature as clones, producing ants that are genetically identical. CRISPR was used to edit lone eggs, which produced an entire colony with the desired modification.

Meanwhile, the other team of researchers selected a species known for an unusual trait that sees worker ants graduate to the role of egg-laying pseudoqueen in the event that the former queen dies.

The social interactions of ants are fascinating because of the way a colony acts as a single entity. And as such, these amalgamate superorganisms can potentially tell us a lot about the way we humans interface with one another.

(Source: *futurism.com*)

How washing your hair could help you survive a nuclear blast

Like most people confronted with the possibility that a nuclear weapon or dirty bomb could release radioactive fallout somewhere near me, I've become obsessed with how to best wash my hair after such a disaster.

In the event of the unthinkable, knowing a bit about hair-care could prove useful.

Nuclear Blast web page recommends that if you're exposed to nuclear fallout, you should remove your outer clothes, then take a decontamination shower to wash your skin with soap and your hair with shampoo or soap and water — not, I repeat, not conditioner. It explains, "Do not use conditioner in your hair because it will bind radioactive material to your hair, keeping it from rinsing out easily." It's rare that the government makes hair-care recommendations, so I needed to find out more.

I imagined post-blast radiation to function like an unholy ghost, but invisible radiation isn't the biggest concern.

Nuclear fallout is actual, visible stuff: It's a "fine dust or sand-like material" that emits radiation — you need to get that off and take deep cover while it's blowing around and burning through its wild, destructive infancy and adolescence.

After removing your outerwear, the next order of business is a decontamination shower.

If a nuclear bomb or a dirty bomb goes off and you survive, experts say that you can easily shed 85-95 percent of the radiation on your body just through the removal of outer clothing and a decontamination shower. Yes, water from pipes will probably contain some radiation, but unless a specific warning is issued, use it for washing up anyway.

(Source: *Racked*)

Rescue underway as flooding claims at least 11 lives

SOCIETY TEHRAN — At least 11 people have been **d e s k** killed and another two reported missing as heavy rains and storms swept across five Iranian provinces on Friday afternoon.

Flooding hit 21 cities and villages in the northern provinces of Golestan, Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, and Semnan, as well as the western province of Ilam.

Tens of rescue groups from the Red Crescent Society (RCS) are continuing efforts and search operations in the regions, the RCS director Morteza Salimi announced.

Eight people lost their lives in Khorasan Razavi, two in Golestan, and one in North Khorasan, he said.

Woman charged with faking cancer, keeping donations from New York towns

A 38-year-old Orlando woman who pretended to have terminal cancer and accepted donations when she lived in New York's Westchester County several years ago was arrested on Friday and charged with fraud, U.S. prosecutors said.

Vedoutie Hoobraj, 38, used the name Shivonie Deokaran while perpetrating the scam from about October 2014 through at least March 2016, federal prosecutors said in a statement.

Hoobraj was charged with one count of wire fraud, which carries a maximum prison sentence of 20 years, after being arrested on Friday morning in Orlando, prosecutors said.

Social media posts from the period in question show Hoobraj posing with her two sons, her head hairless, prosecutors said.

Cancer patients often lose their hair during treatment.

Hoobraj claimed to have seen doctors at cancer hospitals, including New York City's Sloan-Kettering Medical Center, but prosecutors said in court documents that she never actually underwent any cancer treatment.

She raised more than \$50,000 from at least 300 people in Westchester County towns, prosecutors allege. Spaghetti dinners were organized to help raise money for Hoobraj, who claimed she had 18 months to live and was suffering from both leukemia and cancer of the liver, a federal complaint against her shows.

"Hoobraj allegedly concocted an elaborate story about having cancer when she did not, using GoFundMe pages and accepting money raised by a local high school, all supposedly to fund her medical care," Acting Manhattan U.S. Attorney John H. Kim said in the prosecutors' statement.

Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York FBI office, William Sweeney, said the alleged crime was an injustice "to those who do truly need the support of their communities and may now be met with suspicion" because of her alleged behavior.

Hoobraj's public defender in Orlando did not immediately return a call for comment.

She is due to appear in federal court in White Plains, New York, on August 16, according to court records.

(Source: Reuters)

LEARN ENGLISH Movie Trailer

A: In a digital world, even the strongest must fight for **survival**. Two people, **possess** a secret so valuable, so powerful, they have to **defend** it at all costs.

B: I don't care where they are, I don't care **what it takes**... you find them and bring them to me!

A: They only had one chance! And their chance was to fight back!

D: You wanna play **rough**? Okay, say hello to my little friend!

A: With a little help from a Governor...

C: Listen to me! We have to get them outta there! **No matter what!**

A: Nothing will prevent them from doing their job! Double the action.

D: **Get down!**

A: Triple the excitement.

D: Get down again!

A: This summer... nothing will **stand in their way**.

B: I'm going to make him an offer he can't refuse.

A: Two hosts, one podcast, coming to a theater near you.

■ **Key vocabulary**

survival: the state of living and being alive

possess: have or own

defend: fight in order to keep something or someone safe

at all costs: regardless of the cost involved, even if it's difficult

what it takes: everything that is needed

rough: be tough, difficult, violent

no matter what: even if it's difficult

get down: lower your body, not standing

stand in someone's way: prevent a person from doing something

■ **Supplementary vocabulary**

comedy: a funny movie

romantic comedy: a funny movie where two people fall in love

animated film: a movie made with a series of drawings; not with live people

thriller: a very exciting film

drama: a movie about a serious subject

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Have an idea?
Be in touch!
lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com

On the occasion of Caspian Sea Day

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Iran and other Caspian Sea littoral states celebrate Caspian Sea Day, August 12, annually to raise awareness about the environmental ramifications of human interference with this valuable ecosystem.

Taking place under the theme "support Caspian Seal and fish harvested for caviar" the festivals feature live music, painting, kite-flying, local games, sand sculpting, clean-up campaigns and various other entertaining events in three coastal provinces of northern Iran, namely Gilan, Mazandaran and Golestan.

Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea is a regional convention signed by the official representatives of the five littoral Caspian states namely Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation and Turkmenistan in Tehran on November 4, 2003.

The Framework Convention, also called Tehran Convention, entered into force on August 12, 2006. Since then the day is being observed and celebrated as the Caspian Sea Day as a symbolic act to garner attention to this sensitive marine environment.

The objective of this convention is "the protection of the Caspian environment from all sources of pollution including



People celebrated the Caspian Sea Day by holding a kite-flying festival last year on the Roudsar beach, Gilan province.

the protection, preservation, restoration and sustainable and rational use of the biological resources of the Caspian Sea".

Water contaminations caused by large-scale and unsustainable commercial exploitation, unplanned land use in coastal areas, overharvesting of fish for caviar, habitat fragmentation and

destruction threatening the Caspian Sea unique biodiversity, fossil fuel drilling, insufficient waste management, etc. are only a tip of the iceberg.

The understanding of the necessity to protect and preserve the Caspian Sea's natural resources for future generations and that this goal can only be achieved through

international cooperation was at the heart of the intent to create the Tehran Convention.

By ratifying the Convention the five aforementioned littoral states confirmed their readiness to go the path of sustainable development and to take environmental concerns into account in their development planning.

The Tehran Convention is the first regional legally binding instrument signed by all five Caspian littoral states. It serves as an overarching governance framework which lays down the general requirements and the institutional mechanism for environmental protection and sustainable development in the Caspian Sea region.

Under its umbrella the parties have developed additional Protocols on priority areas of common concern. The effective implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols will support the protection of the marine environment and with it of the livelihoods, health and well-being of present and future generations around the Caspian Sea.

The Caspian Sea is the largest enclosed inland body of water on Earth by area. It is bounded by Kazakhstan to the northeast, Russia to the northwest, Azerbaijan to the west, Iran to the south, and Turkmenistan to the southeast. The sea has a surface area of 371,000 square kilometers and a volume of 78,200 cubic kilometers.

Al Gore: Trump has failed to knock Paris climate deal off course

Donald Trump has failed to knock the Paris climate agreement off course despite his efforts to derail it, according to the former U.S. vice president Al Gore.

"The U.S. will meet its commitments [on emissions] in spite of Donald Trump," he said in London, where his new film An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power was released on Friday. "Every other country has pledged [to combat climate change]. I think the psychological message is that the train has left the station. The signal sent to investors, businesses, individuals and civil society is extraordinarily powerful."

He said the U.S. president was now isolated and unable to prevent global action on climate change, despite his announcement of the U.S.'s withdrawal from the 2015 Paris agreement.

"I was very concerned at his speech - I feared that some other countries would use it as an excuse [to delay or withdraw from the Paris agreement]. I was extremely gratified that the rest of the world redoubled their commitment to Paris," he told journalists.

"I think he has isolated himself. Even today in the U.S., members of his own political party in the House [of Representatives] and the Senate are beginning to separate themselves from him, and why wouldn't they?"

Gore's new film recounts much of the story of the Paris negotiations in which he took part informally in attempts to persuade governments, businesses and civil society of the need for concerted global action on the climate. It comes just over a decade after his first film, An Inconvenient Truth, which won an Oscar and helped make Gore co-winner of the Nobel peace prize in 2007 alongside the scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The first film dealt mainly with the science of global warming, making clear the consensus among experts that human activities, chiefly in burning fossil fuels, were contributing to what could end up as large-scale and disastrous changes to the world's climate. Its sequel takes the story forward, detailing some of the probable effects of climate change now being seen, such as floods, droughts and fierce rainstorms, and also some of the potential solutions, such as renewable energy, which is surging ahead across the globe.

Like the first film, the new documentary dwells on some of the remarkable story of Gore's life, including his term as vice president to Bill Clinton, during which the Kyoto protocol aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions was signed, and the 2000 presidential election, in which Gore won the popular vote but was denied the presidency in a controversial supreme court decision to halt a vote recount in Florida, handing the post to George W Bush.

Gore told journalists: "I do not know of a position in the world with [the ability to achieve] positive change that is like the position of US president."

The film was largely made before Trump's election victory, but a final section examines his rhetoric on climate change during the campaign, and initial actions on taking office. As well as announcing the withdrawal from Paris, Trump has appointed several people to high office who dismiss the human role in climate change, including department of agriculture chief scientist Sam Clovis. He has also begun the dismantling of President Obama's clean power plan, as well as longer-standing regulations on clean air and water, and the Guardian recently revealed that his team have censored officials' use of the term climate change.

Gore said of Trump's election: "It is a setback, but not the worst setback we have received. I have seen a lot of setbacks over the years. The damage I feared Trump would do has turned out to be less than I feared."

He pointed to the success of renewable energy, the price of which has plunged dramatically in recent years. In the film, he visits Georgetown in Texas, where the conservative Republican mayor has moved to run



the town using only clean energy. "I'm not saying business and new technology will solve this on their own, but it is a tremendous benefit, a legitimate basis for hope."

Gore's film also deals with aspects of his own role in the Paris negotiations, highlighting efforts he made to broker a deal with the Indian government, which initially took a tough line in the talks, arguing for developing countries to continue using fossil fuels. Gore helped to win a cooperation with the renewable company Solar City that would benefit India. Though the film casts his role as pivotal, Gore acknowledged that "there were many elements involved, a lot of people -

President Obama, [Indian Prime Minister Narendra] Modi, the World Bank and others." He also praised the French hosts of the talks for a "virtuoso performance" in gaining the global agreement, particularly former president François Hollande and foreign minister Laurent Fabius.

The new film highlights the increasing threat of extreme weather. Hurricane Sandy, which caused widespread damage on the US eastern seaboard in 2012, is a taste of disasters to come, according to Gore. He also spent time filming floods in Florida, the low-lying US state most threatened by climate change.

Since his election defeat in 2000, Gore has made climate change his focus. He co-founded, with former Goldman Sachs banker David Blood, the fund manager Generation Investment Management, which specializes in renewable energy and other emissions-cutting technologies, and has run a series of "climate leadership" programs to train politicians, businesspeople and civil society leaders in climate science.

Gore, who will turn 70 in March, has no plans to let up on his globetrotting efforts on climate change. Does he have any regrets over his long and varied career? Just one: "I might have campaigned an extra week in Florida."

(Source: The Guardian)



N.I.O.C
1396.2056



National Iranian Drilling Company

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

One-Stage(compressed)

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
14, 000	490, 000,000	9,795,743,400	P/F "GOLTECH"MEASURING WHILE DRILLING-MODEL:ZT-MWD	1/494/339	Tender No.:FP/12-96/025 Indent No.: 08-22-9645031	1

Brief description of subject:

National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender (compressed) upon following terms and conditions:

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

B) Preparation of tender documents:
Purchasing of documents:
In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.
Notice: According to N.I.D.C technical and commercial committee rule, the limitation for job referrals in procurement field is four active and in process contract.
Receiving of documents:
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurement department in due date and participates in tenderwill be known as tenderer from tender committee.

C) Delivery of envelopes of bids and call quality evaluating:
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including bank guarantees(A), financial offer(C) and stamped and signed of tender documents(B) along with qualification worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document received deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN.
Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) Tender Guarantee:
Type of guarantee:
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.
Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.
More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on WWW.NIDC.IR
Foreign Procurement Dept
National Iranian Drilling Company

تهرآن تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۵/۲۲ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۵/۲۳

Yemeni naval forces, allies sink vessel of Saudi-led coalition off Mukha: report

Yemeni naval forces, backed by fighters from Popular Committees, have reportedly targeted and destroyed a military vessel in a missile attack off the coast of the country's southwestern province of Ta'izz.

A military source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that the frigate was targeted with a guided missile in waters near the port city of Mukha, situated 346 kilometers south of the capital Sana'a, on Saturday.

On July 29, 12 Emirati troopers lost their lives and another 23 sustained injuries when their frigate was targeted with a guided missile off the coast of Mukha.

An unnamed military source told Yemen's official SABA news agency that the vessel was heavily loaded with various munitions, and the missile attack caused a series of explosions that lasted until 8:30 p.m. local time (1730 GMT), before water-dropping planes could extinguish the flames.

The source added that the wounded Emirati soldiers have been transported to the Eritrean port city of Assab to receive treatment.

The Yemeni navy has warned the Saudi regime-led military coalition, which is assisting Riyadh in its war on Yemen, against any adventurism in the Red Sea, efforts to prevent humanitarian convoys from reaching the strategic port city of Hudaydah and attacks on Yemeni fishermen.

The naval force, in a statement released on July 30, said the escalation of confrontation in the Red Sea does not serve the interests of any side, emphasizing that Yemeni fighters would not hesitate to give a befitting response to any act of aggression against their country.

On July 24, Yemeni forces and their allies destroyed a gunboat of the Saudi regime-led coalition off the coast of Yemen's western province of Hudaydah.

An unnamed military source asserted that the Saudi regime vessel was carrying out radar jamming and deception against the Yemeni army when it was targeted with a missile.

On January 30, Yemeni army forces,



backed by fighters from allied Popular Committees, also fired a guided missile at al-Madinah warship in waters near the city of Hudaydah.

The Saudi regime-led coalition later confirmed the incident but claimed only five people had been killed in the attack.

Yet, footage of the raid, provided by Yemeni forces, showed the enormity of the explosion and subsequent fire on the deck of the Saudi vessel.

UAE military chopper crashes in southern Yemen, kills 4

Meantime, a Black Hawk helicopter, belonging to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has crashed in southern Yemen, killing four of its crew.

According to Yemen's official Saba news agency, the chopper crashed in the Amqel area of Ar Rawdah district in the south-central Yemeni province of Shabwah on Friday afternoon.

The general command of the UAE's armed forces confirmed that four of its soldiers were killed after their helicopter was hit by a technical fault.

However, AFP quoted Colonel Turki al-Maliki, a spokesman for the Saudi regime-led military coalition engaged in a war in Yemen, as saying the pilot made an emergency landing in the area due to "a technical defect while returning from



an operation in Yemen."

UN envoy for Yemen arrives in Iranian capital to discuss Yemeni conflict

Elsewhere, the United Nations (UN) Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed arrived in the Iranian capital, Tehran, to discuss the Yemeni conflict with Iranian officials, including Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Cheikh Ahmed arrived in Tehran on Saturday and met Foreign Minister Zarif and other officials, including Zarif's deputy for Arab and African affairs, Hossein Jaber Ansari, later in the day, according to ISNA.

This is Cheikh Ahmed's second visit to Iran.

UN-brokered talks between Yemen's warring sides have also failed to end the conflict so far.

Iran has repeatedly called for a swift end to the brutal Saudi-led military campaign.

Yemen's blood bank faces threat of closure within days

The developments follow as Yemen's blood bank has sent out an urgent appeal to anyone who will listen as war and a blockade on the capital, Sanaa, may force the center to close within a week.

The National Blood Transfusion Centre

director, Dr. Adnan al-Hakimi, said the crisis emerged after French medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF/Doctors Without Borders) informed the bank it was suspending its aid after more than two years of work.

"We appeal to all humanitarian organizations in the international community and all financial donors to support the center, as our medical supplies have nearly run out," said Hakimi.

An MSF spokeswoman said the charity had handed over its support for the blood bank to the World Health Organization.

The blood bank says it treats some 3,000 Yemenis a month who suffer from cancer, kidney failure, and thalassemia, an inherited blood disorder that causes severe anemia.

But a trifecta of war, disease, and famine has left the bank struggling to keep up with spiraling demand, with basic supplies all but impossible to secure in a country locked in by port and airport blockades.

Since March 2015, the House of Saud regime has been heavily bombarding Yemen as part of a brutal campaign against its impoverished southern neighbor in an attempt to reinstall Yemen's former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh, and crush the popular Ansarullah (Houthi) movement, which is in control of large parts of Yemen, including the capital Sana'a.

The UAE is one of the main allies of Riyadh in its deadly war against the Yemeni nation. The United States and Britain has also been providing arms and military training as well as bombing coordinates to the Saudi regime-led coalition since the beginning of the protracted war, which has failed to achieve its goals.

Latest figures show that the military campaign, which lacks any international mandate, has so far killed over 12,000 Yemenis and wounded thousands more. The House of Saud regime aggression has also taken a heavy toll on Yemen's facilities and infrastructure, destroying many hospitals, schools, and factories.

(Source: agencies)

Nobel laureates in mercy plea to Saudi king over young protesters' executions

1→ Sarah Lee Whitson, who heads Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa regions, said the 14 prisoners were at "imminent risk of execution".

Mansour al-Qafari, a spokesman for the Saudi regime Ministry of Justice, said on August 4 that all defendants in Saudi Arabia received due process.

He said terrorism-related cases and death penalty verdicts were reviewed by an appeal court and the supreme court, with a total of 13 judges reviewing a case before an execution is carried out.

The Nobel laureates said that in a world where nearly 2.5 billion people participate in social media and get news on the internet, leaders can no longer "dismiss the voices of their constituency".

Jose Ramos Horta, the former East Timor president and Nobel laureate, said: "It is a reality that the internet has given voice to dissent in our century, and the minority populations who may have felt sidelined now have an open forum."

As well as Maguire, the other laureates who signed the letter were South African anti-apartheid and human rights activist Archbishop Desmond Tutu; former Polish president Lech Walesa; former South African president FW De Klerk; India's anti-slavery leader Kailash Satyarthi; Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee; Yemeni human rights activist Tawakkol Karman; Iranian human rights lawyer Shirin Ebadi; and American anti-landmine activist Jody Williams.

(Source: Independent)

Panetta: Biggest crisis facing U.S. since Cuban Missile Crisis

1→ In an interview on CNN that aired on Friday, Panetta told Wolf Blitzer the rhetoric is "simply fueling this situation."



The U.S. is currently pursuing talks through diplomatic backchannels, however Panetta said he's concerned about the possibility of a "miscalculation."

"There is a mistake by someone in North Korea or someone in South Korea or someone elsewhere that suddenly has us into a war on the Korean Peninsula," said Panetta, who served in former President Barack Obama's administration. "I really do think that what is required now is a lessening of this rhetoric and allow our actions to speak for the United States, not our words."

In addition to serving as secretary of defense, Panetta also was the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) director and a former White House chief of staff.

"We need a president to speak in a steady and calm and stable and responsible way," Panetta said.

(Source: CNN)

Trump's apocalyptic threats demand a moral case for disarmament

8→ We see this structure at work as defense corporations profit every time that Trump launches missiles. The recently overturned Blackwater conviction of a private security involved in the deaths of 14 unarmed Iraqis serves as a reminder of this sector's power.

You don't have to be an absolute pacifist in order to see that King's moral perspective can incisively diagnose our political situation and prescribe much-needed alternative routes. As Trump's evangelical advisers tell him that God has given him authority to take out Kim Jong-un of North Korea, a radical redirection of our foreign policy might just save us.

Nevertheless, one obstacle to reviving a moral argument for disarmament and against militarism is that the majority of religious liberals never truly followed King in this area. Instead, they opted for the realism and liberal internationalism of the Democratic establishment. Even today, many liberal Christian leaders are too busy writing hagiographies for Obama and Clinton to put critical pressure on Democrats on the issue of peace.

If King's vision is to be revitalized, it will probably take a pluralistic and interfaith coalition. This coalition will have to be familiar with the late King who denounced imperialism and pushed for disarmament.

Far from being idealistic, it is King's framework which has regained relevance in the Trump era. As he wrote towards the very end of his life: "We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. This may well be mankind's last chance to choose between chaos and community."

(Source: The Guardian)

Relative calm in Kisumu after Kenya election clashes

A tense calm prevailed on Saturday in Kisumu, stronghold of defeated presidential candidate Raila Odinga, a day after his defeat to incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta was officially announced.

Running street battles between security forces and protesters unhappy with the results continued in several parts of the city of Kisumu for most of the night.

However, by sunrise clashes had whittled down to small groups of youths setting fire to tires only to be chased away by the police.

Most shops in the city remained closed and some roads were still blocked by the leftovers of Friday night's violence - rocks and burnt tires.

The slum of Kondele was one of the worst hit. The opposition protesters accused police of using excessive force against them, including baton beatings and the firing of live ammunition.

Young men gathered on street corners still angry at the election results and their treatment at the hands of the security forces.

One person was killed in Kisumu and another in Siaya.

The local hospital in Kisumu received five casualties, three of which had gunshot wounds, and the other two from beatings with batons.

Regional Police Commissioner, Wilson Njenga, said officers were enforcing the law and used "reasonable force depending on the threat."

Observers have called on opposition leaders and those with grievances to go to the courts, but Odinga supporters say that will not help.

The neighborhood of Obunga is a short drive from Kondele. The roads there were still blocked and angry young men gathered by the roadside.

While the streets were empty on Saturday, police could be seen kicking down doors and entering buildings.

Amnesty International has warned the Kenyan authorities against using excessive violence against protesters.

"While the police should, of course, position their re-



sources where violence and loss of life is likely to occur, officers deployed in the areas identified as violence 'hot-spots' must not believe they have carte blanche to use excessive force," said Abdullahi Boru Halakhe, Amnesty's East Africa Researcher.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

U.S. jets make landings on ISIL-held territory in Iraq: PMU

Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU/Hashd al-Sha'abi) says it is in possession of evidence showing that American aircraft have made flights to territory controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL/Daesh), possibly indicating secret interactions between the United States and the terrorist outfit.

Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the PMU's second-in-command, said during a press conference in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, that there was evidence to prove American aircraft had made landings on ISIL-occupied territory in Iraq.

He did not provide more details but seemed to suggest that the U.S. was in

some form of cooperation with ISIL on Iraqi territory.

The U.S. and its allies have been conducting a campaign of airstrikes against what they say are ISIL positions inside Iraq and Syria since 2014. However, the air raids have not fulfilled their declared aim of dislodging ISIL.

Tal Afar surrounded, Iraqi forces ready to go in

Elsewhere in his comments, Muhandis touched on the situation in the northern Iraqi city of Tal Afar, saying it is encircled by the Iraqi forces, who he said were now awaiting Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's order to launch the liberation operation.

Last month, Iraqi forces fully recaptured the city of Mosul, ISIL's de facto capital in the country.

The Iraqi commander also provided information on the PMU's role in counter-terrorism operations in neighboring Syria, explaining that the group had not advanced into Syrian territory but had rather targeted ISIL positions there with artillery and missile attacks.

Popular Mobilization Units (PMU/Hashd al-Sha'abi) is an Iraqi state-sponsored umbrella organization composed of mainly Shia Muslim groups, but also including Sunni Muslims, Christians,

and Izadi individuals as well. PMU was formed upon a non-sectarian fatwa by the Iraqi top Shia cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani calling for national mobilization against the ISIL terrorist group. In the early days of ISIL's terror campaign, the then-volunteer fighters played a major role in reinforcing the Iraqi army, which had suffered heavy setbacks in the face of lightning advances by the terrorists.

Last November, the Iraqi parliament recognized Hashd al-Sha'abi as an official force with similar rights as those of the regular army.

(Source: Press TV)

India anger as 30 children died in two days in hospital

At least 30 children have died in 48 hours at a hospital in eastern India with local media reporting the deaths occurred when a company supplying oxygen cut off supply after a payment dispute.

Officials denied a lack of oxygen was to blame for the deaths. District Magistrate Rajiv Rautela said on Saturday the deaths of the children being treated for different ailments were caused by natural causes.

The state-run Baba Raghav Das Medical College (BRD) in Gorakhpur ran out of oxygen at 1am local time on Friday, forcing medics to use manual ventilators on patients, the Hindustan Times reported.

The newspaper said doctors made frantic calls to the

supplier, Pushpa Sales, in order to restore the oxygen supply as the children started dying.

Limited supplies resumed but were quickly depleted. BRD, which is in the state of Uttar Pradesh, had run up debts of \$6.9m Indian rupees (\$107,000), a sales representative at the company responsible for supplying the oxygen said.

Siddharth Nath Singh, the state's health minister, said "those behind any kind of laxity will not be spared" but denied the children had died after being deprived of oxygen, according to the Times of India.

He warned political opponents "this is not the time to play politics".

Parents said oxygen supply ran out Thursday night

and patients' families were given self-inflating bags to help the children breathe.

Prashant Trivedi, the state's top health official, admitted there was a problem in the pipeline supplying oxygen.

Indian anger

The deaths and alleged circumstances surrounding the events in Gorakhpur led to an outpouring of grief and anger on Indian social media.

On his Twitter account, cricketer Indian Mohammad Kaif wrote: "Tragic to hear loss of lives of innocent children in Gorakhpur. This is unacceptable. Incompetence [is] the main reason for such tragedies."

(Source: agencies)

Shapovalov's 'dream come true' as teen defeats Nadal

Denis Shapovalov surprised even himself with a stunning win against Rafael Nadal in the third round of Montreal, which followed a defeat of Juan Martin del Potro in the second round.

The 18-year-old Canadian received a wild card into the event and, having barely secured a come-from-behind win in the first round, has taken the tournament by storm.



He came from a set down and a mini-break in the third-set tiebreak to defeat Nadal.

"Yeah, you could tell why he's won so many Grand Slams. His ball was just so heavy. He's such a warrior," Shapovalov said. "So it's honestly, like, a dream come true for me to beat a player like that."

During his courtside interview with Canadian television, the 18-year-old recalled waking up that morning while staying with fellow Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime, and seeing a poster of Nadal on the wall.

Following his win against the player himself, he bent down and kissed the court. "I mean, I couldn't believe it actually happened," he said.

The teenager kept up his attacking play, while Nadal criticized himself for playing defensively.

"I just tried to stay calm, tried to play every point, go for my shots," he said.

Shapovalov also acknowledged the local fans for spurring him on.

"Yeah, the crowd was ridiculous. I've never been in a sporting event where the fans get so loud," he said. "It's so much fun to be a part of. It's so much fun having them cheer me on."

(Source: Tennis.com)

Giroud confirms Arsenal stay after opening-day winner

Olivier Giroud has confirmed that he will stay at Arsenal after netting a dramatic winner in their opening day Premier League victory over Leicester City.

The France international's future had been in doubt following the club-record arrival of Alexandre Lacazette, with clubs both in England and back in his home country reportedly interested.

But Giroud made his mark on Arsenal's new campaign on Friday as his late header secured a 4-3 win at home to Leicester City, who had led when the forward came off the bench.

And speaking after the game, the 30-year-old confirmed his intention to stay and fight for his place at Emirates Stadium.

"I will be remaining at Arsenal," Giroud told SFR Sport.

Giroud had scored 12 Premier League goals in just 11 starts last season, but Lacazette was selected for Arsenal's opener and netted inside two minutes.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger was delighted with the former Montpellier man's impact, however, and offered Giroud a glowing post-match reference.

"I love the man and the player," Wenger told Sky Sports. "He is a fantastic guy as well — committed, he loves the club."

"He doesn't want to leave and I'm happy that he wants to stay."

(Source: Goal)

Watford deny Liverpool in injury time to secure thrilling draw

Liverpool conceded an injury-time equaliser as they were held 3-3 at Watford in their Premier League opener.

Mohamed Salah looked to have netted a winner on his Liverpool debut, but Miguel Britos headed home from point-blank range in the dying moments to secure a share of the spoils.

Liverpool — without Philippe Coutinho, who was ruled out with a back injury amid intense speculation over his future — fell behind on eight minutes, with Stefano Okaka taking advantage of some poor defending from a corner to head past Simon Mignolet.

The visitors hit back on 29 minutes with a superb goal from Sadio Mane, but Liverpool's defensive weaknesses were exposed again almost instantly as Abdoulaye Doucoure slotted in for 2-1.

Liverpool turned it around early in the second half, with Roberto Firmino equalising from the penalty spot after Salah was brought down in the area by goalkeeper Heurelho Gomes on 55 minutes.

Two minutes later, Salah was able to nudge home at the far post following Firmino's lofted pass over Gomes as Jurgen Klopp's men took the lead for the first time.

That appeared to have set Liverpool on course for victory, but Britos struck late to leave the Reds frustrated.

(Source: PA Sport)

Barcelona v Real Madrid: Can the Supercopa set the tone for LaLiga?

Real Madrid and Barcelona will write the latest chapter in their tempestuous rivalry of guts and glory when they clash in the first leg of the Supercopa de Espana at Camp Nou on Sunday.

For arguably the first time since Barca's sensational treble-winning season in 2008-09, Madrid enter the campaign widely favored to get the better of their Clasico rivals on the back of LaLiga and Champions League glory last time around.

Barcelona are under new leadership with former Athletic Bilbao coach Ernesto Valverde, who hammered his new employers 5-1 on aggregate in this fixture in 2015, and he will hope to make a similar statement for supporters still reeling from Neymar's world-record departure to PSG.

But how much influence can the Supercopa realistically have over the title race to come? Here, we examine some showdowns that set the tone for the season ahead.

1997 – Real Madrid v Barcelona

Who won the Supercopa? Jupp Heynckes' Madrid conceded a slender 2-1 first-leg advantage at Camp Nou before putting Barca to the sword 4-1 at the Santiago Bernabeu, with Raul scoring a brace to take his total over the tie to three. It proved a humiliating start to life in Catalonia for Louis van Gaal.

What happened next? Although Van Gaal would never enjoy the popularity of compatriots Johan Cruyff and Ronald Koeman among Cules, the Dutchman whipped Barca into shape and led them to a Liga and Copa del Rey double. Madrid were 11 points back in fourth but ended the campaign with a triumph of their own over Juventus in the Champions League final.

2011 – Barcelona v Real Madrid

Who won the Supercopa? Pep Guardiola's Barcelona continued their imperial period with a 5-4 aggregate victory — Lionel Messi snatching a 3-2 second-leg



win on home turf with his second of the match, having also netted in a 2-2 draw at the Santiago Bernabeu.

What happened next? All hell broke loose. In stoppage time, Marcelo was red carded for chopping down Cesc Fabregas and both benches spilled into a melee. Amid the testosterone-fueled jostling, Madrid boss Jose Mourinho played the role of dastardly villain and poked Barca assistant Tito Vilanova in the eye. Only, as far as the Portuguese was concerned, this was no act of petulance. This flash point came after an ill-tempered run of four Clasicos in 18 days in April, where Barca won a Champions League semi-final, all-but wrapped up LaLiga and lost the Copa del Rey final. It added to a strain that began to show on Guardiola as his final season in charge of Barca rumbled on,

Mourinho's Madrid reeling in his all-conquering side to take the title.

2012 – Real Madrid v Barcelona

Who won the Supercopa? Barcelona, who gave Guardiola a Copa del Rey triumph as a send-off, won 3-2 at Camp Nou but Madrid prevailed 2-1 at the Bernabeu to win on away goals. Cristiano Ronaldo was on target in each leg, while it was all-eyes on the dugouts as Vilanova had stepped up to go head-to-head with Mourinho.

What happened next? Without Guardiola to offer verbal sparring — Vilanova having opted to take the high road with his one-time assailant — Mourinho turned inward and a Madrid dressing room mired in internal conflict ceded LaLiga to a Barcelona side that racked up 100 points in the process.

2013 – Barcelona v Atletico Madrid

Who won the Supercopa? Gerardo Martino took charge of Barca and edged Copa del Rey holders Atletico on away goals, Neymar's first goal for the club to claim a 1-1 draw at Vicente Calderon ultimately proving decisive as the return in Catalonia ended goalless.

What happened next? Martino would win no more silverware as Barcelona coach, a failure largely down to a brilliantly dogged Atletico. By the end of the season, including the Supercopa, the Blaugrana had played Atleti six times and failed to win once. Diego Simeone's men knocked them out of the Champions League at the quarter-final stage and Diego Godin's final-day goal secured a 1-1 draw at Camp Nou to seal improbable LaLiga glory.

(Source: Four Four Two)

Zidane: Neymar-less Blaugrana not the weakest Barca

Zinedine Zidane rejected the suggestion Real Madrid will be taking on the weakest Barcelona side he has faced in the Supercopa de Espana following the departure of Neymar.

Madrid visit Camp Nou on Sunday for the first leg of the Spanish season's curtain raiser looking to add to the UEFA Super Cup title they won by beating Manchester United 2-1 this week.

It marks the first meeting between the two Clasico rivals since Neymar's stunning world-record transfer to Ligue 1 side Paris Saint-Germain, who paid €220million to take the Brazilian to the Parc des Princes.

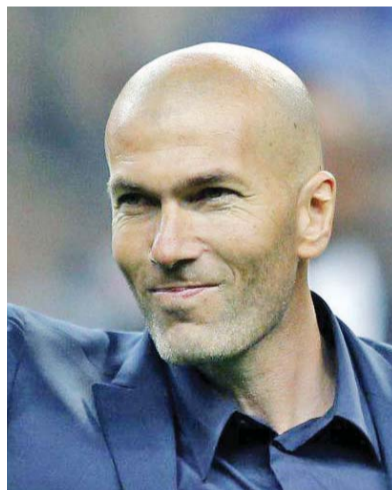
Despite the breakup of Barcelona's fabled MSN forward line, Zidane is still expecting a typically imposing challenge from Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Co. in what will be Ernesto Valverde's first taste of a competitive Clasico as Barca coach.

But asked if this is the worst Barca side he has gone up against in his pre-match media conference, Zidane replied: "Not at all. The opposite. They're a club in the process of changing but Barcelona is Barcelona."

"Nothing is going to change there. If we think it's going to be easier [without Neymar] then we're wrong."

"Whoever is going to play instead of Neymar he will do it well. I'm not really too worried about whether Neymar is there or not."

(Source: Soccerway)



Cristiano Ronaldo played just seven minutes in the victory over United as he made his return having missed Madrid's pre-season preparations as he was given an extended break after his exertions for Portugal in the Confederations Cup.

"We're all fit, healthy, physically we're in good condition. Everyone wants to play. I'm going to have to make some decisions," he added.

"Cristiano is ready, he's in great shape, he's been with us five or six days, he's been working hard on his holidays and he's ready to play."

Ernesto Valverde confident ahead of Spanish Super Cup

Barcelona host rivals Real Madrid in the first leg of the Spanish Super Cup on Sunday badly in need of a morale-boosting win following the world-record sale of Neymar to Paris Saint-Germain.

Despite banking €222m for the Brazilian, Barca's scattergun approach to finding a replacement has so far been unsuccessful with bids for Liverpool's Philippe Coutinho and Ousmane Dembele of Borussia Dortmund so far rebuffed.

New Barca coach Ernesto Valverde must therefore try to down the European and Spanish champions with a weaker squad than the one which missed out to Real for the La Liga title last season.

However, Barca did manage to beat Madrid without the then suspended Neymar the last time the sides met in competitive action back in April as Lionel Messi won an incredible encounter 3-2 with the last kick of the game.

The Catalans also edged last month's Miami friendly between the two in Neymar's last game for Barca 3-2.

Valverde's men completed a perfect pre-season on the field with a fourth straight win by sweeping aside Chapecoense 5-0 on Monday in a match to raise funds for the stricken Brazilian club who lost 19 players and 24 club officials in a plane crash last year.

"We've had a good pre-season and we are coming into the game in good condi-



tion," said Valverde.

"But on Sunday the real thing starts, with a competitive game and a title at stake against our biggest rivals."

Gerard Deulofeu was handed Neymar's role alongside Messi and Luis Suarez up front against Chapecoense on his return to the club after spells at Everton and AC Milan.

And the Spanish international took his chance with a goal and two assists in just 45 minutes on the field.

"It is always a pleasure to play here and even more so with these players," said Deulofeu.

(Source: Sport 360)

Dortmund still control whether Ousmane Dembele stays or goes

"I have nothing but respect when I see how many high profile offers from all over Europe Ousmane Dembele has turned back and how he has stood firm about his commitment to BVB over such a long period of time." Hans-Joachim Watzke, CEO of Borussia Dortmund, noted on the club's official website as Dembele was unveiled by the Black and Yellows in May 2016, adding: "it is not always obvious that someone will act this way and it shows real character."

Ask Watzke again in August 2017 about the 20-year-old's character, and the answer might be a little bit different. The Frenchman has been fined and suspended from training and matches until Monday by the club after going on strike. The French winger missed training this week without a leave of absence while having his phone switched to airplane-mode — apparently, in an attempt to force his way to Barcelona.

On Thursday, events followed swiftly on one another. First, Dortmund coach Peter Bosz confirmed reports at his news conference ahead of Saturday's first round cup match against sixth-tier side FC Rielasingen-Arlen that Dembele indeed skipped training, saying: "It's true, he wasn't there today and to be honest I don't know why. We tried to reach him, without any success. I hope that nothing bad has happened."



"I talked to him yesterday. He told me he was in Paris with his friends. He did not say anything about a transfer."

Less than two hours later, BVB disclosed — as they are obliged to as a stock company — that they turned down Barcelona's first offer, rendering a transfer is "currently not likely" in the ad-hoc statement.

Another 60 minutes passed until sporting director Michael Zorc released a statement via the club's official website that Dembele's action would have consequences.

"Ousmane Dembele missed BVB training today without any valid reason and he obviously consciously made the de-

cision to do this. Of course, we will sanction this behaviour." He added: "In addition, we have suspended the player from training and from taking part in any match day activities after discussing this with the head coach until after the cup match this coming weekend. The player is currently present in Dortmund unlike other reports that state the contrary."

Although it is one of the uglier sides of modern football, it is not exactly new that players go on strike in order to force a transfer. It was Henrikh Mkhitaryan, who stayed away from Shakhtar Donetsk's training ground in 2013 in an ultimately successful attempt to join Dortmund. Neymar showed similar antics that are far removed from professional behaviour in the episode that saw him join PSG for a record fee in the end.

Though this time, the power of a player might be tested as the Black and Yellows have to firmly stand their ground in the negotiation with the Catalans. Watzke described the situation for BVB in this negotiation quite well ahead of the DFL-Supercup last weekend.

Although the bigger club — in this case Barcelona — usually wins the power struggle in such a heated transfer bargaining, Dembele ending up at his declared dream club is not a foregone conclusion.

(Source: ESPN)

Iran overpowers China at FIVB Volleyball World Championship Asian Qualifier

S P O R T S Iran, the only Asian team to compete in the FIVB World League Group 1 this season, outclassed China at the 2018 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship Asian Qualifier on Saturday.

Igor Kolakovic's men defeated China in straight sets (25-21, 29-27, 25-20) in Pool A at the 6,000-seater Rezazadeh Stadium.

"I am satisfied with my players' performance in the match against China. We were good in serves and receives in this match," Kolakovic said.

Iran will play Kazakhstan on Sunday.

Iran defeated South Korea 3-0 in their opener on Friday.

The tournament continues through Monday, with only top two teams after the single round-robin competition securing their places to the 2018 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship, which will be jointly hosted by Italy and Bulgaria.

Hosts Italy and Bulgaria and defending champions Poland have automatically qualified for the next year's World Championship. France, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Russia, Serbia, Finland, and Belgium from Europe plus Japan and Australia from Asia have also booked their tickets through continental qualifiers.



Photo by: Parisa Javanshenazi
volleyball.ir

Iran finish in 16th place at World Junior Water Polo Championships



S P O R T S Iran lost to Egypt 16-8 to finish in the 16th place at the FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championships on Saturday.

Seifeldin Hesham must have written himself into the record books with a magnificent nine goals, including three penalty strikes, as Egypt topped Iran everywhere in the pool, fina.org wrote.

Iran improved one position from the

last championships. Mehdi Yazdankhan, scorer of three goals, topped his team with 16.

The 19th edition of the Fina World Men's Junior Water Polo Championships is taking place in Belgrade, Serbia, from August 5-20, 2017, gathering 20 teams from the five continents, an increase of two teams since the previous edition two years ago in Almaty (KAZ), where 18 teams battled it out for the crown.

Iran share the ball to cruise past Syria



Iran registered 29 assists on their way to a 87-63 victory over Syria to stay undefeated in Group A.

Hamed Hadadi continued to make his case for one of the best passing big men in the game, finishing one assist shy of a triple double with 12 points, 13 rebounds and 9 assists.

Syria struck first just 15 seconds into the game, but Mohammad Jamshidi Jafarabadi responded immediately with a three to give Iran a lead they would not

relinquish the rest of the way, pulling away in the second period to extend their lead to 20 by halftime.

Jamshidi Jafarabadi provided additional support on the ball sharing front, adding 9 assists of his own to go with 16 points, whilst Behnam Yakhchali led the scoring with 25 points on 9 of 13 shooting.

Micheal Madanly led Syria, who dropped to 0-2, with 22 points.

(Source: FIBA)

Fans pay big money for Mayweather-McGregor tickets

Fight fans attending the much-hyped boxing match between Floyd Mayweather and mixed martial artist Conor McGregor will have a chance to rub shoulders with the stars in Las Vegas -- but it won't come cheap.

The least expensive ticket listed on reseller StubHub is going for an eye-watering \$1675 with two weeks to go until the Aug. 26 fight which pits undefeated boxer Mayweather against the UFC's lightweight champion in a 12-round super welterweight matchup.

"Usually for these large events it's comparable to a Super Bowl. There's going to be a lot of stars at these events, especially in the high-priced ticket range, the ringside seats," StubHub spokesman Cameron Papp said.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime, bucket-list event, so the die-hard Mayweather and McGregor fans are usually going to find their way to the event."

The fight has not yet sold out, with high face values and a lack of access seeming to have slowed down demand.

Yet Leonard Ellebre, CEO of Mayweather Promotions, dismissed concerns about the fight's popularity earlier in the week.

"This isn't a damn Rolling Stones concert. They're the only thing that sells out in seconds, he told reporters at Mayweather's media workout in Las Vegas on Thursday.

"Right now we have over \$60 million in ticket sales - what part of that remotely looks like ticket sales are slow?"

"We're talking about tickets that go from \$500 to \$10,000. That's an expensive ticket."

The \$60 million figure revealed by Ellebre dwarfs the UFC box office record of \$17 million set at Madison Square Garden in November 2016 when McGregor defeated Eddie Alvarez to win the lightweight title.

That, however, is still a long way short of Mayweather's previous record of \$72 million in ticket sales, a figure achieved when he met Manny Pacquiao at the MGM Garden Arena in Las Vegas in 2015.

"Boxing is still number one, but we've seen more growth in MMA over the last two years, they've really

built up their brand and we're seeing the demand for it," Papp said.

One reason for this growth is the enormous popularity of McGregor, and it was fan interest in the fight between the brash 29-year-old and the unbeaten Mayweather that led to it being arranged.

One seller on the Vivid Seats website has listed a pair of ringside seats for the contest at a staggering \$164,043 each, but Papp says that prices in secondary markets are likely to come down closer to the event.

"You're going to set your price pretty high early as a seller to see what you can get, but once you get closer to the event, sellers are looking to unload those tickets," Papp explained.

With fans hard-pressed to afford tickets, other venues in Las Vegas are jumping on the bandwagon, with the RiRa Irish pub, a popular bar among McGregor supporters, selling tickets for \$150 just to watch the pay-per-view broadcast on TV.

(Source: Reuters)

Mourinho: Prem title more realistic than last season

Jose Mourinho has told his players they must all take responsibility for solving Manchester United's goalscoring problem, while adding that a Premier League title was a more realistic target this season.

United were the lowest scorers of the Premier League's top seven last season with just 54. Zlatan Ibrahimovic got 17 as part of 28 in all competitions before his campaign was ended early by a knee ligament injury.

The 35-year-old was the only United player to get into double figures in the league. The Swede has since been released but Mourinho splashed £75 million on Romelu Lukaku, who scored 25 Premier League goals for Everton last season.

However, the United boss insists it is not just down to the Belgian to pick up the slack this term, telling a news conference on Friday: "What I had in other clubs was more players scoring goals. What we had was midfielders, wingers, scoring, central defenders scoring goals at set pieces."

"We always had more goals from



wingers, midfielders getting 10 goals, central defenders getting five goals and last season that didn't happen much. We were focused on the striker scoring goals and when it didn't happen we were in trouble."

The lack of goals contributed to 10 league draws at Old Trafford that cost the club any chance of challenging Chelsea for the title. One of which was against West Ham, United's opponents on Sunday as the new Premier League season gets underway.

(Source: Soccernet)

Stroud climbs to tie for third after second round completion

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina (Reuters) — Chris Stroud, the last man to qualify for the PGA Championship, completed a three-under-par 68 on Saturday morning to join 2015 winner Jason Day in a tie for third before setting off for the third round at Quail Hollow.

Stroud had five holes to finish after play was suspended on Friday due to failing light following an afternoon interruption of one hour 43 minutes because of lightning in the area.

The 35-year-old Texan, who qualified by winning last week's Barracuda Championship in Reno, Nevada for his first PGA Tour win in his 290th event, birdied the par-five seventh hole and parred out for a six-under-par 136 total.

Stroud and Australia's Day were two strokes behind co-leaders Hideki Matsuyama of Japan, who won last week's WGC-Bridgestone, and South Carolinian Kevin Kisner.

World number two Matsuyama is aiming to become the first Japanese male to win a major championship.

Matsuyama, Kisner and Day will tee



off together at 2 PM ET (1800 GMT).

Stroud will be grouped with Italy's Francesco Molinari, who fired a 64 in the second round, and South African Louis Oosthuizen who were another shot back at five-under.

Seventy-five players made the cut, which was set at five over par.

Among prominent players to miss the cut were former U.S. Open champion Justin Rose of England at six-over, double Masters champion Bubba Watson at seven-over and 2016 winner Jimmy Walker at eight-over.

IOC meeting to discuss threat of North Korea

LONDON (AP) — Escalating tensions over North Korea's nuclear weapons program have caused security challenges posed to the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics to be assessed at an upcoming IOC meeting.

The International Olympic Committee session comes five months before the Winter Games are staged 80 kilometers across the border from North Korea.

Although regional concerns have been building for months amid new missile tests by the North, the pace has intensified since new sanctions were passed against Kim Jong Un's regime by the U.N. Security Council last week. It led to heated rhetoric between the United States and North Korea, with threats of attacks.

"We are monitoring the situation on the Korean peninsula and the region very closely," the IOC said on Friday from Lausanne, Switzerland. "The IOC is keeping itself informed about the developments. We continue working with the organizing committee on the preparations of these games which continue to be on track."

Valon Behrami arrives in Italy to complete move to Udinese

Valon Behrami has landed in Italy to complete a move to Udinese, according to Sky in Italy.

It is understood the 32-year-old will meet with Giampaolo Pozzo - the son of Watford owner Gino and the owner of Udinese - on Saturday to complete the transfer.

Watford boss Marco Silva, who earned a 3-3 draw against Liverpool in his first Premier League game in charge, said earlier this summer he expected Behrami to leave before the deadline.



Behrami was not part of the Hornets squad that drew with the Reds at Vicarage Road.

The Switzerland midfielder made 49 appearances for the Hornets following a £2.5m move from Hamburg in the summer of 2015.

He has been free to talk with other clubs and of interest to numerous Serie A sides as well as FC Sion in his home country.

Silva said last month: "Valon is working on the training ground but he's one player who won't stay with us."

"It's time for him to find other solutions for his career, and we will see where he will play, but he will not stay in our squad."

(Source: ESPN)

PSG hope to sign Monaco's Fabinho as well as Kylian Mbappe - sources

Paris Saint-Germain could pay more than €60m to sign Monaco midfielder Fabinho, with teammate Kylian Mbappe also keen on a move to the Parc des Princes, sources have told ESPN FC.

Fabinho has been a PSG target since Antero Henrique arrived as sporting director in June.

Sources said Monaco were preparing for the possibility that both he and Mbappe could attempt to force moves if they cannot leave amicably.

PSG, meanwhile, remain hopeful that they could sign both before the end of the window.

A Monaco source said that, since last season, Fabinho has had a gentleman's agreement that he would be granted a move if a suitable offer arrived.

A Paris source said a bid of around €45 million had been tabled by PSG once Henrique arrived -- but he was then told he could not join them.

Both sources said Fabinho had been told he could go to a foreign club but wants to join PSG.

The Brazil international has refused to attempt to force a move out of respect for the role Monaco have played in his career but has grown frustrated by the club's stance.

Sources said he believes his best chance of being part of the Brazil squad for next year's World Cup is to play alongside international teammates including Neymar at PSG.

The Paris source said that after a recent pause in communication between Henrique and Fabinho's agent, Jorge Mendes, dialogue has been reopened with the aim of reaching a swift deal.

The source added that although PSG had looked at Porto's Danilo Pereira, Fabinho remained their preferred option.

(Source: Soccernet)



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Iranian developers to participate in Game Connection

A R T TEHRAN — Three Iranian game developers will put on display their latest productions at the Game Connection 2017, a business convention of the video games industry, which will be held in Paris from November 1 to 3.

The companies include Sourena Game Studio, Black Cube Games and Paezan, which will attend the exhibition by supports from Iran's National Foundation for Computer Games.

The Game Connection is an international exhibition offering the opportunity for professionals in the video game industry to interact with other professionals, expand their networks and promote their products.

Iranian animations to go on screen at Anibar festival

TEHRAN — Five Iranian short animations will go on screen at the Anibar International Animation Festival, which will open in Peja, Kosovo on Monday.



"Shakrak, the Hero" co-directed by Naeim Tadayyon and Hutan Purzaki, "Elephant's Playmate" co-directed by Hadi Tabasi and Mahmud Mokhtari and "The Switchman" by Mehdi Khorramian are among the movies.

"The Empty Page" by Siavash Khodai and "Rumor" by Leila Noruzi will also go on screen at the festival, which will run until August 20.

Netflix discussing keeping Disney's Marvel, "Star Wars" films

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Netflix Inc is in "active discussions" with Walt Disney Co about keeping Marvel and "Star Wars" films after 2019, when new Disney and Pixar movies will stop appearing on the streaming service, a senior executive said late on Thursday.

Disney announced on Tuesday that it was pulling new Disney and Pixar films from Netflix, starting with new releases in 2019. It will start putting the movies on a new Disney-branded online service that year.

Disney Chief Executive Officer Bob Iger told analysts the company had not yet decided where it would distribute superhero films from Marvel Studios and movies from "Star Wars" producer Lucasfilm, which the company owns, at that time.

Netflix is still in discussions with Disney about retaining rights to stream Marvel and Lucasfilm releases after 2019, Chief Content Officer Ted Sarandos told Reuters.

Shares of Netflix were up 1.3 percent at \$171.41 in afternoon trading after falling 5 percent in the two days following Disney's announcement.

A Disney spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Iger said on Tuesday that the Marvel and Lucasfilm movies could go to Netflix or another streaming service after 2019, or Disney might retain the rights for itself.

Sarandos said he expected Disney's service to be "complementary" to Netflix, which carries other family-friendly programming such as animated movies from "Despicable Me" creator Illumination Entertainment and "Shrek" producer Dreamworks Animation.

Disney's plan to stream its content directly to consumers is "a natural evolution" for traditional media companies that Netflix expected, Sarandos said in an interview at an event to celebrate Emmy nominations for his company's drama, "The Crown".

"That's why we got into the originals business five years ago, anticipating it may be not as easy a conversation with studios and networks" to license their content, he added.

Disney's break from Netflix applies only to its film deal in the United States, where the streaming service runs new Disney movies shortly after they leave theaters.

Tehran museum celebrates actress Mehraneh Mahin-Torabi's 60th birthday

A R T TEHRAN — A group of Iranian actors and actresses came together at the Imam Ali (AS) Religious Arts Museum in Tehran on Friday to attend the 60th birthday celebration of actress Mehraneh Mahin-Torabi, famous for her role in the 1996 TV series "The Green House".

Speaking at the ceremony, filmmaker Shahram Karami said that he is happy attending the ceremony, in which the cultural figures of the country are being honored.

"We Iranians are proud of our celebrities and this is the least we can do about our art and cultural figures," he added.

Film producer Amir Samavati expressed thanks to Mahin-Torabi for all her great efforts, which helped elevate the status of cinema and hoped to see her more in artistic activities.

Elham Pavenejad, her co-star in "The Green House", also shared fond memories of their collaboration in the TV series.

Director Marzieh Borumand, famous for "Grandmother's Home" and "School of Mice", two popular puppet series from the 1980s, praised Mahin-Torabi and called her a clever actress who has good knowledge of cinema.

Children's writer Hushang Moradi Kermani in his short speech said that birthday of an artist begins when her/his artworks are seen by others.

The director of the Art and Cultural Organization of Tehran Municipality Mahmud Salahi also said that he is happy to organize the celebration for Mahin-Torabi's birthday and said that the ceremony aims to introduce the dear artists to the young generation.

Addressing the guests, Mahin-Torabi called Borumand a creative artist and said she is proud to have been working with her.



Actress Mehraneh Mahin-Torabi blows candles during her 60th birthday at Tehran's Imam Ali (AS) Religious Arts Museum on August 11, 2017. Her colleagues are also seen in the photo. (Mehr/Mohammad Moheimani)

"Moradi-Kermani has made the memories of several generations with his books and the voice of [actor] Behzad Farahani is the good memories of my childhood. We affect one another in our life without knowing it, so that is why I say we better like each other and care for one another," she concluded.

"Voicelessness" from Iran at Edinburgh festival



Azadeh Shahmiri acts in a scene from "Voicelessness".

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director, writer and performer Azadeh Shahmiri is competing in the theater section of the Edinburgh International Festival in Scotland.

"Voicelessness" is a delicate story of determination and hope, told through mingled voices, viewpoints and times, powerfully poignant in its simplicity, the organizers wrote about the play.

The story of "Voicelessness" is set in 2070. A young woman struggles to

discover the truth behind the mysterious disappearance of her grandfather, more than 50 years earlier. But in the dystopian society that the world has become, in which freedom of expression is stifled, who will admit what really happened?

The play will be performed in Farsi with English subtitles on August 14 and 15.

Many theater troupes and musical bands are participating in the ongoing festival, which will be running until August 28.

Iranian cultural delegation to attend Beijing book fair

CULTURE TEHRAN — An Iranian cultural delegation will attend the Beijing International Book Fair to enhance the participation of Iran as the guest of honor at the major Asian event.

In a press conference held in Beijing on Friday, Gholamreza Noei, the director of the foreign department of the Iran Cultural Fairs Institute (ICFI), elaborated on different programs that Iran arranged for the fair, the ICFI reported on Saturday.

"The delegation is composed of a team of nine Iranian writers and three illustrators," he said, adding that the representatives of 13 publishers and three literary agencies will also accompany the group.

Three bands from Iran are scheduled to give performances and exhibitions by Iranian illustrations will also be organized.

A group of writers will attend the fair to promote their latest offerings.

Several Iranian traditional performances such as naqqali, which is a style of storytelling dedicated to Shahnameh epic stories, and a festival of Iranian films will also be



organized. The Iranian cultural attaché in China, Mohammad Rasul Almasieh, also attending the conference, said that the fair is a good opportunity to introduce Iran's art and culture.

In addition, Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) will display a collection of 100 publications.

Iran will attend the book fair with the motto "Iran, the Colorful Dream of Silk Road".

A pavilion covering an area of 500-square meters has been dedicated to Iran at the Beijing fair running from August 23 to 27.

Jefferson Starship guitarist can pursue lawsuit over band name

NEW YORK (Reuters) — A founding member of Jefferson Starship may pursue part of his lawsuit seeking to stop former bandmates from using the rock group's name, a federal judge ruled on Friday.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Maria-Elena James said the guitarist Craig Chaquico may pursue a breach of contract claim against David Freiberg, Donny Baldwin and other musicians for performances and merchandising since January 2016, when co-founder Paul Kantner died.

The San Francisco-based judge also dismissed Chaquico's claim for earlier alleged contract breaches, and a trademark claim over the use of his likeness.

David Swift, a lawyer for Chaquico, in an email said he was pleased his client can pursue his "core" claim.

"It is important to Mr. Chaquico to protect the legacy of Jefferson Starship by preventing unauthorized bands, like defendants in the case, from using the iconic name," he said.

A lawyer for the defendants did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

According to court papers, members of Jefferson Star-



Guitarist Paul Kantner of the band "Jefferson Starship" plays on stage during the "Summer of Love" 40th anniversary concert at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, California September 2, 2007. (Reuters/Robert Galbraith)

ship agreed to retire the name in 1985 after Kantner left. Eight years later, Chaquico allowed Kantner, "and only

Kantner", to use the name in connection with live performances and merchandise, the complaint said.

James said that when Freiberg and Baldwin later joined Kantner's revamped Jefferson Starship lineup, their use of the name was "related to Kantner's use," but this ended after his death.

In dismissing the trademark claim, the judge said Chaquico failed to show how the public, and especially fans "more likely to be familiar with the history of Jefferson Starship and its multiple iterations," would be confused about his involvement.

The band was an outgrowth of Jefferson Airplane, which was founded in the 1960s and is remembered for now-classic songs such as "Somebody to Love" and "White Rabbit", which featured singer Grace Slick.

In the mid-1980s, following Kantner's departure, it evolved into Starship, where Slick and singer Mickey Thomas were featured on the No. 1 hits "We Built This City" and "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now".

The case is Chaquico v Freiberg et al, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California, No. 17-02423.

"Beyond the Wall": Tales of persecuted lives at the Berlin Wall

BERLIN (Reuters) — An open-air installation is to open along an old section of the Berlin Wall at the weekend, featuring photos of soldiers patrolling the former deadly border, and stories of those persecuted behind it.

"Beyond the Wall" -- 229-metres (250 yards) long and facing the West -- is designed to keep alive the memory of the dividing wall put up by Communist East German authorities nearly 56 years ago on Aug. 13, 1961.

It fell in November 1989 due to mass popular pressure and the decline of Soviet Union power.

The new exhibition features stills from videos that German-American artist Stefan Roloff shot of the Berlin Wall from the west in 1984 -- in-

cluding East German soldiers peering through binoculars, climbing ladders up to watchtowers and walking along the Wall.

"There are very few authentic places where you can still see what's left of the Wall," Klaus Lederer, a Berlin senator responsible for culture told a news conference.

The exhibition also features stories and silhouettes of people whose lives were affected by the Wall -- including a woman arrested for receiving a postcard from a friend in West Berlin, and another woman who whose apartment was bugged by the East German Stasi secret police.

Mario Roellig is one of the victims whose story is told. The Stasi inter-

rogated and imprisoned him after he tried to flee to the West to be with his friend. He remembers a Stasi officer telling him they would find him anywhere.

Years later, when Roellig was working in a shop in reunified Berlin, he realized a customer inquiring about cigars was his Stasi interrogator. Roellig asked for an apology but the man screamed that his sentence was rightful.

"It's important to talk about it so I can get rid of the fear of this place, that time and above all the perpetrators who are still around," he told Reuters at the Wall.

Roellig -- who now lives in western Berlin -- said memories of the past bubble up when he crosses a border

and he feels unable to ever spend a night at his parents' home in eastern Berlin.

"To this day I can't stay there overnight as I seem to still be anxious that the Wall will be put back up and I'll be on the wrong side again," he said.

Roloff, the artist, meanwhile believes his exhibition is particularly relevant at a time when U.S. President Donald Trump wants to build a wall along the border with Mexico.

"For me it's not necessarily a historic project even though it shows things from a time that has passed. It's a continuing phenomenon. There have been walls as long as people have existed and unfortunately they'll continue to exist," he said.