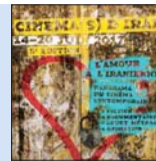




Iran seeks to broaden travel ties with East Asia **10**



Iran's Manavinezhad linked with a move to BluVolley Verona **15**



Parisian festival of Iranian films opens **16**

Condolences over martyrdom anniversary of Imam Ali (AS)

Rouhani meets national football team



See page 15

Iran oil production back around pre-sanction level: BP

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's oil production and its share of OPEC output are now both back around pre-sanction levels, according to BP Statistical Review of World Energy June 2017.

The report put the country's oil output growth at 700,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2016 and said that production in the Middle East rose by 1.7 million bpd, driven by growth in Iran, Iraq (400,000 bpd) and Saudi Arabia (400,000 bpd).

It also put Iran's refinery capacities growth rate per annum at 2.0 percent in 2016.

In its report released on Tuesday, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said Iran produced 3.795 million bpd of oil in May, an in-

crease of 4,000 bpd from 3.791 million bpd in April.

The country's oil production stood at 3.796 million bpd in the first quarter of 2017, rising from 3.741 million bpd in its previous quarter, according to the OPEC's report.

Iran's oil exports to the West surged in May to their highest level since the lifting of sanctions in early 2016 and almost caught up with volumes exported to Asia, Reuters reported on June 9, quoting a source familiar with Iranian oil exports.

Last month, Iran exported about 1.1 million bpd to Europe including Turkey, almost reaching pre-sanction levels and only slightly below the 1.2 million bpd supplied to Asia, the source said.

Democrats to file emoluments lawsuit against Trump

Nearly 200 Democratic members of the United States Congress agreed to file a lawsuit on Wednesday against the U.S. President Donald Trump alleging that by retaining interests in a global business empire he has violated constitutional restrictions on taking gifts and benefits from foreign leaders.

The lead senator filing the complaint in federal district court, Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), said on Tuesday that the lawsuit has already drawn more congressional plaintiffs —

196 — than any legal action previously taken against a president. No Republicans had joined in the lawsuit so far, although they will be invited to do so, Blumenthal said.

An advance copy of the legal complaint reviewed by The Washington Post argues that those in Congress have special standing because the Constitution's "foreign emoluments clause" requires the president to obtain "the consent of Congress" before accepting any gifts. **→13**

ARTICLE
By Wookjin Kim
Deputy Director of KOTRA
Tehran Office

Ching-Chang-Chong and Iran's globalization

Approximately 4 years ago, after a few days when I first arrived in Iran, I went to the Tajrish Bazar in order to buy some necessary stuff. I was still nervous at that time based on the stereo-typed recognition of mine on Iran and I have no background information about Iran frankly. The owner of one cosmetics shop was really curious about me. He asked me every single question. For example, where I am from, what I am doing in Iran, even whether I am married. The most embarrassing reaction was this. "You look different from Iranians. Especially, your eyes are very small." He even imitated my appearance by gesture. At that time, he was smiling, not laughing.

On my way back home, I was frustrated. Because it was sort of hostile action which could be translated racism from general perspective in the rest of the world. But I couldn't make any complaints to him at the shop. It seemed that he had got no intention of discrimination. Although he was naive or even pure, I was mentally shocked by his behavior. In this case, we consider the recipient's feeling then judge which is wrong. It is generally respected in most countries.

As time went on, I was getting accustomed to Iranian lifestyle. The question and personal concerns popped up in my mind again. When I was walking on the street in Tehran, I could find out several passersby saying Ching-Chang-Chong quite often. And they were smiling, not laughing or making fun of me. Ching-Chang-Chong is a very direct expression degrading Asian people and its language, especially massive Chinese and Korean diaspora in the United States. I felt complicated every time I experienced this situation. It seemed not to show hostility, but to attract foreigners' attention by Iranian local people. **→13**

Excess oil inventories to last until 2018: IEA

Oil demand should outpace supply in the second half of this year but excess inventories will persist well into 2018, dealing a blow to global crude producers enacting output cuts to bring down stubbornly high stockpiles.

The forecast from the International Energy Agency comes as higher than expected demand growth next year is met by even stronger output from the U.S. and other producers outside of the OPEC cartel. In its monthly oil market report, which include forecasts for next year, the Paris-based energy agency said: "[The] outlook for 2018 makes sobering reading for those producers looking to restrain supply."

OPEC and Russia have this year joined forces to cut output and reduce an oil market surplus that is keeping pressure on prices.

Producers agreed in May to extend production cuts for a further nine months as U.S. shale production accelerates and countries exempt from the curbs pump more.

The IEA expects global demand growth will increase by 1.4m b/d next year- from 1.3m b/d in 2017 – as China and India take total consumption to a record 99.3m b/d.

But growth in total non-OPEC production in 2018, led by the U.S., will outpace the demand increase. It is forecast to grow by 1.5m b/d, which is more than double the rate of growth this year.

U.S. shale oil production is the biggest component, forecast to grow by 780,000 next year after an increase of 430,000 b/d in 2017. "Such is the dynamism of this extraordinary, very diverse industry it is possible that growth

will be faster," the IEA said.

"Incorporating the scenario that OPEC countries continue to comply with their output agreement, stocks might not fall to the desired level until close to the expiry of the agreement in March 2018," said IEA.

This is despite expectations of an oil market deficit in the latter half of this year, when demand is seasonally stronger.

OPEC crude oil output rose by almost 300,000 b/d in May to around 32m b/d – the highest level so far this year – as conflict-ridden Libya and Nigeria, which were exempt from the supply deal, produced more. Total OPEC output is still lower than the more than 33m b/d it pumped in the last three months of last year. (Source: Financial Times)

Iraq: Syrian army delegation in Baghdad to discuss borders security

A high level Syrian army delegation held talks in Iraqi capital Baghdad with Iraqi counterparts on border security in the first public visit of its kind in years to coordinate the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, the Iraqi defense ministry said on Wednesday.

The Syrian army last week reached the Iraqi border in a move that could open an overland supply route from their allies, in a major concern for the United States and its own allies in the region.

The Iraqi army's chief of staff, Lieutenant General Othman al-Ghanmi, met in Baghdad with a "high-level delegation" from the Syrian defense ministry on Tuesday to discuss con-

trolling joint borders, according to a defense ministry statement.

"The meeting discussed ... the Iraqi-Syrian field of operations, it being one field against a common enemy, which is the terrorist Daesh (ISIL) organization..." the defense ministry said in a statement.

"We discussed holding Syria-Iraq borders to maintain pressure on the terrorist enemy and establishing a joint operations center through which both sides can coordinate," it added.

The statement did not give details on the delegation. Iraqi military sources said previous visits by senior Syrian officials were held in secret.

The Iraqi army chief of staff said they also

agreed to continue exchange of intelligence and information to provide flexibility for the Iraqi air forces to bomb targets near the border and prevent militants from access from one country to the other.

Syrian troops and allied militia in the southeast Syrian desert reached the Iraqi border last week near the Tanf base where the United States special forces are training local rebels to fight ISIL terrorists.

Iraqi warplanes struck ISIL targets inside Syria in February in what appeared to be the first time Iraqi jets conducted such raids across the border. A Syrian source said the strikes had been coordinated with Damascus. (Source: Reuters)

ARTICLE
By Ali Mohammad Mousavi
D-8 Secretary General

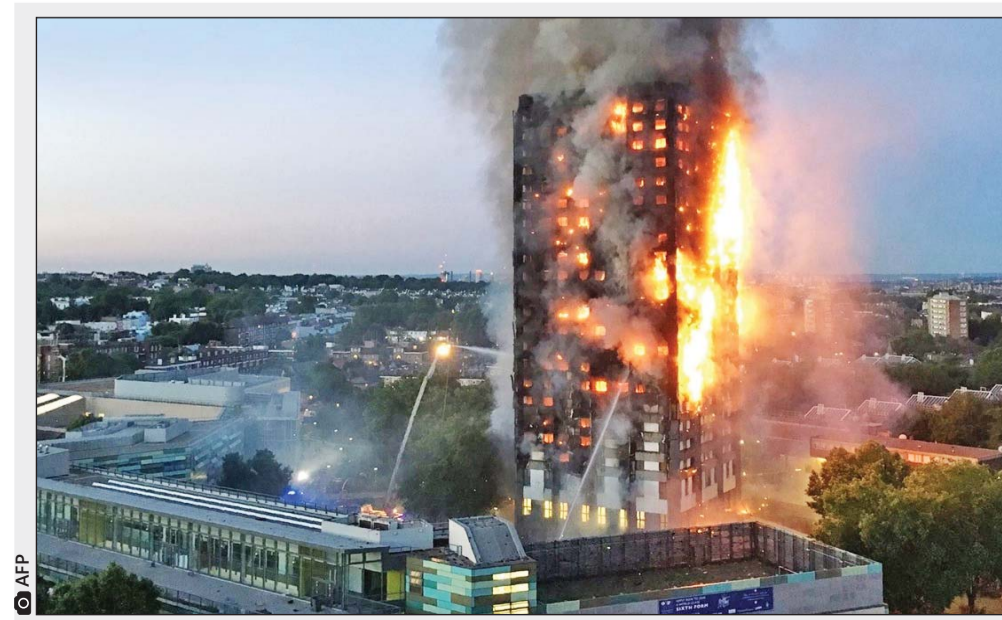
20 years of unique experiment in economic cooperation

Twenty years ago, precisely on June 15, 1997, the Heads of States of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey came together for an exalted purpose and signed the Istanbul Declaration to establish the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation. In light of the noble vision of Prof. Dr. Necmettin Erbakan, our Organization's founding father, D-8 aimed to promote:

- Peace instead of conflict,
- Dialogue instead of confrontation,
- Cooperation instead of exploitation,
- Justice instead of double-standard,
- Equality instead of discrimination,
- Democracy instead of oppression.

20 years of socio-economic success

Over the last 20 years, D-8 has emerged as one of the world's promising trade and economic blocs. It has established itself as a unique economic grouping of eight developing countries comprising over 1.1 billion people or 15 percent of the world's population, a combined GDP of over US\$3.7 trillion, an export volume of over US\$693 billion or four percent share of the global trade, an intra-organizational trade of over US\$100 billion and an annual GDP growth rate of six percent. In line with this impressive economic growth performance, per capita GDP of the countries rose exponentially and more than doubled. From US\$2,207 in 1997, average per capita GDP of D-8 rose to US\$4,645 dollars in 2016. This has been a strong indicator of the overall improvement in the living standards of the peoples of the Member States. With its young and dynamic population, robust economic growth, strong trade relations and the will to cooperate in all strategic sectors such as industry, agriculture, tourism, transportation and energy, D-8 is poised to carry its success to the future. **→2**



Huge fire engulfs tower block in west London

Fire engulfed a 24-storey housing block in central London, killing at least six people and injuring at least 74 others in an inferno that trapped residents as they slept.

Flames raced through the high-rise Grenfell Tower block of apartments in the north Kensington area after taking hold around 1:00am Wednesday (00:00GMT) and witnesses reported many residents desperately calling for help from windows of upper floors.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran abrogates 2030 education agenda

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Supreme Council d e s k Reza Najafi, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, has said his country is not satisfied with Washington's implementation of the 2015 nuclear deal, stressing that the U.S. must fulfill its commitments under the international accord.

Najafi made the remarks on Wednesday after a meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors.

He said the board did not focus much on Iran compared to the previous sessions, noting that the implementation of BARJAM (a Persian acronym for the nuclear agreement) has been going smoothly.

The IAEA is monitoring the technical implementation of the nuclear deal, which was signed between Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — the U.S., France, Britain, Russia and China — Germany and the European Union on July 14, 2015.

"We announced that Iran's nuclear program is proceeding under BARJAM,



Chinese flotilla en route to Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — A Chinese naval flotilla will d e s k arrive at the southern coasts of Iran on Thursday, Tasnim reported.

The Chinese flotilla, comprised of two combat warships, a logistical vessel and a helicopter, is going to berth at the southern port city of Bandar Abbas.

The Chinese naval flotilla had been staying at Pakistan's Karachi port for a training program before heading toward Iran.

Iran's Navy and the People's Liberation Army Navy (Chinese Navy) have intensified cooperation in recent years.



Kerry reveals certain states' call for bombing Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Former U.S. secretary of d e s k state John Kerry said on Tuesday that leaders of certain Middle East states have asked him and former president Barack Obama to bomb Iran.

He made the remarks in his address to the 15th Annual International Retreat of Mediators and Peace Process Actors in Oslo Forum (June 13), IFPNews reported on Wednesday.

Kerry referred to Iran's nuclear issue and said that certain leaders of regional states had at that time believed that bombing Iran was the only solution.



Iranian inmates to wear ankle monitors and go free

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian prisoners who d e s k meet some requirements will be given ankle monitors and set free, the head of the Iran Prisons Organization said on Wednesday.

Ali Asqar Jahangir told Mehr that the prisoners would have to pay 100,000 rials (about \$3) per day while wearing the devices.

Official reports say currently there are 225,000 inmates in prisons across Iran.



Security sessions held to study Majlis terror attack

POLITICS TEHRAN — Security sessions are d e s k being held to review last week's terror attack on Majlis administrative building and adopt security enforcement measures.

Ahmad Amirabadi, a member of parliament, told Quds Online on Wednesday that the sessions are attended by officials from the Intelligence Ministry, military, and other security organizations.

He said the team of representatives discussing the case will eventually prepare a proposal on how to improve security around Majlis and hand it over to the parliament presiding board.



Iran discovers \$125,000 smuggled bills

POLITICS TEHRAN — On Wednesday Iran's d e s k Customs Administration announced it has discovered smuggled dollar bills with a value of \$125,000.

Authorities said the money was going to be taken out of the country by a passenger heading abroad, IRNA reported.

Reports added that the person had hidden the bills inside tea bags and was trying to leave Iran via the Bazargan border checkpoint.

Another report said 700 grams of smuggled gold was also discovered at the same border checkpoint.

U.S. must fulfill commitments under nuclear deal: Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN

d e s k Reza Najafi, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, has said his country is not satisfied with Washington's implementation of the 2015 nuclear deal, stressing that the U.S. must fulfill its commitments under the international accord.

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"We announced that Iran's nuclear program is proceeding under BARJAM,



and as the [atomic] agency's report shows, Iran has implemented all of its commitments under BARJAM," Najafi said, adding that his country is calling on the other signatories of the nuclear deal — especially the U.S. — to keep their side of the bargain.

The remarks came a day after European foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said she was confident the United States would stick to nuclear deal, despite its protestations to the contrary, as the deal is working.

"I am confident that the review in the

United States will bring to wise decisions, which means keeping something that is working," Mogherini told a news conference on the margins of a peace mediation conference in Oslo.

She further said the European Union will guarantee that the deal keeps, adding that the EU's policy of engagement with Iran continues.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Najafi said that most countries expressed their support for the continuation of the implementation of the nuclear agreement as well as the IAEA's efforts.

He also railed against Israel for its anti-Iran stance both during nuclear negotiations and after the deal was struck.

"The Zionist regime, in a statement, made some claims to which we responded," the official noted.

"We emphasized that a regime which is secretly developing nuclear weapons cannot talk about member states of the [UN atomic] agency," he said, adding that the Zionist regime's nuclear program is the most important threat to the international peace and security.

Iran can hit targets at 2,000 km range: military advisor

POLITICS TEHRAN — A top d e s k military advisor to the Leader has said that Iran's missiles are capable of hitting targets within a 2,000-kilometer range, ISNA reported.

"In the event that America wages a war against Iran, all of that country's military bases in the region will be in danger, as Iran is capable of hitting targets with its missiles within a range of 2,000 kilometers," Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi said on Wednesday.

Tension between Tehran and Washington has escalated since the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump, who follows a confrontational policy toward the Islamic Republic.

Rahim Safavi noted though the U.S. military is present all over the world, it cannot hide the fact that its power is vanishing.

This, he said, is manifested in their inability to put an end to the Syrian conflict and impose their own will on the Damascus government.

Tehran and Washington back different sides of the conflict in Syria, with Tehran supporting the legal central government and Washington backing the so-called rebels who try to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Elsewhere, the former IRGC chief condemned last week's terrorist attacks that targeted Iran's parliament and the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Revolution. The attacks were later claimed by Daesh (ISIS).

Rahim Safavi said Daesh is a by-product of Wahhabism which considers Shia Muslims as "infidels".

After the terrorist attacks, Trump blamed Iran for the incident, arguing that the countries which sponsor terrorism risk falling victim to the evil they promote.

The comments sparked an immediate backlash from Iran. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif denounced them as "repugnant", saying Iranians were countering "terror backed by U.S. clients".

Iran will counter any terrorist move with full force: Rouhani

POLITICS TEHRAN — In reaction to the June d e s k 7 terrorist attacks in Tehran, President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that Iran will counter any terrorist move with full force.

"Our country has been facing the devil phenomenon of terrorism and many have been martyred in the front-line of war against terrorists," he said during a session of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution.

He added that Iran has always countered terrorism

while the self-proclaimed supporters of human rights have always backed the terrorists.

Rouhani said the security forces have foiled many terrorist plots against the country.

Killing innocent people by some "mercenary" terrorists is "cowardly" and "brutal" acts which make people more determined to "uproot criminals", he added.

In two simultaneous terrorist attacks on the administrative building of Iran's Majlis and the shrine of Imam

Khomeini in Tehran on June 7, 17 people were killed and 56 injured. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attacks.

The Intelligence Ministry said on June 10 that the mastermind of the attacks has been killed near borders with Iran. He did not give further details.

Massoud Jazayeri, the deputy chief of staff of Iran's armed forces, said on Tuesday that Iran's security forces have thwarted upwards of 100 terrorist plots over the past two years.

Zarif says Iran will send food to besieged Qatar

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian d e s k Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told former UN secretary general Kofi Annan on Tuesday that Iran will send food to besieged Qatar.

On June 5, Saudi Arabia along with the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt cut ties with Qatar and introduced sanctions on the country for its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. Saudi Arabia,

the UAE, and Bahrain also closed their air, sea, and land routes to the country.

Qatar imports about 40 percent of its food from Saudi Arabia, the only country that has land border with Qatar.

Iran has been sending five cargoes of food products to Qatar in recent days.

According to Iran Air spokesman Shahrokh Nooshabadi the cargoes each weighing 90 tons contained perishable

products.

"We will continue sending such cargos while there is still request from the Qatari side," the official said.

Three ships loaded with 350 tons of fruit and vegetables were also set to leave an Iranian port for Qatar, the Tasnim news agency quoted a local official as saying.

Since the blockade of the tiny Arab country, Kuwaiti and Pakistani leaders

have visited Saudi Arabia to calm down the tension.

■ **'All will be losers'**

Zarif who held talks with Annan on the sidelines of the Oslo Forum in Norway also discussed the latest developments in the Middle East region especially the Qatar row and the Syrian conflict.

Annan said that all will be "losers" if the regional situation worsen.

New round of Astana talks to be held on July 4-5

POLITICS TEHRAN — Russian d e s k Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov said on Tuesday that the fifth round of talks on Syria in Astana, Kazakhstan, is scheduled for July 4-5.

"We are now preparing for this meeting — we wanted to hold it on June 12, but we were told that they will not be

ready by that time, then we were told 20," Sputnik quoted Bogdanov as saying.

"Now our Turkish and Iranian partners say that they will not be able to study all the draft documents that we submitted, and which should be agreed during this meeting, so now we are talking about the beginning of July," he added.

Iran, Turkey and Russia brokered the

Astana talks on Syria and the first three rounds of the talks were held on January 23-24, February 15-16 and March 14-15.

The fourth round of the talks was held in May during which a document on creating de-escalation zones in Syria was signed.

According to the document, the de-escalation zones include Idlib prov-

ince and part of the provinces of Latakia, Hama and Aleppo, the area to the north of Homs, Eastern Ghouta, as well as De-rra and Quneitra provinces in southern Syria.

The de-escalation zones are closed to the U.S.-led coalition's aviation.

The coalition's aviation can operate only in areas controlled by Daesh.

20 years of unique experiment in economic cooperation

1 → In striving to achieve its lofty objectives, the D-8 has successfully held eight Summits, 37 Commission Meetings and 16 Council Meetings with the participation of hundreds of delegates from its Member States. It has also held several Ministerial Meetings, Senior Officials Meetings, Task Force Meetings, Expert Meetings and Workshops in six priority areas of sectoral cooperation, namely Trade, Agriculture, Industry, Energy, Transportation and Tourism. As it marks its 20th Anniversary, our Organization is looking forward to consolidating its success with the 9th Summit that is to be hosted by Turkey.

■ **Legal instruments**

Another area of success of the Organization concerns the development of legal instruments required for the regulation of its activities and cooperation in the areas that it considered critical. The conclusion and entry into force of the Visa Agreement, Customs Agreement, and Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) have served to facilitate, regulate and promote cooperation in variety of spheres among the Organization's members.

Among these, D-8 attaches great importance to the PTA, as it serves the ultimate goal of promoting and increasing the level of intra-trade among its Member

Countries. D-8 PTA was signed by all the eight member states at the 5th D-8 Summit on 13 May 2006 in Bali, Indonesia and it officially took effect on 1 July, 2016. The D-8 PTA envisages a cooperation scheme that will strongly benefit our Member countries, and boost trade volume and economic interactions among them. The PTA also aspires to facilitate intra-trade and increase its volume to US\$500 billion as targeted in the D-8 Roadmap.

■ **Beneficial dialogue with international organizations and sectoral partners**

Over the past 20 years, D-8 has succeeded in establishing and developing cooperation with a wide spectrum of International Institutions.

At the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly, all the Member States of the United Nations adopted the text of the resolution on Observer status for the D-8 in the General Assembly. Observer status in UNGA is to enable D-8 strengthen its public visibility, benefit from worldwide experience, including the opportunity to enhance its capacity-building process, and share a platform with the international community.

D-8 also signed a Joint Declaration with United Nations Industrial Development

Organization (UNIDO) on April 2, 2015 in Vienna. The UNIDO, having institutional capacity for inclusive and sustainable industrial development linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), will assist in capacity building within the D-8 Organization.

Through these 20 years, D-8 signed MoUs with the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the International Youth Foundation (IYF), the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC), the African-Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO), the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution (ARDSI), the United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia (UCLG-MEWA) and the Prof. Dr. Necmettin Erbakan Foundation. A Letter of Intent on establishing cooperation between D-8 and the World Maritime University (WMU) was also signed in the Headquarters of the World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden, in July, 2012.

In addition to our partnership with International institutions, we highly value the contributions made by our Affiliated Institutions, namely D-8 Seed Bank, D-8 Technology

Transfer and Exchange Network (D-8TTEN), D-8 Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (D-8 FCCI), D8 Fertilizer Association, D-8 Automotive, D-8 International University, D8COOP and D-8 Animal Feed Information Center (D-8 AFIC) to the development of the shared economic strategy in the Organization.

■ **Future of our organization**

D-8 is still a young organization that has been in existence for only 20 years. Yet, it has made giant strides towards playing a major role in the global economic arena. However, the challenges ahead are enormous. Given the dynamic nature of international economic relations, we need to redouble our efforts in order to increase the density of traffic and volume of interactions between and among our members with a view to fostering economic cooperation and development. We also need to increase public awareness of the Organization and its activities, first and foremost within the D-8 community and subsequently on a larger scale and we need to expand liaison and cooperation with other economic and regional groupings and multilateral institutions. These will enable our Organization to project itself effectively at the international level and play the bigger role that it deserves.

Huge fire engulfs tower block in west London

Fire engulfed a 24-storey housing block in central London, killing at least six people and injuring at least 74 others in an inferno that trapped residents as they slept.

Flames raced through the high-rise Grenfell Tower block of apartments in the north Kensington area after taking hold around 1:00am Wednesday (00:00GMT) and witnesses reported many residents desperately calling for help from windows of upper floors.

The London Fire Brigade said 40 fire engines and 200 firefighters were battling the blaze which had engulfed all floors from the second to the top of the building.

"We can confirm six fatalities at this time following the fire in North Kensington," London's Metropolitan Police said in a statement. "These are very early stages and we do expect that figure to rise."

London's Mayor Sadiq Khan said "a lot of people" still unaccounted for more than eight hours after the fire was reported.

"Unfortunately, there have been a number of fatalities," Danny Cotton, Commissioner at London Fire Brigade, said. "It's a major fire that has affected every floor from the second floor upwards."

Flames ravaged the tower, lighting up the pre-dawn west London skyline and sending up a thick plume of black smoke. Flumes of black and grey smoke billowed into the air over London hours after the blaze was sparked.

Large pieces of debris could be seen falling from the building.

"A number of people being treated for a range of injuries," police said.

It has emerged that residents of Grenfell Tower voiced concerns about the building's fire safety last year.

"It is a truly terrifying thought but the Grenfell Action Group firmly believe that only a catastrophic event



will expose the ineptitude and incompetence of our landlord, the KCTMO (Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation), and bring an end to the dangerous living conditions and neglect of health and safety legislation that they inflict upon their tenants and leaseholders," members of the Grenfell Action Group said in a blog dated November 2016.

The group has since posted a new entry on its blog, saying "all our warnings fell on deaf ears".

"We predicted that a catastrophe like this was inevitable and just a matter of time."

"It is our conviction that a serious

fire in a tower block or similar high density residential property is the most likely reason that those who wield power at the KCTMO will be found out and brought to justice."

No KCTMO official was available for comment.

Witnesses said they heard screaming from the upper floors as the flames rose in the night.

"They were trapped. They couldn't come downstairs, especially from the top floor... People have been burned," a witness identified as Daniel told BBC Radio London.

"I have seen it with my own eyes. And I have seen people jump."

Another witness, Tamara, told the BBC she also saw people trying to throw their children to safety.

Al Jazeera's Laurence Lee, reporting from London, said "there were serious and long-standing complaints by the residents".

Witnesses at the scene confirmed hearing people screaming for help from inside the building and also tying towels and bed sheets to try and escape from the windows before being advised against doing that by the police.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan said a "major incident" had been declared.

(Source: agencies)

U.S. envoy to Qatar to quit as Persian Gulf row intensifies

The United States Ambassador to Qatar Dana Shell Smith says she is stepping down amid a deepening rift among Washington's Persian Gulf Arab allies.

"This month, I end my 3 years as U.S. Ambassador to #Qatar. It has been the greatest honor of my life and I'll miss this great country," Smith tweeted.

The U.S. ambassador did not explain why she was resigning, who would replace her and if she was staying within the diplomatic service. U.S. ambassadorships typically last three years.

A source close to Smith told CNN that she will also conclude her 25-year career in the Foreign Service once her post in Doha ends.

Smith was appointed as the U.S. envoy to Qatar in 2014 by then president, Barack Obama.

She made headlines in May by expressing her dissatisfaction with political events back home under the administration of President Donald Trump.

The ambassador's departure comes days after the House of Saud regime, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) cut their diplomatic and transport ties with Qatar, accusing Doha of destabilizing the region with its support for terrorism, an allegation rejected by the Qatari government.

Doha believes it is targeted by an orchestrated smear campaign over its independent foreign policy.

The U.S. President Donald Trump recently sided with the Saudi regime-led bloc and accused Qatar of funding terrorism at a "very high level," noting that "the time had come to call on Qatar to end its funding, they have to end that funding and its extremist ideology."

■ Riyadh rejects Qatar 'blockade'

As concerns grow about a humanitarian crisis in Qatar due to its Riyadh-led isolation, the House of Saud regime's Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, who is on a visit to Washington, claimed that the measures against the monarchy were reasonable.

"There is no blockade of Qatar. Qatar is free to go," Jubeir said alongside U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Tuesday.



Qatari Defense Minister Khalid bin Mohammad al-Attiyah (R) welcomes U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis and U.S. Ambassador to Qatar Dana Shell Smith (L), at his residence in Doha, Qatar, April 22, 2017.

"The ports ..., airports ... [and] seaports of Qatar are open. There is no blockade on them. Qatar can move goods in and out whenever they want. They just cannot use our territorial waters," he said. "The limitation on the use of Saudi airspace is only limited to Qatari Airways or Qatari-owned aircraft, not anybody else."

On Tuesday, Amnesty International criticized the punitive measures taken by Saudi Arabia and its allies against Qatar, saying the restrictions violate the human rights of the Qatari people.

■ Bahrain targets pro-Qatar lawyer

Separately on Tuesday, a prominent Bahraini human rights lawyer was taken into custody after launching a lawsuit against the government for taking "arbitrary" measures against Qatar.

Issa Faraj Arhama al-Burshaid had filed a case with the Supreme Administrative Court in Manama against the Bahraini cabinet, Interior and Foreign Ministries concerning the Qatar dispute.

"This siege has broken up family ties and hurt all Bahraini families. The decision to cut diplomatic relations violates Bahrain's constitution and laws," he said.

Last week, Bahrain declared it a crime - punishable by imprisonment of

up to five years and a fine - to show "sympathy or favoritism" to Qatar or to oppose the decision to break off relations with it.

■ Diplomatic efforts

This is while efforts are underway on the diplomatic stage to settle the worst crisis to hit the Persian Gulf region in years.

Doha has welcomed mediation, but insists no one can dictate its foreign policy.

On Wednesday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu is set to meet his Qatari counterpart, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Doha.

If possible, the top Turkish diplomat will travel to Saudi Arabia in a diplomatic push to help end the regional dispute, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement late on Tuesday.

Turkey, which has sided with Qatar in the diplomatic spat, has slammed the pressure by the Saudi regime-led bloc of countries against Doha, saying isolating a nation in all areas is inhumane and against Islamic values.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called on Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud to take a leading role in resolving the diplomatic rift in the region.

(Source: agencies)

'Staggering' civilian deaths from U.S.-led air strikes in Raqqa: UN

U.S. use of phosphorus endangers civilians in Iraq, Syria: HRW

Intensified coalition air strikes supporting an assault by the United States-backed forces on the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist groups's stronghold of Raqqa in Syria are causing a "staggering loss of civilian life", United Nations war crimes investigators said on Wednesday.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a group of Kurdish and Arab militias supported by a U.S.-led coalition, began to attack Raqqa a week ago to take it from the terrorists. The SDF, supported by heavy coalition air strikes, have taken territory to the west, east and north of the city.

"We note in particular that the intensification of air strikes, which have paved the ground for an SDF advance in Raqqa, has resulted not only in staggering loss of civilian life, but has also led to 160,000 civilians fleeing their homes and becoming internally displaced," Paulo Pinheiro, chairman of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry told the Human Rights Council.

Pinheiro provided no figure for civilian casualties in Raqqa, where rival forces are racing to capture ground from the ISIL. The Syrian army is also advancing on the desert area west of the city.

Separately, Human Rights Watch (HRW) expressed concern in a statement about the use of incendiary white phosphorus weapons by the U.S.-led coalition fighting ISIL in Iraq and Syria, saying it endangered civilians when used in populated areas.

"No matter how white phosphorus is used, it poses a high risk of horrific and long-lasting harm in crowded cities like [Syria's] Raqqa and [Iraq's] Mosul and any other areas with concentrations of civilians," Steve Goose, the arms director at the HRW, said on Wednesday.

He further called on the U.S.-led coalition to "take all feasible precautions to minimize civilian harm when using white phosphorus in Iraq and Syria."

Almost a week ago, videos were posted online, appearing to show U.S.-led coalition bombers using white phosphorus-loaded munitions in densely-populated areas in Syria and Iraq.

The HRW said it was not able to independently verify whether the use of the munitions had resulted in any civilian casualties, but locals confirmed deaths.

White phosphorus is an incendiary and toxic chemical substance. The munitions filled with the substance create a thick white cloud when they explode. Upon contact with flesh, the substance can maim and kill by burning to the bone.

Such munitions can be used as an incendiary weapon or a smoke screen for signaling and marking.

In both Raqqa and Mosul, the HRW said, the U.S.-led coalition was using M825 series 155-millimeter artillery projectiles containing 116 felt wedges impregnated with white phosphorus, which ignites when exposed to the air.

The U.S.-led coalition insists that, as a matter of policy, it cannot publicly discuss the use of specific munitions, but admits to using white phosphorus in its operations.

U.S. Army Colonel Ryan Dillon, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition, claimed that the U.S. military employed the munitions in "accordance with the law of armed conflict" and that white phosphorus rounds were "used for screening, obscuring, and marking in a way that fully considers the possible incidental effects on civilians and civilian structures."

Earlier this year, The Washington Post published photographs of a U.S. Marine unit deployed to Syria equipped with white phosphorus projectiles, as well as pictures showing white phosphorus projectiles with U.S. army units near Mosul.

"Horrific civilian harm from previous use of white phosphorus has generated public outrage and this latest use of white phosphorus underscores the urgent need for states to strengthen international law relating to incendiary weapons," Goose, the HRW official, said.

The U.S. and its allies have been bombarding what they say are ISIL positions inside Syria and Iraq since 2014. The coalition has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of fulfilling its declared aim of eliminating ISIL.

(Source: Reuters)

Egyptian parliamentary committee backs Red Sea islands transfer

Egypt's plan to hand over two uninhabited Red Sea islands to the House of Saud regime under an agreement that has caused widespread controversy moved closer to fruition on Wednesday when a key parliamentary committee unanimously backed the measure.

The House of Representatives Committee on Defense and National Security referred the plan to parliament for a final vote before it can be ratified by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, committee chairman Kamal Amer, a retired major general, told journalists.

Sisi's government last year announced a maritime demarcation accord with the Saudi regime, which has given billions of dollars of aid to Egypt, ceding control of islands of Tiran and Sanafir to the Persian Gulf kingdom.

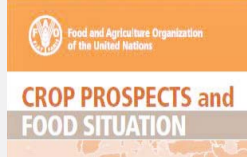
The transfer plan sparked rare street protests last year from many Egyptians, who say their country's sovereignty over the islands dates back to a treaty in 1906, before Saudi Arabia was founded. Dozens gathered in downtown Cairo on Tuesday evening and organizers said a handful were briefly detained.

The treaty was referred to the courts - irritating Riyadh and raising tensions between two major Arab states and traditional allies.

The highest administrative court has blocked the deal but parliament insists the matter is constitutionally within its domain, putting the legislature and the judiciary at odds.

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran, Moscow explore investment opportunities

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Moscow hosted a joint desk Iran-Russia business forum on investment opportunities in Iran on Tuesday in which the two sides discussed Iran's economic potentials, IRNA reported.

The event was attended by Iran's Economic Attaché to Moscow Davood Mirzakhani and over 70 businessmen and entrepreneurs active in various economic areas.

According to Mirzakhani, after implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), cooperation between Iran and Russia has grown in various economic fields.



Iran, Armenia ink MOU on Halal industries co-op

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The National Iranian Standards Organization and Armenia's Ministry of Economic Development and Investments signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Halal industries cooperation on Wednesday in Tehran.

According to IRNA, The MOU aims for improving bilateral cooperation and boosting the level of trade between the two sides.

Earlier in April, the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) and Customs Service of Republic of Armenia also signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on customs cooperation.



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International leaders to debate energy and economy in Astana

Representatives from the world's economic community, including heads of state, business leaders and figures from the scientific world, will come together this week in the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the annual Astana Economic Forum on Thursday and Friday.

The 2017 edition, being held June 15 and 16, is an opportunity for international dialogue, discussion and brainstorming on a range of economic issues facing Central Asia and the rest of the world.

Since it began 9 years ago the forum has tackled a wide range of economic issues, including globalization, risk management and infrastructure. This year AEF participants will be addressing "New energy - New Economy".

(Source: euronews)

Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways to drop San Francisco route from Oct.

Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways said on Wednesday it is suspending flights to San Francisco in the United States from October after falling passenger demand curbed the route's profitability.

The flight, launched in November 2014, was already reduced from a daily service to three times a week earlier this year.

The suspension is from October 29 and passengers booked to travel after then will be rebooked with other carriers, Etihad said in an emailed statement.

"Etihad Airways remains strongly committed to its other U.S. services, which are performing at, or above, commercial targets," Etihad said.

The Abu Dhabi carrier flies to five other U.S. destinations including New York and Washington DC. (Source: Reuters)

Nike, Sanrio, Universal Studios face EU probe over sale terms

U.S. sports goods maker Nike, Comcast's Universal Studios and Hello Kitty owner Sanrio found themselves in EU antitrust regulators' crosshairs on Wednesday over the way they control the sale of products in the bloc.

The European Commission said it would investigate whether the companies were illegally blocking traders from selling licensed merchandise across borders and online in the 28-country bloc.

The crackdown by the EU competition authority followed an inquiry into e-commerce practices by some 1,900 companies in Europe, part of a strategy to boost online trade and economic growth. (Source: Reuters)

Iran to start exporting meat to Qatar in days

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran will start exports of desk 170 tons of meat per day to Qatar in coming days, Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday.

According to the report, 80 tons of the total 170 tons required meat for exports will be supplied by Iranian tradesmen.

Iran's daily meat production stands at 210 tons, 120 tons of which is consumed domestically. Accordingly, the exported meat to Qatar is provided from other countries but no Iran including Armenia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan.

In the biggest diplomatic crisis in the region in years, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, plus Egypt and Yemen, last Monday announced they were cutting all ties with Qatar, accusing it of supporting extremism.

The diplomatic rift has provided a unique opportunity



for Iran to tap into the billion-dollar food market of its Persian Gulf neighbor.

Iran started sending cargoes of food products to Qatar in recent days and as Iranian officials announced it will continue sending such cargos while there is still request from the Qatari side.

According to Iran Air spokesman Shahrokh Nooshabadi Iran sent five cargoes of food products to Qatar in past few days, the cargos each weighing 90 tons contained perishable products.

Three ships loaded with 350 tons of fruit and vegetables were also set to leave an Iranian port for Qatar.

Economists raise 2017 Singapore growth forecast

Economists raised their forecasts for Singapore's growth this year, compared to three months ago, as they upgraded their views on manufacturing and bank lending, a central bank survey showed on Wednesday.

The median forecast of 21 economists surveyed by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) was for gross domestic product (GDP) to grow 2.5 percent in 2017, up from the 2.3 percent estimated in the previous survey, published in March.

That would mark a pick-up from 2.0 percent growth in 2016, and would be at the upper end of the government's forecast range.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry said in May that full-year 2017 GDP growth is likely to come in higher than 2.0 percent "barring the materialization of downside risks", but kept its official GDP growth forecast unchanged at a range of 1-3 percent.

Economists now expect the manufacturing sector to expand 5.0 percent in 2017, up from 4.5 percent seen in the March survey.

They also upgraded their view on bank loans, which are seen increasing 6.2 percent in 2017. The previous median forecast was 3.2 percent growth.

Non-oil domestic exports are expected to grow 5.6 percent in 2017, down from the previous median forecast of 6.1 percent. Other forecasts that were trimmed include construction, now expected to grow 0.2 percent compared to 0.3 percent previously.

The survey's median forecast for year-on-year GDP growth in the second quarter was 2.7 percent, up from the previous median of 2.5 percent.

Singapore's GDP expanded 2.7 percent in the first quarter from a year earlier, but contracted 1.3 percent from the previous three months on an annualised and seasonally adjusted basis.

The central bank's core inflation gauge was expected to rise 1.5 percent for the whole of 2017, unchanged from the previous survey.

According to the latest MAS survey, economists' median forecast for all-items CPI inflation in 2017 was



trimmed to 0.9 percent from 1.0 percent.

Economists estimated that the Singapore dollar will trade at 1.4100 against the U.S. dollar by end-2017. It was trading near 1.3820 on Wednesday.

Singapore's advance estimate of second quarter GDP is due to be released in the first half of July. (Source: Reuters)

World stocks march on as Fed rate hike looms, dollar steady

Stocks rose on Wednesday, but worries about stretched valuations and caution before a near-certain rate hike by the U.S. Federal Reserve kept their gains in check, while the dollar steadied against a basket of major currencies.

The widely expected quarter-point interest rate hike will take the Fed funds target rate above 1 percent for the first time since the immediate aftermath of the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008.

Market participants' focus will be on signals on the frequency of further hikes and how the Fed plans to unwind its huge Treasury bond stockpile over the years ahead.

The U.S. central bank was scheduled to release its decision at 1800 GMT on Wednesday with a news conference to follow from Chair Janet Yellen.

"With financial conditions remaining supportive ... and US financials breaking higher, the Fed may see little reason to moderate its rate hike projections when meeting today," strategists at Morgan Stanley said in a note to clients.

The U.S. bank expects the dollar to gain 2 percent against major currencies over the next few weeks.

On Wednesday, the dollar index .DXY barely budged as slightly firmer moves against the euro EUR= and yen JPY= were offset by losses against the commodity bloc of currencies, such as the Australian and Canadian dollars.

Worries about the pace of global growth and weakness in markets for the commodities they produce drove a 5-percent slide in the values of both Australia's AUD=D4 and Canada's CAD=D4

dollars between March and May.

Relatively upbeat economic data from China and a surge in expectations of higher Canadian interest rates have helped currencies of commodities-related economies.

Optimism about the global economy also underpinned European equities where the pan-European STOXX 600 was up 0.6 percent, led by industrials and financials. Stocks on Wall Streets hit a record high overnight.

However, worries about valuations, particularly in the tech sector which nosedived last week, are on the rise.

A record number of investors said equities are overvalued and three-quarters said internet stocks are expensive or in a bubble, a Bank of America Merrill Lynch fund manager poll showed on Tuesday

Strategists at Deutsche Bank warned that its European "complacency indicator", which measures valuations relative to market volatility, was at an 11-year high, and the bank expects economic momentum to fade in coming months.

The MSCI All-Country World index .MIWD000000PUS was up 0.1 percent and has remained stuck in a tight range this month.

Europe's benchmark bond yield held near seven-week lows ahead of the Fed decision.

In commodities, oil prices fell more than 1 percent, on the backfoot again on worries about US oversupply. Brent crude oil LCOc1 was down 45 cents a barrel at \$48.27 while U.S. crude Clc1 was 50 cents lower at \$45.96. (Source: Reuters)

The global economy is rebounding, but there's one big problem

By Chris Anstey and Enda Curran

There's a dark cloud building behind the world's best period of synchronous growth among developed and emerging economies this decade -- one that in time could rain down volatility in global markets.

The problem, identified by strategist and hedge fund manager Stephen Jen, is a deepening imbalance in the lack of new safe-haven assets as the world's output expands.

China and other developing nations are accumulating wealth, but failing to create sophisticated local markets that feature their own risk-free instruments. That's a dangerous reliance on U.S. Treasuries, according to Jen's argument, perpetuating a bond bubble and pushing investors into riskier assets.

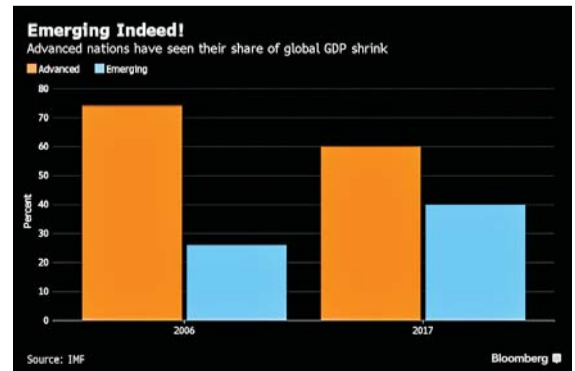
It's a tweaked version of the "savings glut" argument that then-Federal Reserve Governor Ben S. Bernanke put forward in 2005 to explain why American borrowing costs were stuck at low levels even as the U.S. hiked interest rates. These days, current account imbalances among the U.S., China and Japan have come down, and Asia's biggest economies are carrying higher debt loads, undermining the idea that there's too much savings.

Instead, the problem is that emerging markets haven't yet been able to develop assets that investors are willing to hold as stores of value and collateral when times get tough. Doing that requires strong levels of confidence in the rule of law, equitable regulation and belief that money can be withdrawn by the investor whenever needed.

"The local capital markets in EM still lack the sophistication to match the real sectors in these economies," Jen and colleague Nicolo Bandera wrote in a note last week. The continued growth of emerging markets while their financial systems lag behind produces "a situation whereby the genuine safe-haven assets such as the U.S. Treasuries, German bunds, and the British gilts become increasingly rare and in short supply," they wrote.

Fed and other central bank purchases of their own government bonds have even further limited the supply of such assets, Jen and Bandera highlighted. The Fed is widely forecast to raise borrowing costs for the second time in 2017 this week, with attention zooming in on plans to dial back its \$4.5 trillion balance sheet.

China, as the world's second-largest economy, offers the best chance to develop an alternative to the U.S. Treasuries market, though its capital controls have left foreign investors wary to take full advantage of new avenues to invest in its government bonds.



A history of punishing foreign countries that take actions the Communist leadership dislikes -- such as when South Korea moved to allow a U.S. missile-defense system -- could also play into foreign and domestic investor reluctance to embrace Chinese assets as a haven.

"China should -- no doubt -- develop a more liquid and open government bond market," said Alicia Garcia Herrero, chief Asia-Pacific economist at Natixis SA in Hong Kong. Doing so would offer an alternative to Treasuries and help internationalize the yuan, she said.

"Absent of a massively large and liquid sovereign bond market which can act as free-risk collateral and

benchmark for other instruments, no currency can ever become an international currency," Garcia Herrero said. "China seems to have understood the lesson but, still, too much effort is put in developing the corporate bond market. This is like starting a house from the roof."

Demand dynamics have also contributed to the shortage of haven assets.

Scarred by past purchases of developed-nation bonds that turned out to be less than safe in the global crisis, and investing in a world with a more subdued growth path since, investors have piled into assets seen as low risk, says Cui Li, head of macro research at CCB International Holdings Ltd. in Hong Kong.

"Can China help and should China open up? Sure," Li says. "It helps to create financial stability in a world where U.S. Treasury bonds dominate," by creating alternative vehicles for reserve assets, she said.

As Chinese markets join global indexes, their assets will increasingly gain global acceptance, argues Luke Spajic, head of portfolio management for emerging Asia at Pacific Investment Management Co. in Singapore.

It will just take time. In a sign of support for China's efforts, the European Central Bank announced on Tuesday it shifted a small portion of its dollar reserves into yuan. But that's one drop in an ocean of official holdings that's on the rise again. State Street Global Advisors sees global reserves reclaiming their 2014 high by late 2020.

"These are some of the biggest debt markets in the world -- however, this market is in its infancy," Spajic said of China's corporate credit and government debt. "It may take years to reach developed-market standards, so investors must simply adapt to the terrain."

In the meantime, Jen and Bandera worry about the unusual configuration of asset prices and their reaction -- or lack thereof -- to news and shocks. "The aggressive monetary policies have pushed the world into a cul-de-sac, the exit from which may not be orderly, we fear." (Source: Bloomberg)

Oil supply seen outpacing consumption in 2018, demand to top 100m bpd

Growth in oil supply next year is expected to outpace an anticipated pick-up in demand that will push global consumption above 100 million barrels per day (bpd) for the first time, the International Energy Agency said on Wednesday.

The Paris-based IEA said production outside the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries would grow twice as quickly in 2018 as it will do this year, when OPEC and 11 partner nations have restrained output.

"For total non-OPEC production, we expect production to grow by 700,000 bpd this year, but our first outlook for 2018 makes sobering reading for those producers looking to restrain supply," the IEA said.

"In 2018, we expect non-OPEC production to grow by 1.5 million bpd which is slightly more than the expected increase in global demand."

Brent crude futures extended losses after the report, falling 64 cents on the day to \$48.08 a barrel by 0804 GMT, from around \$48.26 prior to the release.

Oil inventories across the world's most industrial nations rose in April by 18.6 million barrels to 3.045 billion barrels, thanks to higher refinery output and imports. The IEA said stocks were 292 million barrels above the five-year average.

The agency continued to forecast an implied shortfall in supply relative to demand for the second quarter of this year. But it said slowing demand growth in China and Europe in particular, as well as increasing supply, meant the deficit should narrow to 500,000 bpd from a prior estimate of 700,000.

OPEC and 11 rival exporters including Russia have agreed to extend a deal to limit supply by 1.8 million bpd to March 2018, in order to cut global inventory levels.

Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih has reiterated the group's commitment to do "whatever it takes" to force a drawdown in global inventory levels.

"We have regularly counselled that patience is required on the part of those looking for the rebalancing of the oil market, and new data leads us to repeat the message," the IEA said.



"Whatever it takes" might be the mantra, but the current form of 'whatever' is not having as quick an impact as expected."

"Indeed, based on our current outlook for 2017 and 2018, incorporating the scenario that OPEC countries continue to comply with their output agreement, stocks might not fall to the desired level until close to the expiry of the agreement in March 2018," the IEA said.

U.S. output rises

The price of oil has fallen 12 percent since May 25, when OPEC and its partners agreed to extend their supply cut, as inventories around the world have been slow to drain.

Rising output from the United States has been one of the main factors behind the stubbornly high stock levels and the IEA estimates U.S. production will continue to grow aggressively into next year.

"Our first look at 2018 suggests that U.S. crude production will grow year-on-year by 780,000 but such is the dynamism of this extraordinary, very diverse industry it is possible that growth will be faster," the agency said.

The forecast for U.S. total oil production for 2017 has been revised 90,000 bpd higher, to average 13.1 million bpd, following further rig additions and increased spending.

Crude output from OPEC nations rose by 290,000 bpd in May to a 2017 high of 32.08 million bpd, still within the confines of the supply deal, after comebacks in Libya and Nigeria, which are exempt from cuts.

Compared to May 2016, OPEC crude production was down by 65,000 bpd, the IEA said. Non-OPEC output rose by 295,000 bpd month-on-month in May to 57.8 million bpd, 1.25 million bpd higher than a year earlier.

(Source: Reuters)

OPEC crude oil basket hit lowest price of the year in May



The OPEC Reference Basket (ORB) averaged \$49.20 per barrel in May, dropping by more than 4 percent over April, to its lowest level for 2017, as the market was range-bound and bearish for most of May despite OPEC/non-OPEC's cuts extension, the cartel said in its Monthly Oil Market Report on Tuesday.

"Oil has been weighed down by the market's impatience with the generally slow pace of the global inventory drawdown amid a significant recovery in global oil supplies, particularly from the U.S.," OPEC said.

The ICE Brent/WTI spread widened by \$0.16 to \$2.86 per barrel, despite successive weeks of U.S. crude stocks draws. "This prompted more U.S. exports, augmenting light crude availabilities in the Asia-Pacific and Europe," OPEC noted.

However, higher seasonal demand for crude and higher refinery runs helped the contango structure to ease in all markets, OPEC said.

One of the cartel's goals with the cuts

was to flip the market to backwardation to force inventories and oil stored in tankers draw down.

The May average OPEC Reference Basket (ORB) was below \$50 per barrel for the first time since November 2016, OPEC said.

Oil prices tumbled sharply despite the extension of the output cuts, and the decision was "greeted by a sell-off, with 25 May daily WTI volumes of 1.1 million contracts the highest since the 30 November 2016 session, when OPEC first announced its production adjustments."

Pressure on prices further increased as producers outside the deal increased output, with the U.S. continuing its 2017 upward trend, and rising output from Nigeria, Libya, and the North Sea keeping the Atlantic basin well supplied with light sweet crude, weighing on crude prices. Nigeria's production grew to the highest in more than a year, following the restart of Forcados loadings, OPEC said.

(Source: oilprice.com)

China's May oil output lowest on record; refiners churn out more



China's crude oil production fell to its lowest on record in May, even as refineries in the world's top buyer of crude churned out product at their fastest pace in nearly two years, data showed on Wednesday.

Crude output fell 3.7 percent in May from a year earlier to 16.26 million tons, or 3.83 million barrels per day (bpd), data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Wednesday. The figure is the lowest since the bureau began publishing records in 2011.

The drop in China's crude oil output has slowed as major oil producers raised spending to boost production as oil prices have stabilized in a range between \$48 to \$55 per barrel. Analysts are forecasting flat or positive production growth for calendar 2017.

"Declining output this year comes as China's major oil fields Daqing and Shengli announced production cuts at the beginning of the year. The pace of decline in production will

ease this year due to higher crude prices," said Gao Jian, a crude oil analyst with China Sublime Information Group.

Crude runs, meanwhile, rose in May by 5.4 percent from a year ago to 46.62 million tons, or 10.98 million bpd. Overall throughput was down from a record reached in March, but May recorded the fastest rate of year-on-year growth since May 2015.

The refinery data highlights the concerns of a growing glut of gasoline and diesel in the domestic and Asian market even as demand slows. Sinopec Group, Asia's biggest refiner, is considering cutting refinery runs in the third-quarter because of the excess fuel supply in the country.

Natural gas output in May dipped to its lowest since October, dropping by one-quarter from April to 12 billion cubic meters. However, compared to a year ago, production rose 10.5 percent.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil prices fall as OPEC output, U.S. crude stockpiles rise

Oil prices fell on Wednesday after industry data showed a build in U.S. crude stocks and OPEC reported a rise in its production despite a pledge to cut output.

Brent crude oil was down 36 cents a barrel at \$48.36 by 0941 GMT. U.S. crude was 45 cents lower at \$46.01.

Crude prices have fallen more than 10 percent since late May, pulled down by heavy global oversupply that has persisted despite a move led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to curb production.

OPEC and other exporters such as Russia have agreed to keep production almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) below the levels pumped at the end of last year and not to increase output until the end of the first quarter of 2018.

But adherence to the cuts is under scrutiny and the producer group said this week that its output rose by 336,000 bpd in May to 32.14 million bpd.

Oil stocks are near record highs in some parts of the world, and producers that are not part of the OPEC deal are increasing



output.

The International Energy Agency on Wednesday said it expected growth in non-OPEC supply to be higher next year than growth in overall global demand.

"For total non-OPEC production, we expect production to grow by 700,000 bpd

this year, but our first outlook for 2018 makes sobering reading for those producers looking to restrain supply," the IEA said in its monthly oil market report.

Shale supply has pushed U.S. crude production up by about 10 percent over the last year to 9.3 million bpd - not far

below the output of top exporter Saudi Arabia.

"The outlook for oil hinges on the effectiveness of the OPEC cuts relative to the supply increases from U.S. shale," said William O'Loughlin, analyst at Australia's Rivkin Securities.

Data from the American Petroleum Institute showed on Tuesday that U.S. crude stocks rose by 2.8 million barrels in the week to June 9 to 511.4 million, compared with expectations for a decrease of 2.7 million barrels.

With supplies plentiful, strong demand is needed to support the market, but there are signs of a slowdown.

Global energy demand grew by 1 percent in 2016, a rate similar to the previous two years but well below the 10-year average of 1.8 percent, BP said in its benchmark Statistical Review of World Energy on Tuesday.

Economic expansion in China, a key component of world oil demand growth for many years, is now slowing.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil giants need to invest heavily in renewables by 2035, says analysis

More than a fifth of investment by the largest oil and gas companies could be in wind and solar power in just over a decade, according to analysis of how global changes in energy will reshape the sector.

Slowing demand for oil and forecasts of rapid growth in renewables posed both a threat and opportunity BP, Shell and Total among others cannot ignore, said research group Wood Mackenzie.

"The momentum behind these [renewable] technologies is unstoppable now," said Valentina Kretzschmar, director of research.

"They [the oil companies] are recognizing it is a megatrend; it's not a fad, it's not going away. There is definitely a risk to their core business."

The commodities analysts found the major energy companies would need to spend more than \$350 billion (bn) (£275bn) on wind and solar power by 2035 to take a market share similar to the 12 percent they have in oil and gas.

Wood Mackenzie admitted that such spending was high even for oil companies and therefore an "unlikely scenario", but forecasted that renewables could still be more than a fifth of capital allocation beyond 2030.

Most of the oil and gas giants are slowly beginning to transform in the face of climate change policies and slowing demand.

Norway's Statoil is to deploy the world's first floating offshore windfarm later this year off Scotland to buoy its existing portfolio of offshore turbines. Shell spent several hours of its annual general meeting in May boasting of its commitment to tackling climate change and to renewable power projects, such as windfarms off the coast of the Netherlands.

Wood Mackenzie said most oil and gas companies realized renewables posed an existential risk to them and needed to hedge against the threat by diversifying.

"Capturing the growth opportunity in this growing market is a driver, but let's not also forget there is investor pressure," said Kretzschmar, citing the 62 percent of shareholders who voted at Exxon's AGM to force the company to be more transparent on climate change.

Like BP, Wood Mackenzie predicted demand for renewables would grow faster than oil in the next two decades: the analysts forecasted annual growth rates of 6 percent for wind and 11 percent for solar, compared with 0.5 percent for oil demand.

Offshore windfarms are probably the most attractive individual technology because of the comparable in scale to drilling for oil and gas, Wood Mackenzie said. But "dramatic reductions" in costs for solar and wind meant that in some places both technologies were now subsidy-free, it added.

Kretzschmar said the European oil and gas companies had embraced renewables much more eagerly than U.S. rivals such as Exxon and Chevron because the U.S. firms had lower cost oil and gas production.

Statoil said it now employed about 100 people in its energy solutions division, which includes wind and carbon capture. The gas and renewable power division of France's Total, which includes solar, biofuels and batteries as well as gas, employs 13,000 people and accounted for \$4.7bn of capital expenditure in 2016.

Anglo Dutch firm Shell has said its new energies unit will spend \$1bn a year on biofuels, hydrogen and renewables by 2020, up from the \$200 million it spent last year, mainly on R&D.

Wood Mackenzie said returns for renewables were about half those of oil and gas production, but the long-life of cash-flow from assets such as windfarms could help firms support their dividends.

The analysts warned that companies that delayed diversification could risk finding themselves left behind - "at a structural disadvantage" - if wind and solar grow even more rapidly than expected.

Revenues from oil and gas are 33 times the level of renewables, but expected to narrow to 13 times by 2035.

Campaigners said Total was the only European oil and gas major taking renewables seriously. (Source: The Guardian)

Hedge funds ditch long positions on U.S. natural gas

Leading into the summer, natural gas builds in the United States have caused hedge fund analysts to turn bearish on the fuel's prices, according to a new report by Reuters.

Deep-pocketed funds downsized their long positions by 1,349 billion cubic feet since May 23rd, after the same players increased their investments by 1,721 billion cubic feet in the 12 weeks prior.

The bullish attitude on natural gas prices was summarized by the U.S. Commodity Trading Commission's May 23rd report that hedge funds held a near-record long position of 3,919 billion cubic feet.

The density of long positions on natural gas paved the way for a correction, which led to their sale over the past couple of weeks. Short positions are now en vogue.

American shale gas production is reaching new heights, even as inventories rise. The two biggest shale gas basins in the U.S. - the Marcellus and the Permian - have been pumping record amounts of power plant-ready fuel. The new supplies from Pennsylvania and Texas extend the domestic gas supply glut, depressing national prices as fuel from the two markets compete for the same customers.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration's forecast for next month predicted a 0.5 percent increase in productivity at Marcellus in July. The Permian's output will climb 1.9 percent next month, the report added.

Oil inventories in the U.S. have also been historically high in recent weeks, which has blocked the effects of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) efforts to increase barrel prices. Saudi Arabia, the bloc's de facto leader, cut exports to the U.S. late last month to force inventories to drop, but Iraqi suppliers filled the gap in the days that followed.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Macron prepares to march France into the future

By Bill Wirtz

The French public has selected a leader who will pave the exact same path as his predecessor

On Sunday, French voters headed to the polls to vote in the first round of the parliamentary elections. A month after the election of its new president Emmanuel Macron, succeeding the socialist François Hollande, the country chose to grant the new executive the necessary seats in the National Assembly in order to enact legislation. Macron's independent political party En Marche! received 32.5 percent of the vote. Meanwhile, a considerable amount of members of parliament from the establishment Socialist Party and Republican Party have already struck deals with Macron's movement in order to see themselves unopposed in their electoral district. As a result, many "opposition" parliamentarians will also support the government of the newly appointed Prime Minister Edouard Philippe.

The center-right Republican Party has received 20 percent of the vote and is likely to be the largest opposition party in parliament, while the Socialist Party, which had governed France for the last five years, only got 9 percent.

Most extraordinary is the participation rate of 49 percent, which is the lowest in the history of the French Republic.

The election night was particularly bitter for Marine Le Pen, whose National Front, the third largest party, got 13 percent of the vote. Now, the National Front's chances of success in next week's second round are dim. Only a few of Le Pen's nationalist candidates are expected to win in the runoff next Sunday. The National Front, contrary to its expectations, has failed to considerably increase its share of votes. This is mostly due to infighting following Le Pen's election loss against Macron. Her party leadership has been ideologically divided, and one key player — her niece Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, who had been one of the party's two members of parliament until now — has left the movement completely.

This result provides Macron with the comfortable majority that he wanted. In fact, only a few days ago the new president had expressed his fear of "ending up with too many [members of parliament]," leading French commentators to mock his political party for its inexperienced candidates, many having never held elected office in their lives. And indeed, Macron's En Marche! is expected to get an absolute majority — between 415 and 450 seats. There are 577 seats and only 289 are needed for a majority.

■ Republican Front

Regardless of these eventual problems, Macron sees himself confirmed once again. He is now embodying the so-called "Republican Front."

Inspired by the name of Le Pen's National Front, the Republican Front gathers those who reject the rampant nationalist positions of the French far right, which they consider contrary to the "Republican spirit." While not an established party in itself, the Republican Front represents a coalition of different parties in the République against a particularly unpopular candidate like Marine Le Pen.

Macron was, in fact, fortunate to run against Le Pen in the presidential election because the major policy differences enabled him to stand out as the candidate for a "tolerant and open" France. The excitement for this new and young president, upon close analysis of his political manifesto, inevitably falls short. As a former economic advisor to the wildly unpopular François Hollande, Macron has been inside the political bubble in Paris for quite a while. In fact, he also served as minister of the economy under Hollande's socialist government. For his presidential run, his manifesto is therefore, to no surprise, very similar to that of the last government.

One of the ways that Macron wanted to stand out was through his love for the European Union. Before his victory speech at the Louvre in Paris, Macron walked onstage to Beethoven's "Ode to Joy." In an interview with French newspaper Libération, Macron said, "You cannot be timidly European," and called for fiscal harmonization in the EU. Macron's radical pro-EU stance is expected to further divide the country given that an increasing number of French people growing skeptical of the European Union.

■ An EU biometric identification

Additionally, France's new president wants to collectivize military forces and surveillance programs. For instance, he wants to create an EU biometric identification card for all citizens. For the Eurozone, the body organizing the policy of the European common currency, Macron calls for a minister of finance and a completely new parliament, which would increase bureaucracy.

Other questionable stances of Macron include the introduction of a "Buy European Act," which would limit private-public partnerships to companies willing locate at least 50 percent of production to Europe. That type of limitation would foster EU-protectionism. It is a stance that is even more paradoxical, given the readiness of European leaders to oppose Donald Trump for protectionism. Macron also wants to further intervene in the agricultural sector and on the housing market, intends on introducing a permanent state of emergency (effectively reducing civil rights) and favors military interventionism in Syria with a UN mandate.

The parliamentary vote on Sunday has given Emmanuel Macron the first confirmation in his policies, which he will try to implement after receiving a large majority. He has crushed party establishments on both sides yet recycled the same old and ineffective policies of the past, and as of now the French public seems oblivious to this massive rebranding effort.

Beware the day that the public discovers that it attributed one of its biggest mandates in France's history to the person who will effectively do the exact same thing as the last person.

(Source: The National Interest)

U.S.-Saudi arms deal narrowly escapes bipartisan opposition

A bid to prevent Trump from selling more than \$500 million in precision-guided munitions to Saudi Arabia needed just a few more votes to pass

Following a bipartisan bid to prevent the sale of more than \$500 million in precision-guided munitions to Saudi Arabia, the Senate voted Tuesday to uphold a previous deal struck by the Trump administration. During a May visit to Saudi Arabia, President Trump approved a \$110 billion arms package to supply the nation with numerous defense items — including tanks, fighter planes, combat ships, and precision-guided bombs — over the next ten years. Last week, the U.S. State Department cleared a portion of the deal that included \$1.4 billion in military training and equipment. With these sales, the administration hopes to create U.S. jobs while improving Saudi Arabia's ability to challenge regional adversaries like Iran.

Saudi Arabia is currently leading a war on Yemen that began in 2015 when the Houthis wrested control of the Yemeni government from the former Saudi-backed president. Considering the move to be a coup d'état, Saudi Arabia proceeded to carry out airstrikes in the region that have since killed thousands of civilians. The nation's naval blockade has also left two thirds of Yemen's population—around 18.8 million people—without vital humanitarian aid, and has deprived more than 7 million people of sufficient food and water. In October 2016, the Obama administration temporarily halted the sale of precision-guided munitions to Saudi Arabia after the nation bombed a funeral hall in Yemen, killing more than 140 people. "They're not picking the right targets," an administration official told Reuters at the time.

"The Saudis will tell you they need these precision-guided missiles to more effectively target Houthi military assets inside Yemen," said Senator Chris Murphy, a democrat, on a press call last



Trump signs \$110 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia on his first Middle East trip.

week. "The fact is, they have deliberately targeted humanitarian and civilian assets within Yemen." He added that Saudi Arabia is "purposefully trying to create a humanitarian nightmare" by attempting to "starve the Yemenis to the negotiating table."

■ Saudi Arabia's humanitarian abuses

Both Murphy and conservative Senator Rand Paul spearheaded this month's bid to prevent the \$500 million

arms deal, championing its opposition from the very beginning, when support seemed unlikely. While Murphy has been a vocal critic of Saudi Arabia's humanitarian abuses in Yemen, Paul has also expressed concern over claims that Saudi Arabia imprisons, tortures, and beheads its political opponents. "This barbaric nation should not be getting our weapons," Paul said Tuesday, calling Saudi Arabia the "number one exporter of Jihadist philosophy."

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Jeff Sessions clams up in congress

How many ways are there to fail to answer a question under oath?

Ask Attorney General Jeff Sessions. The last time Sessions appeared before a Senate committee, during his confirmation hearing in January, he gave false testimony.

"I did not have communications with the Russians," Sessions said in response to a question no one asked — and despite the fact that he had, in fact, met with the Russian ambassador, Sergey Kislyak, at least twice during the 2016 presidential campaign. The omission raised questions not only about his honesty, but also about why he would not disclose those meetings in the first place.

On Tuesday Sessions returned to answer questions from the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is investigating Russian meddling of the 2016 election and the Trump campaign's possible ties to those efforts.

That was the plan, anyway. In fact — and to the great consternation of the Democratic members of the committee, at least — Sessions was not on board. He arrived in full body armor, testy and sometimes raising his voice to defend what he called his honor against "scurrilous and false allegations" that he had colluded with Moscow.

He also defended his misstatements in January, to the Judiciary Committee, as being taken out of context, and he lowered a broad cone of silence around all his communications with President Trump regarding last month's firing of James Comey as FBI director, claiming it was "inappropriate" for him to discuss them. Did they involve classified information? No. Was he invoking executive privilege? No, he said, only the president may invoke that. Reminded that Trump has not done so, he said, "I'm protecting the right of the president to assert it if he chooses."

■ A longstanding policy

In lieu of a real excuse, he cited a longstanding policy at the Justice Department — although he couldn't confirm that it existed in writing or that, if it did, he had actually read it. In other words, Sessions has no intention to



Sessions's explanation would've been impossible to swallow anyway, since he, like Trump, had originally praised Comey's actions in the Clinton investigation.

answer any of those questions now or in the future.

Senator Martin Heinrich, Democrat of New Mexico, angrily accused Sessions of "impeding this investigation" by refusing to respond, but perhaps the attorney general was wise to keep his mouth shut. When he opened it, he often seemed to contradict himself, his staff at the Justice Department, or the president.

The most glaring example was his claim that the letter he wrote supporting Comey's dismissal was based on the former director's missteps in the bureau's investigation of Hillary Clinton's private email server — even

though Trump himself had almost immediately blown that cover, telling a national television audience that he had the Russia investigation in mind when he decided to fire Comey.

Sessions's explanation would've been impossible to swallow anyway, since he, like Trump, had originally praised Comey's actions in the Clinton investigation.

The attorney general also had a strange reaction to Comey's plea that he not be left alone with the president again. By his own account, Sessions seemed less concerned with the president's highly unusual and inappropriate behavior than he was with Comey, telling him "that the FBI and the Department of Justice needed to be careful to follow department policies regarding appropriate contacts with the White House."

So here are a few more questions that Sessions should answer, but probably won't.

Why did he not resist when Trump asked him and others to leave the Oval Office so he could have a private conversation with Comey? At the very least, why did he not take steps to find out what had happened?

Why does he believe he did not violate the terms of his recusal by taking part in Comey's firing? His recusal extended, in his own words, to "any existing or future investigations of any matters related in any way to the campaigns for president of the United States" — which clearly includes the Clinton email investigation.

If his recusal was truly based, as he claimed, on his closeness to the Trump campaign, why not announce it immediately upon his confirmation, rather than wait weeks, until after news of his undisclosed meetings with Kislyak broke?

And perhaps most pressing: Why, since he agreed with the committee that Russian interference in the election represents a profoundly serious attack on American democracy, has Sessions never received or read any detailed briefing on that operation?

(Source: The NYT)

South Sudan is the African exception, not the rule

By David Pilling

If you think the UK is having a hard time figuring out what it means to be a modern nation state, spare a thought for South Sudan. The world's newest country, formed in a flurry of misguided optimism in 2011, has descended into a vicious civil war as forces that suspended their rivalries to win independence from Khartoum struggle for control of the "state."

That state in question lacks almost anything worthy of the name: roads, buildings, institutions, national myths, credibility. The result has been predictable, if horrifying. Groups largely cleaving along ethnic lines have fought to get their hands on power and money.

In the process, they have exacted a

terrible price on the population. Something perilously close to ethnic cleansing is taking place as the Dinka majority, led by President Salva Kiir, claims the country for its own. Rape, murder and the burning of villages are commonplace. More than 3.5m of the 12m population have fled their homes. Hunger is rife, with famine in some regions. About 2m have poured over the borders into neighboring countries, half of them to Uganda.

This comparison with Britain is not meant to be facetious. The UK has held roughly its current form since the Act of Union in 1707. But even today, questions

of British identity and power are not exactly settled. Thankfully, these disputes — the troubles in Northern Ireland aside — are mostly settled peacefully.

■ Patterns of war

Writing just as South Sudan was descending into war in 2013, the political scientist Andreas Wimmer described "repeating patterns of war and conflict" related to the emergence of nation states from a world of "empires, dynastic kingdoms, tribal confederacies, and city-states". Two distinct phases of conflict accompanied this transition, he writes. "First, violence related to the creation of

the nation-state itself, and second, an often bloody struggle over which ethnic or national groups would hold power in the newly established state." South Sudan is up to its neck in phase two.

The historical context is important. All too often the world looks at Africa in ignorant horror, seeing a supposedly uniquely violent continent where warring "tribes" are continually at each other's throats. This is wrong for at least three reasons.

First, there is nothing uniquely violent about Africa. The U.S. was created by exterminating and subjugating the native population. You need go back no further than the two great wars to appreciate the savagery that has occurred on the European continent. →13

Across the continent, states are beginning to feel more comfortable in their borders.

Qatar row: Dichotomy of power in ME

By Parnaz Talebi

Saudi Arabia's severing of diplomatic ties with Doha was a surprise, but to the member states of Arab League and PGCC.

A campaign was launched by Saudi Arabia on Monday, June 6, to isolate and put pressure on Qatar that was joined rapidly by Bahrain, Egypt and United Arab Emirates on the same day.

The diplomatic row started with Bahrain's statement claiming that "due to the insistence of the State of Qatar in further destabilizing security and stability in the Kingdom of Bahrain and interference in its affairs, continuing the escalation and incitement media and supporting armed terrorist activities... the Kingdom of Bahrain announces the severance of diplomatic relations with the State of Qatar."

Bahrain was immediately followed by Saudi Arabia who announced its government "exercising its sovereign rights guaranteed by the international law, and protecting national security from the dangers of terrorism and extremism, decided to sever diplomatic and consular relations with the State of Qatar."

United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Libya and Yemen are the other regional states taking the same measure due to "Qatar's support of terrorism, meddling in internal affairs and growing rapprochement with Iran."

This is while J.U.S. one week before, on May 20-21, Riyadh hosted two multilateral meetings, one between the members of the [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council and the other with Arab and Muslim countries' leaders along with U.S.'s Donald Trump during which focus was on further cooperation and unity in fight against terrorism, or better said, forming an Arab coalition against Iran.

Also during the summit, Trump slammed Iran for supporting Bashar al-Assad and Saudi Arabia, on behalf of all the guests, condemned Iran for its hostile policies and threatened it with an adequate response.

However, tensions between Qatar and its neighbors escalated when a Qatari news agency posted a speech on behalf of the country's emir in supporting ties with Iran.

The remarks were rejected by Qatari Foreign Ministry who announced that the agency's site was hacked and the remarks do not belong to Emir.

The severance of ties in such a turmoil condition in the Middle East could seem surprising and sudden, though it's not.

Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia in late May as the first destination of his first foreign tour marks the extent to which U.S. relies on its key ally in the Middle



Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia in late May as the first destination of his first foreign tour marks the extent to which US relies on its key ally in the Middle East.

East. No doubt Trump's trip was an effort to fulfill particular U.S. interests in the region including inflaming tensions, escalating the fight against Syria, Palestine, Yemen and Iran under the pretext of fight against terrorism and empowering Saudi Arabia. On Tuesday, Trump also underlined the aims his visit was seeking and the outcomes deeming the isolating actions by Arab nations as the possible beginning of the end of terrorism; "so good to see the Saudi Arabia visit with the King and 50 countries already paying off. They said they would take a hard line on funding extremism, and all reference was pointing to Qatar," Trump stated in a Twitter message. "Perhaps this will be the beginning of the end to the horror of terrorism!"

Meanwhile, there have been preparations in U.S. against Qatar. The Zionist lobby organization "Foundation for the Defense of Democracy" held a conference on Qatar on 23rd of May, just after the Riyadh summit during which several panelists talked about Qatar, its affiliation with Muslim Brotherhood and the policies U.S. would follow against the Arab country. Ed Royce, a congressman who also serves as Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, underlined "I know that the argument is being made that Qatar will be, you know, part of helping finance our new anti-terror center and so forth in the Middle East and I think that's good. I

Saudi Arabia, emboldened with its key backer US, tried to unite Arab states against Iran and its allies in Riyadh summit within a frame called Arab NATO.

think it's - there's always the possibility that you can change behavior. But I would say when the behavior is so wrong on so many different issues, if there's going to be a change, it needs to be immediate. So I think there's going to be a great deal of pressure on Qatar to change its behavior."

Saudi Arabia, emboldened with its key backer U.S., tried to unite Arab states against Iran and its allies in Riyadh summit within a frame called Arab NATO. Trump's first foreign visit to a country involved in 9/11 attacks and the leader of sponsorship of terrorism in the Middle East who is responsible for crises in Yemen, Syria and Bahrain, was a political game clearly indicating what's going on behind the scenes. While the U.S. has been trying to milk Riyadh, Saudis are trying to buy and use the Washington card to increase their influence in the region and turn into a regional power by forming coalitions under the pretext of fight against terrorism or sectarian conflicts. Yet the speculations didn't come true as the outcome of the summit was not a united voice against Iran and allies but a split in the Arab world. Most Arab and Muslim leaders in the Riyadh summit have showed up despite their will and they were not even aware of the statement issued after the meeting wrapped up. "We were not aware of the announcement in Riyadh; rather we thought that

no statement would be issued after the summit and we were surprised by its issuance and content when we were on the plane returning to Lebanon," Lebanese Foreign Minister Gibran Bassil has said.

Even the arms deal sealed between U.S. and the kingdom doesn't seem to get to implementation phase at all. The deal in U.S. needs approval of Congress and in Saudi side, faces payment problems as the kingdom has already depleted its financial reserves.

Saudi-led blockade of Qatar is another step toward the final goal of Saudi leadership of an Arab coalition in the region against states like Iran, Syria, Iraq and even Turkey, who has also been absent in the Riyadh Summit. Why Qatar? Doha has been a somehow independent and pioneer state in the region, yet with double standards towards its neighbors in the Middle East. Qatar also enjoys from stable economic and political status. Maybe now it's time for Qatar to clearly announce its affiliations and this has been mostly felt by Saudi Arabia who is stuck in financial and political crises it has provoked in the region by launching a futile war campaign in Yemen for more than two years and supporting armed groups and terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

Kingdom of Al Saud is supported by the United States in this regard but Qatar also hosts the al-Udeid airbase, the largest U.S. military base in the Middle East, which is home to more than 10,000 U.S. servicemen and serves as a major communications and operational center for Washington in the region. Therefore, Saudis would not receive the support they expect from U.S. in the blockading of Doha. This also rules out the option of military invasion, but a military coup to overthrow the government in Doha is still valid. This becomes a more solid and viable option remembering that most forces of Qatar's army are from a Pakistan loyal to its ally U.S. and an ideology close to that of Saudi Arabia.

Being more realistic, the isolation seeks to put pressure on Qatar to give up against Saudi kingdom and get in the line with Saudis on regional issues. Yet, Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey have so far announced unconditional support for the isolated Qatar. Doha would face difficult days in upcoming weeks and would have to make a very difficult decision: to join the Saudi alliance with certain countries of the Middle East as well as United States and Israeli regime whose crimes in the region are crystal clear or to maintain its sovereignty and join Iran, Syria, Iraq, Turkey and their allies, whose support have been proved so many times in the history and are in a true fight against evils in the strategic and turmoil Middle East.

Dirty open secret: U.S. created and supports ISIS

By Stephen Lendman

It's one of the dirtiest of dirty open secrets.

U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) documents prove it - obtained by Judicial Watch through an FOIA lawsuit.

They show ISIS, al-Qaeda and like-minded terrorist groups are the "major forces" used as U.S. foot soldiers in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere.

The myth of so-called "moderate rebels" was long ago discredited. Yet claiming they exist persists.

The DIA documents show America, NATO, Saudi Arabia and other regional rogue states support an Islamic caliphate to challenge, topple and replace Bashar al-Assad with an imperial puppet.

Longstanding U.S./Israeli plans call for redrawing the Middle East map by color revolutions and wars, replacing independent governments with pro-Western puppet regimes, balkanizing Iraq, Syria, Iran and other regional countries for easier control, looting their resources, and exploiting their people.

In a January 2016 Iran Review article, James Fetzer discussed evidence of ISIS' creation by America.

In February 2015, Iraq's military "downed 2 UK cargo planes carrying weapons for ISIL," he explained.

In March 2015, "Iraqi popular forces...shot down a U.S. helicopter carrying weapons for ISIL in Al-Anbar province..." Photographic evidence proved it.

In response to an April 2015 Syrian request to designate ISIL (ISIS) a terrorist organization, "the U.S., Britain, France and Jordan refused..."

"Photographs...showing ISIS members sporting 'U.S. Army' tattoos" went unreported by Western media scoundrels.

A 2012 DIA document states the West will facilitate the rise of ISIS "to isolate the Syrian regime." Former CIA contractor Steven Kelly said Washington

"created ISIL for the sake of Israel," along with assuring "never-ending war in the Middle East" to make the Jewish state the dominant regional power and provide a "constant flow of orders for weapons from the military-industrial complex at home..."

ISIS fighters are recruited from scores of countries, including Western ones.

In October 2015, Russian lower house State Duma International Affairs Committee chairman Alexi Pushkov explained America is "not bombing ISIS at all...Obama is lying to the American people"

In November 2015, Vladimir Putin said dozens of countries are supporting ISIS, including America and other Western ones.

Fetzer: "There are many other sources that confirm that ISIS was created by the U.S. and is being supported by Western powers to promote their own political agenda, where nothing coming from the administration of Barack Obama is worthy of belief"

"Since the nullification of the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 (which precluded the techniques of propaganda and disinformation within the United States) by the NDAA 2013, there are no trustworthy (mainstream) news sources in the U.S..."

In Washington, "ISIS is commonly called 'John McCain's Army'... (one of) the earliest advocates of (regional) military action" on the phony pretext of combating ISIS.

On Sunday, Fars News quoted Iranian armed forces

Washington "created ISIL for the sake of Israel," along with assuring "never-ending war in the Middle East" to make the Jewish state the dominant regional power.



deputy chief of staff General Mustafa Izadi saying:

"We possess documents and information showing the direct supports by the U.S. imperialism for this highly disgusting stream (ISIS) in the region which has destroyed the Islamic countries and created a wave of massacres and clashes"

Washington uses ISIS and like-minded groups as instruments for regional "proxy war..."

On Friday, Fars News quoted Iran's parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, saying "(t)he United States has aligned itself with the ISIL in the region."

ISIS, al-Qaeda, al-Nusra (ISIS in Syria) and like-minded groups are U.S. creations.

They're used as foot soldiers to advance its imperium - responsible for aiding Washington rape and destroy one country after another.

Most Americans are unaware of Washington's diabolical agenda in the Middle East, Central Asia, North Africa and elsewhere in their name - a bipartisan conspiracy against world peace, stability and security no matter the human cost. (Source: Global Research)

Anti-Shiism in the Land of the Free and the Brave

Racist America targets charity, President dances with terrorists

By Catherine Shakdam

America it appears cannot exist without an enemy that threatens its very existence ... only a few decades ago communism and the warnings such an ideology posed to capitalism was vilified to such an extent that an entire segment of our world's demographic was painted with the Devil's brush.

Today America's governing elite has cast its ire on Iran and by association the very faith that it has come to embody: Shia Islam. While it is important to note that Iran does not, and most pertinently, never claimed to represent Shia Islam, it remains nevertheless true that Iran sits a majority Shia country, with a religious tradition that stretches over 14 centuries.

But one country's religious identity does not grant that nation's ownership over a faith, and it certainly should not permit for any form of misguided sectarian profiling on the basis of a warped sense of political ethno-centrism.

Whatever do I mean? Allow me to put this plainly since we have somewhat reached a point of no return in the structure of our political disagreements and our officials' propensity to play prejudices as weapons of political mass destabilization.

Iran has been aligned to Shia Islam, and Shia Islam to Iran so that anti-Iranianism could translate into anti-Shiism and thus serve two purposes at the same time: America would have its great foe and Saudi Arabia could re-enact the crusade by hailing Wahhabism the true face of Islam.

If U.S. President Donald Trump's trip to Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) this May is anything to go by then we may find ourselves staring down at a very dangerous precipice - that of sectarian fascism to mask very materialistic geopolitical ambitions.

Iran's link to Shia Islam only ever became a problem in 1979 when a people chose to defy one tyrant and the imperialist construct of the British Crown ... why is that? Why is it that Iran's traditions never once warranted any form of criticism when the Shah happily squandered his people's sovereign rights to inflate corporations' bottom lines?

Why is it that Iran's religious identity became a problem the minute its institutions were reborn into a republic? Objectivity dictates that we look into those interests an independent Iran disturbed, and those arguments world powers threw to convince their nationals that the Islamic Republic was an unfathomable danger.

While many debates I'm sure will be spent on Iran and Iran's role at the world table, what of the prejudices Iranians, and beyond, all Shia Muslims have suffered for their faith and ethnicity were labelled nefarious?

If conflating a religion to a nationality was not perverse enough, it appears the United States of America is now playing directly into Saudi Arabia's little book of repression by targeting Shia organizations.

If you recall it was President Trump, who, from Riyadh invited the world to think in binary terms so that passions could replace logic, and legal arguments be drowned in a torrent of self-righteous grand-standism: "Drive them out. Drive them out of your places of worship. Drive them out of your communities. Drive them out of your holy land. And drive them out of this earth." U.S. President Donald Trump said during his visit to Riyadh- Saudi Arabia."

Ironically Mr Trump adopted the very language that Terror has used when referring to Shia Muslims - those apostates Wahhabism, alongside all other religious communities, would like to disappear from existence.

It would be a tragedy to revert to a time when one particular group is shun, labelled, and altogether persecuted on account of its beliefs. It would be even more tragic to see a self-proclaimed democracy exploit the tools of fascism at home to promote its geopolitical interests abroad, and that of its allies.

And yet America is doing just that...

Last week the Alavi Foundation pleaded its case before yet another judge in yet another legal round against the state after allegations were lodged that the charitable organization, because of its Shia Muslim identity and its Iranian identity, should be disbanded and its assets seized.

Stuck in litigation hell since September 11th, 2013, the Alavi Foundation is facing an uncertain future. Needless to say that America's broader Shia Muslim community is feeling rather anxious over such development, as many fear such a precedent will open the floodgate of repression.

At present both the Government and the judgment creditors are seeking to obtain the Foundation's 60% share in the building at 650 Fifth Avenue as well as the Foundation's other properties - Islamic Education Centers, schools and clinics in Texas, New York, California, Maryland, and land the Foundation owns in Virginia. If the Government and the judgment creditors were to win their cases, they would be entitled to seize and take ownership of all of these properties.

A charitable organization dedicated to furthering education, promoting interfaith relations and humanitarianism, the Alavi Foundation has been irreproachable in its conduct for over 40 years ... its only crime: sitting a Shia organization in 20th century America.

If such a voice was to be smothered America's Shia community would lose one of its pillars, allowing for hate and prejudices to win over tolerance and reason. Since 1973 the Alavi Foundation has donated an excess of \$50 million towards a myriad of health and education programs - pushing and promoting excellence and democratic values both at home (the United States) and abroad.

"Our charitable activities promote the study of Persian culture, language, art, literature, and civilization. We have long supported programs in interfaith studies. We stand for democracy, freedom of expression, religious coexistence and pluralism, and equal rights for all" - Alavi Foundation.

The voice we should fight to preserve, safeguard and nurture, America's government want to see crush so that no doubt Saudi Arabia could rejoice before the strength of its own Wahhabist lobby.

We live dangerous times indeed when the Free World offers cover to fascism and calls it legal due process.

Is radicalism possible today?

By David Brooks

Are you feeling radical? Do you think that the status quo is fundamentally broken and we have to start thinking about radical change? If so, I'd like to go back a century so that we might learn how radicalism is done.

The years around 1917 were a great period of radical ferment. Folks at The New Republic magazine were championing progressivism, which would transform how the economy is regulated and how democracy works. At The Masses, left-wing activists were fomenting a global socialist revolution. Outside the White House radical suffragists were protesting for the right to vote and creating modern feminism.

People in those days had one thing we have in abundance: an urge to rebel against the current reality — in their case against the brutalities of industrialization, the rigidities of Victorianism, the stale formulas of academic thinking.

But they also had a whole series of mechanisms they thought they could use to implement change. If you were searching for a new consciousness, there was a neighborhood to go to: Greenwich Village. If you were searching for a dissident lifestyle, there was one — Bohemianism, with its artistic rejection of commercial life. People had faith in small magazines as the best lever to change the culture and the world. People had faith in the state, in

central planning as an effective tool to reorganize the economy and liberate the oppressed. Radicals had faith in the working class, to ally with the intellectuals and form a common movement against concentrated wealth.

Genius for creating ideals

There were many people then who had a genius for creating ideals, and for betting their whole lives on an effort to live out these ideals. I've just been reading Jeremy McCarter's inspiring and entertaining new book "Young Radicals," which is a group portrait of five of those radicals: Walter Lippmann, Randolph Bourne, Max Eastman, Alice Paul and John Reed.

All of them had a youthful and exuberant faith that transformational change was imminently possible. Reed was the romantic adventurer — the one who left Harvard and ventured to be at the center of wherever the action might be — union strikes, the Russian Revolution. Paul was the dogged one — the diminutive activist who gave up sleep, gave up leisure, braved rancid prisons to serve the suffragist movement.

But the two true geniuses were Lippmann and Bourne, who offer lessons on different styles of radicalism. With his magisterial, organized mind, Lippmann threw his lot in with social science, with rule by experts. He believed in centralizing and nationalizing, and letting the best minds weigh the evidence and run the country. He lived his creed, going from socialist

journalism to the halls of Woodrow Wilson's administration.

Bourne was more visionary and vulnerable. He'd grown up in a stiflingly dull WASP town. It was only when he met the cosmopolitan stew of different ethnicities in New York that he got the chance to "breathe a larger air." At a time of surging immigration, and fierce debate over it, Bourne celebrated that "America is coming to be, not a nationality but a trans-nationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors."

Bourne believed in decentralized change — personal, spiritual, a revolution in consciousness. The "Beloved Community" he imagined was a bottom-up, Whitmanesque "spiritual welding," a graceful coming together of unlike ethnicities.

The crucial decision point came as the United States approached entry into World War I. Lippmann supported the war, believing that it would demand more federal planning and therefore would accelerate social change. Bourne was appalled by such instrumentalist thinking, by the acceptance of war's savagery. As McCarter puts it, "As Bourne has been arguing, no choice that supports a war will realize any ideal worth the name."

Radical split

The radicals split between pragmatists willing to work within the system and visionaries who raised larger possibilities from outside. Spreading their ideals, they pushed

America forward. Living out their ideals, most were disillusioned. Reed lost faith in the Soviet Union. Lippmann lost faith in Wilson after Versailles. Bourne died marginalized and bitter during the flu epidemic of 1918.

Bourne was the least important radical a century ago, but with his fervent embrace of a decentralized, globalist, cosmopolitan world, he is the most relevant today. He is the best rebuttal to both Trumpian populism and the multicultural separatist movements on the left, who believe in separate graduation ceremonies by race, or that the normal exchange of ideas among people represents cultural appropriation. Most of the 20th-century radicals were wrong to put their faith in a revolutionary vanguard, a small group who could see farther and know better. Bourne was right to understand that the best change is dialogical, the gradual, grinding conversation, pitting interest against interest, one group's imperfections against another's, but bound by common nationhood and humanity.

Are we really going to hand revolutionary power to the state, the intellectuals, the social scientists, the working class or any other class? No. This is not 1917. But can we recommit ourselves to the low but steady process of politics, bartering and exchanging, which is incremental about means but radical about ends? That's a safer bet.

(Source: The NYT)

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9 unexpected things that happen when you abandon your workout routine

By Linda Melone

It happens to the best of us: You get injured, find yourself working around the clock or are otherwise forced to put exercise on the back burner for a while. And when the holidays roll around, you're also provided an incentive to eat and drink and skip your workouts until January.

But a day or two can easily stretch into weeks or even months, and you're right back to square one. In technical terms, you've become "deconditioned." In fact, 25 to 35 percent of adult exercisers quit working out within two to five months of starting, according to the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). How quickly your fitness level declines depends on several factors. Some may surprise you.

1. Cardiovascular fitness starts to tank after one week

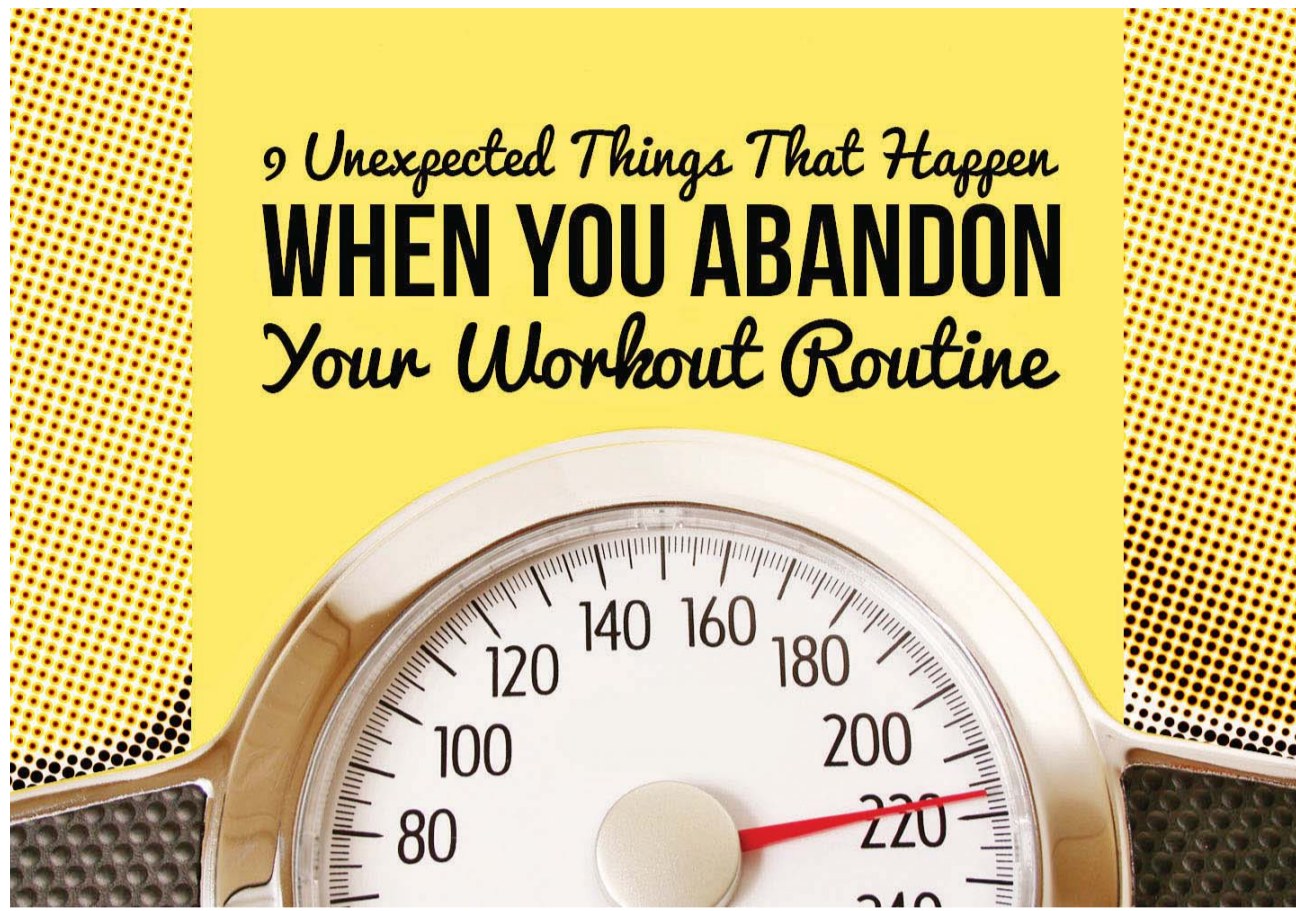
Aerobic fitness is defined as the ability of the body to transport and utilize oxygen from your blood in your muscles. This measure, also known as VO2 max, decreases after as few as one to two weeks of inactivity, says Danielle Weis, doctor of physical therapy with Spring Forward Physical Therapy in New York City. "The functional capacity of the heart also decreases. After three to four weeks of bed rest, your resting heart rate increases by four to 15 beats, and blood volume decreases by five percent in 24 hours and 20 percent in two weeks."

2. You lose cardiovascular fitness more slowly if you're a seasoned exerciser

If you're new to fitness and recently started working out (less than six months), you'll lose fitness faster than someone who's been exercising a year or longer, says Brad Thomas, M.D., orthopedic surgeon and UCLA chief of sports medicine. "You'll lose up to 40 percent of your cardio fitness, but your fitness VO2 max will still be higher than someone who's never exercised," he says. For example, you take two people: one who's exercised regularly for two years and the other for only two months. If both stop working out, they will both lose all their gains quickly — by about six weeks. "But the well-trained athlete will lose about 40 percent and then plateau," says Thomas. So trained athletes lose less fitness than sedentary people who've only recently started exercising.

3. Flexibility loss occurs quickly

You lose the benefits of flexibility quickly if you take any substantial time off from stretching, says Michele Olson, professor of exercise science at Auburn University in Montgomery, Alabama. "After a bout of flexibility exercise, the muscles and tendons begin to retract to their typical resting length — particularly if you sit during your commute regularly and/or sit at a desk at your job." Olson notes that you'll notice a loss of flexibility in as few as three days, with even more pronounced changes occurring at the two-week mark. "Stretching should be done at least three times a week — if not daily," she says.



After three to four weeks of bed rest, your resting heart rate increases by four to 15 beats, and blood volume decreases by five percent in 24 hours and 20 percent in two weeks.

4. Strength starts to diminish after two weeks

When you quit strength training, changes in your muscles begin to occur within days, says exercise physiologist Michelle Olson. "Muscle, when not receiving its regular challenge, will start to lose protein, which is absorbed into your circulation and excreted via urination. Small but meaningful loss in muscle protein (the building block of the contractile units for each muscle fiber) can begin to occur in 72 hours." Noticeable changes when attempting to lift your usual amount of weight show up in two to three weeks, adds Olson. And as with cardiovascular fitness, long-term exercisers will see a slower muscle loss than those new to exercise, says Dr. Brad Thomas.

5. You lose power faster than you lose strength

Power, defined as strength times distance over a period of time (e.g., how quickly you can hoist a weight or dash across the street to make the light), fades faster than strength, says physical therapist Danielle Weis. "Strength losses first occur due to a change in the nerve's impulses to muscle fibers, shortly followed by actual muscle wasting." During muscle wasting, protein breaks down at a faster rate and protein synthesis (building) drops. The time it takes for you to return to your original fitness level depends on the reason you stopped exercising in the first place — whether due to illness or simply lack of time.

6. Fitness levels decline faster when you're sick

Someone who's healthy and takes a break from exercise loses muscle mass and cardiovascular fitness more slowly than a person who stops exercising due to an illness or injury. The latter will lose fitness levels twice as fast, says Dr. Brad Thomas. The stress of an illness or injury takes a greater toll on the body than simply taking a break when you're healthy. Whether you're an athlete or recreational exerciser, if you've taken a few weeks off from your routine, your level of deconditioning will be pretty low, says physical therapist Danielle Weis. "If you are recovering from a fracture, surgery or have been on bed rest, it can take up to and longer than 12 to 24 months to fully recover."

7. Maintenance is easier than you think

If you're planning to take time off from your workout routine, keep in mind that staying in shape isn't an all-or-nothing proposition. In fact, you can maintain your fitness levels in a surprisingly small amount of time, says Dr. Brad Thomas. "In order to maintain both aerobic and strength levels, you need just 20 minutes of high-intensity interval training (HIIT) twice a week." Thomas cautions that the work effort must be truly high-intensity, at between 80 and 90 percent of your maximum heart rate.

8. Aging affects fitness loss

You lose strength and overall fitness twice as quickly as you age, says Dr. Brad

Thomas. "It's largely due to hormone levels. As we age, we have lower levels of human growth hormone (HGH), which makes it harder to recover." We also lose our ability to handle stress and recover from the resulting stress hormones, such as cortisol. As we get older, this same mechanism results in greater fatigue after a workout. Older athletes take longer to recover from workouts in general, according to several studies, including a 2008 article published in the *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*.

9. It takes three weeks to gain back one week off

After a period of lying around, your nervous system loses its ability to fire up as it did before you took time off, says Irv Rubenstein, exercise physiologist and founder of STEPS, a science-based fitness facility in Nashville, Tennessee. That's due to the fact that you lose the neural stimuli that enables you to lift heavy objects with the same amount of effort. "When you return to lifting, you may be able to lift the same weights, but you will be working above your normal capacity, which could put tissue at risk. It will take a greater effort to do what you used to do and will require more rest between sets and days in order to recover." A novice who's taken time off during the holidays will need to start from scratch. The athlete or experienced lifter can start back to where they were in early November and give it a month to get back to speed.

(Source: *livingstrong.com*)

The 3 times you should always be honest

By Susie Moore

"This photo of you is not good!" said an editor of mine over drinks. She was adding me on social media and was surprised by my profile pic. "This doesn't even look like you! You look too old in it. You're prettier and younger-looking in real life."

Wow! That was honest, I thought. I also secretly agreed with her. That night, I changed the profile picture on all of my social media platforms.

In an age where people filter everything—from a picture of a fish taco to a thinly veiled insult in a work email—it's refreshing when somebody is wholeheartedly honest and real, isn't it?

Here are 3 times it's OK to be 100 percent filter free in your life and relationships:

1. When someone is asking you to be

There is an old saying: "When someone asks you to be honest, they actually mean be kind." This is true to an extent, as we all expect caring feedback in our lives. But if a mature person in your life is asking for direct, constructive feedback, don't be afraid to offer it. Just do so warmly with what's known as the "feedback sandwich":

Kind opening — candid feedback — kind close. Just like my editor friend (sans the request, but I still appreciated it!)



2. When someone is about to make an obvious mistake

An unflattering photo is one thing, but if, for an example, a friend or colleague tells you they plan to ask for a sizeable raise, and you know they have a reputation as a total flake at work, it can be much more gentle to ask them some questions first.

You can open a dialogue with, "What research have you done into market salaries for your role so far?" or "Hey, want to run me through your stand-out achievements this year, to practice?" In an indirect way, they are likely to become

more realistic in their approach.

3. When your intuition makes it impossible not to

I used to despise my best friend's ex-boyfriend. He was rude and obnoxious to her friends. His sole hobby was smoking pot while playing computer games. But it was her choice. She would always complain about him, but behind closed doors, I had a strong feeling he was emotionally abusive (or worse).

One night, when she was crying (again!), I said, "Every cell in my body is urging you to break up with him. I've felt

this way for months. I feel in my heart he's bad for you. And I don't think it will ever get any better. But it's your relationship, your life. If you decide to stay, please just don't talk about him to me anymore."

She told me my abrupt decision to not listen to her complaints anymore was the jolt she needed to break it off. The truth was, I couldn't hold it in. It was not an intentional ultimatum, but my vibe of "change your situation or stop complaining" had a positive impact. There was no filter I could apply—even if I tried.

If you really struggle to give any type of criticism, adopt this tip from Tony Robbins. He opens his constructive statements with, "My hallucination is..."

So instead of saying, "This deck looks amateur," you can respond with, "My hallucination is, with a sprinkle of X and Y, this will receive a much better response." Or instead of saying, "That dress is unflattering," you can react with, "My hallucination is, wearing your new skinny jeans and that white cami will totally knock his socks off!" (You can use your own wording if it's more natural!)

In a world that can sometimes feel consumed by filters and fakery, authenticity and truth is not only required—it's generous. It's real. It's loving. And what's better than that? (Source: *greatist.com*)

Tattoo aftercare: What to know

By Alexandria McIntire

Most people know that dirty tattoo needles can transmit infections like Hepatitis C.

But it is less well known that the wound itself can get infected — something that led to severe consequences for one man who died from a tattoo infection after he went swimming in the Gulf of Mexico.

The man, identified as a Texas resident in a study in the *British Medical Journal*, had received the tattoo in his right leg and went swimming five days later. He was admitted to the hospital three days later and tested positive for *Vibrio vulnificus*, a bacteria found in coastal waters.

The man also had chronic liver disease, which hampered his recovery. He died about two months later.

Nicholas Hendren, MD, the lead author of the study, says that while infections of new tattoos are not a common occurrence, they are not rare.

One recent study found that 3.2% of people who received tattoos reported at least one infected tattoo.

Hendren says the Texas man's case was "definitely on the extreme side." People are more likely to contract MRSA, methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, among other more common bacteria, he says.

Hendren tells his patients that getting a tattoo is similar to getting stitches, and that you wouldn't want to go swimming in a pond after getting stitches. He tells people to avoid swimming in lakes, rivers and ponds, saltwater and pools and to avoid excessive scrubbing until the tattoo has healed.

Hendren says a tattoo is healed when the scab falls. Most tattoos take on average about one to several weeks before healing, says Doris Day, MD, a New York City dermatologist.

State and local health departments regulate tattoo parlors. A 2015 study of tattoo regulations found that only seven states specifically required their public health department to approve instructions for tattoo aftercare. Seven state have no licensing at all, and the rest have varying requirements. Most leave aftercare instructions up to the tattoo artist.

Hendren recommends using a licensed tattoo parlor to get a tattoo, saying it helps reduce the chances of liver infection. The most common is hepatitis B, as well as other infections like hepatitis C and HIV.

Day says that aftercare is important while you are waiting for a tattoo to heal.

"Wash with soap and water," says Day. "Apply a topical ointment and nonstick bandage during the day and leave uncovered at night." Remove plastic wrap when you get home, allowing the area to breathe. Plastic wrap keeps in heat and moisture, allowing bacteria to grow.

Both doctors recommend getting medical help immediately if you see any of these signs:

- For tattoos that are on your arms and legs, a red linear band or streak developing and extending from the area.
- Worsening pain around the tattoo five to seven days later.
- Discharge coming from the area.
- Having a fever, which is a sign of infection.

(Source: *WebMD*)

Autism

Autism spectrum disorder includes conditions previously called autism, pervasive developmental disorder, and Asperger's syndrome. The causes are not known.

Core symptoms

The severity of symptoms varies greatly, but all people with autism have some core symptoms in the areas of:

Social interactions and relationships. Symptoms may include:

- Significant problems developing nonverbal communication skills, such as eye-to-eye gazing, facial expressions, and body posture.
- Failure to establish friendships with children the same age.
- Lack of interest in sharing enjoyment, interests, or achievements with other people.
- Lack of empathy. People with autism may have difficulty understanding another person's feelings, such as pain or sorrow.

Verbal and nonverbal communication. Symptoms may include:

- Delay in, or lack of, learning to talk. As many as 40% of people with autism never speak.
- Problems taking steps to start a conversation. Also, people with autism have difficulties continuing a conversation after it has begun.
- Stereotyped and repetitive use of language. People with autism often repeat over and over a phrase they have heard previously (echolalia).
- Difficulty understanding their listener's perspective. For example, a person with autism may not understand that someone is using humor. They may interpret the communication word for word and fail to catch the implied meaning.

Limited interests in activities or play. Symptoms may include:

- An unusual focus on pieces. Younger children with autism often focus on parts of toys, such as the wheels on a car, rather than playing with the entire toy.
- Preoccupation with certain topics. For example, older children and adults may be fascinated by video games, trading cards, or license plates.
- A need for sameness and routines. For example, a child with autism may always need to eat bread before salad and insist on driving the same route every day to school.
- Stereotyped behaviors. These may include body rocking and hand flapping.

(Source: *WebMD*)

Nader Shah's sword stolen from Russian museum

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A sword attributed to Nader Shah, one of the most powerful Iranian rulers in the history of the nation, along with tens of other valuable objects, was stolen from a local museum in Kubachi, Russia, on June 10, IRNA reported on Tuesday.



Statue of Nader Shah and his soldiers at the Naderi Museum, Mashhad, northeast Iran.

The theft was publicized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Dagestan on June 10, when the abductors stole more than 90 valuable items, including a saber once belonged to Nader Shah, silver vases with ivory ornaments which depict pictures of Stalin, Kirov and the Kremlin, Russian sources reported.

The king, born Nadr Qoli Beg in 1688, was a mastermind conqueror who reigned from 1736 to 1747. He created an Iranian empire that stretched from the Indus River to the Caucasus Mountains.

London and Manchester attacks set to hit tourism numbers, warns Merlin

The London Bridge and Manchester terrorist attacks have hit tourism numbers and could hit footfall in the coming months, the owner of Alton Towers and Madame Tussauds has warned.

Merlin Entertainments said overseas tourists had been flocking to the UK at the start of the year thanks to the weakness in sterling making trips here less expensive and that this even continued in the wake of March's attack on Westminster Bridge.

But the subsequent attacks in Manchester and London Bridge "have resulted in a further deterioration in domestic demand", the company said, adding that some of its parks had been "adversely affected in recent weeks by the terror attacks and subsequent heightened security measures".

Twenty-two people died in the attack in Manchester last month, where a bomb was detonated in the Manchester Arena during an Ariana Grande concert. This month's London Bridge attack by three terrorists resulted in the death of seven people and the injury of 48 others.

"And given the typical lag between holiday bookings and visitation, we are also cautious on trends in foreign visitation over the coming months," the company added.

The comments come as part of a trading update ahead of the company's annual general meeting today and pushed the group's shares down 3pc to 489p in early trading.

(Source: Telegraph)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Iguazu National Park

The semicircular waterfall at the heart of this site is some 80 m high and 2,700 m in diameter and is situated on a basaltic line spanning the border between Argentina and Brazil.

Made up of many cascades producing vast sprays of water, it is one of the most spectacular waterfalls in the world. The surrounding subtropical rainforest has over 2,000 species of vascular plants and is home to the typical wildlife of the region: tapirs, giant anteaters, howler monkeys, ocelots, jaguars and caymans.

Located in Misiones Province in the Northeastern tip of Argentina and bordering the Brazilian state of Parana to the north, Iguazu National Park, jointly with its



sister park Iguacu in Brazil, is among the world's visually and acoustically most stunning natural sites for its massive waterfalls. It was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1984.

The river, aptly named after the indigenous term for "great water" forms a large bend in the shape of a horseshoe in the heart of the two parks and constitutes the international border between Argentina and Brazil before it flows into the mighty Parana River less than 25 kilometers downriver from the park. Large clouds of spray permanently soak the many river islands and the surrounding riverine forests, creating an extremely humid micro-climate favoring lush and dense sub-tropical vegetation harboring a diverse fauna.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran seeks to broaden travel ties with East Asia

TOURISM TEHRAN — Iran's tourism chief has said the country aims to deepen tourism ties with East Asian states.

The country is contemplating easing visa restrictions for tourist trips to Japan, South Korea, and China," Tasnim quoted Zahra Ahmadipour as saying on Wednesday.

Ahmadipour, who presides over the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, said that delegations from the aforementioned countries are scheduled to visit Iran in order to negotiate modalities of the tourism enhancement.

"We will do our best to [persuade Japan to] facilitate its visa regime for Iranian nationals," Ahmadipour said, adding that Iran should also try to attract more Japanese tourists to catch up with other countries frequented by the Japanese.

She also unveiled plans for negotiations with Chinese tourism officials

on the sidelines of the 22nd UNWTO General Assembly to be held in the city of Chengdu in September.

Referring to Korean products such as household appliances and cars that are well known to almost all Iranian families, the official explained it would be fair to have more South Korean tourists in the country.

Following a landmark nuclear deal Tehran and world powers clinched in 2015, Iran is repeatedly named as a hot travel destination by a circle of international media outlets in terms of its rich history, picturesque sceneries, traditions, cuisine and hospitable people.

At the moment European travelers from countries including France, Italy and Germany, who account for the majority of Western tourists, can now get visas on arrival in Tehran, and at the main sites they mingle with sightseers from China, Japan and elsewhere.

Special-processed handicrafts to make debut in Tehran

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A national exhibit of Iranian handicrafts formed through special processing and overworked treatment will make its debut at Tehran's Sadabad Cultural-Historical Complex on June 17.

A total of 160 works by 80 artisans, selected from a total of 1000 applicants, have been picked for the week-long event that aims to promote the special processing impression in the Iranian handicrafts sector, IRNA reported on Monday.

Special possessing is a newly-introduced trend that not only entails inherent traditional features of the

Iranian handicrafts but also makes them capable of becoming individual memorials, lavish gifts or stuffs enable to objectify specific meanings, the report said.

Iran exported \$237 million of handicrafts in the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization announced in May.

Over the past couple of years, dozens of Iranian handicrafts have been honored with the UNESCO Seal of Excellence. In 2010, a total of 65 crafts on various themes including enamel, tile, metalwork, leatherwork, wood carving received the privilege.



Picture depicts a patchwork of special-processed Iranian handicrafts

Foreign tourists rushing to visit Iran's historic city Shiraz

Nearly 65 percent of hotels in Iran's ancient city of Shiraz, the capital city of Fars Province, have been booked by foreign tourists for the last quarter of 2017 as the country witnesses an influx of travel makers.

The head of the Hotel Owners Association of Fars Province, Hasan Siadatian, said on Tuesday that foreign tourists have since six months ago booked the hotels in Shiraz for the period between next October and January.

According to the director of Fars province Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, Mossayeb Amiri, the province attracted more than 165,000 foreign tourists in a two-month period before June, showing a 42-percent growth compared with the same period last year.

There has been a significant rise in the number of European tourists visiting the ancient province, Amiri said.

Apart from the English-language tourism maps for Fars, the province has recently published maps in French and



An interior view of the 19th-century Nasir al-Molk Mosque, a tourism destination in Shiraz, southern Iran.

it is preparing maps in German, as more European tourists are rushing to visit the attractions of the historic region.

Fars Province, the heartland of Persian culture for over 2000 years, is home to myriads of historical sites dating back to Medes, Achaemenid, Parthian, Sassanid and Islamic eras. The capital city of Shiraz has long been viewed as a cradle of Persian poetry and the moth-

erland of world-known Persian poets Hafez and Sa'adi.

The city is home to numerous ancient relics, architectural marvels, exquisite bazaars and gardens as well as other natural attractions.

According to the World Tourism Organization, Iran ranks 10th in terms of its potentials for historical attractions and it ranks fifth for its natural attrac-

tions.

From among hundreds of thousands of historic sites in Iran, the country has registered over 32,000 sites as national heritage. The UNESCO has also listed 21 Iranian sites as World Heritage Sites.

Based on Iran's Tourism Vision Plan, the country plans to increase the number of tourism arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million by 2025.

In late May, the World Economic Forum (WEF) announced Iran as the least expensive and one of the safest destinations for foreign tourists from among 136 countries for the third straight year. The WEF report was based on a variety of factors, including travel expenses, infrastructures, public services, transportation and security.

According to the WEF report, the daily expense for a foreign tourist in Iran ranges from \$25 to \$600.

In terms of security, the WEF report puts Iran ahead of many tourist destinations, including Russia, Turkey, and Thailand. (Source: Press TV)

At airports, making travel easier for autistic passengers

By Shivani Vora

For Gearoid Mannion and his wife, Michelle, who live in County Clare, Ireland, air travel with their two autistic sons, Conor, 9, and Darragh, 7, is usually nothing short of a nightmare. The noise level, crowds and announcements at airports overwhelm the boys, and waiting in security and boarding lines is a concept that they don't understand, Mr. Mannion said.

The family's recent experience at Shannon Airport in Ireland, when they were en route to a vacation in Malaga, Spain, however, gave them hope that flying didn't have to be so stressful. Mr. Mannion had heard about the airport's recent initiative to ease the journey for individuals with autism spectrum disorder — the name for a group of developmental disorders that include autism — and called its customer service desk before their trip to relay that he would be traveling with autistic children.

Upon check-in, the foursome were given wristbands and orange baseball caps that identified them as a family with passengers with autism spectrum disorder and allowed them to jump to the front of the security line. Then they headed to the airport's new Sensory Room, meant to soothe

those with sensory issues, similar to those of Conor and Darragh; the room was shielded from outside noise and had a wavy wall, color-changing LED lights, bean bags and other items that kept them calm and happily occupied. And to avoid the challenge of waiting in a boarding line, the Mannions were able to board last.

Shannon Airport isn't alone in its efforts to ease air travel for those with autism spectrum disorder: Some airlines and other airports around the world are also part of the movement, and in the United States, the Arc, a group in Washington representing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism, is a major player.

Part of the reason for this recent support may be the rise in autism spectrum disorder. In the United States alone, one in 68 children has autism spectrum disorder, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the prevalence of autism in children increased 6 percent to 15 percent each year between 2002 and 2010.

Delta Air Lines, in partnership with Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and the Arc, opened a similar sensory room in the airport last year and filled it with toys and items commonly used to

soothe those with autism spectrum disorder, such as a mini ball pit and a water sculpture.

Airports are difficult settings for people with autism spectrum disorder, because they can be hypersensitive to noise and crowds, said Dr. Wendy Moyal, a psychiatrist at the Child Mind Institute in New York City who is an autism spectrum disorder specialist.

Vancouver International Airport is part of a group of airports offering mock flight experiences for people with autism spectrum disorder and their families to help acclimate them to flying. On Vancouver's annual tours, participants get to check in, go through security and board an aircraft.

At the Atlanta airport, Delta has monthly mock flights, called Taking Flight, for people with autism spectrum disorder and their families. They're led by two Delta employees, Sandy Smith, a customer service agent, and Eric Ries, a lead pilot, who have children with autism spectrum disorder. (Both volunteer their time.)

As a part of Taking Flight, Mr. Ries, whose son, Drew, 10, has autism spectrum disorder, shares his advice on how parents should manage flying with their children. His top tip: Let your children fill a backpack

with their favorite items, such as headphones or a book, so that a sense of comfort is always close.

Elsewhere in the United States, the Arc runs practice flights through an event called Wings for Autism, in which one of its local chapters teams with an airport, an airline and the Transportation Security Administration. In some instances, the planes even taxi with participants on board. These trial runs, Dr. Moyal said, are incredibly effective in helping people with autism spectrum disorder become more comfortable with flying. Families said the practice flights give them confidence. Nicole and Jason Beitzel, of Watkinsville, Ga., have only taken road trips with their daughter, Abby, 4, who is autistic and nonverbal, because they were afraid she couldn't handle flying.

Their perspective changed after attending a Wings for Autism event at Hartsfield-Jackson airport in April. "Getting a dress rehearsal of the flying process with Abby has made us open to the idea of air travel with her," Ms. Beitzel said. "Our dream destination is Hawaii, and, instead of thinking that we would never get to go, we have hope that we can take the trip later this year."

(Source: The New York Times)

'Flammable ice' harvesting could spell trouble for the climate

A highly combustible form of energy locked deep in the ocean finally can be harvested using a new technique, but deploying that technique on a broad scale could spell trouble for the climate, experts say.

The solid material, called methane hydrate, is a form of the hydrocarbon methane that is locked in cages of ice called clathrates. Though billions of tons of this form of methane may be locked deep beneath the ocean floor, scientists had no safe or simple way to extract the material and convert it into a form that could be used.

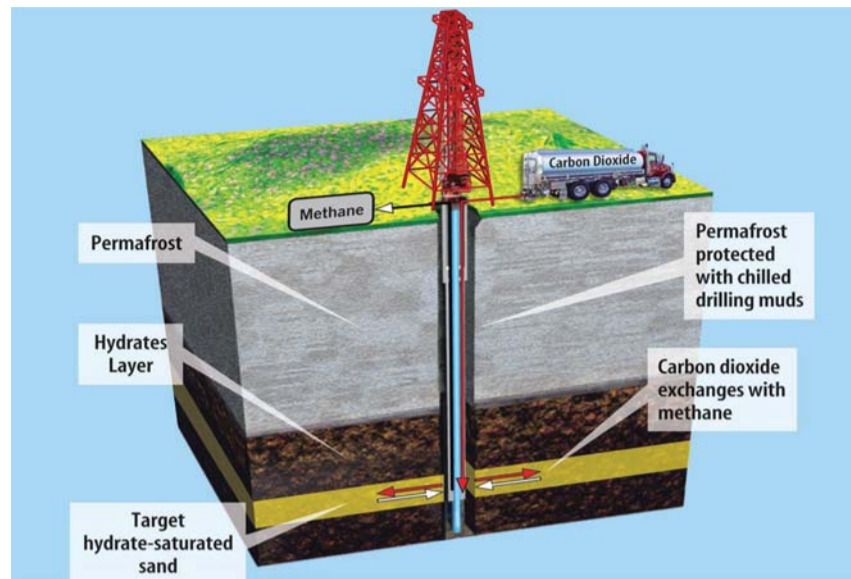
But in a new demonstration, Chinese scientists say they have converted methane hydrate directly into usable natural gas on a floating platform in the South China Sea, the South China Morning Post reported.

However, even if this resource could be extracted safely, it would be bad for the climate because it would release greenhouse gases on a large scale, several experts said.

Methane hydrate is one of the largest untapped reservoirs of energy on the planet, according to the 2012 Global Energy Assessment. What's more, methane-hydrate reserves dot the coastlines of every continent on the planet, according to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

■ Sources of energy

The United States has many other,



more easily accessible sources of energy, including natural gas. But many countries, such as Japan and India, lack such resources.

"If they had a domestic source of nat-

ural gas, that could be a real boon," said Carolyn Ruppel, a USGS scientist who has studied the impact of methane-hydrate leaks in the ocean. "Not everyone has the resource panorama that we have here in

Drilling into the seafloor could destabilize the methane ice crystals and cause explosions, spewing vast troves of methane into the atmosphere, where it is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

Trappist-1 has high odds of interplanetary life, new mathematical model shows

Earlier this year, NASA announced the discovery of an ultracool dwarf star surrounded by seven Earth-size planets. The star, named Trappist-1, and its planetary system quickly became famous among people dedicated to searching for life - microbial, plant, intelligent - elsewhere in the universe. Now, a new mathematical model by researchers at Harvard University hints at just how likely there is life in that system.

Astronomers have counted thousands of previously unknown exoplanets - that is, planets beyond our solar system - in recent years, made possible most recently by the Kepler Space Telescope.

Trappist-1, named for The Transiting Planets and Planetsimals Small Telescope, in Chile, is just one-eighth the size of our own sun, about 40 light years away from us and located inside the constellation of Aquarius. The seven planets orbiting Trappist-1 are relatively Earth-sized and relatively close to one another. And three of these planets orbit in what is called the "habitable zone," a distance from their star that would allow liquid water to pool on their surface.

■ Finding life

For all these reasons, the Trappist-1 Solar System has generated a great deal of excitement when it comes to the prospect of finding life outside our Solar System.

Aside from Proxima Centauri b, the exoplanet nearest us - a mere four light years away - Trappist-1 tops the list of likeliest spots for a so-called second genesis, an arising of life elsewhere.

Scientists from the University of Chicago theorize that a life-spurring hit from a comet or asteroid could feasibly lead to transfer of that life among the system's planets.

The mathematical model developed by astrophysicists Abraham Loeb and Manasvi Langam, both of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, raises the stakes further. They created a calculation for estimating "panspermia," the spread of life among the planets orbiting Trappist-1. Because the planets are so close together, the odds that any life, be it microbial or mammalian, could transfer from one globe to another are high. Panspermia in a system like Trappist-1, says Langam, "has the potential advantage of seeding multiple planets in the same system with life." That this mechanism could increase prospects for life in the universe is a "motivating factor" for the search for life, he says.

Their model shows that the likelihood of life transferring among these rocky planets ("lithopanspermia") is "orders of magnitude higher" than the likelihood of



the same event occurring between Earth and Mars, the authors write. They also conclude that the chances of life spontaneously arising in the Trappist-1 system are higher than in our Solar System. Their findings further led them to assert that more exoplanetary systems with multiple planets huddled close together within a habitable zone will be discovered.

The possibility of finding life elsewhere is still rife with unknowns, including the very existence of microbes and their likelihood of survival, says Langam.

(Source: Newsweek)

Lab on a chip could monitor health, germs and pollutants

Imagine wearing a device that continuously analyzes your sweat or blood for different types of biomarkers, such as proteins that show you may have breast cancer or lung cancer.

Rutgers engineers have invented biosensor technology - known as a lab on a chip - that could be used in hand-held or wearable devices to monitor your health and exposure to dangerous bacteria, viruses and pollutants.

"This is really important in the context of personalized medicine or personalized health monitoring," said Mehdi Javanmard, an assistant professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. "Our technology enables true labs on chips. We're talking about platforms the size of a USB flash drive or something that can be integrated onto an Apple Watch, for example, or a Fitbit."

A study describing the invention was recently highlighted on the cover of Lab on a Chip, a journal published by the

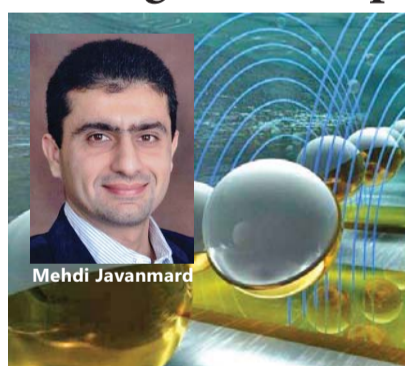
Royal Society of Chemistry.

■ Barcoding microparticles

The technology, which involves electronically barcoding microparticles, giving them a bar code that identifies them, could be used to test for health and disease indicators, bacteria and viruses, along with air and other contaminants, said Javanmard, senior author of the study.

In recent decades, research on biomarkers - indicators of health and disease such as proteins or DNA molecules - has revealed the complex nature of the molecular mechanisms behind human disease. That has heightened the importance of testing bodily fluids for numerous biomarkers simultaneously, the study says.

"One biomarker is often insufficient to pinpoint a specific disease because of the heterogeneous nature of various types of diseases, such as heart disease, cancer and inflammatory disease," said Javanmard, who works in the School of Engineering.



To "get an accurate diagnosis and accurate management of various health conditions, you need to be able to analyze multiple biomarkers at the same time."

Well-known biomarkers include the prostate-specific antigen (PSA), a protein generated by prostate gland cells. Men with prostate cancer often have elevated PSA levels, according to the National Cancer Institute. The human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG) hormone, another

North America."

However, accessing the power of this flammable ice has been difficult, for two reasons.

First, these reserves are often distributed over a large area rather than concentrated in one spot as oil or natural gas reserves often are. That means collecting them is like "picking strawberries in a field," Yifeng Chen, associate researcher with the Key Laboratory of Marginal Sea Geology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Guangzhou, told the South China Morning Post.

The bigger problem, however, is that, true to their moniker as flammable ice, methane hydrates are unstable and potentially explosive.

■ Seafloor drilling

Drilling into the seafloor could destabilize the methane ice crystals and cause explosions, spewing vast troves of methane into the atmosphere, where it is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide (CO₂), several experts told Live Science.

In 2013, Japan demonstrated a production test showing it was possible to mine such methane-hydrate resources without massive leakage. So far, however, nobody has figured out how to use the technology on a large scale.

(Source: Live Science)

Revolutionary gel is five times stronger than steel

Researchers have developed a new gel they say is as durable as metal, has the flexibility of jello, and could revolutionize how our bodies heal and age.

It may look like a mesh bandage, but this material engineered by scientists in Japan is said to be five times stronger than carbon steel.

The tough, bendable fabric combines hydrogels -- such as those found in contact lenses or jello -- with glass fibers.

This particular combination maximizes its resilience, making the material 100 times tougher than hydrogels and 25 times tougher than glass fiber fabric, based on the amount of energy needed to destroy it.

That's according to the team of Hokkaido University scientists who have spent the past three years working on the composite material.

"It's the strongest soft material ever obtained by human beings," Professor Jian Ping Gong, who leads the team, tells CNN.

Gong believes the fiber-reinforced hydrogel could be used to create biomaterials, such as artificial organs and prostheses, able to endure everyday wear-and-tear.

"It might be used as a biological substitute like artificial cartilage, or artificial ligament, or various kinds of artificial organs," she says.

Other uses could include sports clothing, helmets or bulletproof vests.

"I think it could have very good performance against a bullet," says Gong.

This soft durable material could be used to create artificial ligaments and organs.

Gong's inspiration comes from exploring the great outdoors in Sapporo, the mountainous capital city of Hokkaido in northern Japan.

(Source: CNN)

Defibrillator drones to boost cardiac arrest survival

Defibrillator-carrying drones promise to dramatically boost survival rates for people suffering cardiac arrest after a new study found they could reach patients four times faster than an ambulance.

The fully automated eight-rotor machines can fly, unimpeded by traffic at up to 50mph and deliver an easy-to-use heart-starting kit to critically ill patients.

The technology should enable more NHS emergency units to meet the eight-minute response target for the most urgent cases, which has slipped badly in recent years.

Research indicates that for every minute that passes between a person collapsing due to cardiac arrest and defibrillation, the chances of survival decrease by 10 per cent.

In the trial, run by the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, drones responded to 18 simulated cardiac arrests within a six-mile radius of their base, beating the ambulance every time.

The machines were airborne within three seconds of being allocated to a new patient and took an average of five minutes and 21 seconds to reach their destination, compared with 22 minutes for the ambulance.

Developers hope that bystanders will be easily able to attach the defibrillator pads to the patient's chest, while being talked through the procedure by paramedics on the phone or even through a microphone-speaker system installed on the drone.

Defibrillators have been increasingly installed in public places in recent years, however many members of the public do not think to look for one in an emergency.

Certified by the Swedish Transportation Agency, the drones used in the trial were equipped with a global positioning system, a high-definition camera and communicated via the 3G network.

"None the less, further test flights, technological development, and evaluation of integration with dispatch centers and aviation administrators are needed."

(Source: The Telegraph)

NASA experiment to color the skies to learn about Earth's atmosphere

Acting NASA Director Robert Lightfoot on Monday discussed how NASA is going to launch a rocket to change the color of the skies to learn more about Earth's upper atmosphere and whether the Trump administration's budget cuts will hurt the space organization.

"We're putting sounding rockets up that have smoke in them that give us a way to look at the upper atmosphere in a different way ... understanding the upper atmosphere, pretty exciting stuff and it will be a pretty exciting launch, no worries for anybody, just kind of a normal day's work for us with the sounding rockets," he told FOX Business' Liz Claman.

Lightfoot explained why NASA is happy with Trump's 2018 budget which, if passed will cut the department's funding by \$500 million dollars.

"We're pretty happy because it keeps the constancy of purpose for us in terms of what we are trying to do as an agency. We had to make some decisions in our science and some decisions in our education area but for the most part for human exploration and for our science missions, we got a strong set of missions that we are moving forward," he said.

(Source: Fox Business)

Eyewitness memory is a lot more reliable than you think

The ability of a person who witnesses a crime to later pick the perpetrator out of a lineup is atrocious ... right? The answer seems like a resounding 'yes' if you consider some well-known and rather disconcerting information. Eyewitness misidentifications are known to have played a role in 70% of the 349 wrongful convictions that have been overturned (so far) based on DNA evidence. Psychologists have learned a lot about why errors like that happen.

With surprising ease, for example, participants in a memory experiment can be led to believe that they saw a stop sign when they actually saw a yield sign or that they became lost in a shopping mall as a child when no such experience actually occurred. In much the same way, an eyewitness can be led to falsely remember someone committing a crime that was actually committed by someone else.

■ Malleability and reliability

But, there is more to the story. Consider the importance, and often overlooked, distinction between malle-

ability and reliability. Just because memory is malleable - for example, that it can be contaminated with the trace of an innocent person - does not mean that it has to be unreliable. What it means is that the malleability of memory can harm reliability. Once this fact is appreciated, then proper testing protocols can be put in place to minimize the likelihood that the original memory trace is contaminated.

Current procedures for collecting and assessing evidence from eyewitnesses are often not designed to minimize contamination. This problem does not apply to other kinds of forensic evidence. Imagine if police let unauthorized people have willy-nilly access to a crime scene that is under investigation.

■ Forensic evidence

Any evidence can potentially be contaminated, including what is considered to be the gold standard of forensic evidence: DNA evidence. Like eyewitness memory, DNA evidence can be contaminated with the trace

of an innocent person. If the contaminated evidence is relied upon to establish guilt vs. innocence at trial, the risk of a wrongful conviction is high. Consider, for example, the case of Gary Leiterman, who, in 2005, was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison following a cold case investigation in which his DNA was found on the clothing of a woman named Jane Mixer, who was murdered in 1969. Many believe that this conviction was based on contaminated DNA evidence.

First, another DNA profile - one belonging to John Ruelas, who was just a 4-year-old preschooler at the time of the murder - was found on a blood spot taken from the victim's left hand. Even though no connection between Leiterman and Ruelas was ever established, the prosecution theorized that all three must have been together after midnight at the murder scene in 1969, with the preschooler bleeding on the victim for some unknown reason while Leiterman killed her.

(Source: Scientific American)

ARTICLE



By Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, PhD

Part 7

Health tips for Ramadan

Ramadan is a holy month of fasting, introspection and prayer for Muslims, the followers of Islam. Fasting is one of the five fundamental principles of Islam. Each day during Ramadan, Muslims do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset. They are also supposed to avoid impure thoughts and bad behavior.



Muslims break their daily fasts by sharing meals with family and friends, and the end of Ramadan is celebrated with a three-day festival known as Eid al-Fitr, one of Islam's major holidays.

For some years now the holy month of mercy is concurrent with long hot days in majority of Muslim countries and fasting during such long days appears to be much demanding.

However, following the Iranian traditional medicine advices for better fasting experiences would both ensure and enhance one's health during and after the month of Ramadan.

Fasting is a treatment process

Fasting is a treatment course more effective than any anti-obesity or weight loss medications for excreting excess humidity, losing weight, and to achieve an even balance of four bodily fluids and correspondingly a balanced temperament.

One can spot signs of improvement upon their health by feeling lighter after fasting.

Fasting decreases humidity, increases warmth

Fasting decreases humidity and increases warmth in the body consequently those with wet, and wet and cold Mizaj would benefit fasting the most.

Do not overeat

Eating as much as one used to eat before Ramadan, from Iftar to Suhur, is a huge mistake as it both contradicts the true purpose of fasting- which is to practice abstinence- and cause harms to the body.

Consuming too much tea, water, watermelon increases thirst

Consuming too much tea, water, and watermelon at Suhur does not quench thirst, it rather leads to increased urination and inevitably increases thirst during the day.

LEARN ENGLISH

The Office - Showing interest

Tina: Hey Michelle, this is my friend James. He's visiting Shanghai from New York.

Michelle: Oh, hi James. Nice to meet you. So, uh. You visiting for business or pleasure?

James: Well, actually a little of both. I'm meeting some business contacts but I'm also taking some Mandarin classes too.

Michelle: That's cool! How's it going?

James: Well, I'm finding the classes pretty tough actually, but I'm having a great time in Shanghai. It's really an amazing city.

Michelle: It sure is. Are you staying for long?

James: Only two weeks unfortunately. I wish I could stay longer but.

Michelle: Well listen, if you need someone to show you the sights then just call me. I'm having a little get together at my new apartment next week so if you want to drop by then.

James: That sounds great. I'd love to! Let me take down your number Michelle.

Key vocabulary

visit: go to someplace in a formal way

pleasure: feeling of happiness

class: lesson

sight: something seen or worth seeing

get together: spend time together

drop by: an informal visit

Supplementary vocabulary

rendezvous: an agreement between two or more persons to meet at a certain time and place

reunion: the act of uniting again

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Have an idea?
Be in touch!

lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com

Iranian cyclists promote blood donation in Vietnam

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Three Iranian cyclists pedaled from Tehran to Hanoi to commemorate the World Blood Donor Day, June 14, during an international ceremony in Vietnam on Sunday.

Mostafa Sanamiri, Milad Allahyari and Alireza Kohansal started their tour from Iran on April 24. The group pedaled the way to promote the culture of blood donation, raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products.

The cyclists passed Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, and Laos to reach Hanoi on June 11.

On Sunday, hundreds of blood donors, activists, international guests and cyclists including the three Iranian volunteers pedaled along main streets of Hanoi to call people and the community to donate blood and to promote voluntarily blood donation, VietNam News Daily reported.

The event is part of a series of activities



Three Iranian cyclists started their tour on April 24 to promote blood donation in Vietnam

under the framework of the Global Event of the World Blood Donor Day.

The event was hosted by the Vietnam National Steering Committee for Voluntarily Blood Donation Mobilization and the Vietnam National Institute of Hematology and Blood Transfusion.

Several international blood donors from Laos, Cambodia, South Korea, Thailand, India, and the Netherlands also attended the ceremony.

The World Blood Donor Day is aimed at appreciating blood donors for their life-saving gift of blood.

With the theme "Give blood. Give now. Give often", this year's campaign focused on blood donation in emergencies, encouraging people to strengthen the emergency preparedness of health services in their community by donating blood and engaging authorities in the establishment of effective national blood donor programs.

Iran, Oman discuss confronting dust storms

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Iran's cultural attaché to Oman Mohammadreza Nouri Shahrudi and Oman's Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs Mohammed bin Salim bin Said al-Toobi discussed ways to combat the issue of dust storms during a meeting in Muscat on Tuesday.

Iran is combatting dust storms in different ways, however, it is a common problem in the region, Shahrudi

said during the meeting, IRNA reported.

The Omani minister for his part stressed the need for regional cooperation to protect environment and deal with dust storms.

Sand and dust storms mostly originated from hotspots in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia are adversely affecting Iranian cities adjacent to the aforesaid areas and causing great discomfort for dwellers.



Living dolls: Spanish firm makes eerily realistic human, alien babies

Want a doll that looks, moves and feels almost exactly like a newborn? Or how about a baby Avatar, or a half human-half piglet?

The whole range was on display at a trade fair in Bilbao, northern Spain showcasing "Reborn Babies" made by Spanish company Babyclon, one of a small number of firms worldwide that cater to a particular subculture of collectors who value the dolls' unsettling realism.

Some of the basic silicone dolls cost almost 600 euros (\$670), while high-end models equipped with motors that make the doll appear to breathe or suck on a pacifier cost nearly 5,000 euros.

As well as human babies, and ones that look like the blue aliens from the film "Avatar", the company makes baby chimpanzees, tiny mermaids and infants with elf-style pointed ears.

(Source: Reuters)



A Babyclon Animatronic baby is displayed at the Bilbao Reborn Doll Show (REUTERS/Vincent West)

Worldwide cancer rates 'could be cut by 2.8m with healthier lifestyles and diets'

Around 2.8m cancers worldwide could be prevented if people adopted healthier lifestyles and better diets, a report says.

The huge toll of preventable cancers comes from an study published on Wednesday by the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF), which comes 10 days before a United Nations summit in New York that will discuss ways to tackle the soaring rates of the disease around the world.

About 12m cancers are newly diagnosed each year, many of which will have some genetic or other trigger. But increasingly sedentary lifestyles, junk food, smoking and alcohol are key factors in around a quarter of them.

Experts hope the UN will take a lead by setting targets for cutting deaths from the lifestyle diseases - known as non-communicable diseases or NCDs - which include cancer, heart disease,

diabetes and stroke. Campaigners hope issues such as junk food marketing to children on television, the high salt content of food, tobacco

advertising in the developing world and alcohol prices will be addressed.

"Cancer and other lifestyle-related diseases are one of the biggest challenges we face today, and the UN summit later this month is a real turning point," said Professor Mar-

tin Wiseman, medical and scientific adviser to the WCRF.

"With millions of lives at risk around the world, the stakes are incredibly high. And while this is an issue facing millions globally, every day in the UK people are being diagnosed with a cancer that could have been prevented. People are still unaware that risk factors such as alcohol and obesity affect cancer risk while at

the same time, from television advertising to the pricing of food, our society works in a way that discourages people from adopting healthy habits. But this summit offers the chance to look at public health issues at the international level."

Cutting cancer risk with keeping to a normal weight. Being overweight is a risk factor in breast and other cancers.

Don't smoke. Smoking is the biggest cause of lung cancer. Take regular exercise.

Breast-feeding protects against breast cancer. Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and less red and processed meat.

Limit salt to six grams a day. Vitamin supplements do not prevent cancer and too much exposure to sun and sunbeds poses a risk of skin cancer.

(Source: The Guardian)



ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Tehran to host festival on Latifii viper

Tehran Zoological Garden will hold on Friday a festival on protection of Latifii viper, a venomous viper species endemic to Iran. It is one of most rare vipers, which is classified Endangered (En) according to the Red List of Threatened Species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Tehran Zoological Garden vet Iman Memarian told Mehr news agency.

The specific name, Latifii, is in honor of Iranian herpetologist Mahmoud Latifii, who collected the holotype. It is found in Iran in the upper Lar Valley in the Alborz Mountains.

جشنواره «افعی لطیفی» در باغ وحش تهران

جشنواره حفاظت از افعی کوهستانی لطیفی به منظور آشنایی بیشتر مردم با این گونه اندمیک روز جمعه در باغ وحش تهران برگزار می‌شود.

دامپزشک باغ وحش تهران ضمن اعلام این خبر به خبرنگار مهر، گفت: افعی کوهستانی لطیفی از کمیابترین افعی‌هاست. این افعی در حال حاضر در لیست اتحادیه جهانی حفاظت (IUCN) در رده گونه‌های در خطر انقراض (EN) قرار گرفته است از این رو که پراکندگی آن در سراسر دنیا تنها به منطقه البرز مرکزی ایران محدود می‌شود. وی اعلام کرد اولین جشنواره حفاظت از افعی کوهستانی لطیفی در باغ وحش تهران برگزار خواهد شد.

ENGLISH PROVERB

You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink

Explanation: You can offer somebody an opportunity to do something but you can't force them to do it

For example: Katy about all the jobs that are available at our company, but she hasn't applied for any of them. Jane: You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.

PHRASAL VERB

Zone out

Meaning: Not pay attention, dissociate yourself from a situation

For example: What? Oh, sorry - I was just zoning out there for a minute

ENGLISH IDIOM

Your guess is as good as mine

Explanation: When talking to another person, 'your guess is as good as mine' means that neither of you knows the answer.

For example: What happened to the coffee machine? Your guess is as good as mine!

Gunman shoots U.S. congressman, police at Virginia baseball practice

A gunman opened fire on Republican members of the United States Congress during a baseball practice near Washington early on Wednesday, wounding several people including House of Representatives Majority Whip Steve Scalise before being taken into custody, police and witnesses said.

Five people were transported medically from the scene in Alexandria, the city's police chief, Michael Brown told reporters. Two of the wounded were Capitol Hill police who were at the scene, witnesses said.

In a dramatic blow-by-blow account, Representative Mo Brooks of Alabama told CNN the gunman was armed with a rifle and appeared to be a white male.

Brooks said he saw the man only for a second, and that he was shooting from a chain link fence behind the third base position on the field where the congressional group was holding an early morning practice ahead of a game against Democrats this week.

"There must have been 50 to 100 shots fired," he told CNN. "I hear Steve Scalise over near second base scream. He was shot," said Brooks, adding he helped apply a tourniquet with his belt



to a congressional staffer who was shot in the leg.

"One of our security detail was shooting back, but it was our pistol versus the shooter's rifle," Brooks said. "The only weapon I had was a baseball bat."

Republican Senator Jeff Flake told local ABC-TV Scalise was shot in the left

hip. Flake said the gunman was shot.

U.S. President Donald Trump said in a Twitter message that Scalise, "a true friend and patriot, was badly injured but will fully recover. Our thoughts and prayers are with him."

Scalise's position as whip in the Republican-controlled House makes him one of

the most senior figures in Congress. He is a representative from Louisiana.

The group were practicing for the annual Democrats versus Republicans congressional baseball game that was scheduled to be played on Thursday.

"It's pretty well known in the neighborhood who those folks are on the baseball field," Brooks said. "It's not a secret we are practicing ... He was going after elected officials."

Democrats were also practicing at another field at a different location, CNN reported.

Trump, a Republican, said in a statement that he and Vice President Mike Pence were monitoring developments closely.

"We are deeply saddened by this tragedy. Our thoughts and prayers are with the members of Congress, their staffs, Capitol Police, first responders, and all others affected," he said.

Steve Scalise is the third-highest ranked member of the Republican leadership in the House, and has the difficult job of trying to keep order in the fractious party ranks and rounding up votes for bills.

(Source: Reuters)

Trump gives U.S. military authority to set Afghan troop levels: U.S. official

Critics say delegating too much authority to the military does not shield the United States President Donald Trump from political responsibility during battlefield setbacks and could reduce the chances for diplomats to warn of potential blowback from military decisions.

It has been four months since Army General John Nicholson, who leads the U.S. and international forces in Afghanistan, said he needed "a few thousand" additional forces, some potentially drawn from the U.S. allies.

Current and former U.S. officials say discussions revolve around adding 3,000 to 5,000 troops. Those forces are expected to be largely comprised of trainers to support Afghan forces, as well as air crews.

Deliberations include giving more authority to forces on the ground and taking more aggressive action against Taliban fighters.

Some U.S. officials have questioned the benefit of sending more troops to Afghanistan because any politically palatable number would not be enough to turn the tide, much less create stability and security. To date, more than 2,300 Americans have been killed and more than 17,000 wounded since the war began in 2001.

Any increase of several thousand troops would leave American forces in Afghanistan well below their 2011 peak of more than 100,000 troops.

The Afghan government was as-

essed by the U.S. military to control or influence just 59.7 percent of Afghanistan's 407 districts as of Feb. 20, a nearly 11 percentage-point decrease from the same time in 2016, according to data released by the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

A truck bomb explosion in Kabul last month killed more than 150 people, making it the deadliest attack in the Afghan capital since the Taliban were ousted in 2001 by a U.S. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)-led coalition after ruling the country for five years.

On Saturday, three U.S. soldiers were killed when an Afghan soldier opened fire on them in eastern Afghanistan.

The broader regional U.S. strategy for Afghanistan remains unclear. James Mattis, the U.S. Secretary of Defense promised on Tuesday to brief lawmakers on a new war strategy by mid-July that is widely expected to call for thousands more U.S. troops.

Senator John McCain, the chairman of the Armed Forces Committee, pressed Mattis on the deteriorating situation during the Tuesday hearing, saying the United States had an urgent need for "a change in strategy, and an increase in resources if we are to turn the situation around."

"We recognize the need for urgency," Mattis said.

(Source: Reuters)

New Zealand and Israel restore diplomatic ties after spat

The Tel Aviv regime and New Zealand have agreed to end a six-month rift in relations sparked by Wellington's backing of a United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 against Israeli settlements.

A statement from the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday that he and his New Zealand counterpart, Bill English, had decided to end the dispute following a phone conversation.

Israel's ambassador to New Zealand will return to Wellington, the statement added.

Last December, Israel recalled its ambassadors from a number of countries, including New Zealand, due to their support for Resolution 2334, which was approved in the Security Council by a vote of 14-0 with the United States abstaining.

The resolution states that Israel's establishment of settlements in the occupied territories, including East al-Quds (Jerusalem), "had no legal validity, constituting a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the vision of [the so-called] two states."

It also demands that "Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem [al-Quds]."

Additionally on Tuesday, Israeli Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Michal Maayan said in a statement that the New Zealand premier had sent a letter to Netanyahu after the phone conversation.

(Source: agencies)

4 Palestinians injured during Israeli forces' raid in West Bank

Israeli military forces have reportedly shot and wounded four Palestinians, and arrested a dozen more during separate raids across the occupied West Bank as well as East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as International Quds Day rallies in condemnation of the Tel Aviv regime's occupation of Palestinian lands are drawing close.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Israeli troops stormed Duhayshah refugee camp south of the central West Bank city of Beit Lahm (Bethlehem), early on Wednesday, violently breaking into several houses before arresting former prisoners Muataz Sharayaa and Yunis al-Zaghari.

Violent clashes broke out in the aftermath of the raid,

with Israeli forces firing live bullets to disperse the protests. Four people sustained gunshot wounds, and had to be transferred to a nearby hospital to receive medical treatment.

In the nearby village of Husan southwest of Bethlehem, Israeli forces detained Muhammad Nabil al-Shaer after raiding and searching his family's house.

Israeli military forces also raided Misliya village south of the northern West Bank city of Jenin, and fired tear gas canisters and stun grenades before detaining 18-year-old Qasim Muhammad Abu al-Naim.

Elsewhere in the occupied East al-Quds neighborhood of Isawiyah, Israeli forces raided several houses

and detained four Palestinians identified as Muhammad Samer Mahmoud, Muhammad Ala'a Mahmoud, Abd al-Fattah Abu Siyama, and Shakir Mustafa.

The other Palestinians were arrested in the city of Qalqilyah and Shuaft refugee camp in al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The occupied Palestinian territories have witnessed new tensions ever since Israeli forces introduced restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshippers into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East al-Quds in August 2015.

More than 300 Palestinians have lost their lives at the hands of Israeli forces in the ongoing tensions since the beginning of October 2015.

(Source: Press TV)

Democrats to file emoluments lawsuit against Trump

The legal effort, led in the House by Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.), is likely to escalate tensions between the White House and Capitol Hill, where at least five committees are investigating various issues related to the Trump administration.

News of the lawsuit emerged less than 24 hours after attorneys general in the District and Maryland, both Democrats, filed suit alleging that payments to Trump violated the Constitution's anti-corruption clauses. In another lawsuit filed against Trump by business competitors, the Justice Department recently defended Trump's actions, arguing that he violated no restrictions by accepting fair-market payments for services.

Legal scholars consulted by the congressional plaintiffs said their complaint is

distinctive because of the special standing granted to Congress.

Other legal scholars were skeptical, particularly since the lawsuit was filed only by Democrats, the minority party in both houses of Congress.

However, Norman Eisen who served as a co-counsel in the other two emoluments-clause lawsuits, said he thought "the congressional plaintiffs in this case do have proper" standing to sue. He pointed out that in the lawsuit filed on behalf of Trump competitors, the Justice Department argued that Congress had special capacity to deal with questions related to emoluments.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Tuesday night, but on Monday, press secretary Sean Spicer dismissed the lawsuit filed

by the two state attorneys general, saying it's "not hard to conclude that partisan politics may be one of the motivations."

The 37-page congressional complaint contends that the nation's founders were concerned that foreign powers could interfere with American affairs. The suit says that the founders were particularly worried that "foreign states would give benefits and rewards to the nation's chief executive to subvert his loyalty."

As a result, they wrote the emoluments clause of the Constitution with language "both sweeping and unqualified," the lawmakers' lawsuit says.

The obscure clause in Article I of the Constitution says: "[N]o Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under [the United States], shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolu-

ment, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State." The language is interpreted as prohibiting any officeholder — including the president — from accepting a gift, payment or other benefit from a foreign state without the consent of Congress.

A memo prepared by the Senate plaintiff states that "these benefits include any compensation for services rendered in a private capacity such as when a foreign government throws a party at a hotel owned by a federal official."

Although the emoluments clause has a complex history, the request by the lawmakers is rather simple. It asks the court to enjoin the president from "accepting any benefits from foreign states without first obtaining Congressional consent."

(Source: Washington Post)

Iraqi PM: Kurdish independence referendum decision untimely

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has said that the Kurdish minority's decision to hold an independence referendum is untimely.

"Every part of Iraq has aspirations and has a dream, and we respect that, even if we disagree with it," said Abadi. "We live in one homeland and they are our partners," he added.

"We have a constitution that we've voted on, we have a federal parliament and a federal government...The referendum at this time is not opportune," he added.

The president of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government, Masoud Barzani, announced on Twitter on Wednesday that the northern territory would hold an independence referendum on September 25 not only in the three provinces that make up the Kurdish region but in the areas that are disputed by the Kurdish and the central Iraqi governments.

After the announcement, the Iraqi government issued a statement on Friday in response that it would reject any unilateral move by Kurdish regional authorities to press for independence.

Back in April, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi warned against Iraq's disintegration, saying a potential separation of the country's Kurds would harm them.

Turkey has also censured such plans, warning that it would be a grave mistake.

Turkey fears that the potential of the creation of an independent Kurdish state in its backyard could further embolden the militants towards stiffer confrontation with Ankara.

Iran has also expressed Tehran's opposition to a "unilateral" plan by Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region to hold an independence referendum, stressing the importance of maintaining integrity and stability in the country. "The Kurdistan region is part of the Republic of Iraq," said Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi.

(Source: Press TV)

Ching-Chang-Chong and Iran's globalization

On the other hand, those who come to Iran including Korean business people are usually impressed by Iranian hospitality. In the Lonely Planet, a traveler's guide book, it is recommended for anyone arriving in Iran to meet the people firstly. From media coverage, especially by the West, Iran is described as a dangerous, risky, and ideological nation. However, Iranian people show their hospitality naturally to newcomers from outside. They invite the travelers and share food and tea to those who they meet for the first time. They also ask any personal questions at the same time such as occupation, marital status, children matters, etc.

After the Islamic revolution in 1979, the Iran-Iraq war over 8 years and international sanctions followed by, Iran has been isolated from the rest of the world. In the 90s, there was a huge wave of globalization in every country. Iran was quite far from this stream. Therefore, the global standard is yet to exist widely in Iranian society and people's everyday life.

Iran is trying to open its doors by the momentum of the nuclear deal and lifted economic sanctions. The genuine globalization is able to settle in a positive way if people of one society recognize the difference open-mindedly, not by the measure of rightness and wrongness. If Iran succeeds in enhancing people's international sense and consciousness, Iran is going to be more charming and attractive by itself.

Next time, maybe a few years later, I expect the global solidarity of Iranian people with the Internationals, not the low level of interests in foreigners like the Ching-Chang-Chong sound on the street.

South Sudan is the African exception, not the rule

Second, the habit of describing African ethnic groups as "tribes" invites scorn and misunderstanding. The groups in question are tribes to the extent that Britons and French or Chinese and Japanese are tribes. Some are sub-scale in terms of population. But viewed from the perspective of linguistic, political and cultural distinctiveness, they are often as far apart as nations. Ethiopia, one of the few countries to repel colonialists, has 80 distinct languages. Nigeria has several hundred. South Sudan has more than 60.

Third, remarkably, state formation is surprisingly advanced in much of Africa. After independence, many of the states that had been crushed together by colonialist mapmakers, almost inevitably descended into the sort of violence tearing South Sudan apart. Nigeria had a civil war when Biafra sought to break away. Violent power struggles erupted in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and many more. In Rwanda, the long-marginalized Hutus exacted genocidal revenge on the Tutsis.

Yet the real story of Africa is that these struggles have subsided. Either through conscious state-building or the slow (unfinished) process of political accommodation, many African states are beginning to feel more comfortable in their borders. Inter-ethnic rivalries remain. But they are mostly settled at the ballot box or in periodic bouts of low-level violence that stop short of war. South Sudan — and one or two others, such as Somalia and DRC — are the exceptions, not the norm.

This is important. Without a functioning nation state, meaningful development cannot occur. Nations need myths and a sense of shared purpose. In Japan, South Korea and China, such were the preconditions for economic takeoff.

The most chilling line in Wimmer's piece on state formation is this: "The domestic struggle over who 'owns' a new state does eventually come to an end — on average, after 60 years." The good news is that, by this reckoning, most African states are nearly there. The bad news is that South Sudan has more than 50 years to go.

(Source: FT)

Nadal withdraws from Aegon Championship at Queen's Club

Rafa Nadal has announced that he will not compete at Queen's Club as he looks to recover in time for Wimbledon.

The 31-year-old Spaniard picked up his tenth French Open title last week, not losing a single set in the tournament.

However, the fatigue from a grueling surface has taken its toll on Nadal, who has told his fans that he has been advised to rest rather than compete at the Wimbledon warm-up event in West Kensington.

"I am very sorry to say that I am not going to be able play Queen's next week," Nadal said in a statement released on his Facebook page. "I am sad to make this decision because I love Queen's, I won the tournament in 2008 and every time I reached the Wimbledon final it was after playing Queen's."

"I was hoping to take some days off and then be ready, but at 31, and after a long clay court season with all of the emotions of Roland Garros, and after speaking to my team and doctors, I have decided my body needs to rest if I am going to be ready to play Wimbledon."

While Nadal's decision will disappoint fans attending the event, Queen's still have a star-studded group of players in line to attend next week's event.

Andy Murray and Stan Wawrinka top the bill, with Milos Raonic, Nick Kyrgios and Juan Martin Del Porto among a number of other big names who will take the grass of west London.

(Source: Eurosport)

Inter not winning trophies a scandal, says Spalletti

New head coach Luciano Spalletti wants an Inter team that measures up to the club's rich history but concedes there is plenty of work to be done at San Siro.



Spalletti was confirmed as Inter boss last Friday, becoming Stefano Pioli's permanent successor having led Roma to second place in Serie A last season.

By contrast, Inter languished in seventh after a season of upheaval that began with Roberto Mancini departing on the eve of the campaign to herald Frank de Boer's ill-fated tenure.

The Milan club are without European football next term but retain lofty ambitions under the ownership of the Suning Commerce Group.

Antonio Conte and Diego Simeone were among the names linked to the post before Spalletti emerged as a more realistic frontrunner and the 58-year-old is well aware of the task at hand.

"We need to bring Inter back to where their history tells us they should be," he told a news conference.

"I ask my players to have faith in me; I'll back them 100 per cent in every situation. We need them to recognize the shirt they're wearing, know how much this shirt weighs and give a strong impression right away of what the team must do on the pitch."

"What becomes apparent when you meet people is that everyone is wondering how you can have Inter out of the cups over the years, it is like a scandal."

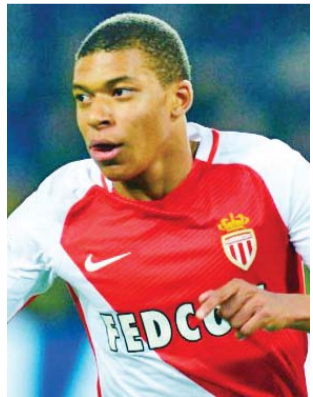
"It seemed like this to me from the outside as well. I wanted to participate in this difficult period and then have an important and correct reaction."

"I am not smarter than the other coaches who came before me but I'm different. I work my way because I trust it."

(Source: Soccerway)

Mbappe to 'sort through' transfer options over summer

Kylian Mbappe has said he will "sort through" the options he has while on holiday with his family in the summer and revealed that Real Madrid "have been trying to sign me since I was 14."



The 18-year-old Monaco striker is pondering the next potential step in his career, with a source telling ESPN FC last week that two clubs had made bids of more than €100 million for him.

Real Madrid, Arsenal and Liverpool have all been linked with Mbappe, who only signed his first professional contract a year ago, and asked about Madrid he told Canal +: "They have been trying to sign me since I was 14."

Speaking to reporters after helping France to a 3-2 win over England on Tuesday, he said: "We're going to go away as a family and we're going to think it over."

"For the moment, I'm going to leave my suitcases in Paris, because we're here. I can't take them with me. We'll have to sort through things, see what happens with the club. I'm under contract, I'm not free."

Monaco's owner, Russian billionaire Dimitri Rybolovlev, recently said he would not stand in a player's way as long as the price was right.

Mbappe's stunning displays in Monaco's Ligue 1 title win and run to the Champions League semifinals have seen him become one of the most sought-after players in world football.

(Source: ESPN)

FIFA 'has come up short' in protecting Russia 2018 stadium workers

FIFA has fallen short of its commitment to protect workers on Russia's World Cup stadiums who have been forced to do backbreaking labor in freezing conditions without appropriate clothing and not knowing if they will be paid, according to Human Rights Watch.

With the Confederations Cup beginning in the country this week, a year before the start of the World Cup, Russia is in the spotlight, particularly for its treatment of migrant workers. However a 34-page report produced by Human Rights Watch said FIFA had failed to deliver on its promise to conduct effective monitoring of labor conditions.

According to the report, workers are often afraid to speak out about abuses, fearing reprisals from their employers. One subcontractor told an investigation by the Observer that 190 "downtrodden" North Koreans worked in "slave-like conditions" and were treated like "prisoners of war" when they were constructing stadiums last year.

In May 2016, FIFA announced it was organizing a system for the first time, together with the Russian authorities, to monitor labor conditions at stadiums being built or renovated for the 2018 World Cup. But the author of the Human Rights Watch report, Jane Buchanan, said the scheme had left a lot to be desired.

"FIFA's promise to make human rights a centerpiece of its global operations has been put to the test in Russia, and FIFA is coming up short," she said.

"Construction workers on World Cup stadiums face exploitation and abuse, and FIFA has not yet shown that it can effectively monitor, prevent and remedy these issues."

While the plight of migrant workers constructing stadiums for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar has been well documented,



the danger faced by workers in Russia has only emerged recently. At least 17 have died on World Cup stadium sites, according to the Building and Wood Workers' International global union.

The report also documents how workers on six World Cup stadium construction sites faced going unpaid or having to endure several month delays in payment. They also worked in temperatures as cold as -25C (-13F) without sufficient protection and employers' failed to provide suitable work contracts.

Russian authorities detained a Human Rights Watch researcher seeking to in-

terview construction workers outside the World Cup stadium in the southern Russian city of Volgograd. They questioned the researcher for more than three hours, threatened him and eventually released him without charge.

"The apparent surveillance and detention of a Human Rights Watch researcher and pressure on workers not to report abuses suggests that those responsible for labor conditions on World Cup sites have something to hide," added Buchanan. "Football fans, players, coaches, and others have a right to know who's building the World Cup stadiums and un-

der what conditions. Transparency is key to any serious human rights protection."

"FIFA and the Russian government took a notable step in organizing labor monitoring on World Cup stadiums," she added, "but to be credible, FIFA needs to make public detailed information about its inspections, what inspectors have found, and the actual results, if any, for workers. There could not be a better time for FIFA to move away from the secrecy that has plagued its operations and to show it can achieve meaningful protections for workers, and be transparent and accountable."

(Source: Guardian)

Real Madrid have 'full confidence' in Ronaldo over tax allegations



Real Madrid insist they have "full confidence" in Cristiano Ronaldo with the forward facing allegations that he defrauded the Spanish tax office of 14.7 million euros.

The Portugal captain has been accused by Madrid's regional state prosecutor of four counts of tax fraud relating to image rights payments - which have been denied by Ronaldo's representatives.

La Liga champions Real Madrid, who signed the 32-year-old from Manchester United in 2009, have backed their star player to "prove his total innocence."

A statement on the club's official website read: "Real Madrid CF shows their full confidence in our player Cristiano Ronaldo, who we understand has acted in accordance with the legality regarding compliance with their tax obligations."

"Cristiano Ronaldo has always shown since his arrival at Real Madrid

CF, in July 2009, a clear will to fulfil all his tax obligations.

"Real Madrid CF is absolutely convinced that our player Cristiano Ronaldo will prove his total innocence in this process."

"Real Madrid CF hopes that the Justice will act as quickly as possible so that its innocence can be demonstrated as soon as possible."

The state prosecutor alleged Ronaldo used an off-shore company to hide a portion of his income from the tax office.

However, a statement from Ronaldo's management company Gestifute insisted the company, Tolin, which was established during Ronaldo's time with Manchester United, has acted in accordance with British and Spanish tax laws.

The statement read: "Cristiano Ronaldo signed for Real Madrid in 2009 under the Law of Impatriots, legislation in force and prevailing then, and he was taxed only for the incomes that were attributable to Spain."

"The Prosecutor's Office says that the player declared the income derived from the transfer of image rights as income from movable capital to evade taxes."

"In conclusion: the declared amount can be discussed, but it is clear that the football player did not try to evade taxes."

(Source: Sky Sports)

Jose Mourinho reveals masterplan behind Europa League success



It's not like Jose Mourinho to glory in his many successes, but he's been doing it anyway.

The Manchester United boss is obviously still on a high from winning the Europa League last month, and it seems as though he's still more than willing to talk to anyone and everyone about the victory over Ajax in the final in Stockholm.

Quite rightly, the Portuguese is reveling in his win, and he's been revealing all about the tactical plan he used to beat the Dutch side.

And it is so very Mourinho. Revealing his thoughts to MA students studying football coaching, Mourinho revealed just how much work went into the final.

"I watched eight Ajax matches," he said, according to Portuguese paper Tribuna Expresso.

"In England, I tend to watch two to

three matches because I already know the opponent, but not in Europe. To me, analyzing the opponent is key because the way I practice and play is influenced by it."

"We wanted to create instability. We would let them play out from the back while blocking (Matthijs) De Ligt, their right center-back, making them play through Davinson Sanchez who had more trouble."

But while he was happy for Ajax to give the ball to De Ligt, he was less happy for his own team to give it to Smalling.

"We prepare a game better when we're aware of our own weaknesses," he continued. "Everyone said Ajax played beautiful football and that the beauty of the game matters and blah, blah, blah. I told my players that, for me, beautiful is not giving our opponents what they want."

"I even joked with Smalling - 'With your feet, we're for sure not playing out from the back!'"

"That's where we won the game. During the initial stage of the build-up we never played from our center-backs to our midfielders, because they are great at recovering possession pressing high. In our midfield they didn't recover the ball once."

(Source: Mirror)

Afghan amputee swimmer aims for international success

It took a pair of landmines that severed Malek Mohammad's legs for him to find his life's passion for swimming in land-locked Afghanistan.

He was 11 years old when he stepped on the mines as he gathered firewood in a vacant lot in Kabul, a city still trying to recover from years of civil war.

"When I lost my legs ... I was in a terrible condition because I didn't know about my future and I was feeling very bad," Mohammad, now 24, told Reuters as he rested after swim practice on a recent morning in Kabul.

Faced with an uncertain future in a country where many war victims face lifetimes of suffering, Mohammad's life changed when a U.S. government official arranged for him to receive treatment, physical therapy, and education in the United States.

It was there that Mohammad first learned to swim, and put him on a track to what he hopes will eventually be sporting glory at the 2020 Summer Paralympics in Tokyo.

"I hope to be selected there to represent my country, because the amputee community are looking at me," Mohammad said.

His dreams of competing in the Olympics have been dashed before, when he failed to make the cut for the

summer games in London in 2012.

He hopes that a good showing in the World Para Swimming Championships in Mexico City in September will help him get close to his dream.

Nothing in Afghanistan is easy, however. Mohammad says his application to the Mexico games has been delayed by conflicting details on his identification papers, a common problem in Afghanistan where many people, including Mohammad, don't know their exact birth date and other information.

The team members hope to follow 18-year-old Abbas Karimi, who recently qualified for Mexico while living and training in the United States.

The lack of resources for a world-class training programme makes it difficult for the members of the Afghan Paralympics swimming team who don't have access to international facilities and support.

Three members of the team, all with amputations from war wounds, train in small public pools with little government support.

COMFORT IN SWIMMING
Like many Afghans, Mohammad has been caught in the increasing global tensions as fighting sends hundreds and thousands fleeing.

His prosthetic legs have begun to wear after eight years, and a clinic in the United States has offered to provide treatment.

Mohammad's application for an American visa was denied last year, however, with the State Department saying he had not proved that he would willingly return to Afghanistan.

No matter what happens, Mohammad says the pool has become a comforting place, because in the water it does not matter that he lost his legs.

"Winning or losing the game is not important for me because this is a pride for me that despite losing my legs I can swim and feel myself relaxed in the water," he said.

Mohammad and his family still express surprise at how his potentially life-ending injury changed his life.

"I was hopeless and crying," said his mother, Bibi Sabza Gul. "Imagine when you see your son lose two legs and covered with blood."
Now those horrible memories have faded, she said.

"I'm really happy seeing my son improving day by day in his career. He is helping his sisters and brothers and encouraging them in sports so I am not concerned about him anymore."

(Source: Reuters)

Rouhani meets national football team

S P O R T S President Hassan Rouhani welcomed Iranian national football team, also known as Team Melli, on Wednesday.

The president wanted to personally congratulate the team on winning a berth in the 2018 World Cup.

In addition to Iranian players, coaching staff, Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Masoud Soltanifar and head of Iran Football Federation Mehdi Taj were also present.

Iran captain Masoud Shojaei also presented a signed No. 17 Iran's jersey to Rouhani in this meeting.

Unbeaten in eight qualifying games, Iran have been in dominant form in Group A, having yet to concede a goal on the Road to Russia.

"We can register another record in the World Cup, advancing to the next stage and it's possible for the best Asian football team. We are ready for making history once again," Rouhani said.

The president also hailed impact of Carlos Queiroz as the Portuguese coach inspired Team Melli book a place at the World Cup for the second time in a row.

Iran national football team advanced to successive FIFA World Cups for the first time in their history Monday night.

Team Melli defeated Uzbekistan 2-0 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Sardar Azmoun and Mehdi Taremi scored for the Persian Gulf country.

After Brazil, who have become the first team to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, Iran are the second team book a place in the prestigious event.



The win means Iran will finish in the top two places in Group A of Asia's final round of qualifying. Uzbekistan are eight points adrift of the leaders in third place and have only two games remaining.

The top two teams in each of Asia's two qualifying groups advance automatically to the finals while the teams in third place go through a series of playoffs.

Iraqi midfielder Rasan on Persepolis's radar



S P O R T S Iranian giant football team Persepolis are set to sign Iraqi international midfielder Bashar Rasan.

Rasan, 20, is a member of Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya of Iraq at the moment.

He had made 10 appearance for Iraqi national football team.

The winger has become the youngest player of Iraq football team in the

history.

The Iran champion have already linked with a move to Rasan's teammate Saad Natiq.

Persepolis have already reached agreement with Nigerian striker Godwin Mensha, former Sepahan defender Shoja Khalilzadeh, Sepidrood Rasht midfielder Shayan Mosleh and Paykan attacking midfielder Siamak Nemati.

Iran's Manavinezhad linked with a move to BluVolley Verona



S P O R T S Italian Serie A1 volleyball club BluVolley Verona has showed interest in signing Iranian outside hitter Mohammadjavad Manavinezhad.

Manavinezhad was on fire stringing up 26 points to become the best scorer of the Iran and Argentina match in the 2017 FIVB World League week 2 but he was forced to leave the court after tear-

ing his muscle.

The good performance of Manavinezhad has caught the eye of Serbia and BluVolley Verona coach Nikola Grbic.

Manavinezhad made his debut for Iran national volleyball team in the game against the U.S. in the 2015 World League.

He invited to Iran national team by Slobodan Kovac.

Iran, Japan football federations sign memorandum of understanding

The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) and the Japan Football Association (JFA) have struck an agreement on the promotion of cooperation and interaction between the governing bodies responsible for organizing national teams as well as club competitions in the two Asian countries.

On Tuesday, President of the FFIRI, Mehdi Taj, and his Japanese counterpart Kozo Tashima signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) during a ceremony in the Iranian capital city of Tehran.

Iranian Vice President at the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Ali Kaffashian, Iranian football administrator Mohammad Reza Saket and other Iranian sports officials were also in attendance.

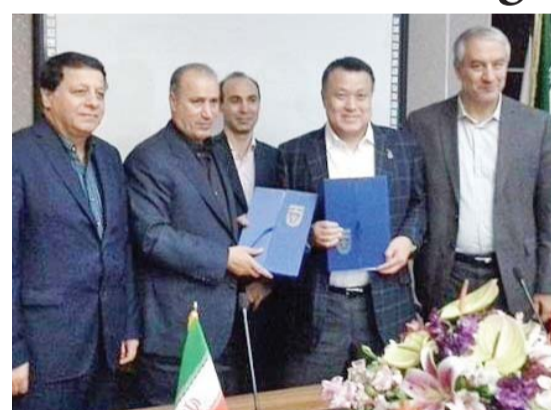
"I view Japan as the standard basis of Asian football. Iran, Japan, China and South Korea can wield enormous influence in the Asian Football Confederation, and it is necessary to bring about a number of reforms to the AFC," Taj said.

"We should set Iran as an example for all-out development, and are very grateful for measures aimed at expansion of cooperation with the FFIRI. Some countries have no effect whatsoever on Asia's football, while some others are highly influential. Such states must receive further AFC support so they can advance to the FIFA World Cup Round of 16. Japan always stands up for more rights for countries participating in FIFA World Cup," Tashima commented.

The agreement between FFIRI and JFA aims to raise the level of cooperation and to deepen relations between the two countries in football.

Holding training courses for Iranian male and female coaches and referees, organizing friendly games, exchanging expertise on sport and exercise medicine, construction of sports facilities as well as production of sports equipment are among the Iranian side's priorities by signing the MoU.

The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFI-



RI) has so far signed MoUs with several different countries, including Armenia, Belarus, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Romania.

(Source: Press TV)

Female footballers to climb Kilimanjaro to play highest match in history

Throughout history sportswomen have had to climb metaphorical mountains: pushing boundaries for the right to compete, confounding critics to reach their sporting summit.

But, for many, the fight for equality is ongoing, which is why a group of women are to climb Mount Kilimanjaro and attempt to break the world record for the highest game of competitive football played.

Over the course of seven to 10 days, the women will scale nearly 6,000 meters (19,330 feet) of Africa's highest mountain.

After reaching the summit, they will descend to 18,799 feet and play a 90-minute, 11-a-side match on a volcanic ash pitch at an altitude not attempted before.

The footballers, representing 20 nationalities, include retired US international Lori Lindsey, former England midfielder Rachel Unitt, ex-Germany international Petra Landers and former Mexico captain Monica Gonzalez.

Ranging in ages, from 18 to 66 years old, the players will embark on the trip on June 15 and, weather permitting, play their match either on June 24 or 25.

Lindsey, who played for USA at the 2011 World Cup and 2012 London Olympics, said their aim was to raise awareness of the issues women and girls face when playing sport.

"I'm fortunate enough to have had pioneers who came before me, but it's our responsibility to continue to make strides forward for the generations to come," she told CNN Sport.

Lindsey said she had not undertaken any special training for the task ahead, but the challenge will be far from easy.

Playing in thin air causes a reduction in physical performance and in May 2007, FIFA -- football's world governing body -- introduced a temporary ban, revoked a year later, on international matches at more than 8,200ft above sea level, citing concerns about players' health and the

"unfair" advantage to acclimatized home teams.

Earlier in 2007, Brazilian club Flamengo had said it would boycott high-altitude games after a match at 12,467 ft (3,800m) against Bolivia's Real Potosi left some team members needing oxygen.

Men aren't climbing for equality

Through the organization Equal Playing Field, and various crowd funding pages, the women have been raising money for the mission which must accommodate players, FIFA referees, coaches, a medical team and support crew.

Lindsey -- who is aiming to raise \$9,000 on her GoFundMe page -- said the fact that fundraising was necessary highlighted the disparity between men and women.

"Men, in general, aren't raising money for equality," said the 37-year-old, who made 31 appearances for her national team.

"Men aren't climbing for equality.

They have it."

In April, the US women's national soccer team ended a long-running dispute over pay and conditions by agreeing a new deal with US Soccer, the country's governing body.

The world champions had long claimed the men's national team unjustly earned more and five high-profile players -- Carli Lloyd, Alex Morgan, Megan Rapinoe, Becky Sauerbrunn and Hope Solo -- filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in March alleging wage discrimination.

That is not the only case this year of international sportswomen taking a stand.

Also in April, the Republic of Ireland women's football team threatened to go on strike. Players' representative, Stuart Gilhooly, said they were being treated like "fifth-class citizens" by the Football Association of Ireland.

(Source: CNN)

Iran basketball team beat China in friendly

Iranian national basketball team beat China 63-60 in a warm-up match on Tuesday.

The two teams will prepare for the 2019 World Cup in China and the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

Chang Lin finished with a team-high 13 points. Abdusalam also scored 13 while Zhaor Rui scored eight points for China. Sajjad Mashayekhi led Iran with a match-high 17 while Behnam Yakhchali added 15.

The two teams will play their second match in Changchun, China on Friday.

The Iranian team are headed by Mehran Hatami.

(Source: Tasnim)

Persepolis set to select Kyrgyzstan to host Al-Ahli of Saudi Arabia

Iranian football club Persepolis is going to select Kyrgyzstan as the neutral venue to host the forthcoming match against Al-Ahli of Saudi Arabia at the 2017 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League quarter-final.

Persepolis was drawn to host the first leg against Al-Ahli on Aug. 22. The return game is in mid-September.

The Persepolis officials will travel to Kyrgyzstan on Wednesday to negotiate with the country's football federation to arrange the match.

Oman and Malaysia countries also are candidates to host the match.

The 2017 AFC Champions League, which is the 36th edition of Asia's premier club football tournament, began on January 24, 2016, and will wrap up on November 25, 2017.

The winner of the tournament will qualify as the AFC representative for the 2017 FIFA Club World Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

(Source: Tasnim)

China's Xi meets FIFA head amid World Cup speculation

Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged continued efforts to improve Chinese football in a meeting on Wednesday with FIFA President Gianni Infantino in Beijing, amid speculation that China may be planning a bid to host the World Cup.

"There is still a very large disparity in the general standard of China's football today compared to major footballing nations," Xi said in the meeting, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Xi, an avid football fan, has launched an ambitious drive to improve Chinese football from the ground up, and has spoken of his wish for China to qualify for another World Cup, to host the tournament, and eventually to win one.

The country has invested heavily in the sport in recent years, boosting its Super League with some high-profile, big-money international signings.

Its growing influence within FIFA was reflected in the election of Zhang Jian to the governing body's council in May, and FIFA has appointed a number of Chinese companies as sponsors for the forthcoming World Cups in Russia and Qatar.

Ranked 82nd by FIFA, China is all but certain to miss out on qualification for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, after a late goal cost the team victory against Syria in their most recent match on Tuesday.

While the incomplete summary released by CCTV did not contain any mention of the World Cup, speculation has grown that China wishes to launch a bid to host the competition in either 2030 or 2034.

Xi told Infantino that China was cultivating a football culture for everyone, building world-class football schools and greatly expanding youth football, CCTV reported.

(Source: Reuters)

Tiote agent asks for respect for family as investigations continue

Cheick Tiote's agent has asked for respect for the player's bereaved family as investigations into the cause of his death continue.

Tiote collapsed and died during a training session with his club, Beijing Enterprises, last week. He was 30.

On Tuesday a memorial service was held in China, where his former Newcastle teammate Papiss Cisse led the tributes.

Tiote's body is now due to be flown back to Ivory Coast, where a private funeral will take place.

His agent Emanuele Palladino issued a statement to Press Association Sport requesting consideration for the family as they await official confirmation of the cause of death of the former Anderlecht, FC Twente and Newcastle midfielder.

"There is increasing speculation regarding the circumstances and reasons behind Cheick Tiote's death, with many inaccuracies being printed in the press on this subject," the statement said.

"This has been upsetting for Cheick's family and all parties involved at what is already a difficult time.

"We appreciate Cheick was a much-loved personality. His club Beijing Enterprises are being co-operative at this time, and when we have official information surrounding his death we will give a statement on behalf of his family.

"Until then we cannot comment further, however we thank you for all your continued support and well wishes."

(Source: ESPN)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
www.eshtarak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
Printed at: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



Isfahan children's filmfest announces intl. lineup

A R T TEHRAN — The 30th International Film Festival for Children and Youth, which will be held in Isfahan from June 30 to July 6, announced the lineup for the international competition on Wednesday.



Twelve foreign movies including "My Friend Raffi" by Arend Agthe from Germany, "Little Grey Fergie" by Peder Hamdahl from Norway and "Bo's Most Exciting Holiday Ever" by Diederik Ebbinge from the Netherlands will compete in the festival.

Among the highlights are also "Fortune Favors the Brave" by Norbert Lechner from Germany, "Belle and Sebastian" by Christian Duguay from France, "Jill and Joy's Winter" by Saara Cantell from Finland and "Come Along" by Igor Sterk from Slovenia.

Iranian mining organization to hold photo festival

A R T TEHRAN — The Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) plans to organize a festival of photos on mines and the mining industry in July.

Photos on the subjects such as "fillings and lava", "man and mine", "mine and environment", and "mine and women" will compete in the festival, which will be held from July 23 to 26, the organization announced on Wednesday.

Film critic Akbar Alami will preside over the jury of the festival, which is composed of Seifollah Samadian, Masud Zenderuh Kermani, Mehdi Alipur, Saed Nikzad and Reza Moattarian.

Sony unveils new "Spider-man" game at E3 expo

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Sony unveiled a new "Spider-man" game for its Playstation video console at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in Los Angeles on Monday.



Sony Playstation shows the Spider-Man game as they demonstrate upcoming game releases during a news conference at E3 2017 in Los Angeles, California, U.S. June 12, 2017. (Reuters/ Mike Blake)

"Spider-man", due for release in 2018, is being developed by Insomniac Games, the group behind PlayStation offerings such as "Resistance" and "Ratchet & Clank".

"The future is here and it's now with PlayStation 4 Pro and PS VR," said Shawn Layden, president and CEO of Sony Interactive Entertainment America, unveiling the "Spider-man" game.

Virtual reality (VR) is fast becoming the new battleground in the gaming world with developers seeking to win over fans with immersive headsets and accessories.

Sony Corp said last week it had sold more than one million units of its virtual reality headset globally, and was boosting production.

Sony also announced at E3 that the cult game "Shadow of the Colossus" will get a high-definition remake for PlayStation 4. This game and the next "God of War" edition are set to be released next year.

Pop singer Behnam Safavi preparing to undergo new brain surgery

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian pop singer Behnam Safavi who previously underwent surgery in 2015 to remove a tumor from his brain is preparing to have a new operation as the tumor recrudesced.

"Professor [Majid] Samii and his medical team in Germany will perform the surgery in a month," 34-year-old Safavi told the Persian service of ILNA on Wednesday.

Safavi underwent successful surgery in July 2015 at Tehran's Erfan Hospital to remove a small tumor from his brain.

In early October, his medical team permitted him to hold a concert to raise his spirits sufficiently to allow him to continue chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments.

He appeared on the stage at Tehran's Milad Tower, performing his concert while sitting in a chair.

"The chemotherapy treatments were stopped five months ago, but the tumor has grown a bit afterwards," his publicist, Reza Foadian, said.

"Behnam will leave Iran to Germany to pursue his treatment," he noted and added, "There is no critical point in this issue."

Safavi's debut album, "Be My Love", was released in October 2009 and a song by the same name from the collection soon became a smash hit at that time.

Two years later, he released his second album, "Calm", which earned him a firm place in the Iranian pop music arena.

His latest collection "Extraordinary" was released in May 2014.



Iranian pop singer Behnam Safavi performs at Tehran's Milad Tower on October 9, 2015. (Muiscepars.com/Shayan Yavari)

Parisian festival of Iranian films opens

A R T TEHRAN — The 5th edition of the Cinema of Iran, a festival of Iranian films, opened at the Nouvel Odéon Cinema in Paris Wednesday.

A rich lineup of the latest movies, documentary films and shorts has been arranged and dozens of meetings and review sessions are scheduled to be held during the festival, the organizers announced.

"The Secret of Baran" by Majid Majidi, "The Blue Veil" by Rakhshan Bani-Etemad and "Take Me Home" by Abbas Kiarostami are among the movies to be screened.

Also included are "76 Minutes and 15 Seconds with Abbas Kiarostami" by Seifollah Samadian and "From the Shadow to the Light" by Nazanin Sobhan Sarbandi.

The acclaimed acid attack drama "Lanturi" will also be screened as director Reza Dormishian and the



film's star, Navid Mohammadzadeh, are currently in Paris to attend a review session at the festival, which will run until June 20.

Bitra Ebrahimi translates more works from children's English literature

CULTURE TEHRAN — The prolific Iranian translator of children's books, Bitra Ebrahimi, has recently completed the translation of U.S. writer Wendelin Van Draanen's novel "The Running Dream" and English writer Mark Haddon's "Agent Z".

Peydayesh Publications is scheduled to release "The Running Dream", the English version of which was published in 2011, the publishing company announced on Wednesday.

The novel is about Jessica, a young girl who loses a leg in a car accident. Because Jessica is obsessed with running, she thinks her life is over.

A Persian version of the four-volume series "Agent Z" will be published by Hoopa Publications in the near future.

It tells the story of three schoolboys and friends who use the fictional character of Agent Z to fight

boredom.

A Persian translation of British writer Siobhan Dowd's book "Bog Child" by Ebrahimi has recently been published by Peydayesh.

The historical novel is about an 18-year-old boy in Ireland during the 1980s who dreams of a murdered girl whose body he discovered in a bog.

The book won the 2009 Carnegie Medal from professional librarians, recognizing the year's best book for children or young adults published in the UK, about two years after the writer's death.

Translator Bitra Ebrahimi is currently working on "The World of Norm", a series by English writer Johnny Meres.

Darkub Publications is scheduled to publish the series that is about Norman, a normal boy who lives with his parents and two really annoying little brothers.

Scorsese's Film Foundation in deal to preserve African cinema

LOS ANGELES (Screendaily) — Martin Scorsese's The Film Foundation has signed a letter of agreement with UNESCO and the Pan African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI) to restore African films.

The agreement formalizes their existing partnership on the African Film Heritage Project (AFHP) to preserve African cinema.

AFHP will locate and restore an initial selection of 50 African films, identified by FEPACI's advisory board of African archivists, scholars and filmmakers.

After initially launching in February, the AFHP completed its first restoration, the 1969 film Soleil O directed by Med Hondo, which premiered in Cannes last month.

An extensive survey to locate the best existing film elements for each of the 50 films will be conducted in African cinematheques and archives around the world.

Following restoration, the films will be distributed worldwide at festivals, museums and universities, and will be made available via digital platforms and other formats.

Scorsese said: "I'm proud to be partnering with

FEPACI and UNESCO on this critically important project, and I'm excited to have already restored the first film of the program. I believe that cinema is the perfect way to open up one's mind and curiosity and share different cultures with people around the world. Working together, we can help ensure that Africa's richly diverse cinematic heritage will be preserved, restored, and made available."

Irina Bokova, the director-general of UNESCO, (pictured at right) added: "This project will contribute to enhancing Africa's cultural heritage and improving the global understanding of the continent's past and its rich cultural diversity. Fast-evolving technology has offered safeguarding cinema history new possibilities and new challenges."

Aboubakar Sanogo, North African regional secretary of FEPACI (pictured at left), said: "We at FEPACI come to you standing on the shoulders of the founders of our continent's independence and, in cinema, the founders that have laid the groundwork and who are responsible for the creation of FEPACI. Our task consists in pursuing their work by creating the best possible climate and institutions for the



prosperity and success of African cinema."

He continued: "This partnership will work to bring African cinema into the field of visibility and audibility in order to reclaim and reconquer the continent's dignity and place in the world. The films that will be restored will show her beauty, her complexity, her doubts, her uncertainties, and of course, her hopes, aspirations and attitudes toward life on Earth and beyond."

Sean Combs ousts Taylor Swift as highest-paid global entertainer

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Rapper and music producer Sean "Diddy" Combs was named the world's highest-paid entertainer on Monday, ousting pop singer Taylor Swift who fell to 49th place on the Forbes annual list.

Beyonce moved into the second spot with \$105 million, courtesy of her best-selling "Lemonade" album and world tour, while British author J.K. Rowling (\$95 million) moved back into the top three thanks largely to her "Harry Potter" spinoff movie franchise "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them."

Combs, 47, earned an estimated \$130 million in the 12 months ended June 1, 2017, Forbes said. It attributed the big payout to his Bad Boy Family Reunion Tour, earnings from his Sean John clothing line, and his partnership with Ciroc vodka.

Last year, Combs came in 22nd on the list in a year



Sean Diddy Combs at 2017 Billboard Music Awards, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Chris Brown, Dj Khaled, New Edition to perform at Bet Awards

NEW YORK (AP) — Chris Brown, DJ Khaled, Lil Wayne and New Edition have been added as performers at this month's BET Awards.

The network announced Tuesday that Post Malone and Roman GianArthur

would join previously announced performers Bruno Mars, Migos and Future on June 25 at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles.

Other set to hit the stage include Trey Songz, Tamar Braxton and Jessie Reyez.

"Saturday Night Live" comic Leslie Jones will be host.

Presenters include Jamie Foxx, Queen Latifah, Trevor Noah, Jada Pinkett Smith, Issa Rae and Yara Shahidi.

Beyonce, who is pregnant with twins, is

nominated for seven awards, while Mars is up for five.

New Edition, who had success with their BET biopic this year, will receive the lifetime achievement award. Chance the Rapper will earn the humanitarian award.