

Leader: Iran against holding independence referendum in parts of Iraq

2

IRAN DAILY



Crude steel production records over 13% rise in five months

4

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Key Macron ally quits French government

3



The day Iran beat USA

11



Iran's 'Versailles Palace' eventually registered as National Heritage Site

12

Brussels attacker identified as Moroccan with nail bomb

Belgium said on Wednesday a Moroccan man carried out a foiled terrorist attack with a nail bomb at a busy Brussels train station, the latest in a wave of attacks to hit Europe.

The 36-year-old man, identified only as O.Z., shouted and tried to detonate a suitcase in a group of passengers at Brussels Central station before a soldier shot him dead on Tuesday, AFP reported.

The suspect, from the largely immigrant Brussels neighborhood of Molenbeek which has been linked to a number of previous attacks, was not known to police for terrorism offences.

"It could have been much worse," Belgian federal prosecutor's spokesman Eric Van Der Sypt told a news conference. "It is clear that he wanted to cause more damage than he did."

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel said a "terrorist attack has been prevented" in the city that hosts the EU and NATO headquarters.

But he said that while security would be stepped up, the country's terror alert level would be kept stable. "We are not allowing ourselves to be intimidated by terrorists," he added.

The blast came a day after a man mowed down Muslims near a mosque in London, and a suspected radical on a terror watch list rammed a car laden with weapons into a police vehicle in Paris.

Brussels has been on high alert since suicide bombers struck Zaventem Airport and the Maalbeek metro station near the EU quarter in March 2016, killing 32 people and injuring hundreds more. The Daesh terror group claimed the attacks, which were carried out by the same Brussels-based cell behind the November 2015 suicide bombings and shootings in Paris which left 130 people dead. In Tuesday's incident, the man failed to cause any casualties.

He entered the station and twice approached a group of around 10 passengers, the second time standing in the middle of them, prosecutors said.

"He grabbed his suitcase while shouting and causing a partial explosion. Fortunately nobody was hurt," Van Der Sypt said.

A soldier opened fire and hit the individual several times.

The man, who died instantly, was not wearing a suicide belt, contrary to some Belgian media reports, he said.

Belgium would keep its terror alert level at three on a scale of four, Michel said after chairing a meeting with his national security council.

Events in Brussels including a concert by rock band Coldplay were set to continue, although authorities said there would be extra security and warned people not to bring backpacks.

Rouhani urges unity against Zionism, terrorism



president.ir

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday urged unity among Muslim nations in the face of the Zionist regime of Israel and terrorism.

"Unity in the Muslim world needs to be fortified in order to contain Zionism and terrorism in the region," President Rouhani said, adding that rifts among Muslim countries only serves the Israeli interests, IRNA reported.

He further censured Israel for supporting terrorism, saying the regime is, either covertly or overtly, complicit in almost all crises gripping the Middle East.

"Today, it happens rarely for Zionists not to have a hand, either behind the scenes or openly, in rifts among regional countries," Rouhani said in a cabinet meeting.

Wounded terrorists receive treatment in Israeli hospitals, he said, adding that the Tel Aviv regime arms terrorists and bombs the region in favor of them.

"It is clear that they (Israelis) support terrorism in the region," President Rouhani said. "Undoubtedly, the split between regional countries and the Muslim world, such as the ones between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Saudi Arabia, and Egypt and Turkey eventually benefits global Zionism and usurping Israel."

He noted that the Islamic Republic would not allow terrorism to spread in the region, warning the terrorists and their masters against attempts to drag the scourge into Iran.

He was referring to remarks by Saudi

Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman, who said last month that Riyadh would work to move "the battle" to Iran.

Fight against terror

Rouhani referred to Iran's recent retaliatory missile strike on Daesh terrorists in Syria and said fighting terrorism is a decision made by the whole Iranian nation.

On Sunday, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) fired six medium-range ground-to-ground ballistic missiles at the Daesh-held Syria town of Deir ez-Zor in retaliation for the recent deadly terror attacks in the capital, Tehran.

Continued on Page 2

Iraqi forces tighten noose around Daesh in Mosul



AFP

US-backed Iraqi forces on Wednesday began a push toward the mosque in Mosul where Daesh declared a self-styled caliphate three years ago, military officials said.

The Iraqi forces had encircled the terror group's stronghold in the Old City of Mosul, where the mosque is located, on Tuesday, they said.

The Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) were 200 to 300 meters away from the medieval Grand al-Nuri Mosque, an Iraqi military statement said, Reuters reported.

Iraqi officials have privately expressed the hope that the mosque could be captured by Eid al-Fitr, the feast marking the end of Ramadan, the Muslim fasting month. The first day of

the Eid falls this year on June 25 or 26. The battle for the Old City is becoming the deadliest in the eight-month-old offensive to capture Mosul, Daesh's de facto capital in Iraq.

More than 100,000 civilians, of whom half are children, are trapped in its old fragile houses with little food, water, medicine, no electricity and limited access to clinics.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said on Monday that sick and wounded civilians escaping through Daesh lines were dying in "high numbers".

"We are trying to keep families inside their houses and, after we secure their block, we will evacuate them through safe routes," said Lieutenant

General Abdul Ghani al-Assadi, senior CTS commander in Mosul.

The terrorists are moving stealthily in the Old City's maze of alleyways and narrow streets, through holes dug between houses, fighting back the advancing troops with sniper and mortar fire, booby traps and suicide bombers.

They have also covered many streets with sheets of cloth to obstruct air surveillance, making it difficult for the advancing troops to hit them without a risk to civilians.

"We are attacking simultaneously from different fronts to divide them into smaller groups easier to fight," said an officer from the Federal Police, another force taking part in the assault on the Old City.

The Iraqi Army estimates the number of Daesh terrorists at no more than 300, down from nearly 6,000 in the city when the battle of Mosul started on Oct. 17.

The fall of Mosul would, in effect, mark the end of the Iraqi half of the "caliphate" even though Daesh would continue to control territory west and south of the city, the largest they came to control in both Iraq and Syria.

The Iraqi government initially hoped to take Mosul by the end of 2016, but the campaign took longer as terrorists reinforced positions in civilian areas to fight back.

The terrorists are also retreating in Syria, mainly in the face of a US-backed Kurdish-led coalition. Its capital there, Raqqa, is under siege.

About 850,000 people, more than a third of the pre-war population of Mosul, have fled, seeking refuge with relatives or in camps, according to aid groups.

Iran blames high US output for falling oil prices

Iran blamed a recent rise in US oil production for the plunge in global prices of crude oil.

Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh told reporters on Wednesday that the US had increased its oil production by 900,000 barrels per day. This, he said, was way beyond what the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) had estimated, Press TV reported.



SHANA

Zanganeh said he was already discussing the role of high US oil production in the decline of prices. However, he said it would be difficult to prepare the member states for any collective action on such issues.

Continued on Page 4

Saudi king ousts nephew, names son as first heir

Saudi Arabia's King Salman on Wednesday appointed his 31-year-old son Mohammed bin Salman as crown prince, placing him first-in-line to the throne and removing a figure well-known to Washington from the line of succession.

The monarch stripped Prince Mohammed bin Nayef from his title as crown prince and from his powerful position as the country's interior minister overseeing security. The announcements were made in a series of royal decrees, AFP reported.

The all-but-certain takeover of the throne by Mohammed bin Salman awards near absolute powers to a prince who has led a war in Yemen that has killed thousands of civilians.



REUTERS

The prince already oversees a vast portfolio as defense minister and is spearheading economic reforms. He has pushed reforms that have opened the deeply conservative country to entertainment and greater foreign investments as part of an effort to overhaul the economy, including plans to list a percentage of the state-run oil giant Aramco.

The young prince was little known to Saudis and outsiders before Salman became king in January 2015. He had previously been in charge of his father's royal court when Salman was the crown prince.

The Saudi monarch quickly awarded his son expansive powers and named him deputy crown prince two years ago to the surprise of many within the royal family who are more senior and more experienced than Mohammed bin Salman, also known by his initials MBS.

The appointment of such a young royal as the immediate heir to the throne essentially sets Saudi policy for decades and removes the challenge of uncertainty. Saudi Arabia's stock market was up by more than 3.5 percent in midday trading.

Another young prince also ascended to power on Wednesday. Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud, 33, was named the new interior minister tasked with counterterrorism efforts and domestic security. His father is the governor of Saudi Arabia's vast Eastern Province, home to much of the country's oil wealth and most of its minority Shias. He previously served as an adviser to the interior and defense ministries.

The new interior minister is Mohammed bin Nayef's nephew, while Mohammed bin Salman is the former crown prince's cousin. All hail from the powerful Sudairi branch of the royal family.

The royal decree issued Wednesday stated that "a majority" of senior royal members — 31 out of 34 — from the so-called Allegiance Council supports the reconfiguring of the line of succession.

The Allegiance Council is a body made up of the sons and prominent grandsons of the late King Abdul-Aziz, the founder of the Saudi state. They gather in secret and vote to pick the king and crown prince from among themselves.

After the decrees were announced, Saudi TV aired footage of the new crown prince kissing Mohammed bin Nayef's hand and kneeling before him. Mohammed bin Nayef is heard telling him: "I will rest now, and God help you."

Iran urges Saudi Arabia to release three fishermen

Iran's Interior Ministry in a statement on Wednesday called on Saudi Arabia to swiftly release the three Iranian fishermen who have been detained by the Arab country's coastguards.

The ministry's statement also said Riyadh had to live up to its legal obligation of returning the fishermen, paying compensation, and punishing those behind the incident, IRNA reported.



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The Iranian fishermen had wandered into Saudi waters because of tumult in the sea and were detained by the Saudi coastguard.

Bearing licenses, three Iranian fishing boats had departed from the southern Iranian Bushehr Port last week, the statement explained, adding that, later during the trip, tumultuous sea conditions pushed them into Saudi waters.

One of the vessels managed to return to Iranian waters; the other two being directed by the waves into Saudi waters, where they came under live fire from the Saudi coastguard, Press TV reported.

The statement said the fishermen on board the two boats had no idea they had been pushed across the maritime border and even if they did, they could not do anything about it because they had lost control of the vessels.

The Saudi fire killed one fisherman on board one of the two boats, on which another fisherman finally managed to regain control and return to the Iranian coast. The other vessel, however, was impounded by the Saudi coastguards, who also detained three fishermen on board.

The ministry said such innocent trespassing by civilian boats is common and had occurred 17 times over the past months in Iran's territorial waters.

"The boats trespassing [into Iranian waters] were returned to their respective countries with goodwill. The opening of fire on fishing boats [by Saudi Arabia] is against humanitarian and Islamic principles," it said.

On Monday, Saudi Arabia's Information Ministry said in a statement that Saudi forces had captured and were questioning three members of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), "who were intending to carry out an attack on a major offshore oilfield in the Persian Gulf," according to an Associated Press report.

This is while Saudi Arabia itself had offered a different narrative about the incident some two days earlier, saying merely that the Iranian boats had entered its waters and been shot at.

Iran has rejected the claim, saying the arrested individuals were "simply fishermen" and not IRGC members.

Leader: Iran against holding independence referendum in parts of Iraq

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei stressed the importance of safeguarding Iraq's territorial integrity, saying, "As a neighbor, the Islamic Republic of Iran is against certain murmurs about the holding of a referendum for the separation of a section of Iraq."

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with visiting Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in Tehran on Tuesday, Press TV reported.

Officials in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region have decided to hold an independence referendum on September 25.

The move has drawn criticism from Baghdad and international bodies, including the United Nations and the European Union (EU).

EU has cautioned political parties in Iraq's Kurdistan region against holding the referendum, saying that "unilateral steps must be avoided, and that all open questions must be resolved through consensual positions" based on Iraq's Constitution.

The United Nations has also said it will not be "engaged in any way or form" in the process surrounding the independence referendum in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

US against Iraq's independence

The Leader also warned against placing trust in the United States, saying Washington is against Iraq's independence and unity.

"Vigilance is required against the Americans and they should not be trusted at all because the US and its puppets oppose Iraq's independence, identity and unity," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The Leader hailed the unity and coherence among all Iraqi political and faith movements in their fight against Daesh terrorists and said the Popular Mobilization Units, commonly known by their Arabic name, Hashd al-Sha'abi, are important and a power element for the country.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that the US is against Hashd al-Sha'abi because "they [Americans] want Iraq to lose its key element of strength."

"Do not trust the Americans"

"Do not trust the Americans at all because they seek an opportunity to strike their blow," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei warned that any



leader.ir

emergence of division and conflict among Iraqis would pave the way for Washington to harm Iraq, stressing the importance of preventing the presence of US forces in Iraq under the pretext of training.

The Leader further emphasized that the US and some of its allies in the region do not seek the destruction and eradication of Daesh as the terrorist group has been created through their support.

Ayatollah Khamenei expressed hope that the Iraqi government would manage to solve the problems it faces and said, "The Iraqi government must be strengthened in every way and all political and faith movements in Iraq are duty-bound to support the sitting government."

The Leader also said Iran and Iraq must further expand relations in various fields, urging the two sides to remove the obstacles in the way of bolstering their cooperation.

Praising Tehran aid

The Iraqi prime minister commended Iran's support for his country in the fight against Daesh.

Abadi said all Iraqi political and religious groups are united in the battle against Daesh until its full eradication.

He added that Baghdad needs Tehran's aid during the fight against Daesh and after the elimination of the Takfiris – a time for Iraq's stability, peace and construction.

Earlier in the day, the Iraqi premier held talks with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

During the meeting, President Rouhani described the terrorist operations across the Middle East as part of Israel's agenda, warning that anti-terror campaigns in the region should not divert attention from the Palestinian crisis.

"Fighting against terrorism should not overshadow the issue of Al-Quds and the threat of the Zionist regime in the region," he said.

Elsewhere, Rouhani congratulated the Iraqi government and nation over the liberation of Mosul from the hands of Daesh terrorists, saying, "The liberation of Mosul is a symbol of putting an end to terrorism; it is a victory celebration for Iran, Iraq, Syria and all the regional countries fighting the grave issue of terrorism."

The president also underlined the importance of safeguarding the territorial integrity of all regional countries and denounced any measure aimed at undermin-

ing the unity and sovereignty of Iraq as "unacceptable."

Boosting ties

The Iranian chief executive also called for the expansion of Iran-Iraq ties in all areas.

Abadi called for the promotion of Tehran-Baghdad relations in all spheres, particularly in fighting terrorism.

He noted that Daesh terrorists know no boundaries and urged all countries to cooperate in fighting against such a common threat.

Abadi's visit to Iran comes as Iraqi government forces continue more territorial gains in the militant-held Old City of Mosul as they continue their operations to push Daesh terrorists out of their last urban stronghold in the Arab country.

On Wednesday, the Iraqi prime minister also held talks with Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani.

Heading a delegation, Abadi arrived in Tehran on the second leg of a three-nation tour after a key trip to Saudi Arabia. At the end of his two-day visit to Tehran, the Iraqi premier will set off for Kuwait to meet with the country's senior officials.

Rouhani urges unity against Zionism, terrorism

From Page 1

Rouhani reaffirmed that Iran's missiles are for defensive purposes, saying the country seeks no permission from anyone to boost its defense might.

On Tuesday, Rouhani said that the Islamic Republic will respond "more decisively" to any future terrorist attack on Iran's soil.

He added that the IRGC's move to fire missiles toward Daesh positions was not made by one person or military component.

"If we decide to target a location with missiles, this decision falls within the field of national security," said Rouhani. "Such decisions are made by the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC)," he added.

The IRGC has said that at least 65 Daesh terrorists, including several top intelligence commanders, were killed in Iran's missile attack.

US miscalculations

The president pointed to an anti-Iran sanctions bill passed by the US Senate last week, saying the new officials in Washington have made wrong calculations if they think they could pressure Iran with congressional measures.

The bill calls for sanctions on Iran over its missile program among other things.

Rouhani said the US has hatched different plots against Iran over the past decades, stressing that the new US administration should know the Iranian people would not remain silent and would give an appropriate response to any threats.

IRGC: New missile attacks against Daesh possible

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps spokesperson raised the possibility of repetition of missile attacks similar to a recent one against Daesh terrorists in Syria's Deir ez-Zor, saying Iran's option would depend on the conduct of the enemies.

In comments on Wednesday, IRGC Spokesman Ramezan Sharif said whether or not new missile strikes will be launched and depends on how the enemies behave in various arenas, Tasnim News Agency reported.

"Crushing responses would be formulated and given, proportional to their (enemies') behavior," he added.

The general also noted that Sunday's missile raid sent out a clear signal to "terrorists, their regional and international sponsors, and to everyone who would even think of threatening Iran's national security."

Last Sunday, the IRGC fired six medium-range ballistic missiles at targets belonging to the terrorist group of Daesh in Syria's

northeastern Deir ez-Zor Province in response to a June 7 attack by the outfit against two locations in Tehran, which killed 18 people.

mand and planning posts used to spearhead the Tehran terror attacks, most of which lied in Deir ez-Zor.

In an exclusive interview with



iribnews.ir

The countermeasure killed dozens of Daesh terrorists, including six of the group's Libyan commanders, with one of the missiles reportedly hitting a Daesh command center in the province's city of Al-Mayadin.

He said it took just 11 days for IRGC forces to pinpoint the com-

Press TV on Monday, the official warned terrorists and their sponsors about "more serious revenge" should they try their hands at more terror attacks against the Islamic Republic.

He billed Iran's retaliatory missile strike as a countermeasure of just a "very limited scale."



Romania PM ousted after losing confidence vote

Romania's prime minister was ousted by MPs in a confidence vote after losing support from his party's powerful boss during Eastern Europe's biggest anti-corruption clampdown.

Sorin Grindeanu, who was appointed to head a coalition led by the center-left Social Democratic party six months ago, complained he had been the victim of a power struggle with Liviu Dragnea, the party's leader, ft.com reported.

Dragnea withdrew backing from the prime minister in recent weeks, citing slow progress on the government's reform plans. "This is a sad day for us. The premier did not perform," he said before the vote.

Some 241 MPs, mostly from the PSD (Social Democratic Party), supported the no-confidence motion on Wednesday against Grindeanu. He was expelled from the party last week.

Relations between Dragnea and the ousted prime minister have soured since February, when the government shelved plans that would have weakened anti-corruption laws. The plans had sparked the largest demonstrations in the country since the collapse of communism in 1989.

The vote showed the tight grip on lawmakers held by Dragnea, who has a conviction for vote-rigging that bars him from holding ministerial office. Dragnea is appealing against his conviction.

Analysts said Dragnea would try to replace Grindeanu with a pliant figure to help shield party figures from corruption allegations.



Dragnea is expected to nominate a successor prime minister within days. Grindeanu will remain as caretaker.

Any prime minister will need to be confirmed by President Klaus Iohannis, a popular anti-corruption champion.

Egypt's top court temporarily halts decisions on Red Sea islands

Egypt's top court temporarily halted all verdicts on a contested deal to transfer two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia until it decides who has jurisdiction, a spokesman said on Wednesday.

Egypt's Parliament last week backed plans for the uninhabited islands under an accord that attracted widespread public criticism. But the deal has been caught in a dispute over which institution has the final say after Egypt's highest administrative court rejected it last year, Reuters reported.

A separate court suspended the Supreme Administrative Court's verdict. The agreement now sees two courts and Parliament in a battle over jurisdiction.

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's govern-

ment last year announced a maritime demarcation agreement that cedes control of Tiran and Sanafir islands to Saudi Arabia, an ally which has given billions of dollars of aid to Egypt.

Supreme Constitutional Court spokesman Ragab Saleem said: "The Constitutional Court, in cases of contradictory judgments, looks at who has jurisdiction."

"It might see one side has jurisdiction, or that neither side has. It might be under the jurisdiction of another entity."

He said the court was not examining whether the deal was constitutional and did not give a timeframe for a decision. State media earlier reported the ruling was made to allow time to decide on the consti-

tutionality of the islands deal.

Wednesday's decision only applies to the two courts involved, not to Parliament, which has approved the deal.

The Egyptian and Saudi governments say the islands are Saudi but have been subject to Egyptian protection since 1950.

But the plan caused street protests last year from many Egyptians who say their sovereignty over the islands dates back to a treaty from before Saudi Arabia was founded.

Parliamentary leaders and government lawyers say the House of Representatives is the only entity allowed to rule on matters of sovereignty. But in June last year the country's highest administrative court

ruled Egypt's sovereignty must stand.

The Red Sea deal has become politically sensitive for Sisi's government. Saudi Arabia helped Sisi with aid since he toppled President Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013.

But Egyptians are eager for economic revival after years of political upheaval and after a devaluation of the Egyptian pound, tax rises and subsidy cuts introduced by Sisi's government that have put pressure on their living costs.

The islands issue touched national pride, prompting thousands of protesters to take to the streets in April chanting "people want the fall of the regime", a slogan little heard since the uprisings of 2011.

Key Macron ally quits French government

French Justice Minister Francois Bayrou, a key ally of President Emmanuel Macron, told AFP on Wednesday he was quitting the government as his party battles a funding scandal.

The move means Macron, who has pledged to clean up French politics after a series of scandals, loses a centrist partner as he seeks to pull together a government to push forward his ambitious pro-business reform agenda, AFP reported.

Bayrou's small centrist MoDem party was in an alliance with Macron's 14-month-old Republic on the Move (REM) movement, and

"I have taken a decision not to be part of the next government," Bayrou said, adding that he would hold a press conference at 5:00 p.m. (1500 GMT).

Macron has promised that his presidency will usher in an era of new, cleaner politics after a series of scandals involving ministers under his Socialist predecessor Francois Hollande.

Observers say that pledge makes it difficult for the president to keep MoDem in his government because the party is facing allegations it broke European Parliament rules by using funds to pay parliamentary assistants who are actually based in France.

Another key MoDem figure, Defense Minister Sylvie Goulard, announced on Tuesday she was resigning because she could not remain in the cabinet with a potential investigation hanging over the party.

MoDem's third representative in the government, European Affairs Minister Marielle de Sarnes, is also set to quit, a party source said.

Government spokesman Christophe Castaner said Bayrou's decision to quit was a "personal choice" which "simplifies the situation" and "a major government crisis".

Bayrou, who ran three times for president, has dismissed the allegations, saying there had "never been" fake jobs among his party's European Parliament staff.

Paris prosecutors opened a preliminary investigation this month into the funding claims that first emerged in the Canard Enchaîné newspaper.

Russian defense minister's plane 'buzzed by NATO jet'

A plane carrying Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu was buzzed by a NATO F-16 fighter jet as it flew over the Baltic Sea, but was seen off by a Russian Sukhoi-27 military jet, Russian news agencies

US B-52 strategic bomber it said was flying over the Baltic near its border, in an incident that had echoes of the Cold War.

The Kremlin referred questions about the latest incident to the De-



VADIM SAVITSKY/REUTERS

reported on Wednesday.

The F-16 had tried to approach the aircraft carrying the defense minister even though it was flying over neutral waters, agencies said. Shoigu was reported to be en route to the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad for a meeting to discuss how well Russia's western flank was defended, Reuters reported.

One of the Russian fighter jets escorting Shoigu's plane had inserted itself between the defense minister's plane and the NATO fighter and tilted its wings from side to side to show the weapons it was carrying, Russian agencies said.

After that, agencies said the F-16 left the area.

The Baltic Sea has become an area of rising tensions between Moscow and NATO. Earlier this month, Russia scrambled a fighter jet to intercept a nuclear-capable

defense Ministry, which did not immediately comment. It has said in the past that all Russian flights over the Baltic are conducted in strict accordance with international law.

The incident occurred a day after the Russian Defense Ministry said an RC-135 US reconnaissance plane had swerved dangerously in the proximity of a Russian fighter jet over the Baltic. The ministry said at the same time that another RC-135 had been intercepted by a Russian jet in the same area.

The Pentagon had a different version of events. Apparently referring to the same episode, Pentagon spokesman Navy Captain Jeff Davis said the US aircraft "did nothing to provoke this behavior."

The Pentagon said the intercept had been unsafe and accused the Russian pilot of flying too fast and having "poor control" over his SU-27 fighter jet.

A glance at Saudi Arabia's power reshuffle

By Hassan Beheshtipour*

Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud replaced Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz with his own 31-year-old son, Mohammed bin Salman.

Here are six points which can shed light on the ongoing and future developments in Saudi Arabia.

1- The ouster of Mohammed bin Nayef shows that the power struggle between him and Mohammed bin Salman has ended in favor of the current king's son. Presently, the fate of Saudi Arabia is in the hands of a young person who has managed to change the Kingdom's future powers in his interests through US support.

2- Reports say the decision by King Salman to promote his son and consolidate his power was endorsed by 31 out of 34 members of the Allegiance Council, made up of senior members of the ruling Al-Saud family.

3- The main challenge pertains to the Kingdom's royal hierarchy, which indicates that the senior, or one of the senior, grandsons of Saudi Arabia's founder must be appointed as the new crown prince. Since the kingdom has only seen old figures in such a top position, Mohammed bin Salman's appointment could pose serious challenges to the political system of Saudi Arabia which is based on tribal rule.

4- Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef was appointed interior minister after Mohammed bin Nayef was ousted from his role as the interior minister. The new minister has good ties with the US.

5- In the US, the Pentagon played a role in the promotion of Mohammed bin Salman to maintain Saudi Arabia's warmongering approach in the region. However, the security apparatus, particularly the CIA, strongly supported Mohammed bin Nayef, who maintained close ties with US security organizations. The CIA also granted Mohammed bin Nayef a medal and introduced him as a symbol of fighting against terrorism.

6- Mohammed bin Salman is now one of the vertices of the triangular power, along with the kingdom's interior minister and intelligence minister, who will rule over Saudi Arabia.

*Hassan Beheshtipour is a political analyst.

Queen outlines UK gov't agenda in scaled-down speech

Queen Elizabeth II outlined the UK government's legislative program in a speech to Parliament on Wednesday after the prime minister slimmed down her plans and promised "humility" in negotiating Britain's exit from the European Union following a disastrous election that cost the ruling Conservative Party its majority.



The 91-year-old monarch carried on with her royal duties at the ceremonial opening of the new Parliament despite the announcement that her husband, Prince Philip, had been hospitalized. Buckingham Palace said Philip, 96, has been hospitalized as a precaution for treatment of an infection, AP reported.

While the queen reads the speech to lawmakers, it is written by Prime Minister Theresa May and her staff and offers a broad brush of goals for the future.

The nine-minute speech reflected May's weakened position – a loss of stature that has emboldened those within her own party who want a "softer" Brexit which makes a less-sharp break with the EU.

Eight of 27 bills outlined in the speech deal with the complex process of Brexit. May omitted several policies touted in the Conservative election campaign, including plans to change funding for the care of older people, which opponents dubbed the "dementia tax." Also missing was ending free school lunches and limiting winter fuel payments to low-income elderly. Nor was there a mention of President Donald Trump's state visit. May's invitation, extended with days of Trump taking office, had been sharply criticized by all parties.

May's Downing Street office said nothing had changed: An invitation had been extended and accepted. It was not mentioned in the speech because no date had been set, May's office said.

Tempted a big lead over the opposition Labour Party in opinion polls, May had called the snap election expecting an overwhelming victory that would silence dissenters and give her a mandate to push ahead with plans to leave the European Customs Union and drastically limit immigration as Britain leaves the EU. Instead, she lost seats and still hasn't secured a deal with another party to insure Parliament will back the government's agenda.

"The election result was not the one I hoped for, but this government will respond with humility and resolve to the message the electorate sent," May said in a statement. "We will work hard every day to gain the trust and confidence of the British people, making their priorities our priorities."

Signaling the importance of Brexit negotiations with the EU, set to continue until the spring of 2019, the speech set out the government's program for two years, rather than one.

SPECIAL NEWS

Domestic Economy Desk

Ministry attracts over \$2b in foreign investment in four years

Domestic Economy Desk

Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade has drawn foreign investment to the tune of \$2.2 billion since President Hassan Rouhani assumed office in August 2013, said the ministry's director general of Foreign Investment Office.

Afrouz Bahrami told IRNA that investment pertains to 81 projects which have been approved by the administration.

He said the Rouhani government has approved foreign investments worth \$18 billion for 263 projects.



IRAN DAILY

The official said \$8 billion of the total figure pertains to 178 projects initiated by the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade. Bahrami added that in addition to the \$2.2 billion investment in 81 projects, the ministry is attracting \$5.8 billion in the remaining 97 projects.

He said the aforementioned projects have all witnessed physical progress of 20 percent.

Investment in post-JCPOA era

Bahrami also touched upon the achievements of the Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), underlining that the administration has approved 165 projects in all sectors of the economy in the JCPOA-era attracting \$13 billion.

He said the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade has played a leading role in luring foreign investment over the past four years.

The official put the annual average foreign investment in the country in the last two decades at \$2 billion.

Bahrami noted that Spain ranked top among foreign investors in Iran over the past four years with \$3 billion followed by Germany (\$1.36 billion) and China (1.32 billion).

He said that most of the foreign investment under the Rouhani government went to polymer industries (\$3.5 billion) followed by metals industries (\$1.3 billion), petrochemicals (\$1.1 billion), trade (\$920 million) and the auto sector (\$410 million).

The JCPOA has offered ample opportunities for domestic and foreign investors.

The lifting of sanctions which began in January last year following the JCPOA's conclusion in July 2015 has sparked interest from numerous sectors and industries.

This interest is particularly evident in Iran's oil and gas industry as the Islamic Republic holds the world's fourth largest proven oil and the largest natural gas reserves.

Iranian top hotels have over the past two years also been teeming with foreign delegations seeking to boost trade with the Islamic Republic.

Scores of agreements have so far been signed between major international companies and their Iranian counterparts in all fields.

Iran blames high US...

From Page 1

He spoke highly of OPEC's performance in reaching a consensus to cut output and help prop up prices.

He said the output cut plan was just beginning to show its effects, adding that it was still too soon to judge its effectiveness.



SHANA

In a meeting in May, OPEC agreed to extend until March 2018 an oil output cut deal that was sealed last year to help shore up prices.

The cuts would lower the collective production of producers by 1.8 million barrels per day (mbd).

A dozen non-members led by top oil producer Russia, which reduced output in tandem with OPEC, would also join the scheme.

OPEC members Nigeria and Libya would still be excluded from cuts as their output remained curbed by unrest.

Iran would also be allowed to keep its oil production by 3.8 mbd over the next nine months. The country has been exempted from the existing six-month oil output cut deal.

Crude steel production records over 13% rise in five months

Domestic Economy Desk

Iran produced 8.159 million tons of crude steel in the first five months of 2017, indicating a 13.08-percent rise compared with the figure for the same period of 2016, which was 7.215 million tons.

According to statistics released by World Steel Association (WSA), China topped the list of crude steel producers in the period with 346.833 million tons. Japan, India and the United States with 43.936 million tons, 41.822 million tons and 33.978 million tons respectively were listed in second, third and fourth places, the report said.

In May, Iran produced 1.79 million tons of crude steel, which is 3.17 percent higher than the figure for April, which was 1.635 million tons.

Global steel production in May amounted to 143.325 million tons, showing an increase of 0.89 percent compared with the figure for April which was 142.06 million tons.

WSA is the international trade body of the iron and steel industry. The association represents approximately 170 steel producers, including 17 of the world's 20 largest steel companies, national and regional steel industry associations and steel research institutes.

Its members account for around 85 percent of world steel production.



msc.ir

Iran's oil output reaches 4 mbd

Iran is currently producing about four million barrels of oil a day, half of which is exported to Europe, said an oil industry official.

According to the preliminary estimates, daily oil production reached four million barrels in late April, said Managing Director of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Ali Kardor, Shana reported.

During the sanctions period, oil production was capped at about 2.7 million barrels a day, including one million barrels sent to export markets.

Earlier, Kardor said that, considering that the average daily gas condensate export stands at 700,000 barrels, total oil and gas condensate exports hit an all-time high of three million barrels in February.

On July 1, 2012, the European Union imposed embargo on Iranian oil imports as a punitive measure for Tehran's perceived ambitions to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran has been reentering the global oil market and boosting energy exports since January 2016 when the European Union, the United Nations, and partially the United States lifted their sanctions against the Islamic Republic after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) verified Tehran's compliance with a nuclear agreement reached in July 2015.

Iran has signed a flurry of deals with Western companies over the past year since the easing of international sanctions on Tehran after an accord was reached over its nuclear program.

Iran needs foreign investment to repair and upgrade its oil and gas fields. It also seeks the transfer of technology



IRNA

to its oil industry after a decade of sanctions.

In November 2016, France's Total became the first oil major to sign a big deal with Tehran since the lifting of sanctions and agreed to help it develop the world's largest gas field, South Pars.

Shell signed a provisional deal in December to develop Iranian oil and gas fields South Azadegan, Yadavaran and Kish in December 2016.

Iran has named 29 companies from more than a dozen countries as being eligible to bid for oil and gas projects using the new, less restrictive contract model.

The firms include Shell, France's Total, Italy's Eni,

Malaysia's Petronas and Russia's Gazprom and Lukoil, as well as companies from China, Austria, Japan and other countries.

Russia's Zarubezhneft signed an MoU to conduct feasibility studies on two joint fields in the west of the country.

Norway's International Aker Solutions Company signed an MoU to modernize Iran's oil industry. In May 2016, Austria's OMV signed an MoU for projects in the Zagros area in western Iran and the Fars field in the south.

South Korean Daewoo Engineering and Construction (Daewoo E&C) signed an MoU to construct an oil refinery in Bandar Jask, on the southern coast of Iran.

Italy's Saipem signed MoUs to cooperate on pipeline projects, upgrading of refineries and development of Tous gas field in the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi.

Norwegian oil and gas company DNO said it was the second Western energy company after Total to sign a deal with Iran under which it agreed to study the development of the Changleh oilfield in western Iran.

Lukoil, Russia's second biggest oil producer, hopes to reach a decision on developing two new oilfields in Iran. Germany's Siemens AG signed an MoU in May to overhaul equipment and facilities at Iran's oil operations and refineries.

BASF's Wintershall oil and gas exploration subsidiary signed an MoU with the National Iranian Oil Company in April 2016.

Russia's Sukhoi Civil Aircraft mulling office in Iran

The manufacturer of Russia's Sukhoi SuperJet (SSJ-100) planes, Sukhoi Civil Aircraft, is looking at opening an office in Iran, said the company's president.

Speaking to TASS, Vladislav Masalov added, "We are looking at possible opening of an office in Iran jointly with the United Aircraft Corporation (UAC). We have agreements with two companies. There is a big demand and a big interest in regional planes in that country."

According to Masalov, the office may be opened by 2018. "Probably, we will open the mission earlier than 2018," he added.

Earlier, Sukhoi Civil Aircraft planned to open a mission in China but, according to the company's CEO, the two sides decided to postpone the implementation of the framework agreement to analyze the terms and prospects of the project more thoroughly.

On June 10, Iran's Aseman Airlines finalized a deal to purchase 30 Boeing 737 MAX jets for \$3 billion, with an option to buy 30 more, the Iranian company said.

"We have finalized the deal and now we are awaiting Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) permission within the next month," Aseman spokesman Amirreza Mostafavi told AFP.

He said Aseman would pay five percent of the contract in cash, with the remainder paid through a financing deal organized by Boeing.



TASS

"I'm glad that we can... upgrade the air fleet in an appropriate manner so they can take over regional markets," said Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Minister Ali Rabiee at the signing ceremony.

Boeing is also building 80 planes for national carrier Iran Air.

Iran has seriously considered renewing its aging fleet of planes, but was largely blocked from dealing with major aircraft manufacturers until the 2015 nuclear accord.

In December 2016, Iran Air finalized a deal with Bo-

eing to buy and lease 80 jets including 50 narrow-body 737max 8s, 15 wide-body 777-300ERs and 15 777-9s, which are scheduled to be delivered to Iran Air over 10 years. Iran Air has additionally struck a massive deal with Boeing's rival Airbus to buy 100 jets.

OFAC has approved the sale of the 80 Boeing as well as 100 Airbus planes to Iran Air. The first consignment of Airbus jets have already been delivered.

Aseman is also in talks with Airbus to add two A340s and seven A321s to its fleet.

Aseman has three A320-200s, one A340-300, four ATR72-200s, two ATR72-500s, three B727-200s, one B727-200(F), two B737-400s and 19 Fokker 100s.

Owned by Iran's Civil Service Pension Funds but managed as a private company, Aseman is Iran's third-largest airline in terms of operational fleet size.

Boeing has described the deal as a "memorandum of agreement," meaning it is only outline for the time being and subject to government approvals.

Boeing deliveries to Aseman would start in 2022 and the US planemaker must first apply for licenses from the US Treasury allowing it to proceed with the sale.

"Boeing continues to follow the lead of the US government with regard to working with Iran's airlines and any and all contracts with Iran's airlines are contingent upon US government approval," it said in a statement in April.

Merkel reaches out to Macron on eurozone budget



wsradio.com

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she could back a eurozone finance minister and eurozone budget "if the circumstances are right".

French President Emmanuel Macron has argued strongly for both, in order to reform the eurozone, BBC reported.

Germany is wary of any move that might lead to a 'transfer union' — a common budget used to prop up indebted governments in the 19-nation eurozone.

Many Germans resent the billions of euros spent on bailing out Greece.

The Berlin government does not want German taxpayers to have to underwrite high spending elsewhere in the EU without oversight.

Merkel said sensible changes could be introduced if they could be sure of improving the lives of European citizens, including generating work for young people.

She was addressing German business leaders in Berlin. "We could also consider a euro-budget if it is clear that we are really strengthening the structure of the economy and doing sensible things," she said.

President Macron's strongly pro-EU stance has boosted Merkel's position in the run-up to Germany's general elections in September.

But reforming the eurozone remains a major challenge. The 2008 financial crash and subsequent eurozone debt crisis led to high unemployment and painful public sector cuts in much of Europe.

The old French-German alliance that once powered the political heart of the EU is spluttering back into life, fuelled in part by Britain's decision to leave the union.

Merkel and Macron share a vision of an EU of closer integration, stronger cooperation.

It's a vision which rather appeals to German

voters too. But they (and consequently Merkel) are rather more wary of his ideas for the future of the eurozone. Germans, still smarting from the Greek debt crisis, are sensitive about the idea of their money bailing out other countries.

So Merkel is treading carefully, ensuring that her support for a eurozone finance minister and possibly a budget too was counter-balanced with the apparent insistence that there could be no mutualization of individual state debt.

She's striking a balance, forging an alliance with Macron but keeping a close eye on the German electorate. — And — while it's unlikely to have been deliberate — the timing of her comments come just as Brexit negotiations begin. She's been keen to steer that narrative towards the future of the EU without Britain; raising the prospect of closer fiscal integration among eurozone members may help to achieve that aim.

Italy to cut spending by €61.5b over two years

Italy has cut its public spending by about €30 billion per year as a result of a controversial review of its expenditure, senior government officials said in an attempt to defend their record on fiscal discipline.

In a presentation at the Italian parliament, Yoram Gutgeld — the spending chief in the center-left government — said that a review of expenditure that began in 2014 had yielded savings of €25 billion in 2016, with €30 billion and €15.5 billion more to come in 2017 and 2018 respectively, according to FT.

The data offered by Gutgeld comes as Italy is preparing to present its annual budget in October, which is expected to be the object of tough scrutiny by EU authorities.

Italy is expected to push for a higher budget deficit limit than previously agreed with the EU, in order to support its sluggish economic recovery ahead of a general election to be held in early 2018 at the latest.

Paolo Gentiloni, prime minister, said: "We are not aspiring for cuts, we are aiming for efficiency."



retirementpeace.org

"If we really want to accompany the recovery which is showing positive signs in our country, we have to continue with this work," he added.

Because of its high level of public debt — worth about 133 percent of GDP — Italy is under constant pressure to get its fiscal house in order so that it is less vulnerable to the kind of sovereign debt crisis it experienced in 2011.

The International Monetary Fund has acknowledged Rome's 'efforts' in recent years to cut spending, but said 'further steps' are still needed.

Gutgeld said cuts implemented since 2014 were focused on public procurement, health spending, and cuts to government personnel through attrition. The so-called 'spending review' — launched by former prime minister Matteo Renzi — has come under fire in the past for not being aggressive enough. Gutgeld's predecessor in the role, Carlo Cottarelli, left the position amid tensions with Renzi.

But Gutgeld said public sector spending in Italy — aside from the high cost of interest payments — had increased by just 0.2 percent between 2013 and 2016, compared to an EU average of 6.6 percent.

BoE governor defends decision not to raise interest rate



telegraph.co.uk

Bank of England (BoE) Governor Mark Carney defended an earlier decision by the bank not to raise interest rate from the record low of 0.25 percent.

"Given the mixed signals on consumer spending and business investment, and given the still subdued domestic inflationary pressures, in particular anemic wage growth, now is not yet the time to begin that adjustment," Carney told business leaders in his annual Mansion House speech, Xinhua wrote.

The BoE's rate-setting Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) met last week and decided not to raise the bank rate from the record low set in August last year as a counter-stimulus to the expected deflationary pressures that Brexit would bring to the British economy.

"In the coming months, I would like to see the extent to which weaker consumption growth is offset by other components of demand, whether wages begin to firm, and more generally, how the economy reacts to the prospect of tighter financial conditions and the reality of Brexit negotiations," said the central bank governor.

British Consumer Price Index (CPI) touched 2.7 percent in May, continuing a rising trajectory that started after the Brexit referendum vote on June 23 last

year.

The CPI inflation in May 2016 was 0.5 percent, but the rapid fall in sterling from \$1.48 on the day of the vote to \$1.19 has made imports and raw materials more expensive, fuelling the rapid rise in inflation.

Sterling traded down on Tuesday at \$1.26, having lost as much as one percent against the dollar immediately as markets assessed Carney's speech.

Carney said that Brexit has affected central bank monetary policy, and would weigh on future growth and prosperity of the British economy.

"Since the prospect of Brexit emerged, financial markets, notably sterling, have marked down the UK's economic prospects," he said.

"Monetary policy cannot prevent the weaker real income growth likely to accompany the transition to new trading arrangements with the EU," he added.

Carney also defended the role of London as one of the major global financial hubs.

Carney's speech at the Mansion was an annual keynote speech on the direction of the British economy, and it had been delayed from last week because of the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy.

Main Indices of TSE

Index	Value	Change	Percent
Total Index	78801.2	(54)	0
Industry Index	67740.7	(18.3)	(0.08)
Free Float Index	85734.7	86.3	0.1
First Market Index	54291.0	(34)	(0.02)
Second Market Index	176895.9	192.8	0.15

Overall Index details on 20170621

First	78868.6	Change end of year(%)	918.32%
High	78883.8	Historical highest	89500.6 (20140105)
Low	78804.1	Historical lowest	100 (1369/1/6)
Close	78801.2	Base Value	100 (1369/1/6)
Change	0		

Industry Index details on 20170621

First	67783.8	Change end of year(%)	1027.74%
Max Value	67802.7	Historical highest	75181.9 (20140105)
Max Value	69610.5	Historical lowest	1226.8 (1377/8/25)
Closing	67740.7	Base Value	
Closing	(18.3)		

Free Float Index details on 20170621

First	85699.1	Change end of year(%)	
Max Value	88753.6	Historical highest	105040 (20140105)
Max Value	88687.9	Historical lowest	
Closing	85734.7	Base Value	
Closing	86.3		

Main Board Index details on 20170621

First	54365.3	Change end of year(%)	777.1%
Max Value	54368.6	Historical highest	67441.4 (20140105)
Max Value	55990.5	Historical lowest	
Closing	54291.0	Base Value	4740.4 (1381/6/2)
Closing	(34)		

Secondary Index details on 20170621

First	176894.5	Change end of year(%)	1345.03%
Max Value	176983.8	Historical highest	181353 (20170522)
Max Value	181452.5	Historical lowest	
Closing	176895.9	Base Value	4740.4 (1381/6/2)
Closing	192.8		

Major Currencies

Currency	To USD	Currency	To USD
Turkish Lira	0.2826	Chinese Yuan	0.1463
Euro	1.1131	UAE Dirham	0.2722
British Pound	1.2608	Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2902
Australian Dollar	0.7565	Iraqi Dinar	0.0008
Japanese 100 Yen	0.0089	Saudi Riyal	0.2666

Major Commodities

Crude Oil	\$43.53	Silver	\$16.45
Gold	\$1246.30	Platinum	\$920.40
Copper	\$2.55	Wheat	\$471.25

Italian jogger to cross Lut Desert to accomplish Guinness record

An Italian runner plans to jog 80 kilometers in Lut Desert, Central Iran, at temperatures reaching 70°C to register his name in the Guinness Book of Records.

Modin Afzali, coordinator of the program for the Italian runner and director of a tourism agency in Lut Desert, told Mehr News Agency that Paolo Venturini, the Italian nature adventurer will go to Gandom Baran, the hottest spot in Lut Desert, on July 30, when the temperature ranges between 65°C and 70°C, to run 80 kilometers in a day.

In late July, he added, the Lut Desert would have the highest possible temperature and Venturini has chosen this day to record his name in the Guinness by running in the hottest temperature.

He added the event will also record the name of Lut Desert in the Guinness Book of Records.

Lut Desert is a large salt desert in Kerman and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces which is the world's 25th largest desert.

Two Guinness experts and a cameraman from Italian TV program Sky Sports will accompany the runner, Afzali noted. This is one of the accomplishments of last year's marathon, when foreign runners, including Paolo Venturini jogged in the Lut Desert.

"He decided last year to record his name as a Lut Desert runner," Afzali added.

In the Red Sea, coral reefs can take heat of climate change

Global warming has in recent years caused colorful coral reefs to bleach and die around the world — but not in the Gulf of Aqaba, part of the northern Red Sea. In the azure waters of the Red Sea, Maoz Fine and his team dive to study what may be the planet's most unique coral: One that can survive global warming, at least for now, phys.org wrote.

The corals, striking in their red, orange and green colors, grow on tables some eight meters (26 feet) underwater, put there by the scientists to unlock their secrets to survival.

They are of the same species that grows

elsewhere in the northern Red Sea and are resistant to high temperatures.

Fine's team dives in scuba gear to monitor the corals, taking notes on water-resistant pads.

"We're looking here at a population of corals on a reef that is very resilient to high temperature changes, and is most likely going to be the last to survive in a world undergoing very significant warming and acidification of sea water," Fine said at his nearby office ahead of the dive.

That is what has prompted Fine's work, both in the Red Sea and on its shores.



wallpapers13.com

Vietnam environment official sacked over mass fish kill



phys.org

Taiwan firm Formosa was fined \$500 million for the waste dump that caused Vietnam's worst-ever environmental disaster.

A senior Vietnamese environment official has been fired for negligence over a toxic waste dump that killed tons of fish in a major environmental crisis last year, according to officials and state media.

Luong Duy Hanh, director of Vietnam's Environment Protection Management Department, is the latest official to be punished over the toxic leak, which was blamed on a multi-billion dollar steel plant run by the Taiwanese firm Formosa, according to phys.org.

Formosa was fined \$500 million for the waste dump and Vietnam has vowed to

punish 11 officials over the country's worst-ever environmental disaster.

"The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has carried out disciplinary action by sacking Luong Duy Hanh," according to an online statement from Vietnam's environment ministry published.

State media reported on Wednesday that Hanh was sacked because he failed to properly oversee the Formosa project.

He was blamed for not "consulting and supervising the implementation of the environmental protection unit during the construction and pilot operation" of the plant, according to

state-controlled Thanh Nien newspaper.

A deputy director of the Environment Agency has already been fired over the mass fish kill, and four former officials have been stripped of their Communist party positions.

The Formosa steel plant was still under construction at the time of the disaster in April 2016.

Last month the government gave it the green light to operate on a trial basis.

The disaster decimated livelihoods in fishing towns along the central coast, and fishermen continue to stage protests demanding greater compensation.

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جهت اجاره به یک سفارتخانه
و کمپانی های خارجی نیازمندیم

Cholesterol-lowering vaccine jab to stop heart attacks

Heart attacks could be prevented with a jab after promising research revealed it can help the immune system lower cholesterol.

More than 70 patients have already taken part in a trial to see if a vaccine, so far tested on mice, will work in humans, express.co.uk reported.

In future, a cholesterol-lowering vaccine could provide an effective alternative to statin drugs.

Statins are prescribed to thousands of people in the UK to protect them from heart attacks, however there has been controversy surrounding the medication in recent years.

The vaccine, known as AT04A, triggers the production of antibodies which target an enzyme involved in regulating levels of blood cholesterol.

The enzyme, PCSK9, has been shown to impede the clearance of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) — the 'bad' form of cholesterol that is largely to blame for blocked arteries — from the blood.

Dr. Gunther Staffler, chief technology officer at the Austrian biotech company AFFIRIS, which developed the vaccine, said, "AT04A was able to induce antibodies that specifically targeted the enzyme PCSK9 throughout the study period in the circulation of the treated mice."

"As a consequence, levels of cholesterol were reduced in a consistent and long-lasting way, resulting in a reduction of fatty deposits in the arteries and atherosclerotic damage, as well as reduced arterial wall inflammation."

"If these findings translate successfully into humans, this could mean that, as the induced antibodies persist for months after a vaccination, we could develop a long-lasting therapy that, after the first vaccination, just needs an annual booster."

"This would result in an effective and more convenient treatment for patients, as well as higher patient compliance."

In tests, mice fed an unhealthy fatty diet had their total blood cholesterol lowered by 53 percent by the vaccine.

Atherosclerosis, which is caused by the build-up of hard deposits on the walls of arteries, was reduced by 64 percent.



medicalnewstoday.com

Experts also found biological markers of blood vessel inflammation by up to 28 percent compared with unvaccinated mice.

The new results open up the prospect of a yearly vaccine jab to keep cholesterol under control in at-risk patients.

PCSK9 is made in the liver and blocks LDL receptor molecules on cells that allow the body to get rid of harmful cholesterol.

The vaccine causes the body to produce antibodies that lock onto and immobilize the enzyme, so that the LDL receptors can remain active.

The trial testing the vaccine was launched at the Medical University of Vienna in 2015 and is set to finish this year.

However, before the vaccine can be licensed and

rolled out to patients, larger scale trials focusing on effectiveness as well as safety will have to be carried out.

British expert Dr. Tim Chico, reader in cardiovascular medicine at the University of Sheffield, said, "If similar effects were achieved in humans it would be likely to lead to a reduction in heart attacks."

"This was a well-conducted but very early study, using animals not humans, and many questions remain about whether this approach could work in man."

"The theory is sound and I think this might have the potential to replace the need to take regular cholesterol-lowering drugs."

The study was published in the European Heart Journal.

Chemotherapy in childhood may leave lasting effects on memory

Childhood cancer survivors who had chemotherapy may have certain types of thinking and memory problems as young adults, a small study suggested.



UPI

Belgian researchers assessed 31 young adults who had undergone chemotherapy, UPI wrote.

They were at an average age of slightly over six when they had the treatment. The researchers compared them with a control group of young adults who hadn't received chemotherapy.

Both groups had similar scores on tests of long-term memory and ability to concentrate.

Those are skills that developed before the cancer survivors underwent chemotherapy, the researchers said.

But compared to the control group, the cancer survivors had poorer thinking flexibility and short-term memory. These skills develop at a later age, the researchers explained.

Iris Elens, a psychiatrist in training, and Rudi D'Hooge, a professor at the University of Leuven, said, "Tests that require quick switching between tasks or remembering new information for a short amount of time were clearly more difficult for former cancer patients."

"The developmental stage of the brain at the start of the cancer treatment probably plays a decisive role."

The researchers also measured levels of protein called p-Tau in the patients' brain fluid. The protein is part of the internal structure of nerve cells.

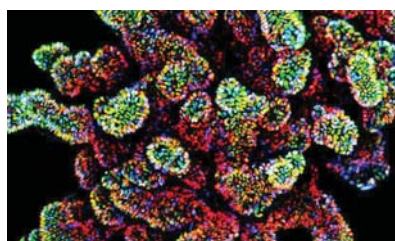
D'Hooge said, "Our team collected samples of brain fluid during the cancer treatment. We analyzed the p-Tau levels to measure the damage to the brain cells."

"We found that high concentrations of p-Tau predict cognitive problems at a later age."

Elens said, "If we systematically measure these p-Tau levels in the future we can offer specific help to children with high values."

"With early coaching aimed at the most relevant functions we can prevent problems that would otherwise manifest 10 to 15 years after the treatment."

The study was published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.



medicalxpress.com

This is a projection image displaying all of the colon organoid layers. The green represents cells that line the colon called epithelial cells; the red represents an increase in the number of cells that are proliferating; and the blue represents the staining of all cells.

Human tissue model developed to test colon cancer drugs

The first-ever 'disease in a Petri dish' platform that models human colon cancer derived from stem cells has been developed by Weill Cornell Medicine investigators, allowing them to identify a targeted drug treatment for a common, inherited form of the disease.

The discovery also overcomes a long-standing challenge of using mice to research this form of cancer, as they do not typically develop the disease, according to medicalxpress.com.

In the study, published in Nature Medicine, the scientists used human-induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), which can in principle differentiate into any type of cell in the body, that were derived from the skin of two patients with an inherited form of colorectal disease called familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP).

With FAP, large intestine cells develop into numerous polyps that for these patients eventually become colon cancer.

Using iPSCs, they developed 3D structures called colonic organoids that closely represented large intestine tissue systems and then performed drug testing.

Co-senior study author Todd Evans, the Peter I. Pressman, MD professor in surgery and professor of cell and developmental biology in surgery at Weill Cornell Medicine, said, "Creating an effective testing platform for human colon cancer has been a challenge for the entire field."

"The protocols for modeling human colon disease for drug testing just weren't there until our team developed a stem-cell-based large intestine tissue system."

Colon and rectal cancers are the second-leading cause of cancer

deaths in America. In 2017, it is estimated that 50,260 people will die from the disease and 135,430 new cases will be diagnosed.

The investigators confirmed through a variety of steps including genomic DNA sequencing and gene expression profiling that they had grown large intestine cells with either of two different FAP mutations, FAP8 or FAP9, and that a gene that when mutated allows FAP cells to grow out of control, called APC, was inactivated.

They also created colonic organoids using stem cells derived from a person without FAP for comparison.

Next, they tested the colonic organoids with drugs to measure response. The researchers found that two drugs, XAV939 and rapamycin, significantly curbed cell proliferation; but also, significantly decreased growth in the organoids developed without FAP, suggesting that those drugs could harm healthy colon tissue.

Another drug, geneticin, known for its ability to rescue gene activity for some types of mutations, successfully restored normal growth in the FAP9 organoids, yet had no impact on the FAP8 or healthy control organoids.

Co-senior author Shuibing Chen, associate professor of chemical biology in surgery and of biochemistry at Weill Cornell Medicine, said, "Our results demonstrate that we can use this platform to model colon cancer and identify precision medicines that may work to target specific genetic mutations driving the disease."

"The beauty is that we can make patient-specific organoids, increasing the likelihood of predicting which drugs may work and learn about any undesirable effects, all before we treat the patients."

Women with BRCA gene mutations given clearer picture of breast cancer risk

Women who carry the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutations now have the clearest picture yet of their risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer.

An Australian study led by the University of Melbourne, Peter MacCallum Cancer Center and Cancer Council Victoria tracked almost 10,000 women with these mutations for up to 20 years, theguardian.com wrote.

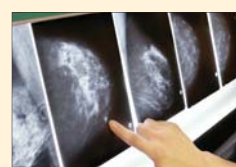
What they found has given clinicians 'enormous power' to assess a carrier's risk of developing these cancers.

The oncologist Professor Kelly-Anne Phillips, founder of the Peter Mac Breast and Ovarian Cancer Risk Management Clinic, said, "It will also provide carriers with greater confidence in the decisions they make about prevention strategies including surgery."

"This is the largest and most scientifically rigorous study to date without question."

"We used data from a large number of studies running internationally in over 18 around the world."

The study published in JAMA — The



theguardian.com

Journal of the American Medical Association — found that women with BRCA1 mutations have on average a 72 percent risk of developing breast cancer by the age of 80.

For BRCA2 mutation carriers, the risk of breast cancer is 69 percent.

The average lifetime risk of ovarian cancer is 44 percent for BRCA1 and 17 percent for BRCA2.

It was also found that the location of where the abnormality is found in the gene and family history influenced the risk.

She said, "So women who had these

gene mutations who had more people in their family who'd been affected with breast and/or ovarian cancer had a higher likelihood of developing these cancers than women with the same mutation who had less of a family history."

"The findings also had significant implications for older women with these mutations."

The study found cancer risk increased rapidly at a young age and peaked in the 30s for BRCA1 mutation carriers and in the 40s for BRCA2 mutation carriers.

But it remained as the women aged, overturning previous thinking that the risk reduced when a woman turned 60 without a diagnosis.

Phillips said, "Our study really showed that the risk reaches its highest level in a woman's 30s and remains well into her 80s."

Further analysis of the data will examine whether modifiable lifestyle-related factors such as timing of pregnancies, contraceptive use and smoking can influence the risk of cancer for these women.

Killer fungal disease found in Europe

A fungal disease that had killed wild snakes in North America has been found for the first time in Europe, experts at the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) said.

Experts at the society, based at London Zoo, warned Europe's wild snakes could face a growing threat from the fungal skin disease that has contributed to wild snake deaths in North America, xinhuanet.com reported.

They based their findings on an international collaborative study, led by ZSL alongside partners including the US Geological Survey. Their new study has been published in the journal Scientific Reports.

The study said the fungus *Ophidiomyces ophiodicolis*, snake fungal disease (SFD) can lead to symptoms including

skin lesions, scabs and crusty scales, which can contribute to the death of the infected animal in some cases.

It was first recognized in wild snakes in eastern North America around a decade ago, but prior to the new study, the only wild populations found to be affected had been those in the central and eastern US.

Said the study, "Now, an analysis of samples collected from wild snakes in the UK and the Czech Republic between 2010 and 2016 has confirmed the presence of the pathogen and SFD in Europe for the first time."

While the disease poses no known risk to humans or livestock, scientists are calling for further research to fully understand the significance of SFD to Europe's snake populations.

Scientists discover why wheeled suitcases wobble

French physics students investigated the mystery of why wheeled suitcases wobble and found a solution.

Sylvain Courrech du Pont at Paris Diderot University told a group of undergraduate students to figure out why wheeled suitcases wobble — a question many travelers have had but no scientists bothered to answer until now, UPI reported.



insidescience.org

For their experiment, the group placed a tiny model wheeled suitcase on a treadmill to observe how it goes from easy rolling to side to side swaying.

The team found out that once the wheels hit something, the entire suitcase is thrown off balance.

The wobbling is exacerbated by the diagonal position of the suitcase owner's arm, which inadvertently encourages the side to side motion.

However, by going faster over bumps or holes, the shock from those interruptions is lessened and the wobbling subsides and eventually stops.

The findings by the French undergraduate students were published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society A — a possible first for this type of research.

Physicist François Petrelis at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, who did not take part in this research, said, "It is a very extensive study, covering experiments and theory, on a problem experienced daily by anyone who carried a luggage."

"It shows that many problems — even of daily interest — are still waiting for a solution."

"Young students sometimes have the feeling that most progress was made a long time ago."

"This may be true in some domains of physics, but in most domains there are many problems that are still unsolved."

Europe selects grand gravity mission

It is set to be one of the major science projects of the 2030s.

The European Space Agency (ESA) has just given the green light to the LISA mission to detect gravitational waves, according to bbc.com.

This will see lasers bounced between three identical satellites separated by 2.5 million kilometers.

By looking for tiny perturbations in these light beams, the trio hope to catch the warping of space-time that is generated by cataclysmic events such as the merger of gargantuan black holes.

Ground-based laboratories in the US have recently begun detecting gravitational waves from coalescing objects that are 20-30 times the mass of our Sun.

But by sending an observatory into space, scientists would expect to discover sources that are millions of times bigger still and to sense their activity all the way out to the edge of the observable Universe.

It should immeasurably advance our understanding of gravity and how it works; and perhaps even highlight some chinks in Einstein's so-far flawless equations.

ESA's Director of Science Professor Alvaro Giménez Cañete, said, "We have no idea what we will discover, but perhaps we can get closer to the line that divides gravity from

quantum physics. This may take us there."

The agency's Science Program Committee (SPC) took the decision to select LISA as one of the agency's flagship missions at a meeting in Madrid.

It paves the way for parallel industrial studies to consider the best way to build the mission.

Once these have reported back and it is clear how ESA member states will divide up the various responsibilities for the satellites' development, the SPC can reconvene to formally 'adopt' the project.

It is at this point that the mission becomes real and the flight hardware begins to be fabricated.

One of outstanding questions that needs to be resolved

soon is the role and contribution of international partners.

There was a time when LISA was going to be a 50-50 endeavor between Europe and the US.

Then, in 2011, the Americans walked away from the concept, citing financial worries.

Europe continued with the feasibility work, even operating a demonstration spacecraft last year to test key technologies.

But with the confirmation of the existence of gravitational waves made at the Advanced LIGO labs in Washington and Louisiana states, the Americans are understandably very keen to get back onboard.

The earlier painful divorce had prompted ESA to put a 20 percent ceiling on any future international contribution, to

avoid being left high and dry again.

But Giménez said that there could be some flexibility on the issue, especially if it makes the mission more do-able.

"The 20 percent is not so hard and fast; whether it's 15 percent or 30 percent is not important. What's important is that ESA leads."

"This is one of our Large-Class missions, one of our flagships. And you have to lead your flagships."

"The problem with 50-50 is that no-one leads, and nobody takes the responsibility needed to make sure things happen."

Detecting gravitational waves is an astonishing technical feat. Even though these black hole mergers are extremely powerful, the ripples they

induce in the fabric of space-time are fantastically small.

The laser interferometers in the LISA satellites will need to be sensitive to a squeezing and stretching of their light beams on the order of just a few picometers.

That's a few trillionths of a meter. And they must do this while flying the spacecraft in a triangle where the arm lengths are more than six times the Earth-Moon distance.

Remarkably, ESA's demonstrator, known as LISA Pathfinder, proved the sensitivities are achievable.

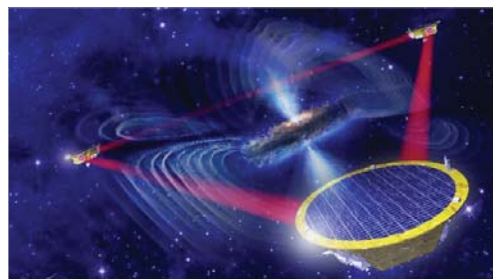
Tuesday's Science Program Committee also formally adopted a planet-hunting telescope called PLATO.

This was first selected in 2014, which gives an idea of how long it can take to step through the hoops of mission approval. PLATO is now set for launch in 2026.

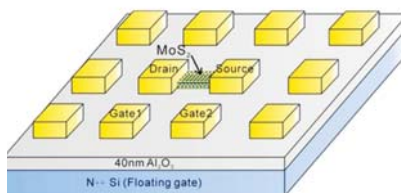
The earmarked launch date for LISA is 2034. Efforts will be made, though, to bring this forward because of the excitement that currently surrounds gravitational wave science.

Giménez said, "It won't be much earlier — even if we had all the money in the world."

"It's a question of the technology readiness. It takes time to build a mission as complex as this. 2030 is the earliest we could do it, assuming we get the money we need and have no problems."



LISA envisages three spacecraft linked by laser arms that are 2.5 million kilometers in length. bbc.com



Structure of the neuron transistor, which contains a 2D flake of MoS₂. phys.org

Neuron transistor behaves like a brain neuron

Researchers have built a new type of "neuron transistor" — a transistor that behaves like a neuron in a living brain.

These devices could form the building blocks of neuromorphic hardware that may offer unprecedented computational capabilities, such as learning and adaptation, phys.org wrote.

The researchers, S. G. Hu and coauthors at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China and Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, have published a paper on the neuron transistor in a recent issue of Nanotechnology.

In order for a transistor to behave like a biological neuron, it must be capable of implementing neuron-like functions — in particular, weighted summation and threshold functions.

These refer to a biological neuron's ability to receive weighted input signals from many other neurons, and then to sum the input values and compare them to a threshold value to determine whether or not to fire.

The human brain has tens of billions of neurons, and they are

constantly performing weighted summation and threshold functions many times per second that together control all of our thoughts and actions.

In the new study, the researchers constructed a neuron transistor that acts like a single neuron, capable of weighted summation and threshold functions.

Instead of being made of silicon like conventional transistors, the neuron transistor is made of a two-dimensional flake of molybdenum disulfide (MoS₂), which belongs to a new class of semiconductor called transition metal dichalcogenides.

To demonstrate the neuron transistor's neuron-like behavior, the researchers showed that it can be controlled by either one gate or two gates simultaneously.

In the latter case, the neuron transistor implements a summation function.

To demonstrate, the researchers showed that the neuron transistor can perform a counting task analogous to moving the beads in a two-bead abacus,

along with other logic functions.

One of the advantages of the neuron transistor is its operating speed.

Although other neuron transistors have already been built, they typically operate at frequencies of less than or equal to 0.05 Hertz, which is much lower than the average firing rate of biological neurons of about five Hertz.

The new neuron transistor works in a wide frequency range of 0.01 to 15 Hertz, which the researchers expect will offer advantages for developing neuromorphic hardware.

In the future, the researchers hope to add more control gates to the neuron transistor, creating a more realistic model of a biological neuron with its many inputs.

In addition, the researchers hope to integrate neuron transistors with memristors (which are considered to be the most suitable device for implementing synapses) to construct neuromorphic systems that can work in a similar way to the brain.

Boeing using AI to fly into the future with autonomous planes

Boeing is to begin testing self-driving aeroplanes in a move that will fly the company into the future.

The aviation firm announced that it will develop autonomous aircrafts that have the ability to arrive at a destination without human input, express.co.uk wrote.

Boeing said that it will use artificial intelligence aboard its aircrafts to minimize human needs.

Planes already have the ability to take off, cruise and land with minimal human interference, but Boeing is hoping to increase the amount a plane can do by itself.

Mike Sinnott, Boeing's vice president of product development, said, "When I look at the future I see a need for you know 41,000 commercial jet airplanes over the course of the next 20 years."

"And that means we're going to need something like six hundred and seventeen thousand more pilots. That's a lot of pilots."

"So one of the ways this may be solved is by having some type of autonomous behavior and that could be anything from taking instead of five pilots on a long haul flight down to three or two, taking two pilots down to one in a freight situation, or in some cases going from one to none."



Pilots may soon be a thing of the past. express.co.uk

Astronomers find star birth triggered by another star birth

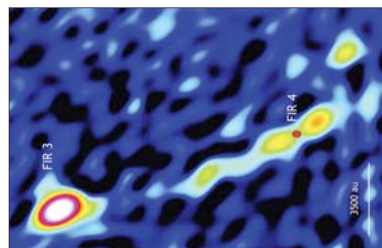
New astronomical observations suggested a jet from a newborn star triggered the birth of another star.

Quoting Mayra Osorio, a researcher at the Astrophysical Institute of Andalusia in Spain, UPI reported, "The orientation of the jet, the speed of its material, and the distance all are right for this scenario."

Osorio and her colleagues found evidence of the phenomenon while surveying a gas cloud in the star factory known as the Orion Nebula.

Researchers used the National Science Foundation's Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array to render the star-forming region in unique radio frequencies, revealing new details about the oft-studied cosmic region.

The observations revealed an



New data from the National Science Foundation's Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array suggested the outflow from an older protostar triggered the birth of a second, younger protostar. UPI

outflow of stellar material flowing from a protostar toward another younger protostar.

Ana K. Diaz-Rodriguez, also

a researcher at Instituto de Astrofísica de Andalucía (IAA-CSIC), said, "We found knots of material within this outflow

and were able to measure their speeds."

The speeds revealed a timeline in accordance with the astronomers' hypothesis.

Scientists believe that roughly 100,000 years ago, the outflow from the older protostar, HOPS 370, hit a clump of gas, triggering the collapse that yielded HOPS 108, the younger protostar.

There is one hiccup in the researchers' theory. The younger star appears to be moving in a way that suggested it was formed elsewhere.

Osorio said, "This motion, however, might be an illusion possibly created by an outflow from the newer star itself."

"We want to continue to observe it over a period of time to resolve this question."



More UK students experience mental health problems

theconversation.com

The UK student population has doubled in the last 20 years to almost two million. During this time, higher tuition fees have placed increased pressure on students — with a recent survey finding that 75 percent of students who receive a maintenance loan feel stressed about their debt.

It may not be a total surprise then that a 2015 NUS survey revealed that 78 percent of students experienced mental health issues during the previous year. And for 33 percent of those questioned, this included suicidal thoughts, independent.co.uk wrote.

The situation has been described as a 'mental health crisis' — with student support services struggling to meet demand. ONS data on the issue also shows student suicides are at a 10-year high.

A Unite survey of students in 2016 also found lower life satisfaction levels reported in the 16-19 and 20-24 age groups, compared to the general population, which suggests that attending university can negatively affect students' well-being.

Student pressures

Of course, not all students are the same. Some will have the time of their lives at university, while others will struggle. There are many factors that can reduce a student's ability to cope with the challenges of university life that include living independently for the first time, making friends, or managing an increased workload.

Some students may also have additional work responsibilities, family or care commitments. International students may encounter culture shock, language barriers, and homesickness. While other students may

be dealing with pre-existing mental health conditions alongside their studies.

This has led to an increasing number of charities and universities now taking action to tackle mental health problems on campus and raise well-being among the student population.

Increased student suicides have also prompted the Samaritans to begin adapting their Step by Step schools program for a university setting. Samaritans advisers will work with institutions to create a response plan of communication and support to help reduce suicide contagion on campus. This is when exposure to suicide can increase the risk of suicidal behavior in vulnerable individuals.

Trying to help

Many universities also now offer dedicated events and initiatives to enhance student well-being, such as University of Leeds' Light Cafe — which uses lighting to boost concentration, lift the mood and increase energy. Then there is also pet therapy sessions such as those run at the University of Edinburgh, as well as numerous well-being cafes, and well-being zones.

More ambitious projects include the University of Ulster's sport-based program to increase mental health awareness and encourage students to seek treatment.

The University of Edinburgh also recently launched a mental health strategy that involves allocating £140,000 to their counselling services. They will train personal tutors in mental health first aid, and offer online support and mindfulness courses to students.

Letting students down

But while it's great that schemes like these are up and running, there is currently no agreed minimum level of mental health support universities must provide to students.

This means that while some institutions may have appropriate policies and processes in place and are doing great work in this area, others may be letting their students down. And without a common standard of practice, it's difficult to know on which side of this divide an institution sits.

Our research also found that some universities actively avoid collecting student mental health data, fearing Freedom of Information requests that may damage their reputation.

Rising standards

This is why, earlier this year, researchers at the University of Salford launched ProtectED, a not-for-profit national accreditation scheme to assess how well universities look after their students' safety, security and well-being.

Developed by academics, in consultation with sector experts, the scheme is informed by a student survey, and discussion groups with university security managers, police officers and students' union sabbatical officers.

The ProtectED Code of Practice brings together guidance recommendations, training programs and university case studies to support its measures for addressing student mental health. And trained assessors have to verify that a university meets all the requirements before accreditation is awarded.

War, violence, persecution push displacement to new unprecedented high

War, violence and persecution worldwide are causing more people than ever to be forcibly displaced, according to a report published by UNHCR, the UN refugee agency.

UNHCR's new Global Trends report — the organization's major annual survey of the state of displacement — said that at the end of 2016 there were 65.6 million people forcibly displaced worldwide — some 300,000 more than a year earlier. This total represents an enormous number of people needing protection worldwide.

The figure of 65.6 million comprises three important components. First is refugee numbers, which at 22.5 million are the highest ever seen. Of these, 17.2 million come under the responsibility of UNHCR and the remainder are Palestinian refugees registered with its sister-organization UNRWA.

Syria's conflict remains the world's biggest producer of refugees (5.5 million). However in 2016, the biggest new factor was South Sudan where the disastrous breakdown of peace efforts in July of that year contributed to the outflow of 739,900 people by year's end (1.87 million today).

Second is displacement of people inside their own countries, whose numbers were 40.3 million at the end of 2016 compared to 40.8 million a year earlier. Syria, Iraq, and the still very significant displacement inside Colombia were the biggest internal displacement situations, nonetheless the problem of internal displacement is a worldwide one and accounts for almost two-thirds of the global forced displacement total.

Third is asylum seekers, people who have fled their country and are seeking international protection as refugees. As of the end of 2016, the number of people seeking asylum globally was 2.8 million.

This adds up to an immense human cost of war and persecution globally: 65.6 million means that on average one in every 113 people worldwide is today someone who is displaced — a population bigger than that of the world's 21st most populous country, the United Kingdom.



amnestyusa.org

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said, "By any measure this is an unacceptable number, and it speaks louder than ever to the need for solidarity and common purpose in preventing and resolving crises, and ensuring together that the world's refugees, internally displaced and asylum seekers are properly protected and cared for while solutions are pursued. We have to do better for these people. For a world in conflict, what is needed is determination and courage, not fear."

Among the report's key findings, is that new displacement in particular remains very high. Of the 65.6 million people forcibly displaced globally, 10.3 million became displaced in 2016, about two-thirds of them (6.9 million) fleeing within their own countries. This equates to one person becoming displaced every three seconds — less than the time it takes to read this sentence.

At the same time, returns of refugees and internally displaced people to their homes, combined with other solutions such as resettlement in third countries meant that for some, 2016 brought the prospect of improvement. Some 37 countries together accepted 189,300 refugees for resettlement. Around half a million other refugees were able to return to their home countries, and about 6.5 million internally displaced people to their areas of origin — although many did so in less than ideal circumstances and facing uncertain prospects.

Worldwide, most refugees — 84 percent — were in low- or middle-income countries as of end 2016, with one in every three (4.9 million people) being hosted by the least developed countries.

This huge imbalance reflects several things including the continuing lack of consensus internationally when it comes to refugee hosting and the proximity of many poor countries to regions of conflict.

It also illustrates the need for countries and communities supporting refugees and other displaced people to be robustly resourced and supported — the absence of which can create instability, have consequences for life-saving humanitarian work, or lead to secondary displacement.

By population, Syria still accounts for the biggest numbers of displaced people overall, with 12 million people (almost two-thirds of the population) either displaced internally or having fled abroad as refugees or asylum seekers.

Leaving aside the long-standing Palestinian refugee situation, Colombians (7.7 million) and Afghans (4.7 million) remained the second and third largest populations, followed by Iraqis (4.2 million) and South Sudanese (the world's fastest growing displaced population with 3.3 million having fled their homes by the end of the year).

Children, who make up half the world's refugees, continue to bear a disproportionate burden of the suffering, mainly because of their greater vulnerability. Tragically, 75,000 asylum claims were received from children traveling alone or separated from their parents. The report says even this number is likely to underestimate the true figure.

UNHCR estimates that at least 10 million people were without a nationality or at risk of statelessness at the end of 2016. However, data recorded by governments and communicated to UNHCR were limited to 3.2 million stateless people in 75 countries.

Global Trends was released on World Refugee Day, June 20.

S. Korea watchdog busts 23 on suspicion of smuggling

South Korean food safety watchdog said it has busted seven people suspected of illegally importing edible pigments sold at a French store, in a case that also involved 16 other people who allegedly made and distributed macarons containing the pigments.

The Food and Drug Safety Ministry booked them on charges of violating a law on import food safety and a law on food hygiene, and referred the case to the prosecution with the recommendation of an indictment without physical detention, Yonhap reported.

One of the seven people, identified only by his name Kang, illegally imported 25 million won (\$21,847) worth of Mora Pigments from France in the period

of March 2015-April this year and sold them to manufacturers of the sweet meringue-based confection for 60 million won, the watchdog said.

Mora Pigments refer to pigments sold by the Paris-based culinary supply store Mora. But South Korea has banned imports of Mora Pigments that contain some tar pigments not allowed to be used for food coloring in the country.

The French-originated pigments smuggled by the seven and worth 100 million won have been distributed in the country.

The food watchdog has launched an investigation into the case following a tip-off that illegally imported Mora Pigments are used in some cakes and macarons sold on the Internet.



yonhapnews.co.kr

Turkish students collect plastic bags to save loggerhead sea turtles

Students in Köyceğiz District of western province of Muğla in Turkey have collected plastic bags from the sea so that loggerhead sea turtles do not mistake them for edible jellyfish.

A total of 87 students and 10 teachers from five schools in the area were present at a Science and Nature Camp, held at a recreational area in Köyceğiz, Daily Sabah reported.

The loggerhead sea turtles sometimes mistake plastic bags for jellyfish, which they can swallow, often dying as a result.

Students from the five schools took action to save the turtles from the threat by diving into the water of Köyceğiz Lake, Dalayan Channel and the Marmaris shore and collecting plastic bags.

Professor Yakup Kaska from the Sea Turtles Research

Rescue and Rehabilitation Center (DEKAMER) explained that plastic bags that had been thrown into the sea were one of the greatest dangers to sea turtles.

Loggerhead sea turtles eat jellyfish, as well as crabs, horseshoe crabs, other mollusks and shrimps, Kaska said.

"Many loggerheads choke and die because of this. There's a great duty and responsibility on all individuals to protect these creatures. Our protection efforts should create awareness among the future generations as well," he added.

Kaska stressed that individuals must be more vigilant in ensuring that their plastic waste does not enter the sea and endanger the creatures living there.

There are approximately 20 sites worldwide where loggerhead turtles nest and lay their eggs, from which



dailysabah.com

the young turtles then crawl back into the sea en masse.

Dalayan is one of the most significant nesting sites for loggerheads and the beach is sealed off during the day from May to September so as not to disturb the turtle nests.



Two photos reveal disgusting reality behind 'romantic' wedding photos



GETTY

There's a story behind every wedding photo. Not just about how the lucky couple met and fell in love — but about the extraordinary and, frankly, bizarre lengths some photographers have to go to get that money shot.

The elegantly constructed and beautifully executed finished product are only half the story, mirror.co.uk reported.

Behind the scenes, wedding photographers and their assistants are toiling away to make as special and unique a photo opportunity as possible.

We hope, for this photographer's sake, this image takes pride of place in this couple's home.

Because here's what really happens behind the lens vs. what we get to see.

Rom Celano, a wedding photographer from Vietnam, has given us this amazing insight into what he found himself doing to get that perfect wedding photo.

Yes, that is a man having to spit copious amounts of water out of his mouth so it can a) catch the light and b) be captured on film as it does.

Snake regurgitates pair of barbecue tongs



DARIO CARAVANS AND REPAIRS/FACEBOOK

Owners of an automotive repair shop captured a bizarre sight as they pulled a pair of barbecue tongs from inside of a snake.

Dario Caravans and Repairs shared video of a man holding a snake as it regurgitated the large pair of tongs, UPI wrote.

"Snake regurgitates BBQ tongs that are huge! Don't watch if you are squeamish!" the repair

shop wrote.

The person behind the camera could be heard groaning uncomfortably as the man holding the snake attempted to pry the tongs out of the snake's jaw.

After gently pulling on the tongs and turning the snake's head, he managed to pull the barbecue utensil from its mouth and tossed it to the side.

10-foot alligator roped, wrangled off Texas ranch

A Texas rancher lassoed a 10-foot (three-meter) alligator and wranglers crawled atop the thrashing reptile's back after it got a little too close to the landowner's cattle.

Bystanders shot video of the recent take-down near Hawkins, a town about 100 miles (161km) east of Dallas, AP reported.

Byron South of Convergent Hunting Solutions says he got a call from the landowner, Hal Conover, after the alligator

broke into a pen where he was weaning calves. Game wardens were also summoned.

South said that Conover was able to throw a rope around the reptile. The video later showed two men atop the alligator as it thrashed and bit one man's hand. The man suffered minor injuries.

The alligator was eventually loaded into a trailer and hauled to a wildlife park.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Police capture 1,000-pound escaped pig

Police in Massachusetts, the US, managed to track down and capture a massive pig that escaped into a local neighborhood.

Georgetown Police officer Henry Olshefsky responded to a report of a loose pig in a resident's front yard, but was surprised to find the massive 1,000-pound pig that awaited him when he arrived at the scene, according to UPI.

Olshefsky said the giant pig appeared friendly and was calmly playing with a few dog toys strewn about the



CBS BOSTON/INFORM INC

yard. "We had a Frisbee and a bone outside, don't know what it was doing with it."

Playing with it, I guess," homeowner Julia Gagne told Fox 25.

Olshefsky said police were able to quickly track down the pig's owners, who revealed the pig's name is Bruno and he has a tendency to wander away from home.

Bruno's owner Frank Martino said, "He's probably escaped, since he was a baby, three or four times. We didn't know how big he was going to get so now we have to think of a new way to lock him in with a padlock, that type of thing."

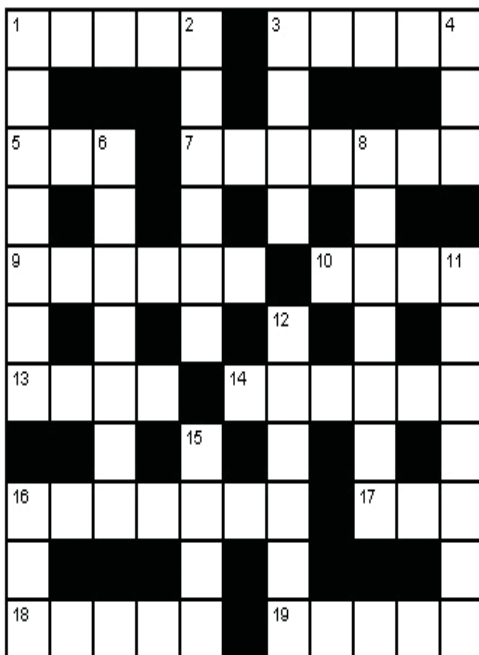
PICTURE OF THE DAY



A plane flying over Jakarta, Indonesia.

BAY ISMOYO/AFP

Quick Crossword



DOWN

- Avid (7)
- Shrewd (6)
- Slightly open (4)
- Atmosphere (3)
- Yield (7)
- Well-founded (7)
- Depict (7)
- Stringed instrument (6)
- Catch sight of (4)
- Large vase (3)

ACROSS

- African equine (5)
- Artery (5)
- Part of a circle (3)
- Farm vehicle (7)
- Embellished (6)
- Break suddenly (4)
- Plant support (4)
- Lumber (6)
- Household implement (7)
- Make a mistake (3)
- Awful (5)
- Cacophonous (5)

Yesterday's solution



Sudoku

Sudoku was inspired by the table devised by Iranian mathematician Khwarazmi. Fill 9x9 grid with digits so that each column, each row and each of the nine 3x3 sub-grids that compose the grid, contains all of the digits from 1 to 9.

	1		8		7	5	9	
			6	4			2	
6		8	2			7		
		3	9		1	6		
		1			6	8		2
7				1	8			
	8							
	9	6	7		4		5	

8	5	3	4	2	7	9	6	1
1	7	2	6	9	5	4	8	3
4	9	6	8	1	3	5	2	7
2	3	8	9	7	4	1	5	6
5	4	9	1	8	6	3	7	2
6	1	7	3	5	2	8	4	9
7	8	1	2	4	9	6	3	5
3	2	4	5	6	1	7	9	8
9	6	5	7	3	8	2	1	4

The day Iran beat USA

Yesterday, June 21, marked the anniversary of Iran's historic victory over the USA at the 1998 World Cup in France as the 2-1 result was the Asian side's first and to date, only, triumph in the history of the competition.

On this occasion, the AFC official website took a look at the historic game which forever will be remembered by all Iranian football fans: The FIFA World Cup France 1998

Iranians then lost 3-2 after extra time to Japan in the continental playoff to leave the Asians facing a two-legged encounter with Australia for the right to advance to the competition.

A 1-1 draw in the first leg at Azadi Stadium of Tehran in front of well over 100,000 spectators was then followed by a sensational 2-2 score line in Melbourne as Iran secured its place on away goals.

home soil at the 1994 edition of the tournament, and with a number of players now plying their trade in Europe, the USA had seen its reputation grow in recent years.

The trio of Ali Daei, Karim Bagheri and Khodadad Azizi, meanwhile, all played their club football in Germany, but elsewhere the Iranians remained somewhat of an unknown quantity.

Iran kicked off its World Cup just

out by Javad Zarincheh from the right.

Then, with 10 minutes to play, Iran's all-time leading scorer Daei slotted through to a surging Mehdi Mahdavi, who kept his cool to toe-poke past Kasey Keller in the American goal and spark joyous celebrations among Iranian players and fans.

Brian McBride pulled a goal back with three minutes to play to ensure a nervy finish but Iran managed to hold on to wrap up its first and to date only World Cup win and, in turn, eliminate the USA after just two games.

What happened next?

With Germany and Yugoslavia drawing 2-2 in their second match of the competition, Iran went into its final fixture with the Germans knowing only a win would guarantee progression to the next round.

It was a tough task but Jalal Talebi's team performed admirably in the first half in Montpellier by keeping its more illustrious opponent at bay to go in level at the interval. Germany's superiority shone through after the restart, though, as Oliver Bierhoff opened the scoring on 50 minutes before Jurgen Klinsmann made it two soon after.

Iran's exit was confirmed following the 2-0 defeat, but the Iranian players returned home with the heads held high having secured their finest result on the global stage.

The aftermath

Although there were legitimate concerns about a endured a fraught political relationship over the previous two decades, the match was said to have done far more good than bad.

The Iranian players took white roses – a symbol of peace in their homeland – on to the pitch to present to their opponents, before the two teams then posed for photographs prior to kickoff.

Having now secured the progression to the FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 with a highly regarded team, the next aim for modern-day Iran will be to add to that famous first win and create a new chapter of history for Team Melli.



American and Iranian team players pose before their historic game at the 1998 World Cup in Lyon, France, which Iran went on to win 2-1.

is remembered for many things: Zinedine Zidane cementing his place amongst the all-time greats, Ronaldo's pre-final meltdown and David Beckham's dismissal against Argentina that was followed by scathing criticism in his homeland.

Yet 19 years ago, on June 21 1998, the Islamic Republic of Iran went head-to-head with the USA for the first time ever in a match that carried arguably as much significance as any during the four-week competition.

Having first appeared at the FIFA World Cup in 1978 in Argentina, Iran would have to wait a further 20 years to progress to the tournament again – and it did so the hard way.

After coming second to Saudi Arabia in their qualifying group, the

The draw

The USA was appearing in its third successive World Cup – having hosted the tournament four years earlier – but it was the first time the two nations had been represented at the same competition.

And as fate would have it, a match billed as the most politically charged in World Cup history and described as “the mother of all games” by the US Soccer Federation would take place in Lyon as Iran was paired with the USA in Group F alongside powerhouse Germany and Yugoslavia.

The buildup

Fresh from reaching the last 16 on

over 20 years to the day since its last fixture in the competition but, after running a star-studded Yugoslavia side close, lost 1-0 in the opening game in Saint-Etienne.

The USA would begin its campaign with a 2-0 defeat to Germany in Paris to mean both teams went into the clash in Lyon needing a win in order to maintain their hopes of reaching the knockout phase.

The match

Just under 40,000 turned out for the crunch encounter at Stade de Gerland to witness Hamid Estili give the Iranians the lead five minutes before the interval with a superb header from 15 meters after being picked

Murray stunned by Jordan Thompson

Defending champion Andy Murray was knocked out of the Aegon Championships in the first round by world number 90, Jordan Thompson on a day of shocks.

The world number one lost 7-6 (7-4), 6-2 to Thompson, a late replacement for the injured Aljaz Beden, BBC reported.

matches.

However, it was Murray's straight-set defeat that left the crowd packed into the new 10,000-capacity Centre Court stunned.

“It's a big blow, for sure,” said Murray. “It has happened in the past where guys haven't done well here and gone on to do

loads of chances. I didn't return particularly well. He served big. He served well.”

‘Hoping to get a match’

Australian Thompson, a lucky loser who lost in qualifying and only made the first round after Briton Beden withdrew because of a wrist injury, played superbly. The 23-year-old from Sydney sealed the most famous victory of his career with an ace after one hour and 43 minutes.

“Andy's the world number one. I've looked up to him and that's definitely the biggest win of my career,” Thompson said.

“I took each point at a time. I didn't expect it to be winning in straight sets. “I was sitting around yesterday hoping to get a match. Here I am, I got in the draw and I was so lucky to be here.”

Murray, 30, could not find any rhythm, dropping serve twice in the second set and failing to convert the three break points which came his way as his forehead in particular let him down.

The defeat was the Scot's first at the tournament since 2014 and ended a 14-match winning streak on grass stretching back to 2015.

Both his Wimbledon titles, in 2013 and 2016, followed victories at Queen's Club. Murray had to adjust his game plan after the late change in opponent, and hot, blustery conditions were not ideal, but the five-time champion was still surprisingly out of form.



Jordan Thompson (L) is congratulated by Andy Murray on his famous straight-sets victory in the first round of the Aegon Championships on June 20, 2017.

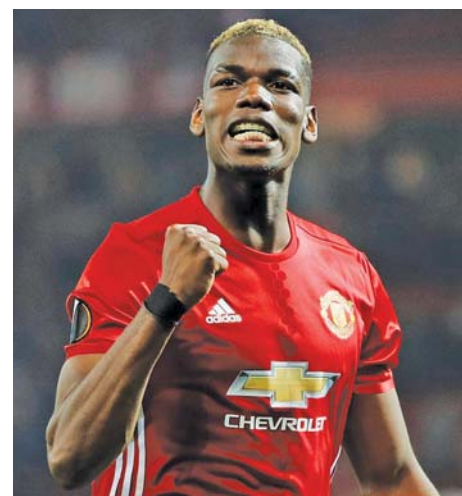
It is the first time since 2012 that Britain's Murray has lost his opening match at Queen's Club.

Second seed Stan Wawrinka and third seed Milos Raonic also lost their first-round

well at Wimbledon.

“There is no guarantee that I won't do well at Wimbledon, but it certainly would have helped to have had more matches.

“He played better than me. I didn't create



Paul Pogba's £89.3 million move from Juventus to Manchester United came under scrutiny after extracts from documents related to the transfer were leaked.

FIFA clears Manchester United over Pogba move

Manchester United was cleared of wrongdoing in the transfer of Paul Pogba but FIFA opened disciplinary proceedings against Juventus.

World football's governing body announced in May it had requested clarification from United and Juventus on every aspect of Pogba's £89.3 million move to Old Trafford, the Guardian reported.

FIFA acted following allegations Pogba's agent, Mino Raiola, would earn €9 million (£41.3 million) from the most expensive transfer in history. Reports based on contracts from documents and extracts relating to Pogba's move, revealed by the Football Leaks operation, alleged Raiola was paid €27 million from Juventus, €19.4 million by United and a further €2.6 million paid by United on behalf of Pogba for negotiating his wage package.

United said at the time it was relaxed about the investigation after offering FIFA all the relevant documents when the transfer was completed in August 2016.

FIFA told ESPN on Tuesday: “We

can confirm disciplinary proceedings have been opened against Juventus. We cannot comment further as proceedings are ongoing. We can confirm no disciplinary proceedings have been opened against Manchester United.”

FIFA is set to examine Raiola's agreement with the Serie A club to see if there is a breach of third-party ownership rules. Raiola admitted in an interview with the Financial Times last year that: “Juventus was not the only owner of the player's rights.”

However, he recently dismissed suggestions he had “cashed £40 million” from Pogba's move as “fake news” and, during an interview with Gazzetta dello Sport, refused to confirm his slice of the deal. He said: “€27 million? I'll just say it's not an exact figure: maybe it's less but maybe it's even more.”

Agents are permitted to act for two sides to a transfer, and three in exceptional circumstances, as long as all parties are aware of it and agree.

If Juventus is found guilty of wrongdoing, the Italian champions could be fined or handed a transfer ban.



José Mourinho won his first trophy in Spanish football as Real Madrid defeated Barcelona in the Copa del Rey final in the Mestalla Stadium in Valencia on April 20, 2011, which was followed by a La Liga title in 2012.

José Mourinho denied accusations of tax evasion made by authorities in Spain. Spanish prosecutors filed a claim against the Manchester United manager that he defrauded the tax authorities of €3.3 million (£2.9 million) while he managed Real Madrid.

In a statement released on Tuesday, a prosecutor in Madrid said the Portuguese manager had committed two counts of tax fraud in 2011 and 2012, saying that “corporate structures were used by the accused in order to conceal revenues generated from his image rights”, the Guardian reported.

Mourinho failed to declare that income when he submitted his tax returns in the relevant years “with the intention of deriving unlawful benefit”, the prosecutor alleges.

A judge will decide whether the matter will go to court.

A spokesman for the Manchester United manager said: “José Mourinho has not received any notification with regards to the news published today. To this date, neither the Spanish tax authorities, nor the public prosecutor have contacted José Mourinho or his advisers who were hired for the inspection process.

“José Mourinho, who lived in Spain from June 2010 until May 2013, paid more than €26 million in taxes, with an average tax rate over 41 percent, and accepted the regularization proposals made by the Spanish tax authorities in 2015 regarding the years of 2011 and 2012 and entered into a settlement agreement regarding 2013.

“The Spanish government in turn, through the tax department, issued a certificate in which it attested that he had regularized his position and was in compliance with all his tax obligations.”

Iran, Bulgaria call for further cultural cooperation

Iranian Chargé d'affaires ad interim Sofia Hassan Dotaqi and Bulgarian Culture Minister Boil Banov in a meeting underlined the need to upgrade cultural ties and cooperation between the two countries.



IRNA

In the meeting, Dotaqi pointed to the signing of an MoU and also the three-year-old cultural exchanges between Iran and Bulgaria in the post-JCPOA era, noting that the exchange of visits by officials of the two countries indicates the development of relations in all fields.

According to IRNA, Iran can invite Bulgarian publishers to the 2018 Tehran International Book Fair, he added.

The Iranian diplomat further expressed Iran's interest to be the special guest in Sofia International Book Fair.

The two sides also discussed further cultural cooperation such as holding ceremonies for the 120th anniversary of Iran-Bulgaria diplomatic ties and the 70th anniversary of bilateral cultural cooperation.

Remains of Achaemenid child discovered in southern Iran

Remains of the skull and the upper torso of a child with bronze earrings and two clay containers on top of the head together with a few opal and faience beads were discovered near the city of Ramhormoz in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, it was reported on Wednesday.

The vestiges dated back to the Achaemenid era of the Neo-Elamite. They were discovered during archaeological explorations in the ancient area of Jubaji near the city of Ramhormoz.

According to ISNA, head of the exploration team Arman Shishegar said that explorations of the second season in Jubaji were conducted in an area about 50 meters southeast of the Neo-Elamite tomb. The tomb which was discovered during the first exploration season in 2007-2008, belongs to the two Elamite princesses of the house of King Shutur-Nahunte, son of Indada, among the last kings of the Neo-Elamite period (about 585 to 539 B.C.), he added.

He considered the presence of the structures and remains of two stoves with an approximate diameter of about 50cm and 60cm, querns and heel of the stone door as the signs of the settlement of migrant people in that location which might have belonged to the Achaemenid period.

Trillium Book Award goes to Melanie Mah

Melanie Mah is the winner of 2017 Trillium Book Award, which recognizes the best work published by Ontario authors each year.

She was awarded the \$20,000 prize on the strength of her debut novel, 'The Sweetest One', which tells the story of Chrysler Wong, a teenage girl who believes in a family curse that will kill her — as it has three of her siblings — if she leaves her small Alberta town, theglobeandmail.com wrote.

The other finalists — chosen by a panel of jury made up



of writers Cherie Dimaline, Soraya Peerbaye and James Grainger — were André Alexis for his novel 'The Hidden Keys'; Susan Holbrook for her poetry collection 'Throaty Wipes'; Danila Botha for her short-story collection 'For All The Men (and Some of the Women) I've Known'; Leesa Dean for her story collection 'Waiting for the Cyclone'; and Kamal Al-Solaylee for his book of non-fiction: 'Brown: What Being Brown in the World Today Means (to Everyone)'.

Earlier winners of the prize, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary, were Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood and Michael Ondaatje. Jean Boissoli won the \$20,000 French-language Trillium Book Award for 'La Mesure du Temps', while Pierre-Luc Belanger won the \$10,000 Trillium Book Award for Children's Literature for 'Ski, Blanche et Avalanche'.

Meaghan Strimas won the \$10,000 Trillium Book Award for Poetry for her third collection, 'Yes or Nope'.

» Weather



45 28

Ahvaz



34 9

Borujerd



25 20

Rasht



39 21

Semnan



34 13

Arak

37 ^

v23

Tehran



33 21

Bishkek



27 19

Istanbul



29 17

Amman



20 9

Minsk



18 8

Moscow

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The Iranian theater troupe Moj led by writer and director Arash Abbasi is performing an adaptation of Russian writer Leo Tolstoy's novel 'Anna Karenina' at the Nazerzadeh Kermani Hall of the Iranshahr Theater Complex in Tehran until July 18, 2017.

REZA MO'ATTARIAN/theater.ir

Iran's 'Versailles Palace' eventually registered as National Heritage Site

Iran's top cultural heritage body finally gave the green light for registration of the Sabet Pasal Mansion, commonly known as the 'Versailles Palace of Iran', as a National Heritage Site following growing controversy over the imminent destruction of the architectural masterpiece.

Eventually on June 21, the head of Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHITO) Zahra Ahmadipour directed Tehran's governor general to inscribe the Sabet Pasal Mansion in the Iranian capital on the list of National Heritage Sites, ifnews.com reported.

The order was issued following many ups and downs and considerable controversy.

The registration of the mansion, located in Tehran, is aimed at preventing the demolition of the mansion by its private owner, who wants to build a high-rise to replace the architectural masterpiece.

Following the registration of the mansion as a

national heritage site, no development will be allowed in the building's precincts.

Earlier, Mehdi Chamran, the outgoing chairman of Tehran City Council, had said the building "is of no cultural value" and supported a proposal to construct a mosque in its place as well as a commercial center "to cover the expenses of the mosque".

Sabet Pasal Mansion, also known as the 'Stone Palace' or 'Iran's Versailles Palace', is Tehran's largest historical house. It was built in the second Pahlavi period in an area of over 11,500 square meters, modelled after Petit Trianon Chateau on the grounds of the Palace of Versailles.

It belonged to wealthy Iranian businessman Habibollah Sabet, known as Sabet Pasal, but was seized by Mostazafan Foundation after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. It is currently owned by Ali Ansari, the managing director of Ayandeh Bank.



ifnews.com

Iranian cartoonist stands second at Turkish contest

Iranian cartoonist Shahram Rezaei won the second prize at the 34th Aydin Dogan International Cartoon Competition in Turkey.

The first prize went to Ross Thomson from the UK, and the third to Raimundo Rucka from Brazil.

All three top cartoons focused on the problems of refugees and immigration, Tasnim News Agency reported.

Two other Iranian cartoonists, Dokshid Qodratpour and Ehsan Ganji, also won the special prize in the contest.

The selection committee, which included Iranian artist Mohsen Nouri-Najafi, evaluated the 261 caricatures by 187 artists from 40 countries.

Rezaei is a designer, painter and cartoonist who holds 175 national and international awards. He teaches designing and illustration at university.

The 34th Aydin Dogan International Cartoon Contest, which is ranked the "number one cartoon contest in the world", is a competition of works that shed light on global issues.

The award ceremony of 34th Aydin Dogan International Cartoon Competition will be organized in November 2017 in Istanbul.



TASNIM NEWS AGENCY