

Russia, Iran ink deals as Rouhani visits Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) shakes hands with his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani

Moscow

Russia signed yesterday a string of bilateral agreements with Iran as President Vladimir Putin hosted his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani for his first official visit to Moscow.

The meeting between Putin and Rouhani, who have grown closer through their mutual support of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, mostly focused on flourishing economic ties in the fields of energy and industry.

Putin said in televised comments after the meeting that trade between the countries had "grown more than 70 percent" last year.

"This is truly a good result considering that it was achieved in unstable global conditions and amid persistent volatility on the commodity and currency markets," Putin said.

A joint statement published by the Kremlin said that "special attention" had been paid to cooperation in energy, with both sides pledging to continue efforts to stabilise the international market.

In addition to cooperation

on Syria, energy and defence ties have deepened between Iran and Russia in recent years

Rouhani is looking to boost Iran's economy ahead of elections in May, in which he is expected to stand for a second term. (AFP)

IS releases Farsi video threatening Iran

Tehran

The Islamic State group threatened Iran for its role in the region's conflicts, in a rare Farsi-language propaganda video released on Monday.

The 36-minute video, entitled "The Farsi Land: from Yesterday till Today", was issued through IS's social media channels from Diyala province in neighbouring Iraq.

A masked man directs his message to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"O, Khamenei, you cursed person who controls the so-called Islamic Iranian regime, rest assured that soon we will destroy your house like this," he says, pointing to ruins behind him.

'Monster' cyclone Debbie batters northeast Australia

Ayr

A "monster" cyclone smashed into northeast Australia yesterday, cutting power, damaging buildings and uprooting trees, with coastal residents battling lashing rain and howling winds.

Great Barrier Reef islands popular with foreign tourists were battered by the category four storm which slammed into the coast of Queensland state with destructive wind gusts of up to 270 kph (167 miles) near its broad core.

There were fears its arrival would coincide with early morning high tides and cause severe flooding, but it slowed



Palm trees blow in the wind in the town of Ayr in far north Queensland before making landfall between the towns of Bowen and Airlie Beach in the early afternoon.

By late evening it had been downgraded to category two and was expected to weaken further.

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Imposing annual fees would push expat students away from public schools in Bahrain

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Can't Say



"Why not? But I must ask my people. If my people say OK, they say yes, I will start to prepare,"

Joko Widodo
Indonesia's President on restoring a moratorium on the death penalty

Rest in sight

Clock is ticking on Bob Dylan's Nobel prize money



The Swedish Academy has warned that Nobel literature laureate Bob Dylan has until June 10 to deliver the Nobel lecture, in order to receive prize money of \$910,000.

China holds military drills near restive Myanmar border

China's army held drills near its border with Myanmar yesterday, in a show of strength from Beijing following weeks of clashes between ethnic rebels and Myanmar's military.

Scotland to press for independence vote

The Scottish parliament prepares to call for an independence referendum, just a day before triggering Brexit.

Ousted Thai PM slapped with \$500m tax bill

Thai tax officials slapped ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra with a \$500 million bill yesterday, resurrecting a dispute on the decade-long political rift.

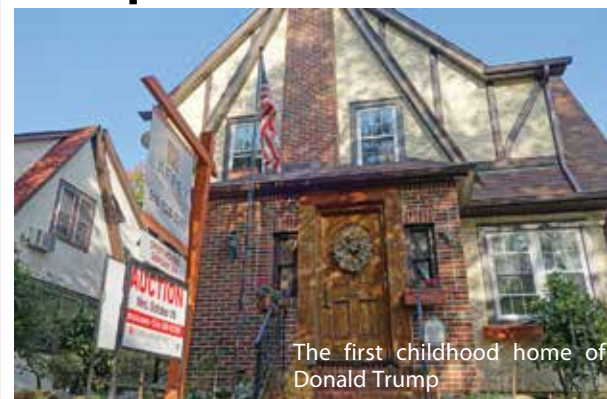
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Mystery buyer snaps up Trump's childhood home



The first childhood home of Donald Trump

New York

President Donald Trump's childhood home in the New York borough of Queens has sold for \$2.14 million -- a premium price for the neighbourhood -- to an unknown buyer.

Built by his father Fred in 1940 in the upmarket enclave of Jamaica Estates, the building served as the president's home for the first four years of his life. The address is listed on his birth certificate.

The two-story mock Tudor-style house embellished with red brick sold at auction in January for 54 percent more than its

selling price in December, when a real estate investor paid \$1.39 million for it. The latest sale closed last week.

Fred Trump, a real estate developer who made his fortune building low-cost housing, also helped develop Jamaica Estates.

He moved his family to a colonnaded nine-bathroom mansion he built nearby in 1951.

Asked about the house when he appeared on NBC's "The Tonight Show" in September, then-candidate Donald Trump said it was "sad" the building was on sale at the time. "I want to buy it," he said.

Mice living alongside humans for 15000 years

Miami

Mice began infesting human settlements some 15,000 years ago in the Middle East, said a study that suggested the little rodents have been scurrying underfoot far longer than previously thought.

As soon as hunter-gatherers began settling down rather than roving from place to place, house

mice began to edge out their wild counterparts, said the study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

The research provides the first evidence that, as early as 15,000 years ago, humans were living in one place long enough to impact local animal communities resulting in the dominant presence of house mice.

Sewol ferry 'remains' are animal bones: S. Korea

Seoul

Bone fragments recovered from the wreck of South Korea's Sewol ferry are from an animal and not human remains, the maritime ministry said yesterday, dashing hopes of the relatives of missing victims.

Authorities had earlier announced the pieces were human -- raising the prospect of closure for families of at least some of the nine passengers whose bodies were never found after the 2014 maritime disaster.

But the ministry corrected



Wreck of the Sewol ferry

its initial statement, declaring: "According to test results by the National Forensic Service, they have been confirmed to be seven animal bone fragments."

They were suspected to be pig bones, South Korea's Yonhap news agency said, citing forensic officials.