



A dozen killed in Tehran terrorist attacks

All Parliament, mausoleum attackers killed

Ministry:
Third attack thwarted,
terrorists arrested

Zarif:
Region plagued
with terrorism

Condemnations from world leaders pour in

UAE threatens Qatar sympathizers with jail

The United Arab Emirates on Wednesday threatened anyone publishing expressions of sympathy toward Qatar with up to 15 years in prison as it barred entry to Qataris.

Efforts to defuse the regional crisis – triggered on Monday when the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and others severed diplomatic ties with Qatar over alleged support for extremists – showed no immediate signs of success.

Qatar vehemently denies any such backing. US President Donald Trump took sides in the rift on Tuesday, praising the actions against Qatar, but later spoke by phone with Saudi King Salman and stressed the need for unity. Reuters reported. His defense secretary, James Mattis, also spoke to his Qatari counterpart to express commitment to the Persian Gulf region's security. Qatar hosts 8,000 US military personnel at Al-Udeid, the largest US airbase in the Middle East.

Kuwait's emir has also been seeking to mediate, meeting Saudi's king on Tuesday.

"Strict and firm action will be taken against anyone who shows sympathy or any form of bias toward Qatar, or against anyone who objects to the position of the United Arab Emirates, whether it be through the means of social media, or any type of written, visual or verbal form," UAE Attorney General Hamad Saif al-Shamsi said. On top of a possible jail term, offenders could also be hit with a fine of at least 500,000 dirhams, a UAE-based newspaper said. Since the diplomatic row erupted, slogans against and in support of Qatar have dominated Twitter in Arabic, a platform used widely in the Arab world, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

Newspapers and television channels in the region have also been engaged in a war of words over Qatar.

Those breaking ties with Qatar are the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, the Maldives and Mauritania. Jordan has downgraded its diplomatic representation and revoked the license of Doha-based TV channel Al Jazeera.

Closing all transport links with Qatar, the three Persian Gulf states who have moved against Doha gave Qatari visitors and residents two weeks to leave. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt banned Qatari planes from landing and forbade them from crossing their air space.

Qatar has said it will not retaliate against the curbs. "We are willing to sit and talk," Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani told CNN late on Tuesday. He said his country was "protecting the world from potential terrorists".

A Qatari official, however, said the rift was pushing Doha in the direction of leaving the six-state Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, founded in 1981, "with deep regret".

Bans on Doha's fleet using regional ports and anchorages are threatening to halt some of its exports and disrupt those of liquefied natural gas.

Political Desk

Gunmen and suicide bombers raided Iran's Parliament and the Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum in Tehran on Wednesday, killing at least a dozen people and injuring 42 others.

The attack on the Parliament triggered a five-hour standoff that ended with all as-sailants dead.

The assaults began in the mid-morning when four gunmen burst into the Parliament complex in the center of Tehran with Kalashnikov rifles and pistols, killing a security guard and another person.

Deputy Interior Minister Mohammad Hossein Zolfagari said they were dressed as women and entered through the visitors' entrance.

As gunshots continued in the neighboring office buildings, police helped staff to escape from windows and snipers took positions from rooftops.

One of the attackers later blew himself up inside, where a session had been in progress, while others were killed

by security forces, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

Soon after the assault on Parliament, two assailants entered the grounds of Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum, a few kilometers outside Tehran, killing a gardener and wounding several other people.

One detonated an explosive vest, while the other was shot dead.

The Daesh terror group claimed responsibility and released a 24-second video pur-portedly shot inside the Parliament building during the standoff. Circulated online, the video shows a gunman and a bloody, lifeless body of a man lying on the ground next to a desk.

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani called the attack a cowardly act. "Iran is an active and effective pillar in the fight against terrorists, and they want to damage it," he said.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif strongly condemned the attacks, saying the entire region has been plagued with terrorism and insecurity.

Zarif expressed deep sorrow over the terrorist attacks and said that in terms of security, the region is in a very bad situation.

"Terrorism is a problem that we are facing in the Middle East region and the world," the top diplomat said.

The unusual attacks prompted the Interior Ministry to call for an urgent security meeting. Officials at one point

urged people to avoid using public transportation until further notice.

The Intelligence Ministry said security forces had busted another terrorist team planning a third attack. It said the team was neutralized before the attacks started.

Condemnations

Reactions poured in after attackers mounted gun and bomb assaults on the Parliament building and Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum.

Russian President Vladimir Putin forwarded a message to his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani, conveying condolences over the attacks, the Kremlin press service said in a statement.

"The Russian leader strongly condemned this attack which once again emphasized the need to boost international cooperation in the fight against terrorism," the state-meat read.

"Putin conveyed his sympathy and support to the families of the victims, and wished a speedy recovery to the wounded," the statement added.

The European Union foreign policy chief sent her condolences to the victims of the attacks.

In a phone conversation with Zarif, Federica Mogherini expressed sympathy with the Iranian government and people. Mogherini said she was following events very closely on this "very sad

day again".

The UN resident coordinator and UNDP representative in Iran extended condolences to the families of the victims on behalf of the world body.

In his Instagram page, Gary Lewis said hate drives terror but love and search for peace will win in the end.

Iraqi senior officials, including President Fuad Masum, slammed the attacks.

In a letter to his Iranian counterpart, Masum underlined the role of solidarity between Iranian and Iraqi nations in confronting terrorism.

He said the attacks run counter to the teachings of divine religions and human morality.

Syria strongly condemned the assaults, stressing that such terrorist attacks that are backed by "well-known countries" will not discourage Syria and Iran from continuing to fight terrorism.

In a statement, the country's Foreign Ministry voiced Syria's full solidarity with the leadership, government and people of Iran and expressed its condolences to the families of the victims.

Oman extended condolences to the families of the Iranians killed in the terrorist assaults.

In a statement, the Omani Foreign Ministry denounced violence and terror attacks, which it said result in insecurity and instability as well as the death of innocent people.

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Myanmar military plane debris found in sea

Pieces of a Myanmar military plane which went missing with more than 100 soldiers and family members aboard were found in the Andaman Sea late Wednesday, a local official said.

Navy ships and aircraft had been searching since the afternoon when the plane lost contact with air traffic controllers, AFP report-ed.

More than a dozen children were believed to be among the passengers on the plane traveling from the southern city of Myeik to Yan-gon.

"Now they have found pieces of the damaged plane in the sea 136 miles (218 km) away from Dawei city," said Naing Lin Zaw, a tour-ism official in Myeik, adding the navy was still searching the sea.

An air force source said that a navy search and rescue ship had found pieces of the plane in the sea an hour's flight south of Yan-gon, Myanmar's commercial capital.

The commander in chief's office said the plane lost contact at about 1:35 pm (07:05 GMT) off Myanmar's



southern coast.

There was conflicting information about the number of people on board.

Giving an updated figure, the office said 106 passengers were on board – soldiers and family members

– along with 14 crew.

The air force source said more than a dozen of those on board were children.

Four naval ships and two air force planes were sent to search for the plane, which was flying at an altitude of more than 18,000 feet (5,486 meters).

It is monsoon season in Myanmar but there were no reports of bad weather at the time the plane went missing.

The plane was a Y-8F-200 four-engine turboprop, a Chinese-made model still commonly used by Myanmar's military for transporting cargo.

The army said it was delivered in March last year and had logged 809 flying hours.

The former military junta bought many of the aircraft from China during their 50 years of isolated rule, when they were squeezed by Western sanctions.

A former executive at the Aviation Ministry said many of the air-craft in Myanmar's fleet were old and decrepit.

Zarif in Turkey to discuss bilateral, regional issues

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif departed Tehran for Ankara on Wednesday morning for consultations with Turkish officials on bilateral and regional issues, the Syrian crisis in particular.

Foreign Ministry spokesman, Bahram Qassemi, told reporters that the visit is part of constant diplomatic negotiations between Iran and Turkey, IRNA reported.

The trip comes amid escalating tensions between the Persian Gulf Arab states and Qatar.

Upon his arrival in Turkey, Zarif said there was a need for close discussions with Turkish officials on "worrying" developments in the region.



Zarif was scheduled to meet with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu for talks on bilateral and regional issues, Turkish officials said.

"There are worrying developments for us that are taking place in the region," Hurriyet newspaper quoted Zarif as telling reporters as he arrived at his hotel in Ankara. "There is a need for a close exchange of views with Turkey concerning these developments."

On Monday, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, and the Maldives cut off diplomatic ties with the Doha government and suspended air, sea and land transport with Qatar.

Riyadh has accused Qatar of "harboring a multitude of terrorist and sectarian groups that aim to create instability in the region."

Qatar said there is "no legitimate justification" for cutting diplomatic ties.

Iran's Foreign Ministry has urged Qatar and its neighboring countries in the Persian Gulf to resolve their disputes through diplomacy and explicit dialogue.

Zarif on Monday stressed the importance of dialogue among regional countries, particularly during the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

"Neighbors are permanent; geography can't be changed. Coercion is never the solution. Dialogue is imperative, especially during the blessed month of Ramadan," Zarif said in a post on his Twitter account.

Following the unprecedented escalation in regional tensions, the Iranian foreign minister held separate phone calls with his counterparts in the region and other countries.



Shamkhani: Any plan aimed at disintegrating Syria deepens crisis

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani said any peace plan devised with the aim of disintegrating Syria or strengthening the presence of armed forces in the Arab country will only deepen the ongoing crisis.

"The full liberation of Syria (from terrorists) should take place within the framework of the country's national sovereignty and with the consent of the (Syrian) government," Shamkhani said at a meeting with Russian President Special Envoy on Syria Alexander Lavrentiev in Tehran on Wednesday, Tasnim News Agency report-ed.

Any plan that is seeking to disintegrate Syria or maintain the presence of armed elements will cause terrorist activities to continue and deepen the crisis in the future, he stressed.

The Iranian official further hailed close cooperation between Tehran and Moscow in the Arab country as "constructive" and said the cooperation has changed security equations in the region against terrorists.

The Russian envoy also praised Iran's role in the political process to establish peace in Syria and said the Islamic Republic and the Russian Federation have greatly contributed to peace and security in the region and the world.



Syria has been gripped by civil war since March 2011 with various terrorist groups, including Daesh, currently controlling parts of it.

According to a report by the Syrian

Center for Policy Research, the conflict has claimed the lives of over 470,000 people, injured 1.9 million others, and displaced nearly half of the country's pre-war population of about 23 million

within or beyond its borders.

In the meantime, Iran and Russia have remained close allies of Syria and support its legitimate government in the face of foreign-backed militancy.

Iranian deputy FM, Afghan president discuss relations

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia and Pacific Affairs Ebrahim Rahimpour held talks with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah on various issues.

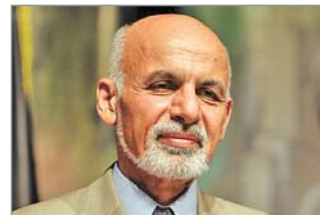
In his meeting with Ghani in the Afghan capital on Wednesday, Rahimpour offered his condolences over recent terrorist attacks in Kabul and con-demned acts of terrorism committed by terrorist groups in the neighboring country.

At least 150 people were killed in a terrorist attack in Kabul last week, making it the deadliest attack in the Afghan capital since the ouster of the Taliban in 2001.

The blast occurred when a sewage truck packed with explosives detonated at the entrance to a fortified area of that city that includes foreign embassies and government buildings.

The meeting between Rahimpour and Ghani was held on the sidelines of Kabul Process for Peace & Security Cooperation, in which representatives of 25 countries, the UN, the EU, and NATO participated to reach a consensus on combating terrorism and establishing peace in Afghanistan.

The Afghan president stressed the need to further



promote relations between Iran and Afghanistan in all spheres.

He said Afghanistan has had good progress in water management and has presented some plans to be implemented to pave the way for water management in the near future.

President Ghani also said that Iran can be connected to China through Afghanistan-Tajikistan railroads. In May 2016, the Afghan president traveled to Iran

to sign the trilateral agreement between Iran, Afghanistan, and India on the establishment of an international transit corridor via the Iranian port city of Chabahar.

In a separate meeting on the same day, Rahimpour and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah exchanged views on a range of issues, including ways to boost bilateral ties between the two neighboring countries.

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From Page 1

Pakistan's Foreign Office condemned the raids, saying the country "stands in solidarity with the people of Iran in their hour of grief."

Pakistan offered its deepest condolences to the bereaved families of those affected, the Iranian government and people.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani slammed the attacks as "cowardly acts".

In a statement released by the country's presidential office, Ghani called for inter-national consensus to fight against the "gloomy phenomenon" of terrorism.

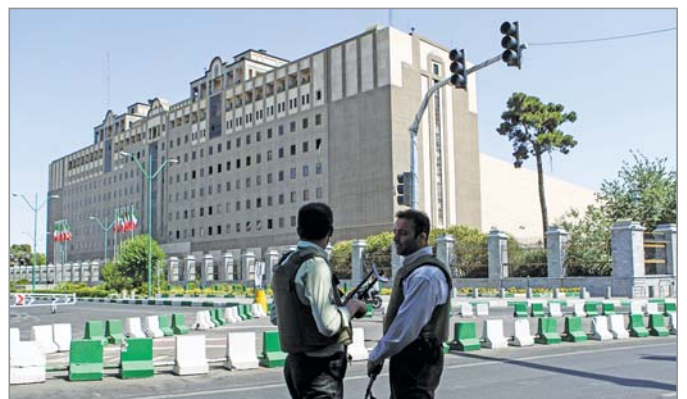
The United Arab Emirates also condemned the attacks.

"Our position on terrorism is very clear... Any terrorist attack in any country, in any capital, directed at innocent people is something that the UAE abhors and condemns," State Minister for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry condemned the assaults as "heinous".

"We are saddened to learn that Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly and the Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum in Tehran have come under terrorist attacks this morning and there are people who lost their lives or are injured as a result of these attacks," a statement read.

"We condemn these heinous attacks, wish Allah's mercy upon those who lost their lives and convey our condolences to the people of Iran, particularly to the relatives of those who lost their lives, as well as the government of Iran, and wish a speedy recovery to the



injured," it added.

France's Foreign Ministry denounced the raids in the Iranian capital.

"We strongly condemn the attacks that targeted the Iranian Parliament and the Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum in Tehran," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

It said its embassy was monitoring the situation and passed on its condolences to the families of the victims.

The Norwegian foreign minister condemned the assaults. In his Twitter account, Borge Brende offered his deepest condolences to the victims, their families and to all Iranians.

EU unveils defense fund, urges US to stay on world stage

The EU unveiled an unprecedented plan for common defense spending on Wednesday to help Europe stand alone as a global military power, while urging the United States under Donald Trump to remain on the world stage.

The proposal by Brussels for a 5.5-billion-euro a year fund follows a Franco-German-led bid to focus on security and defense to provide a new sense of purpose after the Brexit vote last year shook Europe, AFP reported.

But the incentive has grown stronger since the election of Trump, who berated his European partners on military spending at a rare NATO summit in Brussels last month even as he pursues his "America First" policy.

EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, said the bloc would continue to "encourage our American friends to stay engaged in the global scene - I know it sounds surreal to hear this from Brussels to Washington, but that is the reality of facts".

She said that there was a "growing need, desire to partner with the European Union; part of this might be linked to a certain unpredictability of positions on some issues our partners have seen in Washington".

Her comments echo those by German Chancellor Angela Merkel who said last week that the US was no longer a reliable partner and that Europe had to take its destiny into its own hands.

The EU military plan would be a key part of this, Mogherini said, although insisting that it would not overlap the NATO military alliance.

"It's not about substituting neither the



PATRICK HERTZOG/AFAP

alliance nor the United States, but it's a matter of focusing on what we can do more for our own purposes, our own interests," she said.

The EU's proposal for a common defense fund comes as US President Donald Trump presses NATO members to meet their spending commitments to the alliance.

The new EU fund will consist of two parts.

The first will help member states finance defense research into fields such as electronics, encrypted software, robotics and drones.

A draft unveiled at the end of 2016 envisaged a research program with an annual budget of around 500 million euros after

2020.

The fund's second portion will pool resources for big-ticket hardware purchases such as tanks, helicopters and drones.

This part would reach a budget of five billion euros a year once fully operational, with the commission arguing that member states waste 25 to 100 billion euros EU-wide when going alone.

Russia, Syria censure US airstrike in Homs

Compiled from Dispatches

Syria and Russia condemned the latest deadly attack by the US-led coalition targeting an army position in Syria's Homs Province, saying it proves Washington's support for terrorism.

On Tuesday, US-led warplanes attacked a Syrian military position on the road to the town of At-Tanf, where US forces are based, killing a number of people and causing some material damage, Press TV reported.

The Syrian Army Command warned against the risks of such escalations and urged the coalition to not carry out similar aggressive actions under any pretext, the official SANA quoted a military source as saying.

"This aggression once again demonstrates these forces' support for terrorism, at a time when the Syrian Arab Army and its allies are making daily progress against Daesh," the source added.

He also affirmed the resolve of the Syrian Army and its allies to continue fighting terrorist groups, primarily Daesh and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly known as Al-Nusra Front.

Separately on Wednesday, Moscow condemned the strike as an "act of aggression" that targeted the most effective forces battling "terrorists" in the war-torn

country, the Daily Mail reported.

"It was an act of aggression which breaches the territorial sovereignty of Syria and intentionally or not targeted those forces that are the most effective in fighting the terrorists on the ground," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.



REUTERS

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov also said the US air raid violates international law.

"Russian and US military maintain contact regarding the situation in Syria by and large," he said. "The question is not about whether there had been a warning of the strike or there had been none, but about the po-

litical side of the affair. Just as it was the case on May 18, when a strike was delivered in that area, the latest one, according to our estimates, was carried out in violation of international law. The explanations we hear from the US Central Command are doubtful, to say the least," TASS quoted Ryabkov as saying.

Viktor Ozerov, the chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament, said such strikes empower terrorists.

Syria is entitled to initiate a United Nations Security Council debate on the issue, he noted, rejecting as baseless the coalition's claims that its airstrike was defensive.

The coalition had said in a statement that the Syrian forces who came under the attack posed a threat to US and US-backed forces in Syria.

The US-led coalition had carried out a similar strike on a Syrian military convoy near At-Tanf last month.

The US and its allies have been bombarding what they call Daesh positions inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a UN mandate.

They have been accused of targeting and killing civilians, while failing to fulfill their pronounced goal of destroying Daesh.

South Korea to freeze new THAAD deployment pending probe

South Korea will suspend any further deployment of a controversial US missile defense system until an environmental impact assessment ordered by new President Moon Jae-in is finished, his office said Wednesday.

Seoul agreed last year under Moon's ousted predecessor Park Geun-hye to deploy the powerful missile intercept system to guard against "threats" from nuclear-armed North Korea despite angry opposition from Beijing, which views it as a threat to its own military capabilities, AFP reported.

Two missile launchers have been deployed in the southern county of Seongju, where hundreds of residents have staged fierce protests over what they see as potential environmental hazards posed by the batteries used in the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system.



AFN YOUNG-JOON/AP

There is "no need to withdraw" the two launchers that have already been deployed, a senior official at the South's presidential office told reporters.

However, "additional deployment (of THAAD) should be carried out only after the environmental impact assessment is over," the official added.

"We do not view the deployment process as urgent enough to bypass the whole environmental impact assessment," he said.

The deployment freeze comes two days after Moon ordered a "proper" probe into the potential environmental impact of the missile batteries in a bid to win greater public support for the project.

Four more launchers arrived recently in the South and are currently being stored at a US Army base in the country, which plays host to some 28,500 US troops as a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War.

The South's army came under fire this week after Moon - who voiced ambivalence about THAAD on the campaign trail - accused it of withholding key information about progress on the system.

According to Moon's office, top military brass who briefed Moon's national security adviser last month deliberately withheld information about the arrival of the four new launchers. A senior defense ministry official was removed from his position over the incident.

Defense Minister Han Min-koo - appointed by Park and widely expected to be replaced soon - admitted the presence of the new launchers only when pressed by Moon in a phone conversation last week.

The South's military cited a confidentiality agreement with the US military as a reason to hide the critical information from the South's new commander-in-chief, according to a probe into senior army officials.

China - the South's biggest trading partner - has in recent months taken a series of measures against South Korean businesses seen as economic retaliation for THAAD.

Trump nominates Wray to lead FBI

US President Donald Trump announced Christopher Wray as his pick for FBI director.

Trump's early morning two-sentence tweet nominating Wray, a lawyer, came one day before the FBI director that Trump fired last month, James Comey, was to testify in public on Capitol Hill for the first time since his dismissal, AAP reported.

Trump called Wray "a man of impeccable credentials" and offered no more information about the selection, ending the tweet by saying, "Details to follow".



AAP

Wray served in a leadership role in the George W. Bush Justice Department, rising to head the criminal division and overseeing investigations into corporate fraud, during the time when Comey was deputy attorney general.

Wray took charge of a task force of prosecutors and FBI agents created to investigate the Enron scandal.

Comey, during his appearance before the Senate Intelligence Committee, is expected to describe his encounters with Trump in the weeks before his firing on May 9. He could offer new details regarding discussions with Trump about the federal investigation into Russia's election meddling.

Wray works in private practice for the King & Spalding law firm. He worked as a federal prosecutor in Atlanta, Georgia, from 1997-2001, and was associate deputy attorney general from 2001-03.

He graduated with honors from Yale University in 1989 and in 1992 from Yale Law School.

China slams Pentagon report on overseas military bases

Beijing on Wednesday dismissed as "irresponsible" an annual US Defense Department report that predicted China would expand its global military presence, building overseas bases in countries like Pakistan.

Published Tuesday, the Pentagon report estimated that China spent \$180 billion last year on its military - the world's largest - a figure well over the country's official \$140 billion defense budget, AFP reported.

"China most likely will seek to establish additional military bases in countries with which it has a longstanding friendly relationship and similar strategic interests, such as Pakistan, and in which there is a precedent

for hosting foreign militaries," the report said.

China's Defense Ministry refuted this assessment on Wednesday. "China is not doing any military expansion and does not seek a sphere of influence," it said in a statement.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying likewise said during a regular briefing that China "is firmly opposed" to aspects of the publication.

"We have noted the report released by the US which made irresponsible remarks about China's national defense development in disregard of the facts," Hua said, declining to comment on "speculation" and noting that the "friendly cooperation (between China and Pakistan) does not target any

third party".

As part of China's expansive Belt and Road regional infrastructure project, China and Pakistan are building an economic corridor aimed at linking northwest China to the Arabian Sea.

India has voiced displeasure at the planned route, which cuts through Gilgit and Baluchistan in Pakistan-administered Kashmir - disputed territory which India claims is illegally occupied.

China started building its first overseas military base in February 2016 in the small nation of Djibouti, where it will be stationed just a few miles from its US camp.

The outpost will support the country's UN peacekeepers in



AFP

Africa, allow it to evacuate its nationals in a crisis and support anti-piracy activities off Somalia, according to China.

The Pentagon report noted that the strategically-sited

camp, "along with regular naval vessel visits to foreign ports, both reflects and amplifies China's growing influence, extending the reach of its armed forces".

OPINION

Financial market reforms can boost Iran's economy

By Gary Kleiman*

Tehran Stock Exchange index rallied to eliminate its five percent loss since the beginning of the year after Hassan Rouhani won a second term in mid-May.

With the momentum of victory and technocrats in charge at the Central Bank of Iran and key ministries, long-awaited financial sector overhauls could finally draw in foreign direct and portfolio investors, who have visited in droves with minimal allocation to date estimated at less than five percent of equity turnover, Financial Times wrote.

Over 200 Asian, European and Middle Eastern lenders have forged correspondent relationships, and China's ICBC, South Korea's Woori and Oman's Bank Muscat are establishing local branches.

In turn, Iranian banks are expanding and reviving their cross-border presence in London and local European markets such as Turkey and credit and debit card integration has been set up in Azerbaijan, Iraq and Russia.

In theory, foreign banks can acquire minority ownership in local counterparts, and the biggest state-run, partially privatized and purely private banks are listed on the Tehran exchange.

The top three — Mellat, Saderat and Tejarat — control about 60 percent of assets, and government shares could be further divested under a plan to complete hundreds of state enterprise transactions this fiscal year just released by the Economy Ministry's Privatization Organization.

In early 2015, before the nuclear accord, Rouhani convened a national conference to debate industry modernization and rehabilitation. Officials subsequently introduced contemporary Basel and International Financial Reporting Standards, and submitted bills to expand CBI supervisory and enforcement powers and institution management and operating responsibilities.

Banks were ordered to divest non-credit real estate and securities activities over three years as they focus on core balance sheet repair, but the non-performing loan rate remains over 10 percent, according to September 2016 CBI figures, and capital adequacy has fallen to five percent under stricter measures requiring \$5 billion in emergency injections under the latest budget.

Financials have been the worst-performing shares for several years, with the benchmark borrowing rate still punishingly steep at more than 15 percent, an attempt to quash demand as banks struggle to repay long-term deposits yielding 20-30 percent from the period of 40 percent inflation early in Rouhani's term.

Financials also have sizeable exposure in property, which has been in a five-year recession, and the government has accumulated massive contract arrears from the sanctions era, which it has just started to whittle down by issuing new bonds as part of a broader capital markets development strategy.

The Tehran bourse is a leading member of the Istanbul-based Federation of Euro-Asian Stock Exchanges and has committed to aligning trading, regulation and corporate governance with prevailing emerging market standards.

Following experimental placements by the Treasury, fixed income activity has grown to \$8 billion and Turquoise Partners — a top market-maker for foreign investors, launched a dedicated sovereign bond fund several months ago.

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World Bank projects Iran's 2017 growth rate at 4%

World Bank, in its June 2017 Global Economic Prospects report, projected four percent growth rate for Iran in 2017.

Iran is seen slowing to a four percent rate before accelerating modestly to a 4.1 percent pace in 2018 as limited spare capacity in oil production and difficulty in accessing finance weight on the country's growth, IRNA reported.



World Bank forecasts that global economic growth will strengthen to 2.7 percent in 2017 as a pickup in manufacturing and trade, rising market confidence, and stabilizing commodity prices allow growth to resume in commodity-exporting emerging market and developing economies.

According to World Bank's June 2017 Global Economic Prospects, growth in advanced economies is expected to accelerate to 1.9 percent in 2017, which will also benefit the trading partners of these countries.

Global financing conditions remain favorable and commodity prices have stabilized.

Minister:

Iran-Malaysia trade to go beyond \$2b

Domestic Economy Desk

Head of the Iran-Malaysia Joint Economic Cooperation Commission estimated that bilateral trade will exceed \$2 billion.

Mahmoud Vaezi, who is also Iran's minister of communications and information technology, made the remarks after signing a cooperation deal with Malaysian Minister of International Trade and Industry Mustapa Mohamed at the ministry in Tehran, IRNA reported.

"With the signing of the cooperation deal, trade between Iran and Malaysia, which is currently \$700 million, will triple," Vaezi said.

He described the agreement as a very important step in developing bilateral relations.

The ministers agreed to continue talks on preferential trade agreements between the two nations.

Vaezi noted that two Malaysian oil companies have been permitted to study two Iranian oilfields adding an MOU was reached in this regard.

The Iranian minister said President Hassan Rouhani's trip to Malaysia paved the ground for boosting bilateral trade.

Rouhani traveled to the Asian country in October 2016 to enhance Tehran-Kuala Lumpur relations.



Vaezi said trade ties have grown 40 percent since the chief executive visited

Malaysia.

He also said the governors of Iranian

and Malaysian central banks have agreed to expand banking ties.

SZOGPC earnings hit \$9b

Output and revenues of South Zagros Oil and Gas Production Company (SZOGPC) considerably increased during a one-year period, announced a senior energy official.

Gholamhossein Montazeri said on Wednesday, "SZOGPC's revenues reached \$9 billion through export of gas and oil."

He noted, "We are planning

months to November 21."

He added that production will rise to 200 mcm/d in the four months to March 20, 2018.

South Zagros Oil and Gas Production Company is one of three subsidiaries of Iranian Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC). It produces 235 mcm/d of gas, which is nearly 40 percent of the country's total output.

The company operates eleven oil and gas fields located in five regions: Nar and Kangan, Aghar and Dalan, Parsian, South Sorkhoun and Gashou, Sarvestan and Saadatnabad.

The eleven fields: Aghar, Dalan, Nar, Kangan, Tabnak, Sorkhoun, Homa, Varav, Shanoul, Sarvestan and Saadatnabad fields are in Fars, Bushehr and Hormuzgan provinces.



According to Shana, the company's Managing Director

to pump 163 million cubic meters/day of gas in the eight

NPC planning to raise petrochemical exports

Domestic Economy Desk

National Petrochemical Company (NPC) plans to increase the share of petrochemical products in Iran's non-oil exports, said the company's managing director.

Marzieh Shahdaei, who is also deputy oil minister for petrochemical affairs, further said that the company is cooperating with petrochemical holdings and companies to draw up a strategic plan for exporting petrochemical products, Shana reported.

She added that collaboration with petrochemical companies will pave the ground for improving of Iran's global ranking.

Shahdaei said on Monday that Iran's total petrochemical production capacity will reach an annual 72 million tons in the year to mid-

March 2018.

She further said Iran will launch a number of key petrochemical projects during the current year which will raise the total annual petrochemical output to over 70 million tons from the current 65 million tons.

She said the achievements of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will be evident this year, adding that petrochemical output is expected to rise by 18 percent year-on-year this year crossing the 59 million tons per year mark.

Shahdaei estimated that 23 million tons of petrochemical products will be exported during the year bringing in some \$11 billion.

She said 10 million tons of the products will also be sold on the domestic market this year.



Iran, Georgia interested in promoting trade: Envoy



Iran can meet Georgia's needs for natural gas, electricity and all energy sources and there is a mutual interest in developing trade between the two countries, said Iran's ambassador to Georgia.

Javad Qavam Shahidi further pointed to the capabilities of Tehran and Tbilisi to promote cooperation in various areas and called for the implementation of joint major projects, IRNA reported.

"The number of opportunities for cooperation between Iran and Georgia is considerable," he noted.

Qavam Shahidi said that Georgia has the capacities to play a role in Iran-Europe relations. "Georgia has more than enough water resources and they are perfect for both drinking and agriculture while Iran lacks the second," he said.

Georgia lies at the intersection of Europe and Asia and is located in the Caucasus region of Eurasia, neighboring Russia to the north, the Black Sea to the west and Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia to the south.

Georgia benefits from good relations with the European Union (EU) due to its special geographical situation and is willing to join EU.

On Tuesday, Azerbaijan Railways Public Relations Department announced that Azerbaijani, Georgian and Iranian railways will set up a working group to coordinate the transportation of cargo from the Persian Gulf and India to Europe and vice versa.

The decision was made at a meeting attended by Chairman of Azerbaijan Railways Javid Gurbanov, Chairman of Georgian Railways Mamuka Bakhtadze and Managing Director of Iranian Railways Saeed Mohammadzadeh in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The meeting focused on organizing overland cargo transportation from the Persian Gulf and India (passing through Azerbaijan and Georgia) to Europe and in the opposite direction, as well as cargo transportation via Azerbaijani and Iranian ports.

They noted that a large volume of cargo from the Persian Gulf and India to Europe and vice versa is currently being transported by sea, and this takes about 30-40 days.

Transporting cargo through Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran will cut the transportation time, they said.

Asia can unlock \$5 trillion, 230m jobs via key development goals

Businesses in Asia could unlock at least \$5 trillion in market opportunities and create 230 million jobs by 2030 by implementing a few key development goals, global business and finance leaders said.

Asia's unprecedented economic growth has helped reduce poverty but future growth, prosperity and stability "are all under threat from the impact of a swelling list of environmental and social burdens", according to a report released on Monday by the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, Reuters wrote.

"There is the opportunity to shape a safer, more prosperous world," the report said.

Asia, home to two-thirds of the world's population, is extremely vulnerable to weather-related disasters, whose frequency and intensity could worsen as a result of climate change.

Meanwhile, more than 80 percent of the region's population lives in countries where inequality has risen over the past 20 years, according to the Asian Development Bank.

Pursuing strategies in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals would turn these threats into opportunities and provide "the chance to consolidate and sustain the region's regeneration", the report said.

The 17-point SDGs, launched last year, include targets on eliminating poverty, providing clean energy, creating better jobs and tackling economic inequality by 2030.

The report identified four key areas with the most significant opportunities — cities, energy and materials, food and agriculture, and health and well-being — and specific projects such as affordable housing, renewable energy, reducing food waste and sustainable aquaculture.

The \$5-trillion value is conservative and more value could come from other sectors including information and communication technologies, education and consumer goods, it added.

The cost of realizing these opportunities in the four



assets.bwbx.io

key areas would likely require \$1.7 trillion of annual investment, the report said.

The commission said "Blended financing", where public and philanthropic bodies take on high risk and more policy-sensitive investment, could fill the funding gap.

The report follows an earlier study that identified \$12 trillion in market opportunities and the creation of up to 380 million jobs globally in the same time frame. Asia

accounts for more than 40 percent of these opportunities, the latest report said.

Of the \$5 trillion in business opportunities in Asia, around \$2.3 trillion could be found in China alone, \$1.1 trillion in India and \$1.1 trillion in developing and emerging countries, the report said. The rest are in developed countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea.

South Africa falls into second recession



ALAMY

South Africa has fallen into recession for the first time in eight years after economic growth shrank by 0.7 percent between January and March.

The downturn, due to weak manufacturing and trade, follows a 0.3 percent fall in GDP in the final quarter last year, BBC reported.

It is the first time that economic has slowed for two consecutive quarters — the technical definition of a recession — since 2009.

The value of the rand fell by one percent on the currency markets.

Analysts had expected GDP to grow

by 0.9 percent during the first quarter. However, Joe de Beer, deputy director general of Statistics South Africa, said: "We can now pronounce that the economy is in recession."

He added: "The major industries that contracted in the economy were the trade and manufacturing sectors."

Africa's third-largest economy is under pressure after President Jacob Zuma fired his respected finance minister, Pravin Gordhan, earlier this year.

It prompted two credit rating agencies, Standard and Poor's and Fitch, to downgrade South Africa's credit worthiness to junk.

This means it is more expensive for South Africa to borrow money, because it is seen as having a higher risk defaulting on its debts.

Last week, S&P and Fitch pointed to further concerns about the South African economy, including uncertainty over who will succeed President Zuma as leader of the ruling African National Congress.

A successor is expected to be chosen in December, but Zuma can remain as head of state until an election in 2019.

Real income growth outpaces in South Korea



jkdaily.com

The growth of real income of South Koreans has risen at a slower pace than that of economic growth over the past five years, government data showed on Wednesday.

The average real income of local businesses with at least five employees was 3.39 million won (\$3,000) per month last year, up 2.8 percent from a year earlier, according to the data by the Ministry of Strategy and Finance and the Ministry of Employment and Labor, Yonhap reported.

It is on par with the country's real gross domestic product growth that stood at 2.8 percent last year.

In previous years, however, the country's GDP growth consistently outpaced real income gains as the country on the whole did not do a good job in sharing the fruits of its gains with workers.

The economy expanded a real 2.8 percent and 3.3 percent in 2015 and 2014, respectively, compared with a 2.7-percent gain and a 1.2-percent rise in actual income over the same period. In 2013, economic growth marked 2.9 percent, while real income trailed at 2.5 percent.

Over the past five-year period, the GDP went up 2.82 percent on average, vis-a-vis the 2.46 percent rise in real income growth.

Even worse, the GDP growth averaged 4.18 percent during the 2000-2016 period, but the income increased 2.52 percent.

"Businesses have reaped the benefits of economic growth," said Kim Yoon-sun from the Korea Labor and Society Institute, a Seoul-based think tank.

"The growth pace of real income has slowed down to a large extent amid an increase in the number of lower-paid temporary workers."

Main Indices of TSE

Index	Value	Change	Percent
Total Index	79758.5	0	0
Industry Index	68546.8	(18.3)	(0.03)
Free Float Index	87373.3	86.3	0.1
First Market Index	55068.0	(34)	(0.06)
Second Market Index	178381.1	192.8	0.11

Overall Index details on 20170607

First	80295.7	Change end of year(%)	918.32%
High	80299.8	Historical highest	89500.6 (20140105)
Low	79758.5	Historical lowest	100 (1369/1/6)
Close	79758.5	Base Value	100 (1369/1/6)
Change	0		

Industry Index details on 20170607

First	69027.4	Change end of year(%)	1027.74%
Max Value	69034.4	Historical highest	75181.9 (20140105)
Max Value	69610.5	Historical lowest	1226.8 (1377/8/25)
Closing	68546.8	Base Value	
Closing	(18.3)		

Free Float Index details on 20170607

First	87480.7	Change end of year(%)	
Max Value	88753.6	Historical highest	105040 (20140105)
Max Value	88687.9	Historical lowest	
Closing	87373.3	Base Value	
Closing	86.3		

Main Board Index details on 20170607

First	55350.1	Change end of year(%)	777.1%
Max Value	55380.5	Historical highest	67441.4 (20140105)
Max Value	55990.5	Historical lowest	
Closing	55068.0	Base Value	4740.4 (1381/6/2)
Closing	(34)		

Secondary Index details on 20170607

First	180073.8	Change end of year(%)	1345.03%
Max Value	180084.6	Historical highest	181353 (20170522)
Max Value	181452.5	Historical lowest	
Closing	178381.1	Base Value	4740.4 (1381/6/2)
Closing	192.8		

Solar energy boom turns to bust for Indian manufacturers

Some of India's biggest solar equipment makers are facing financial collapse, priced out by Chinese competitors as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government prioritizes cheap power over local manufacturing despite his 'Make in India' push.

Though President Donald Trump is pulling the US out of the Paris accord on climate change, India is sticking to its huge renewable energy program. That has created a multi-billion-dollar market for Chinese solar product makers, who are facing an overcapacity at home and steep duties in Europe, according to Reuters.

India's solar power generation capacity has already more than tripled in three years to over 12 gigawatt as Modi targets raising energy generation from all renewable sources to 175GW by 2022.



ecodaily.org

Chinese companies have gained the most from that increase, accounting for around 85 percent of India's solar module demand and earning around \$2 billion,

according to industry data. The total annual market could jump to more than \$10 billion in the next few years going by the government's capacity targets.

Local companies such as Jupiter Solar, Indosolar Ltd. and Moser Baer India Ltd., however, are struggling to win contracts.

Orders funneled through a domestic-content policy have all but dried up after the World Trade Organization last September upheld an earlier ruling that found the move violated global trade norms.

As a result, Jupiter said it could shut shop by July after delivering their last orders this month; Indosolar auditors have raised doubts over it remaining as a 'going concern', and Moser Baer said it needs support from its lenders to revive its solar business.

Indian solar power plant developers — including companies backed by Japan's Softbank and Goldman Sachs — are quoting ever-lower tariffs in auctions to win big projects, encouraged by steep drop in Chinese solar equipment prices.

Major Currencies

Currency	To USD	Currency	To USD
Turkish Lira	0.2844	Chinese Yuan	0.1471
Euro	1.1264	UAE Dirham	0.2722
British Pound	1.2917	Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2988
Australian Dollar	0.7555	Iraqi Dinar	0.0008
Japanese 100 Yen	0.0914	Saudi Riyal	0.2666

Major Commodities

Crude Oil	\$48.00	Silver	\$17.66
Gold	\$1295.20	Platinum	\$960.20
Copper	\$2.54	Wheat	\$440.50

Ecological variation

Climate change causes ecological variation and affects the lives of animals. The ever-earlier springs and later autumns caused by rising temperatures cause changes to animals' physiology, breeding seasons and even population distributions.

China, California sign deal to work on climate change without Trump

President Donald Trump's decision to pull the US out of the Paris agreement will be only a temporary setback, said California Governor Jerry Brown.

China and California have signed an agreement to work together on reducing emissions, as the state's governor warned that 'disaster still looms' without urgent action on climate change, according to The Guardian.

Brown spoke to reporters at an international clean energy conference in Beijing about Trump's decision to pull the US out of the Paris agreement, saying it would ultimately prove to be only a temporary setback.

For now, he said, China, European countries and individual US states would fill the gap left by the federal government's decision to abdicate leadership on the issue.

"Nobody can stay on the sidelines. We can't afford any dropouts in the tremendous human challenge to make the transition to a sustainable future," Brown said. "Disaster still looms and we've got to make the turn."

Brown later held a closed-door meeting with the Chinese President Xi Jinping, during which the two pledged to expand trade between California and China with an emphasis on so-called green technologies that could help address climate change, Brown said.

Trump's announcement last week that he wanted to pull out of the Paris accord did not come up, according to the governor.

El Niño, global warming combine to cause record-breaking heat in Southeast Asia

Scientists at The University of Texas Institute for Geophysics (UTIG) have found that a devastating combination of global warming and El Niño is responsible for causing extreme temperatures in April 2016 in Southeast Asia.

The research, published in the journal Nature Communications, showed that El Niño triggered the heat, causing about half of the warming, while global warming caused one-third and raised the heat into record-breaking territories, according to the team's analysis. El Niño is a climate pattern that impacts the tropical Pacific, and usually brings warmer temperatures to Southeast Asia in April, phys.org wrote.

In April 2016, high temperatures in mainland Southeast Asia broke all previous records, exacerbating energy consumption, disrupting crop production and causing severe human discomfort in Cambodia, Thailand and other countries in the region.

The especially high temperatures of 2016



churchmilitant.com

made the researchers interested in investigating the factors behind such extreme heat, including the impact of the record-breaking El Niño of 2015 and whether ongoing global warming played a significant role in the event.

The researchers used computer model simulations designed to disentangle the natural and human-made causes of the extreme heat.

They also used observations from land and ocean monitoring systems and found that

long-term warming has played an increasing role in rising April temperatures in Southeast Asia. Since 1980, this trend has caused a new temperature record each April following an El Niño.

"The El Niño system primes mainland Southeast Asia for extremes, although long-term warming is undoubtedly exacerbating these hot Aprils," said UTIG postdoctoral fellow Kaustubh Thirumala, who led the study. UTIG is a research unit of the UT Austin Jackson School of Geosciences.

The researchers used statistical techniques to quantify the contributions from El Niño and from long-term warming.

Their analysis looked at the 15 hottest April temperatures over the past 80 years. All of them occurred after 1980, and all of them but one coincided with El Niño.

They found that while the impact of El Niño fluctuated over the years, the impact of global warming has steadily increased over time.

Saving the oceans, saving the future

The oceans' health is only getting worse and the cycle of decline must be reversed, said representatives at the opening of a high-level UN conference.

Approximately 5,000 representatives from governments, civil society, and the private sector from around the world have gathered at the UN for its first ever Ocean Conference, a high-

level meeting which aims to address and mobilize action to improve the state of oceans, IPS reported.

"The health of our oceans and seas are inextricably linked with the health of our planet and all life on earth," Secretary General Antonio Guterres told the full General Assembly hall.

However, the oceans are under

threat as a result of human activity.

"We are here on behalf of humanity to restore the sustainability, balance, and respect in our relationship with our primal mother — the source of all life — the ocean," said President of the 71st Session of the General Assembly Peter Thomson.

"The time has come for us to correct our wrongful ways," he added.

Among the pressing issues to be addressed during the conference is marine pollution, and much of this pollution is from plastic.

Over five trillion pieces of plastic weighing more than 260,000 tons are currently floating in the world's oceans, a figure that may be an underestimate. More than 80 percent of such plastic waste in oceans comes

from land.

Because of ocean currents, this trash accumulates in what is known as 'ocean garbage patches', located in virtually every ocean in the world.

The largest such patch is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch located between Hawaii and California which is estimated to be around one million square kilometers.

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Study: 75% of pregnant women don't have healthy weight gain



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A comprehensive new study has found 75 percent of women are not gaining a healthy recommended weight when pregnant.

Gaining too little or too much weight during pregnancy increased the risk of premature births or requiring cesareans, it said, and the prevalence of both obesity and excess gestational weight gain was increasing, The Guardian reported.

The international research team, led by Monash University researchers, examined more than 5,000 previous studies and analyzed pregnancy data from three groups across Asia, the US and Europe, but noted it was limited by a lack of studies from developing nations.

It found that 23 percent of women did not gain the recommended weight during their pregnancy, and more than 50 percent gained too much. The higher weight gain was more prevalent in Western countries.

Other key findings included that seven percent of women were underweight and 38 percent were overweight and obese at the time of pregnancy.

Women who gained more than the recommended weight were a higher risk of having large babies and requiring a cesarean birth. Women who went into a pregnancy underweight and who didn't put on recommended weight had an eight percent risk of having an underweight baby, and an eight percent risk of a premature birth.

"Gestational weight gain greater than or less than guideline recommendations ... was associated with higher risk of adverse maternal and infant

outcomes," it concluded.

Research team leader Professor Helena Teede said the results emphasized an urgent need for monitoring and support strategies for women before and during pregnancy.

Endorsed guidelines recommended pregnancy gains of 12.5kg to 18kg for underweight women, 11.5kg to 16kg for women of healthy weight, 7kg to 11kg for overweight women, and 5kg to 9kg for obese women.

"Health professionals need to be encouraged and trained in having 'healthy conversations' introducing relatively simple effective lifestyle interventions to support women before, during and after pregnancy," said Teede.

"For health services and policymakers recognition that effective simple health lifestyle interventions are available and now need to be incorporated into routine care to optimize reach and availability for all women."

The study aimed to update medical guidelines which are almost 30 years old, based on 1980 data of a mostly Caucasian population. A 2009 update was still based on a population of mothers with limited ethnic diversity and with a lower general weight.

Teede said it represented the largest contemporary international snapshot of women's weight during pregnancy and its impact on their health and that of their baby, and on the healthcare system. It also took into account "our more contemporary population of mothers who are increasingly

entering pregnancy at an unhealthy weight and it covers the diversity of race across Europe, US and Asia".

A separate, landmark report released on Tuesday, by the Australian commission on safety and quality in healthcare, found the rate of cesareans in Australia was increasing, and varied depending on where a woman gave birth. The Queensland area of Brisbane had the highest rate of 438 per 1,000 women aged 20-34, and Victoria's Baw Baw the lowest, with 147.

The Second Australian Atlas of Healthcare Variation sought to analyse the rates of hospitalizations, surgical procedures, and complications, across Australian local areas. The data is expected to assist local clinicians and policy developers in identifying and addressing localized medical issues and health disparities.

Chair of the Atlas advisory group, Professor Anne Duggan, said in Australia there was a much higher rate of cesarean sections than in other countries.

"About a third of our deliveries are cesarean sections. It's not clear to me — and that's why we put the data up — why we have such a high rate compared to elsewhere," she said. "It does make you wonder if people are not informed about the treatment options."

The Atlas also found a sevenfold variation in the prevalence of hysterectomies, and a 21-fold variation in endometrial ablation.

"We know treatments have changed over time," said Duggan.

Revolution in mental healthcare needed: UN expert

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to health, Dainius Puras, called for a 'sea change' in mental healthcare around the world.

After presenting his latest report to the UN Human Rights, he said that where mental health systems existed, they were segregated from other forms of health care and based on outdated practices that violated human rights, Xinhua reported.

"We need little short of a revolution in mental healthcare to end decades of neglect, abuse and violence," Puras said.

He called on states to move away from traditional practices and thinking, and toward a long overdue shift to a rights-based approach.

According to the UN expert, the current mental health policies and services are in a crisis of power imbalances.

He explained that progress was being hindered by huge imbalances in the systems currently used in policymaking, service provision, medical education and research.

"There is now unequivocal evidence of the failures of a system that relies too heavily on the biomedical model of mental health services, including the front-line and excessive use of psychotropic medicines, and yet these models persist," Puras said.

"This pattern occurs in countries across the national income spectrum. It represents a failure to integrate evidence and the voices of those most affected into policy, and a failure to respect, protect and fulfill the right to health," he added.

In his report just presented to the UN Human Rights Council, Puras warned that power and decision-making in mental health were concentrated in the hands of 'biomedical gatekeepers', particularly those representing biological psychiatry.

These gatekeepers, he said, maintain this power by adhering to two outdated concepts: that people experiencing mental distress and diagnosed with 'mental disorders' are dangerous, and that biomedical interventions are medically necessary in many cases.

"These concepts perpetuate stigma and discrimination, as well as the practices of coercion that remain widely accepted in mental health systems today," he stressed, adding that it was crucial now to assess the root causes of failure and to chart a way forward, reaching consensus on the best way to do this.

"Paternalistic and excessively medicalized concepts must give way to participatory, psychosocial care and support in the community," he noted.

For high blood pressure, combining drugs at lower dose may be effective

Taking one blood pressure medication is not always enough to keep high blood pressure (hypertension) under control, sometimes prompting doctors to prescribe a second drug. With the additional medication, though, often come additional side effects. Might there be a better option?

The researchers analyzed data from 42 studies, involving 20,284 adults (average age, 54) with hypertension who had been randomly assigned to taking a placebo or blood-pressure-lowering medication in varying combinations and dosages, washingtonpost.com reported.

Medications included calcium channel blockers, beta blockers, angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs), angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and thiazide diuretics (TZs).



GETTY IMAGES

Among those taking medication, some took a full dose and some took a quarter-dose; others took a combination of two drugs at a quarter-dose each or a combination of four drugs at a quarter-dose each.

After an average of seven weeks, blood pressure measurements showed that taking a quarter-dose of one medication did not lower blood pressure as much as a full dose did.

However, taking a quarter-dose of a two-drug combination was just as effective at lowering blood pressure as taking a full dose of one drug, and taking a quarter-dose of a four-drug combination proved more effective.

Those who took the smaller doses of a combination of drugs had fewer side effects than those taking one drug at full dose and no more side effects than those taking a placebo.

Who may be affected?

People taking medication because of hypertension, which makes the heart and blood vessels work harder and less efficiently. Uncontrolled, hypertension can lead to a heart attack, stroke or kidney failure. In addition to medication, methods to control hypertension — and possibly prevent it — include being physically active, not becoming overweight, eating healthfully and not smoking. About one of every three adults in the United States has high blood pressure, but just over half of them have it under control.

The researchers did not attribute results to specific medications. Just one study included a four-drug combination. Two of the 19 researchers are named as inventors for an institute that has applied for patents for the development of drug combinations, including those for blood pressure lowering.

The World Health Organization (WHO) published a new classification of antibiotics that aims to fight drug resistance, with penicillin-type drugs recommended as the first line of defense and others only for use when absolutely necessary.

The new 'essential medicines list' includes 39 antibiotics for 21 common syndromes, categorized into three groups: 'Access', 'Watch' and 'Reserve', Reuters reported.

Drugs on the 'Access' list have lower resistance potential and include the widely-used amoxicillin.

The 'Watch' list includes ciprofloxacin, which is commonly prescribed for cystitis and strep throat but "not that effective", WHO Assistant Director General for Health Systems and Innovation Marie-Paule Kienny told reporters.

Its use should be "dramatically reduced", the WHO said.

"We think that the political will is there but this needs to be followed by strong policies," Kienny said.

In the 'Reserve' category antibiotics such as colistin should be seen as a last resort. That prompts questions about



REUTERS

WHO ranks antibiotics to counter drug resistance

how producers of such antibiotics could make money, said Suzanne Hill, WHO's director of essential medicines and health products.

"What we need to do is stop paying for antibiotics based on how many times

they are prescribed, to discourage use. We don't want colistin used very frequently. In fact we don't want it used at all," Hill said.

"What we need to do as a global community is work out how we pay the

company not to market colistin and not to promote it and to keep it in reserve."

The WHO classification takes into account the use of antibiotics for animal health use, and was developed together with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health.

Other changes to the list included the addition of two oral cancer treatments, a new pill for hepatitis C that combines two medicines, a more effective treatment for HIV, and new pediatric formulations of medicines for tuberculosis.

But the WHO also said Roche's well-known flu drug oseltamivir, marketed as Tamiflu, may be removed from the list unless new information supports its use in seasonal and pandemic influenza outbreaks.

"There is an updated data set compared to when the committee evaluated this product last, and what that suggests is that the size of the effect of oseltamivir in the context of pandemic influenza is less than previously thought," Hill said.

How much CO₂ does a single volcano emit?

By Ethan Siegel*

Every volcanic eruption that occurs on planet Earth is full of pollutants. Not just ash and dust, mind you, but also carbon dioxide: One of the strongest greenhouse gases on our planet.

According to Forbes, in the largest cases, a single volcanic plume, lasting only hours, might add many millions of tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.



WIKIPEDIA

Could it be the case, then, that individual volcanoes add more carbon dioxide to our atmosphere than human activity does? To find the answer, we've got to look to the scientific data.

As viewed from space, it's immediately

clear that the Earth is a truly living planet, distinct from every other known world in the Solar System.

With continents, liquid oceans, icecaps, changing cloud patterns, and a thin but substantial atmosphere, our planet is teeming with life, changing from day-to-day and season-to-season.

Without the atmosphere, our world would be some 33°C cooler, would be incapable of having liquid water on the surface, and would see the most important part of our world – the surface – change irrevocably. Even though it's only around 0.0001 percent the mass of our planet, the atmosphere makes our world habitable.

The pressure allows water to exist in the liquid phase, and the heat-trapping clouds and gases like water vapor, methane and carbon dioxide give us the warmth necessary to have oceans.

Carbon in particular is a tremendous part of our planet; it's the fourth most abundant element in the Universe, the essential element for organic matter, and – other than the Sun – is the most important factor in determining Earth's temperature.

It's also the essential element in two of the three major greenhouse gases playing a role in our temperature, with water vapor varying tremendously based on other factors.

But most of that carbon is sequestered not in the Earth's crust, but deep within the mantle.

For billions of years, geological processes like volcanic eruptions controlled the carbon concentration in the atmosphere, as volcanism is the major way that carbon rises from the mantle into the atmosphere.

Most of the carbon stored in the mantle is in the form of carbonate (a salt of carbonic acid), but there are also huge stores of actual carbon dioxide sequestered deep within the mantle as a dissolved gas within the liquid rock.

Recent research about carbon reserves discovered underneath the United States has led to a new estimate of the amount of carbon in the Earth's upper mantle: approximately 100 trillion tons.

By contrast, there are only about 3.2 trillion tons of CO₂ (containing about 870 billion tons of actual carbon) in the atmosphere today. Yes, we've accurately measured and estimated the amount of carbon dioxide that humans have been adding to the atmosphere through our burning of fossil fuels, but it's vital to know what the natural rate of CO₂ emission is to understand the impact humans are having.

Humans emit around 29 billion tons of CO₂ each year. A little less than one percent of present atmospheric CO₂. We tend to think of erupting volcanoes with active, smoking plumes as the biggest source of carbon dioxide, and Mt. Etna is not only a classic example, it's one of the most reliable volcanoes of all. If anyone ever bets you, "which major volcano do you think might erupt this year", bet on Mt. Etna.

We can measure the degassing of Mt. Etna extremely well, and find that it adds about 16,000 tons of CO₂ to the atmosphere each day, or 5.8 million tons per year.

This might not sound impressive, but it's only one volcano. Interestingly, it's not just smoking, actively erupting volcanoes that emit CO₂, but seemingly inactive volcanoes around arcs and rift zones. Persistent degassing still occurs around a great number of volcanoes worldwide, on a continuous basis.

A tremendous synthesis of information took place in 2013, revealing our best value yet for the total amount of CO₂ emitted from natural release events within Earth. They found 33 measured degassing volcanoes emit a total of 60 million tons of CO₂ per year.

There are a total of 150 known degassing volcanoes, implying (based on the measured ones) that a total of 271 million tons of CO₂ are released annually.

With 550 historically active volcanoes total, they extrapolate this class of object contributes 117 million tons per year.

The global total from volcanic lakes is 94 million tons of CO₂ per year. Additional emissions from tectonic, hydrothermal and inactive volcanic areas contribute an estimated 66 million tons of CO₂ per year, although the total number of emitting, tectonic areas are unknown.

And finally, emissions from mid-ocean ridges are estimated to be 97 million tons of CO₂ annually.

Add all of these up, and you get an estimate of around 645 million tons of CO₂ per year. Yes, there are uncertainties; yes, there's annual variation; yes, it's easy to get led astray if you think that Mt. Etna is typical, rather than the unusually large emitter of CO₂ that it is.

When you realize that volcanism contributes 645 million tons of CO₂ per year – and it becomes clearer if you write it as 0.645 billion tons of CO₂ per year – compared to humanity's 29 billion tons per year, it's overwhelmingly clear what's caused the carbon dioxide increase in Earth's atmosphere since 1750.

The Earth's mantle is full of trillions of tons of carbon alone, and if even a small percent of it were added to the atmosphere, it has the potential to be absolutely catastrophic for the planet. But given the scales of the eruptions we actually have, less than a billion tons are emitted per year thanks to volcanic activity: A small enough amount that our planet can sequester roughly the same amount on a per-year basis.

*Ethan Siegel is an American theoretical astrophysicist and science writer.

Iran aims for Asia's third rank in biotech medicine production



science.co.org

Iran plans to rank third in Asia in the production of biotech medicines within the next three years, announced a senior official for technology and international affairs at the Vice Presidency for Science Affairs.

Currently, the number of biotech medicines in the global market is 146, of which 20 are available in the

Iranian market," Mostafa Qane'i was quoted as saying by Tasnim News Agency.

Of the 20 drugs in the market, four are monoclonal antibodies while the other 16 are recombinant drugs, he added.

The official noted that within the next three years, Iran would attain Asia's third ranking in the

production of biotech drugs by indigenizing 49 medicines.

Biotech drugs differ from pharmaceutical drugs as they use biotechnology in production, which involves the manipulation of microorganisms, like bacteria, or biological substances, such as enzymes, to perform a specific process.

India hopes new rocket can carry humans into space



AP

India successfully launched its heaviest-ever rocket which it hopes will eventually be able to carry astronauts into space – a feat that only Russia, the United States and China have achieved – its space agency said.

The Indian Space Research Organization said the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk III rocket lifted off from India's space launch center in Sriharikota, an island off the coast of Andhra Pradesh State in the country's southeast, and placed a communication satellite into orbit, abcnews.com reported.

The space agency's director, A.S. Kiran Kumar, said it is the heaviest rocket and satellite to be launched from India. The rocket is powered by an

indigenous engine that uses liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen as fuel, he said.

In the past, India has used

French rockets to launch its heavier communication satellites.

Indian space scientists

worked "relentlessly for decades and for this project since 2002 to successfully put the satellite into orbit", Kumar said. "This is a

historic day for ISRO."

India hopes the launch of the satellite, which weighs 3,136 kilograms, will expand its commercial launch business.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the scientists on Twitter.

"The GSLV - MKIII D1/ GSAT-19 mission takes India closer to the next generation launch vehicle and satellite capability. The nation is proud!", Modi tweeted.

The launch is the latest in a string of successes for the Indian space agency. In February, it launched a record-breaking 104 nano-satellites into orbit, all on-board a single rocket.

In November 2013, India launched a space probe that has been orbiting Mars since September 2014.

Scientists unveil Japan's largest complete dinosaur skeleton



nhmu.utah.edu

Scientists in Japan discovered the island nation's largest complete dinosaur skeleton. The record-breaking, 72-million-year-old fossils were unearthed on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido.

According to UPI, the bones belong to a duck-billed dinosaur specimen. Paleontologists from Hokkaido University and Hobetsu Museum in Mukawa have been excavating the skeleton since 2013.

Duck-billed dinosaur species, or hadrosaurs, have been unearthed in North America, South America, Eurasia and Antarctica. The herbivores thrived during the Late Cretaceous Period, between 100 million and 66 million years

ago.

However, the latest discovery marks just the third time a Hadrosaurid has been recovered from marine deposits. It's rare for a complete skeleton to be found in marine strata.

The species of the newly discovered dinosaur is unknown, but scientists dubbed the dino 'Mukawaryu', Japanese for Mukawa dragon.

A complete skeleton is any fossil skeleton with more than 50 percent of the specimen's bones.

Lead researcher Yoshitsugu Kobayashi said in a news release, "We first discovered a part of the fossilized Mukawaryu skeleton in 2013, and after a series of excavations,

we believe we have cleaned more than half of the bones the dinosaur had, making it clear that it is a complete skeleton."

The Hadrosaurid family tree is divided into two distinct groups. Species with a crest belong to Lamboasaurinae, while uncrested species belong to Hadrosaurinae.

"Although Mukawaryu has some characteristics of both groups, our preliminary analysis indicated it might belong to the Hadrosaurinae," Kobayashi said.

"Further cleaning of the fossils and detailed research should make it clearer which group the Mukawaryu skeleton belongs to."

Renewable energy

The vast majority of Australians want the government to focus on renewable energy, even if that means more money needs to be spent on making the system reliable, according to polling by the Lowy Institute.

Talk to your children about online lives every two weeks



theguardian.com

A leading charity has urged parents to do more to keep their children safe online as new figures reveal how often young people are exposed to violence, hatred, sexual content, bullying and other inappropriate content when using the Internet.

Amanda Azeez, associate head of child safety online at the UK's National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), said parents should have regular, open conversations with their children about their online lives and discuss basic safety in the same way they are also taught how to cross the road and not to talk to strangers, theguardian.com wrote.

"It's normal to have conversations about crossing the road, bullying and talking to strangers, but with the digital world changing all the time, it can be hard to have conversations about staying safe online," Azeez said.

"We really want to help parents and carers to feel more confident and to talk to their children at least every two weeks, if not more regularly."

In the NSPCC's latest Net Aware survey, two-thirds of children admitted to using apps while under the age limit. Popular sites such as YouTube, Facebook, SnapChat, Instagram, Twitter, Periscope, WhatsApp and Musical.ly all have a minimum age of 13.

The survey of more than 1,600 children and young people in schools across the UK found that a third had seen violence and hatred online, a fifth had seen sexual content and bullying. In every category, live-streaming sites were the worst offenders, with content relating to suicide and self harm, bullying and violence reported by 18 percent, 31 percent and 46 percent of reviewers respectively.

More than a third of the children surveyed had added a stranger to their contacts in the past six months, and quarter said they were likely or very likely to add someone they didn't know in the future.

Last year, a YouGov survey found that while one in five UK parents talked to their children about their online lives roughly once a fortnight, many were not confident that

their children were using the Internet safely.

Speaking ahead of an event on child safety at Cheltenham Science Festival evening, Azeez said that as soon as children have devices they should learn to be 'share aware'.

"They need to know how to think about the images they are sharing, the types of information they share, such as their location, and to think about who they are speaking to," she said.

"You wouldn't want them to talk to strangers in real life, but when they're on Minecraft, do you know who's messaging them?"

By having regular conversations as soon as children go online, Azeez said parents can keep up-to-date with the apps and games their children like and the safety issues they may present.

"We know most children, like all of us, are on their devices every day," she said. "Having frequent conversations will help parents spot any problems, but will also encourage children to talk when they are worried about anything."

Marriage key to healthy heart, longer life

Marriage may hold the key to a healthy heart and a longer life, research found.

In one of the largest studies of its kind, researchers based at Aston Medical School, Birmingham, monitored the survival of over a million people who had the three main risk factors for heart disease — high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes — between 2000 and 2013, express.co.uk reported.

The results found that people with high cholesterol were 16 percent more likely to be alive at the end of the study if they were married.

The same was true for diabetes and high blood pressure, with married people having 14 percent and 10 percent higher survival respectively compared to those who were single.

While the link is not fully understood, it is believed that the support offered by a spouse may be a key factor behind the improved survival.

In particular, the researchers suspect that people are better at managing these risk factors when they have the help of a loved one. But single people should not despair, they said. Though those who are happily married had the best survival rates, unmarried people who have close relationships with family and friends also reap the benefits.

It is also important to speak to your GP or get advice and support from the British Heart Foundation's Heart Helpline.

The data for this new research comes from the Algorithm for Comorbidities, Associations, Length of stay and Mortality (ACALM) study, which included over a million hospital patients in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Paul Carter, lead study author based at the ACALM study unit, said: "Our research suggests that marriage offers a protective effect, which is probably down to having support in controlling the key risk factors for heart disease."

"The findings shouldn't be seen as a reason to get married, but rather as encouragement for people to build strong support networks with their families and friends."



alert-1.com

The new research backs up some of ACALM's earlier studies which showed that people who suffered a heart attack had higher survival rates if they were married.

Doctors took that research and examined it more closely to unravel the underlying reasons why some patients survived while others did not and also whether the marriage-factor could be applied to other conditions which caused heart disease.

Are friends better for us than family?

The power of friendship gets stronger with age and may even be more important than family relationships, indicated new research by a Michigan State University scholar.

In a pair of studies involving nearly 280,000 people, William Chopik found that friendships become increasingly important to one's happiness and health across the lifespan. Not only that, but in older adults, friendships are actually a stronger predictor of health and happiness than relationships with family members, msu.edu wrote.

"Friendships become even more important as we age," said Chopik, assistant professor of psychology.

"Keeping a few really good friends around can make a world of difference for our health and well-being. So it's smart to invest in the friendships that make you happiest."

For the first study, Chopik analyzed survey information about relationships and self-rated health and happiness from 271,053 participants of all ages from nearly 100 countries.

The second study looked at data from a separate survey about relationship support/strain and chronic illness from 7,481 older adults in the United States.

According to the first study, both family and friend relationships were linked to better health and happiness overall, but only friendships became a stronger predictor of health and happiness at advanced ages.

The second study also showed that friendships were very



familyaction.org.nz

influential — when friends were the source of strain, participants reported more chronic illnesses; when friends were the source of support, participants were happier.

Chopik said that may be because of the optional nature of relationships — that over time, we keep the friends we like and make us feel good and discard the rest. Friends also can provide a source of support for people who don't have spouses or for those who don't lean on family in times of need.

Friends can also help prevent loneliness in older adults who may experience bereavement and often rediscover their social lives after they retire.

Family relationships are often enjoyable too, Chopik said, but sometimes they involve serious, negative and monotonous interactions.

"There are now a few studies starting to show just how important friendships can be for older adults. Summaries of these studies show that friendships predict day-to-day happiness more and ultimately how long we'll live, more so than spousal and family relationships," he said.

Friendships often take a "back seat" in relationships research, Chopik added, which is strange, especially considering that they might be more influential for our happiness and health than other relationships.

"Friendships help us stave off loneliness but are often harder to maintain across the lifespan," he said.

"If a friendship has survived the test of time, you know it must be a good one — a person you turn to for help and advice often and a person you wanted in your life."

Empower kids to solve community challenges

An after-school program that empowers young people to be agents of change in their communities has helped eighth-grade students in one Michigan area develop more prosocial behaviors and avoid antisocial behaviors, said University of Michigan School of Public Health researchers.

A five-year evaluation of the Youth Empowerment Solutions (YES) program developed by U-M and piloted in the Flint area shows the program was successful in helping youth gain confidence in themselves, think critically about their community, and work with adults to create positive change, said Marc Zimmerman, the Marshall H. Becker Professor of Health Behavior and Health Education, phys.org wrote.

"If you give middle school age kids a challenge and the opportunity to be creative within a safe and structured environment, they do amazing things when they are encouraged to think critically and think more about their communities and more outside of themselves," Zimmerman said. "This creates confidence in their abilities. They are not going to engage in destructive behaviors because they are focused on positive goals for which they feel ownership."

The program enrolled and followed for four years 367 youth from 13 urban and suburban middle schools. The participants were comprised of 32 percent white students, 46 percent African-American students and 22 percent mixed race, Asian-American, Latino, Native American or other ethnic/racial group. Sixteen percent were from



accesscommunity.org

Flint public schools and the others were from nearby districts in Genesee County.

The researchers measured prosocial outcomes including helping others, academic effort and responsible decision-making, and antisocial behaviors such as aggressive and delinquent behaviors.

They said the program improved youths' sense of psychological empowerment, which was associated with more helping of others, greater academic effort, more responsible decision-making, and less aggressive and delinquent behavior.

Zimmerman has written extensively about empowerment theory, which he said has three major parts: The intrapersonal component includes beliefs about control and confidence that one can make a difference; the interactional component, which involves awareness of the forces that shape life and an understanding of the resources and actions needed to create situations more

aligned with personal goals; and the behavioral component, which refers to actions individuals take to make desired changes in their environment, including involvement in prosocial activities.

While many youth intervention programs incorporate some empowerment principles, few include all three of these elements, Zimmerman said.

The YES program was created based on research — much of it conducted by Zimmerman and others at the U-M School of Public Health — showing that a young person's sense of identity, particularly ethnicity, is beneficial to his or her development. "Youth need to engage in activities that develop pride in their community and who they are, develop projects that they 'own,' and that involve active learning. That's the 'secret sauce,'" Zimmerman said.

"They learn by doing. They also learn by working with adults, but the adults don't take over. They are there for support and guidance."



dailymail.co.uk

The bloodied little boy who became a symbol of Aleppo's struggle

When Omran Daqneesh's photograph was beamed around the world, it became a haunting image of suffering of children in Syria.

A picture of Omran in the back of an ambulance, blood caking his face and his body covered with masonry dust following an air strike, garnered international attention last year, dailymail.co.uk wrote.

But now new pictures have emerged of the five-year-old from Aleppo, showing him fit and healthy with his family.

Last August, Omran sat dazed and confused when he was

loaded into an ambulance after being pulled from the rubble of his home in Aleppo which was decimated in an air strike.

His older brother, Ali, 10, died from injuries sustained in the blast.

But in new pictures taken from interviews with his family, Omran can be seen sitting on his father's knee at their home.

His family was interviewed in Aleppo for Al-Mayadeen. Journalist Kinana Allouche tweeted a picture of Omran with the caption: "The child Omran now lives in the Syrian state with its army, its leader and its people."



CECILIA WESSELS

Canadian man mows lawn with tornado behind him

A Canadian man's commitment to lawn care is going viral after his wife snapped a photo of him mowing the grass with a tornado looming behind him.

Cecilia Wessels posted a photo to Facebook that she said was snapped as a tornado passed near their Three Hills, Alberta home, UPI wrote.

The photo shows Wessels' husband, Theunis, mowing the lawn with the

tornado in the background.

"My husband mowing the lawn with a breeze in his hair," Wessels wrote.

Wessels later explained the tornado was not as close as it appeared to be in the photo and was moving away from their home at the time.

Theunis Wessels said he was keeping an eye on the twister to ensure it didn't change directions while he was mowing.

Enormous alligator swaggers across golf course

An enormous alligator shocked onlookers after sauntering along the fairway at a golf course.

The 12ft-long reptile — believed to be an elusive local predator dubbed 'Sherman the Tank' — emerged from a nearby pond and swaggered onto the grass last Wednesday evening.

Incredibly, the reptile came within a few meters of a family of startled deer that look on in bewilderment, mirror.co.uk reported.

The gator carried on walking before calmly disappearing into long reeds next to a pond at the Ocean Creek Golf Course on Frapp Island, South Carolina.

Animal worker Jessica Miller, 27, who recorded the creature, said: "This was an absolutely enormous alligator."



VIRAL PRESS

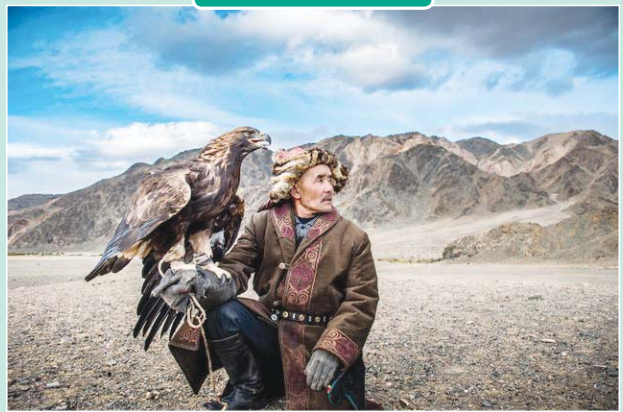
so it's hard to know the exact age. "Alligators mostly come out in the middle of the night so it was pretty rare to see one this size in the daytime."

Jessica who responded to animal calls at the resort said she 'wasn't scared' of Sherman.

She added: "Alligators don't get that big by doing stupid things like attacking people."

"So I trusted him. But then again I was using the zoom on the camera and not getting too close."

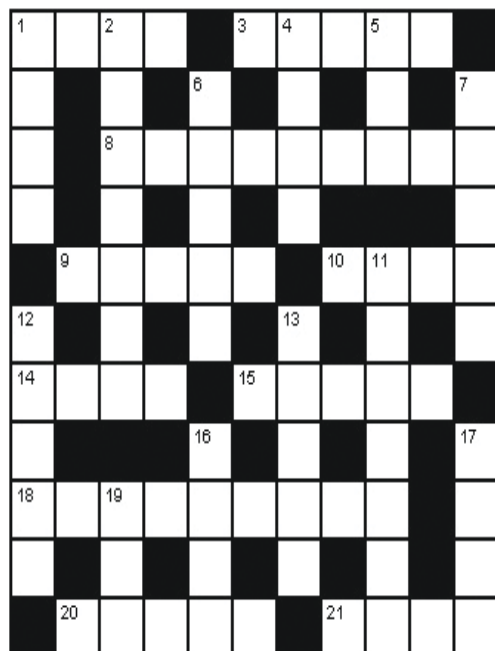
PICTURE OF THE DAY



A hunter named Saliukhan pauses with his golden eagle in Mongolia.

BILJANA JURUKOVSKI, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC YOUR SHOT

Quick Crossword



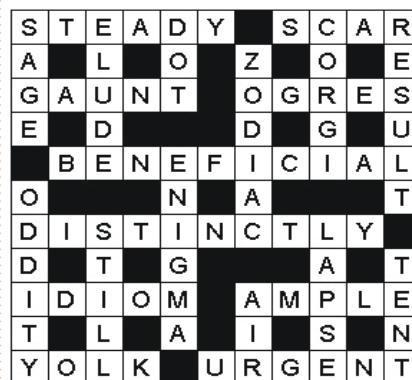
DOWN

1. Nothing (4)
2. Roman counterpart of Greek Poseidon (7)
4. Step (4)
5. Garland (3)
6. Courageous (5)
7. Arboreal mammal (5)
11. Imaginary creature (7)
12. Poisonous (5)
13. Subject (5)
16. Highly excited (4)
17. Diminutive (4)
19. Type of fish (3)

ACROSS

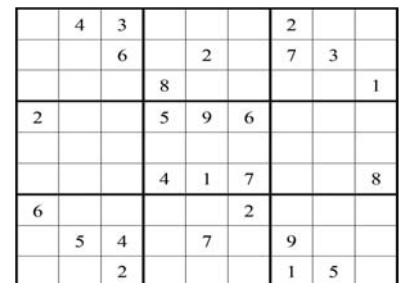
1. Metallic element (4)
3. Fruit (5)
8. Insular (9)
9. Bend (5)
10. Female relative (4)
14. Portent (4)
15. System of reasoning (5)
18. With identity concealed (9)
20. Proverb (5)
21. Jealousy (4)

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.



Deluxe Devils

Manchester United, valued at \$3.69bn, overtook Real Madrid as the world's most valuable football team for the first time in five years according to business magazine Forbes.

Defending champion Novak Djokovic was knocked out of the French Open following a straight-sets defeat by Dominic Thiem.

The Serbian second seed was second best throughout to powerful-hitting Thiem, losing 7-6 (7-5), 6-3, 6-0 in Paris, BBC reported.

It was the Austrian sixth seed's first victory over Djokovic and he will now play Rafael Nadal in the last four.

Djokovic out of French Open, Nadal through semis

The match was delayed from Tuesday because of rain. In 2016, Djokovic won the French Open title to become the first man since 1969 to hold all four grand slam titles at the same time.

Since then, he has lost in the third round at Wimbledon, suffered defeat in the US Open final, and lost in round two at the Australian Open. He has now failed to progress past the last eight in Paris for the first time since 2010.

"The last couple of tournaments I have had some great tournaments and it is unfortunate to finish Roland Garros in this way," said Djokovic.

"This is a whole new situation for me, not winning a big tournament for eight or nine months - this hasn't happened for a while."

"All the top players have gone through that and I guess I have to learn lessons and figure how get through. It is a big challenge and I'm up for it."

He was unable to cope with the power of



Novak Djokovic looked frustrated during his straight-sets defeat against Dominic Thiem in the French Open quarterfinal on June 7, 2017.

Thiem, who hit 38 winners - 20 from his dominant forehand - in total to Djokovic's 18.

Third set result was first time Djokovic has lost a set to love at a Grand Slam since the US Open in 2005.

"The third set, obviously, nothing was going my way and everything his way. It was a pretty bad set," added Djokovic. "I think it was decid-

ed in the first set. I tried but I lost a crucial break at the start of the second set.

"He deserved to win, he was definitely the better player on the court."

Nadal brings up his clay century

Also on Wednesday Rafael Nadal advanced

to the French Open semifinals after fellow Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta withdrew from their last-eight match with an injury.

The fourth seed, who is aiming to win a record 10th title at Roland Garros, led 6-2, 2-0 when Carreno Busta quit because of an abdominal problem. Nadal is now just the fifth man to reach 10 semifinals at a single Grand Slam in

the Open era.

Tournament-favourite Nadal, 31, has won the French Open title on each of the nine previous occasions he has advanced past the quarterfinals.

He has now recorded 100 best-of-five-sets victories on clay from just 102 matches, with his only defeats coming at Roland Garros, to Robin Soderling in the round of 16 in 2009 and Djokovic in the 2015 quarterfinals.

Nadal has also dropped just 22 games through five matches in Paris, bettering his previous low of 25 en route to the last four in 2008.

He broke Carreno Busta four times to take the first set, at the end of which the world number 21 needed a lengthy break to have treatment and bandaging applied to his stomach. Carreno Busta lasted just two games of the second set before retiring to extend Nadal's French Open record to an incredible 77 wins and just two losses.

Ostapenko shocks Wozniacki

Unseeded Latvian Jelena Ostapenko became the first teenager to reach the French Open women's semifinals since 2007 with a shock win against former world number one Caroline Wozniacki.

The 19-year-old lost the first five games of her first major quarterfinal before winning 4-6, 6-2, 6-2.

She will play Swiss 30th seed Timea Bacsinszky, who beat France's Kristina Mladenovic 6-4, 6-4.

"I'm really happy. I can't believe it," world number 47 Ostapenko said.

Ostapenko will meet 27-year-old Bacsinszky in their semifinal later today - when both players celebrate their birthdays.

The pair eventually won their quarterfinal matches after torrential rain disrupted the first two women's last-eight ties in Paris on Tuesday.

Part 1

There was something familiar about Gianluigi Buffon hoisting the Serie A trophy aloft after the game against Crotone at the end of May. Now, when had we last seen that? Ah, yes, in 2016. Oh, in 2015 as well. 2014? Yep, very much so. 2013 and 2012? Of course.

Juventus has racked up six consecutive Serie A titles. In those six seasons Juve has picked up nearly 200 points more than Internazionale. The champion's dominance has been spectacular. The Guardian reported.

It is very much the same story in Germany, where Bayern Munich has won the Bundesliga five years in a row since Borussia Dortmund secured the double in 2012. In France, Paris St-Germain has won four of the past five league titles.

Where is the fun in that? True, England and Spain have had a slightly better spread of teams who have won the league and the main cup (six different teams over the past six years in England and three in Spain) but the dominance of a few clubs means that, at least in Italy and Germany, we pretty much know in August who is going to win the league.

So why do we still care? Why do we still watch? The Guardian asked its writers how the dominance of a few teams is affecting their league and whether there are signs of fans turning off their TVs or not going to the stadiums.

Italy

After Juventus won a record-breaking sixth consecutive Scudetto, it's fair to say that things are getting repetitive at the top of Serie A. The problem is that Juve has pushed the bar so high.

Back in 2011-12 Juventus claimed its first title in this sequence with 84 points. Roma and Napoli exceeded that number this season, and yet neither has looked close to dislodging the Bianconeri.

The standard of the league is decidedly uneven. Juventus has re-established itself as one of the best teams on the planet, and to some extent has dragged the chasing pack up with it. Napoli plays some of the most entertaining football in Europe, and acquitted itself better against Real Madrid in the Champions League this season than the 6-2 aggregate defeat suggested. Roma, too, has improved.

But there is a significant gap between those teams and the next tier.

Europe's top leagues more predictable, so why are we watching?



Real Madrid's head coach celebrated La Liga triumph with his players after the 2-0 victory against Malaga on May 21, 2017.

Lazio and Atalanta - the latter especially impressive for its development of homegrown talent - were compelling, but neither truly threatened the top three. The Milan clubs seem to be trapped in permanent disarray - albeit both are expected to spend big under new Chinese owners this summer. Fiorentina remains frustratingly flaky.

And as you drift into the bottom half of the table, so talent levels fall steeply. Hardly surprising when you consider that 13 teams posted total revenues below €68m on their 2015-16 accounts.

Overall, it is a mixed picture. Juventus's European exploits have restored some prestige to Serie A, but also highlight how far others have fallen behind. Calls for the division to be reduced back to 18 teams are growing louder but the Italian Football Federation's president, Carlo Tavecchio,

called them "pure utopia".

Has the league's TV deal suffered? Serie A's TV deal works out at around €1.13bn per year. Predictability may have harmed the league's marketability but Juventus's strong performances in Europe are also a counterbalance. Half-empty stadiums, the poor performance of the Milan clubs and a struggling national economy are more tangible concerns.

Spain

The accusation is as relentlessly repetitive as it is tiresome, not to mention a little baffling. Who chants for a league rather than a team? And why does it sound so wounding about it? Why does it occupy people so much, to the extent that any reference to Spain, however innocuous, is guaranteed to immediately get a least one "pub league"

or similarly dismissive comment in reply? The accusation is flawed, too, but that doesn't mean that it is entirely false.

Spanish football does have more than two clubs: Atlético Madrid won the title three years ago and has reached two of the past four Champions League finals. That underlines the fact that if Spain is a two-horse race - and there's an element of that, Madrid and Barcelona having won all but one of the past 10 titles - it is not because the rest are a bunch of donkeys. Sevilla, Athletic Bilbao, Celta Vigo and Villarreal have in recent years reached semifinals or beyond in Europe, which Spanish football has dominated. Celta, 13th in La Liga, was one dreadful miss away from eliminating Manchester United and taking yet another Spanish team to yet another final in this season's Europa League.

Meanwhile, this season has not lacked surprises. Madrid dropped points against Eibar and Las Palmas. Barcelona lost the title against Deportivo, Celta and Málaga. For much of the year, Sevilla looked as if it might challenge for the title. Teams did compete with Madrid, the champion, who needed goals in the last 10 minutes in a quarter of its games. It wasn't a stroll - and if its "B Team" kept winning in the final weeks, just look at how good those reserves are. Few doubt that Madrid or Barcelona would win the Premier League too; they don't just dominate domestically, they dominate Europe in this super club era.

And yet Sevilla fell away, was knocked out of the Champions League by Leicester (which it had overrun in the last-16 first leg), and it is true that by the end of the domestic season it

was a familiar duo competing on the final day, as they had been all season, and there were few real shifts: the same top four, same next three and same bottom three all year. It is also true that at the bottom some of the teams could not really compete (although Madrid needed a last-minute winner to defeat relegated Sporting Gijón, for example), and there simply is not the money that other leagues have - even if that is improving a little.

It is not Scotland in the sun but there are problems, even if the last couple of years have seen them mitigated a little, not as bad as it was six or seven seasons ago. Spain's "other" clubs cannot compete economically and are a long way off Premier League teams in that regard. Another thing: fans are treated horribly in Spain, with kickoff times decided late and dictated entirely by TV (whose coverage is poor) and subject to change, with supporters criminalized and utterly voiceless.

Madrid's and Barcelona's enormity does eclipse everyone else and however brilliant they are - and they are brilliant - that can be discouraging. It is impossible to imagine it ending, too. But, then, everyone thought that the season that Atlético ended up as champion - a colossal, almost miraculous success that was rightly celebrated but might have hidden a deeper, troubling reality.

Has the league's TV deal suffered? The new TV deal, at last managed centrally and negotiated collectively, as enshrined in law, was designed to increase the amount raised and redistribute the money. The plan was to help to reduce the huge inequalities in the league, although Madrid and Barcelona will still take far higher amounts than the rest under a new formula that calculates earnings based on league position, historical position, "social base" and audience. Barcelona and Madrid will expect to make around €40m this year, while teams at the bottom can expect closer to €2m - a huge leap from figures that were close to €0.5m as recently as last season. Every single game is televised live, with matches spread right across the weekend, starting on Friday night and finishing on Monday night. In between those, the slots are Saturday at 1 p.m., 4.15 p.m., 6.30 p.m., and 8.45 p.m., and Sunday at 12, 4.15 p.m., 6.30 p.m., and 8.45 p.m. In total, the deal is worth an estimated €573,809m (€1,424,035 once Mediapro has taken its commission), €30m from domestic, €643m from international.

Cultural events to mark Chinese heritage day

A series of cultural events will be held to celebrate China's National Cultural Heritage Day, which falls on June 11.

A variety of cultural programs covering exhibition, public lecture and academic forum will be organized across the city to raise public awareness of cultural heritage, shanghaidaily.com wrote.



shanghaidaily.com

The Shanghai Great World — a landmark architecture of the city — re-opened to public in March. From tomorrow to July 9, innovative stage productions, creative bazaar, folk arts exhibition and cultural competition will be hosted to explore and showcase time-honored values of intangible cultural heritage.

Local families are also invited to a light-hearted competition of Tai Chi. The Chinese traditional martial arts will be creatively combined with Chinese tea art performance and traditional Chinese folk music.

On June 9, the international forum on the protection of intangible cultural heritage will be held at Shanghai Art and Design Academy.

Around 100 experts and scholars from Europe, Japan, South Korea and Egypt will share their expertise and experience in the preservation and revival of intangible cultural heritage.

Eight documentary series about the country's cultural heritage achievements will be aired on Dragon TV for a month.

On June 10, historic relic buildings of the city will be open to public for free. A painting exhibition will also provide visitors an insight into the buildings' history and unknown stories.

'Portrait of Philip III'

by Velázquez on view for first time

'Portrait of Philip III' by Velázquez was discovered and donated last year by William B. Jordan to American Friends of the Prado Museum, which has deposited it with the museum. It is now on display in Room 24 of the Villanueva Building in the Philippines.

According to artdaily.com, this donation and long-term deposit at the Prado will assist in completing the Museum's presentation of Velázquez as a court portraitist given that this is a painting previously unknown to scholars which casts new light on one of the key works painted by the artist during his early years at court: 'The Expulsion of the Moriscos'.



artdaily.com

For this first public presentation of the new deposit, the museum has decided to display it in one of its most emblematic spaces, at the heart of the permanent collection and next to 'Philip II' offering the 'Infante don Fernando to Victory' by Titian, which has very recently been restored.

Also on temporary display are 'Philip III' by Pedro Vidal and 'Philip IV' in Armor and the Infante don Carlos', both by Velázquez. Together they create a context for an understanding of the portrait of Philip III and for the reasons behind its attribution to Velázquez. The attribution of this work to Velázquez is based on three aspects: Stylistic analysis, technical characteristics, and its relationship to 'The Expulsion of the Moriscos'.

The painting reveals significant similarities with royal portraits painted by Velázquez between 1627 and 1629, such as 'Philip IV' standing. Shared traits include the use of shadows to model the join between the hair and forehead; the expressive organization of the face through a network of delicate points of light (on the eyes, nose, etc.), and the modeling of the mouth and the surrounding area, the lips created from delicate variations in the intensity of the reds and the chin with a slight indentation. These characteristics are quite different to the style of Philip III's portraitists, as becomes evident if this work is compared to 'Vidal's 'Portrait of Philip III'.

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'The Room', written by Harold Pinter and directed by Fatemeh Ali-Hosseini, is on stage at Tehran's City Theater Hall until June 23, 2017.

REZA MO'ATTARIAN/theater.ir

Iran's 'Cold Breath' warms up Mammoth Lakes Film Festival

An Iranian film 'Cold Breath', by Abbas Raziji, won the best narrative feature at the Mammoth Lakes Film Festival (MLFF) in the US state of California.

The film was screened in a number of distinguished international festivals and welcomed by foreign audience and critics, IRNA reported.



IRNA

Visitors are drawn to the area to experience exciting new films by both new and established independent artists, and for the opportunity to mingle with them at fun and friendly daily events. The festival is also a forum for filmmakers to have their work seen by industry professionals who have the potential to provide mentorship and propel their careers.

The movie narrates the story of Maryam, who is over the age of 30 and is facing numerous hardships every day.

The cast includes Bitia Baderan, Majid Mozaffari, Parichehr Riali, Hamideh Barati and Ezzatollah Ramezani.

Raziji's 'Cold Breath' won the best film award at the Second Ridgefield Independent Film Festival (RIFF), which was held in the US state of Connecticut from May 19 to 21.

MLFF screens independent features and shorts in the spectacular setting of Mammoth Lakes — California's premier mountain resort.

Named as one of the Top 50 Festivals worth the Entry Fee by Movie Maker Magazine in 2016 and 2017, MLFF captures the imagination of audiences and contributes to the vitality of film culture by providing emerging filmmakers with an opportunity to show their latest work in a vibrant and nurturing atmosphere.

Malaysia plans to have 125,000 Qur'an memorizers by 2050



The government of Malaysia targets to produce 125,000 Qur'an memorizers by 2050 through the National Transformation 2050 (TN50) policy, said the country's deputy prime minister.

Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the target was important for Malaysia to build a generation capable of developing a peaceful, harmonious, prosperous country and blessed by the Almighty, IQNA reported.

He said the Qur'an reciters being produced need to be molded to become leaders and professional workers such as doctors and engineers, and not just to be imam or religious teachers, according to Bernama.

"With 125,000 Qur'an reciters as professional workers, one day even Cabinet ministers and the PM as well could be Qur'an memorizers so that they would provide better leadership."

He was speaking at the opening ceremony of the 'Inculcation of Noble Values during Ramadan' program in Ayer Keroh, Malacca with Defense Minister Hishammuddin Hussein and Melaka Chief Minister Idris Haron also present.

Ahmad Zahid said to realize the aspiration, the government would strive to ensure that the National Tahfiz Education Policy (DPTN) could be implemented to streamline the education system in this country.

» Weather



47 29

Ahvaz



36 13

Borujerd



30 20

Rasht



38 22

Semnan



35 15

Arak



38^ 24

Tehran



27 15

Bishkek



28 18

Istanbul



37 23

Amman



22 9

Minsk



21 9

Moscow