



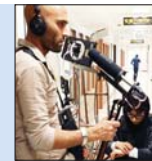
Kurdistan referendum will isolate Kurds: Shamkhani **2**



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"Retouch" crew pay tribute to Maryam Mirzakhani at Portuguese festival **16**

Energy deals inked with Russian, Japanese firms



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Hiroshi Sato (2nd L), Gholam-Reza Manouchehri (2nd R) and Hamid Akbari (1st R), respectively of Japan's Toyo, Iran's NIOC and Petropars, sign a gas agreement in Tehran on July 17, 2017.

'Big risk' for U.S. if IRGC named terrorist: military chief

POLITICS **TEHRAN** - Mo-hammad Bagheri, Iran's armed forces chief of staff, warned Washington on Monday that putting the IRGC on the list of terrorist groups will pose a "big risk" for U.S. forces and its military bases in the region.

Addressing a forum of the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps in the northeastern city of Mashhad, the major general advised U.S. officials to guard their words "more rationally and prudently" when talking about "powerful" countries like Iran.

U.S. officials said in February that the Trump administration was con-

sidering a proposal that could lead to potentially designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

Iran's missile power not open to talks

Elsewhere his remarks, the top general said the Iranian military has promoted its defense capabilities more than ever.

"New security threats being devised by the arrogant powers and regional reactionaries have targeted the Islamic Republic of Iran which makes it essential to raise awareness and increase readiness to counter the threats," the senior commander noted. **→2**

Could death end drug-related offences?

By Maryam Qarehgozlu

The Majlis (Iranian parliament) on Sunday approved the general outlines of a controversial bill proposing limitations on death penalty for drug offenders.

Out of 245 MPs present in the 290-seat parliament 182 voted in favor of the bill. It will become a law after being thoroughly studied by the parliament's Judicial Committee and confirmation by the Guardian Council.

The bill, which was first put forward last year, would conditionally exempt those who commit drug-related crimes due to poverty and unemployment from death penalty. However, those offenders who carry deadly weapons while trafficking drugs as well

as drug lords and those with criminal records will still get death sentence.

A review of drug sentencing laws in Iran

Laws pertaining to drug sentencing in Iran criminalize those who perpetrate drug-related offences including import, export, cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of drugs depending on the amount and origin of the drug either being synthetic/semi-synthetic [also known as opioids] or natural [also known as opiates].

As per the law, import, export, cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of 5 kilograms or more of opiates such as opium or 30 grams or more of opioids such as heroin are capital offences. **→13**

PGCC may be about to eject member Qatar

The regional grouping of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) may well be on its way to excommunicating member state Qatar, as political tectonic plates seem to be widening a bitter divide.

Seismic uproar first surfaced early last month, when Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain — all PGCC members — abruptly cut their diplomatic ties to Qatar, another member of the bloc, and blocked their transit routes with the country.

They accused Qatar of sponsoring terrorism and later issued a list of 13 demands they said Doha had to meet in order for ties to be normalized. The Qatari government denied the accusation and rejected the demands.

On Monday, in a speech at Chatham House in London, Emirati Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash gave the strongest signal yet that the PGCC might act to expel Qatar.

"You cannot be part of a regional organization dedicated to strengthening mutual security and furthering mutual interests, and at the same time undermine that security and harm those interests," Gargash said, referring to the PGCC and addressing Qatar.

Will the PGCC survive?

Observers say the dispute with Qatar has less to do with the terrorism sponsorship claims and more to do with the fact that Doha follows a foreign policy that is more independent of Saudi Arabia. That view is specially strengthened given the fact that Saudi Arabia itself stands accused of supporting terrorism. **→13**

Mahathir: Saudis not suitable partner to fight terrorism

KUALA LUMPUR - Saudi Arabia is not a suitable partner for Malaysia in promoting moderation in the Muslim world or in countering terrorism, says Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

The former prime minister said any such cooperation can only be with a country that is not involved in a war, a condition he said Riyadh had failed to fulfill.

"Any cooperation (to fight terror) must be with countries that are not involved in war, but we are now working with a country that is clearly taking part in a war.

"That is not proper," the Pakatan Harapan chairman said.

Saudi Arabia is currently engaged in a military operation in Yemen, backing its government's fight against the Houthi rebels.

Rights groups have condemned the Sau-

di-led bombardments of Yemen, which they said have killed tens of thousands of civilians. More than three million people have been displaced by the conflict.

Mahathir, who not long ago organised a global campaign to outlaw war under his Perdana Global Peace Foundation, was asked to comment on the government's decision to approve a 16ha piece of land in Putrajaya for a new "centre for peace" named after present Saudi ruler, Salman Abdulaziz.

It has recently emerged that the Muslim World League (MWL), an organisation heavily funded by the Saudi government to prop up the kingdom's Islamic image worldwide, is also involved in the new centre.

The group has for decades acted as Riyadh's chief mouthpiece through the publi-

cation of Islamic materials and the financing of mosques and Islamic centres from Asia to Europe.

But a recent report by a British think-tank linked MWL to extremist ideologies behind militant groups such as Al-Qaeda, Taliban and Islamic State (IS).

The plan for the centre also baffled Washington-based terrorism expert, Zachary Abuza, who said Saudi Arabia could not become a representative of moderate Islam.

"Saudis have been spreading Wahhabism throughout the world, especially Southeast Asia, from a more tolerant brand of Shafite Islam to a more austere version," the professor from the National War College told FMT.

(Source: Free Malaysia Today)

Iran's military capabilities avert threats: analyst

A political analyst says Iran's military capabilities have averted the threats against the country amid the West's efforts to create conflicts in the region.

In a Monday interview, Abdullah Hosseini, a lecturer at Al-Mustafa University, pointed to Iran's achievements in enhancing its military capabilities, adding, "It is completely logical. The history has proved that if they (nations) have been capable of defending themselves, the amount of the threats from outside were reduced."

"Because of these capabilities, Tehran has turned into a superpower in the region and because of this no one has managed to ever think about invading Iran. Several times they (the U.S.) have spoken about the war [option] being on the table, but these are just the threats that never materialized and they are not going to be materialized because of the Iranian [military] capabilities," Hosseini said.

The analyst slammed the U.S. military presence in the Middle East and its interference in the affairs of regional countries and

noted, "It is not that the Americans want to solve the problems. They are here to create problems, to increase the problems and to bring disunity."

"The U.S. wants to divide and rule... So the first mission of the U.S. and Britain and Europe, when they come to the region, is not unification of the countries; it is not the unification of schools of thought; it is not unification of the people and nations; it is to bring differences to create conflict and, as a result, sell their weapons," Hosseini said.



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Al-Quds holy site reopened

Israel reopened an ultra-sensitive holy site Sunday closed after an attack that killed two policemen, but Muslim worshippers were refusing to enter due to new security measures including metal detectors and cameras.

Crowds chanted "Allahu Akbar" (God is Greatest) as a number of initial visitors entered Jerusalem's Haram al-Sharif compound, known to Jews as the Temple Mount.

The flashpoint holy site includes the Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

Condolences

Dear Mr. Homayoun Saleh

We express our heartfelt condolences on the death of your beloved father. We pray the Almighty God to bestow you and your bereaved family patience and forbearance on this irreparable loss. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

COHEN AMIR-ASLANI

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Kurdistan referendum will isolate Kurds: Shamkhani

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Shamkhani said on Monday that holding a referendum on the Iraqi Kurdistan's independence would lead to the isolation of the Kurdish people of that country.

Shamkhani made the remarks in a meeting with a high-ranking delegation from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in Tehran.

Pointing to the referendum as a plan orchestrated by colonizing powers, the senior official said it would eventually hurt the national interests of the Kurds and other Iraqi civilians.



Iran can play positive role in Baghdad-Erbil disputes: Kurdish PM

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Prime Minister of Iraqi Kurdistan, Nechirvan Barzani, said on Sunday that Iran can "play a positive role" in resolving disputes between the Iraqi government and the autonomous Kurdish Regional Government (KRG).

In a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad, Iraj Masjedi, Barzani said serious dialogue is needed to resolve the disputes, adding that Iran can help in this regard.

Masjedi, for his part, said Tehran has already offered to mediate between Baghdad and Erbil and tried to pave the ground for talks between the two sides.



General says Britain, U.S. accomplices in creating terrorists

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Masoud Jazayeri, the deputy chief of Iran's armed forces, said on Monday that documents prove that the American and British governments were accomplices in creating terrorist groups in the Middle East, calling the U.S. the prime sponsor of terrorist groups.

Jazayeri added, "All regimes which aided terrorists in Iraq and Syria are themselves gripped with problems that will have even more adverse consequences in the future."



Iran welcomes Syrian initiative to monitor crimes against humanity

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A foreign policy advisor to the Iranian Parliament speaker has said that Iran welcomes the initiative by a number of Syrian lawmakers to launch a center in two towns of al-Foua and Kafriya to monitor crimes against humanity.

"Iran is steadfast in fighting terrorism and finding a political solution to the Syrian issue," Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in a meeting on Sunday with Hussein Raqi al-Husseini, head of Syria-Iran parliamentary friendship group.

The two Syrian towns, 10 km to the northern Idlib, have been under siege since 2015 by terrorist groups.



Iran boosts range, accuracy of cruise missiles

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran has increased the range and accuracy of its sea-launched cruise missiles, Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehghan told lawmakers at a Sunday meeting.

Dehghan noted that peace and security will be established by power and Iran's success to this end relies very much on its military power.

Iran is self-sufficient in developing its military products and one cannot prevent the country's progress by sanctions, he noted, adding that his country's might is evident in shaping regional developments.



Rights advocates indifferent to Syrians' suffering: top MP

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A senior Iranian lawmaker has criticized the self-proclaimed advocates of human rights for their indifference toward the sufferings of the Syrian people, saying they do not take any steps to help resolve the raging conflict.

"While people in some parts of Syria are under terrorist siege and going through a critical situation, the so-called defenders of human rights do not take any steps to help Syrians and lessen their suffering," Alaeddin Boroujerdi said in a meeting with Hussein al-Raqeeb, a member of People's Council of Syria, on Sunday in Tehran.

Iran turning Soviet-American wreckage into good, serving Afghans

By Mehdi Sepahvand

TEHRAN — "F*** the Russia!" says Baba, father of the protagonist of Khaled Hosseini's novel "The Kite Runner" and a post-Soviet invasion Afghan refugee in the U.S. The old man is "still adjusting" to American ways, including English language.

A charming character, Baba was among the smaller number of Afghan refugees that made it to the U.S. This is while according to Sivanka Dhanapala, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Representative in Iran, the Islamic Republic in December 2016 hosted 951,142 Afghan refugees, in addition to 620,000 Afghans who held Afghan passports and Iranian visas. The government also estimates that there are approximately 1.5-2 million undocumented Afghans also living in Iran. Many of these fled the Soviet-rendered hell in Afghanistan, while many others fled a similar situation caused by the U.S. in later years.

Embracing the refugees, Iran has been acting as a recycling machine to turn them into good, serving citizens. Afghan refugees first were noticed in Iran as low-cost labor, eating into the labor market in areas such as construction and municipal service, among others. In recent years, during the Syrian crisis, Iran helped



Afghan boys in a day school in Iran study Farsi. (Photo: Tasnim)

Afghan refugees first were noticed in Iran as low-cost labor, eating into the labor market in areas such as construction and municipal service, among others.

form a brigade for President Bashar al-Assad as a bulwark against adversaries. Iran also opened its land for burial of those of them who fell in the battlefield.

It has been a few years since Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a mandate for the government to more warmly embrace Afghan refugees, expanding the range of services given to them in various fields from education, health, and insurance to citizenship.

During his May visit to Afghanistan, he issued a mandate for the government to more warmly embrace Afghan refugees, expanding the range of services given to them in various fields from education, health, and insurance to citizenship.

Saudis extend Iran antagonism to trade sphere

By Ali Kushki

TEHRAN — As Iran strives to reap a bonanza from an international nuclear deal with world powers, Saudi Arabia is intervening in regional markets to dent the efforts, an Iranian economy official said.

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

"Because Saudi Arabia lacks technical and engineering capabilities, they try to fight us with money," Ansari added.

It is under the Saudis' sway that certain Iraqi ministries are reluctant to enter partnership with Iranian engineering firms.

"It is not clear yet why certain Iraqi ministries do not agree with the activity of Iranian firms in the country," he said, urging "political negotiations" with Baghdad to catalyze the process.

This is while the Iraqi government, due to financial

crunches, has not been responsive to 48 Iranian firms who want to settle the bill, Ansari explained.

Iran was the first country to rush to the aid of Iraq as Islamic State militancy got the country off guard in 2014, ravaging through nearly two-third of the Iraqi territory.

Some link the surprise visit of the Saudi Arabian foreign minister to Iraq in February 2017 to Riyadh's concerns over increasing Iranian sway in the country.

Adel al-Jubeir's surprise trip marked the first official visit by a Saudi foreign minister since 1990, and the first high-level visit since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

As arch-rivals in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Iran have had no political relations for more than one year now, and support rival groups in Syria's conflict.

Due to regional conflicts, Saudi Arabia tries to swing the balance in Iran-dominated markets in its favor by injecting money into these markets.

Iraqi diplomat says Kurdistan independence bid is 'illegal'

By Negar Asadi

TEHRAN — Rageh Saber Abbood Al-Musawi, the Iraqi ambassador to Tehran, has said a plan by the autonomous Kurdistan region to hold a referendum to secede from Iraq is "illegal".

"This is an ineffective action which runs contrary to Iraq's constitutional law, which stresses Iraq's integrity and the one that Kurds agreed upon in 2005," he told ISNA in an interview published on Monday.

"Kurds are our brothers and friends,"

he noted, saying that different views can be bridged through dialogue.

Highlighting the great importance of Iraq's territorial integrity, the top diplomat expressed hope that the war-torn Iraq would be reconstructed with the help of people and through maintaining integrity.

The northern Iraqi Kurdistan region is to hold independence referendum in September on breaking away from the mainland.

The decision to hold the referendum was taken in June, during a meeting be-

tween President of Iraqi Kurdistan Masoud Barzani and other political leaders.

"I am pleased to announce that the date for the independence referendum has been set for Monday, Sept. 25, 2017," Barzani tweeted on June 7.

The Iraqi government issued a statement on June 9 rejecting any unilateral move by Kurdish regional authorities to press for independence.

Iran and Turkey have denounced the move.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's clear stance is to support Iraq's territorial in-

tegrity and unity," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on June 10.

The Kurdistan region is part of Iraqi soil and unilateral decisions which are not on the basis of the Iraqi constitution will just complicate the crisis in the country, he explained.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry also called the decision a "grave mistake".

"The maintenance of Iraq's territorial integrity and political unity is one of the fundamental principles of Turkey's Iraq policy," it added.

Looking back, what the Soviet and Americans did not accomplish in Afghanistan has now turned into a blessing for the Islamic Republic. By analogy, what the U.S. did in Iraq in the early 2000s has also offered its share of benefit for Iran. Having gotten rid of its blood enemy Saddam Hussein thanks to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Iran started building ties with the Iraqi government afterward. Tehran nevertheless has claim over a recent setback forced upon the terrorist group Daesh in the Iraqi city of Mosul. These have encouraged Iran to be looking for more strategic co-operation with its western neighbor.

Good at recycling and turning threats into opportunities, Iran has proven to play smart in the wake of regional crises, from Afghanistan to Iraq. Syria may turn out to be the next blessing for Iran.

Saudi Arabia particularly showed animosity toward the nuclear accord between Iran and six world powers, including the U.S., in 2015, which made it possible for Tehran to re-engage with global economy as it agreed to scale down its nuclear program.

Saudis believe lifting sanctions put an end to Iran's isolation, leaving it with more leeway to pursue her hegemonic ambitions, what Iran rules out as "illusionary".

Speaking at an annual retreat of "mediators and peace process actors" in Oslo, Norway, in June, former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry revealed regional countries' mal intention toward Iran and the deal.

"Leaders in the region were saying to me personally, and to the president, President Obama, you should bomb these guys (Iranians)," Kerry said.

Also, leaked U.S. diplomatic cables in 2010 indicated that then-King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia had repeatedly urged the U.S. to attack Iran to destroy its nuclear program.

The Saudi king was recorded as having "frequently exhorted the U.S. to attack Iran to put an end to its nuclear weapons programme", one cable stated.

Guardian Council marks 38th anniversary

By Mohammad Homaeifar

TEHRAN — The Guardian Council marked its 38th anniversary of its establishment in an announcement on Monday.

In the announcement the council renewed its pledge to work toward safeguarding the Islamic Republic.

The Guardian Council is a constitutionally mandated 12-member council that wields considerable power and influence in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Iranian constitution calls for the council to be composed of six Islamic faqihs (experts in Islamic law), "conscious of the present needs and the issues of the day" to be selected by the Supreme Leader, and six jurists, "specializing in different areas of law, to be elected by the Majlis from among the Muslim jurists nominated by the head of the Judiciary".

It is charged with interpreting the constitution, supervising elections of, and approving of candidates to, the Assembly of Experts, the president and the Majlis, and ensuring the compatibility of the legislation passed by the Majlis with the criteria of Islam and the constitution.



The Majlis has no legal status without the Guardian Council, that is, any bill passed by the Majlis must be reviewed and approved by the Guardian Council to become law.

According to Article 96 of the constitution, the Guardian Council holds veto power over all legislations approved by the Majlis. It can nullify a law based on two accounts: being against Islamic

laws, or being against the constitution. While all the members vote on the laws being compatible with the constitution, only the six clerics vote on them being compatible with Islam.

If any law is rejected, it will be passed back to the Majlis for correction. If the Majlis and the 12-member Guardian Council cannot decide on a case, it is passed up to the Expediency Council for a decision.

The Guardian Council is uniquely involved in the legislative process, with equal oversight with regards to economic law and social policy, including such controversial topics as abortion.

The Guardian Council also functions similar to a constitutional court. The authority to interpret the constitution is vested in the council. Interpretative decisions require a three-quarters majority. The council does not conduct a court hearing where opposing sides are argued.

Since 1991, all candidates of parliamentary or presidential elections, as well as candidates for the Assembly of Experts, have to be qualified by the Guardian Council in order to run in the election.

'Big risk' for U.S. if IRGC named terrorist: military chief

1 → Bagheri noted that the Iranian people have stood strong in defending the country and do not let others inter-

fere in their internal affairs.

Elsewhere, he said that Iran's purely "defensive" missile power is "non-negotiable".

On 15 June, the U.S. Senate voted nearly unanimously for legislation to impose new sanctions on Iran over its bal-

listic missile activity, its alleged human rights violation and claims of support for terrorist organizations.

UAE arranged hacking of Qatari media

UAE minister denies any hacking

The United Arab Emirates arranged for Qatari government social media and news sites to be hacked in late May in order to post false quotes linked to Qatar's emir, prompting the Qatar-Persian Gulf diplomatic crisis, the Washington Post reported on Sunday, citing U.S. intelligence officials.

The Qatari emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, had been falsely quoted in May as praising Hamas and saying that Iran was an "Islamic power," the Post reported. In response, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain cut diplomatic and transport ties with Qatar on June 5, accusing it of supporting "terrorism". Qatar strongly denies the allegations.

Qatar said in late May that hackers had posted fake remarks by the emir, an explanation rejected by Gulf states.

The Post reported that U.S. intelligence officials learned last week of newly analyzed information that showed that senior UAE government officials discussed the planned hacks on May 23, the day before they occurred.

The officials said it was unclear if the UAE hacked the websites or paid for them to be carried out, the newspaper reported. The Post did not identify the intelligence officials it spoke to for the report.

UAE Ambassador to the US Yousef al-Otaiba denied the report in a statement, saying it was "false," the Post said.

"What is true is Qatar's behaviour. Funding, supporting, and enabling extremists from the Taliban to Hamas and Gaddafi. Inciting violence, encouraging radicalisation, and undermining the stability of its neighbours," the statement said.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation was previously known to be working with Qatar to probe the hacking.

Al Jazeera's Heidi Zhou-Castro, reporting from Washington, DC, said this is new information and the US Department of State has yet to officially respond.

"These are certainly developments that will be analysed and will have a major role to play in negotiations coming up," she said.



Anwar Gargash, UAE state minister for foreign affairs

"Perhaps this will finally result in some movement."

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Thursday returned to the United States from his shuttle diplomacy in the Persian Gulf region to try to resolve the dispute. His visit had yielded little except for a bilateral agreement between the US and Qatar to fight "terrorism".

"Tillerson's spokesperson has said that [Qatar-Persian Gulf crisis negotiations] may be a long process to find any sort of common ground in resolving this conflict," said Zhou-Castro.

"But with this new information - that certainly throws a wrench in these negotiations - it remains to be seen exactly where things will go."

Qatar said in June it had proof that the recent hacking of its state-run news agency and government social media ac-

counts was linked to countries that have recently cut ties with it.

"Qatar has evidence that certain iPhones originating from countries laying siege to Qatar were used in the hack," Ali Bin Fetais al-Marri, Qatar's attorney general, told reporters in the capital, Doha, on June 21.

Khalil Jahshan, executive director at the Arab Center Washington, DC, told Al Jazeera the revelations are the most important development so far since the beginning of the crisis and undermined the Emirati position.

"It illustrates that Qatar, from the very beginning of this crisis, by inviting both US and British intelligence services to help investigate this was a step in the right direction," he said.

"And now the results are out in public and they confirm that hacking has taken

place and the quotes that precipitated this crisis by the emir of Qatar were fabricated and resulting from this hacking."

Jahshan said the revelations should have an effect on the mediation efforts, although the signs during the crisis so far have not been encouraging.

"It's denial after denial after denial. They [the UAE] claim that basically their demands from Qatar are legitimate and they insist that they should be fulfilled almost as a diktat instead of sitting at a table and negotiating some legitimate differences that they might have with Doha, and somehow, unfortunately, Saudi Arabia has followed suit," said Jahshan.

"So the failure, if you will, or at least temporary failure of Tillerson is not going to change unless there is a change of attitude on the part of the Emirates in particular."

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Ukraine wants Russia held to account over MH17 downing

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko says Russia must be held to account over the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, three years after the tragedy that killed 298 people.

International investigators have said the Boeing jet flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was shot down over war-torn eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014, by a Russia-supplied missile system that was fired from territory held by Russian-backed fighters.

The probe being led by the Netherlands - which suffered the majority of losses - is focusing on some 100 people suspected of having played an "active role" in the incident, but the investigators have not publicly named any suspects.

Ukraine has said that all the evidence points to the anti-government fighters and Russia.

Russia and the anti-government groups it supports, however, have denied any involvement and have blamed Ukraine.

Poroshenko called the incident a "barefaced crime" in a Facebook post on Monday, marking the third anniversary of the tragedy.

"It was a barefaced crime that could have been avoided if not for the Russian aggression, Russian system and Russian missile that came from Russian territory," Poroshenko said.



"Our responsibility before the dead and before future generations is to show to the aggressor terrorists that responsibility is unavoidable for all the crimes committed."

Officials announced this month that the trials of any suspects arrested over the shooting down of MH17 will be held in the Netherlands.

Poroshenko said that he was "convinced that the objectivity and impartiality of Dutch justice will complete this path".

No official events are planned in Kiev to mark the anniversary but local residents are expected to gather for a small religious ceremony at the crash site in territory held by anti-government fighters.

In the Netherlands, thousands of relatives and friends gathered on Monday to unveil a "living memorial" near the Amsterdam airport from which the plane departed.

In Malaysia, Dato Sri Liow Tiong, the transport minister, promised justice for the victims.

"Three years may have passed, but the memories of the passengers and crew on-board will always be with all of us and they will be remembered dearly. Ten nations have also lost sons and daughters to this tragedy," he said in a statement on Monday.

Russia and Ukraine have been locked in a bitter feud since Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014.

Fighting then broke out between pro-Russian fighters and Ukrainian government forces in a conflict that has cost the lives of nearly 10,000 people.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Netanyahu opposes U.S.-Russian ceasefire deal in Syria

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed his opposition to a U.S.-Russian ceasefire deal recently reached in southern Syria during his meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron.

Netanyahu told reporters after the meeting on Sunday that Tel Aviv totally opposes the truce agreement in southern Syria, which he alleged consolidates Iran's presence in the Arab country.

A top Israeli official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, claimed that Tehran was interested in deploying extensive military forces including the establishment of an airbase for Iranian aircraft and a naval base in Syria besides sending advisers to the Arab country.

The Israeli premier also discussed the truce deal with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson by phone on Sunday night.

On July 7, Russia, the U.S. and Jordan agreed to back a ceasefire in southwestern Syria and to establish a de-escalation zone covering the provinces of Dara'a, Suwayda and Quneitra, in an area bordering the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

The trilateral agreement on the cessation of hostilities was announced after

a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his American counterpart, Donald Trump, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in the German city of Hamburg.

Netanyahu's remarks revealed a major disagreement between Tel Aviv and the two great powers that had until now been kept under wraps and expressed only through quiet diplomatic channels.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says Tel Aviv and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri militant groups wreaking havoc in the country.

Israel regularly hits positions held by the Syrian army in the Golan Heights, describing the attacks as retaliatory. Damascus says the raids aim to help Takfiri militants fighting against government forces.

On several occasions, the Syrian army has confiscated Israeli-made arms and military equipment from terrorists fighting government forces. There are also reports that Israel has been providing medical treatment to the extremists wounded in Syria.



Last month, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres expressed concerns about a spike in contacts between Israeli armed forces and Syria militants in recent months, saying it could lead to escalation and cause harm to UN observers deployed to the Golan Heights.

Also, the Wall Street Journal recently reported Israel has been providing Takfiri

terrorists in Syria's Golan Heights with a steady flow of funds and medical supplies.

The meeting between Netanyahu and Macron took place at the Élysée Palace in Paris and lasted an hour and a half. A portion of the meeting was conducted in private.

(Source: SANA)

ISIL leader Baghdadi almost certainly alive - Kurdish security official

A top Kurdish counter-terrorism official said on Monday he was 99 percent sure that ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was alive and located south of the Syrian city of Raqqa, after reports that he had been killed.

"Baghdadi is definitely alive. He is not dead. We have information that he is alive. We believe 99 percent he is alive," Lahur Talabany told Reuters in an interview.

"Don't forget his roots go back to al Qaeda days in Iraq. He was hiding from security services. He knows what he is doing."

Iraqi security forces have ended three years of ISIL rule in the Iraqi city of Mosul, and the group is under growing pressure in Raqqa - both strongholds in the militants' crumbling self-proclaimed caliphate.

Still, Talabany said ISIL was shifting tactics despite low morale and it would take three or four years to eliminate the group.

After defeat, ISIL would wage an insurgency and resemble al-Qaeda on "steroids", he said.

The future leaders of ISIL were expected to be intelligence officers who served under former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, the men credited with devising the group's strategy.

(Source: Reuters)

South Korea's new government proposes military talks with North Korea

South Korea on Monday proposed military talks with North Korea, the first formal overture to Pyongyang by the government of President Moon Jae-in, to discuss ways to avoid hostile acts near the heavily militarized border.

There was no immediate response by the North to the proposal for talks later this week. The two sides technically remain at war but Moon, who came to power in May, has pledged to engage the North in dialogue as well as bring pressure to impede its nuclear and missile programs.

The offer comes after the North claimed to have conducted the first test of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) earlier this month, and said it had mastered the technology to mount a nuclear warhead on the missile. South Korea and the United States, its main ally, dispute the claim.

"Talks and cooperation between the two Koreas to ease tension and bring about peace on the Korean peninsula will be instrumental for pushing forth a mutual, virtuous cycle for inter-Korea relations and North Korea's nuclear problem," the South's Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon told a news briefing.

The South Korean defense ministry proposed talks with the North on July 21 at Tongilgak to stop all activities that fuel tension at the military demarcation line.

Tongilgak is a North Korean building at the Panmunjom truce village on the border used for previous inter-Korea talks. The last such talks were held in December 2015.

Cho also urged the restoration of military and government hotlines across the border, which had been cut by the North last year in response to the South imposing economic sanctions after a nuclear test by Pyongyang. In all, the North has conducted five nuclear tests and numerous missile tests.

The South also proposed separate talks by the rival states' Red Cross organizations to resume a humanitarian project to reunite families separated during the 1950-53 Korean War in closely supervised events held over a few days.

The South Korean Red Cross suggested talks be held on Aug. 1, with possible reunions over the Korean Thanksgiving Chuseok holiday, which falls in October this year.

The last such reunions were held in October 2015 during the government of Moon's predecessor under a futile push for reconciliation following a sharp increase in tension over border incidents involving a landmine blast and artillery fire.

-----Beijing in Favor

China, which has close ties to Pyongyang despite Beijing's anger over North Korea's missile and nuclear tests, welcomed the proposal, saying cooperation and reconciliation between the two Koreas was good for everyone and could help ease tensions.

"We hope that North and South Korea can work hard to go in a positive direction and create conditions to break the deadlock and resume dialogue and consultation," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a daily news briefing.

The proposals come after Moon said at the G20 summit in Hamburg earlier this month that he was in favor of dialogue with the North despite the "nuclear provocation" of its latest missile test.

When Moon visited Washington after being elected president, he and U.S. President Donald Trump said they were open to renewed dialogue with North Korea but only under circumstances that would lead to Pyongyang giving up its weapons programs.

"The fact that we wish to take on a leading role in resolving this (North Korean) issue has already been understood at the summit with the United States and the Group of 20 summit meetings," Cho said on Monday.

In the proposal for talks, South Korea did not elaborate on the meaning of hostile military activities, which varies between the two Koreas. South Korea usually refers to loud-speaker propaganda broadcasts by both sides, while the North wants a halt to routine joint U.S.-South Korea military drills.

Moon suggested earlier this month hostile military activities at the border be ended on July 27, the anniversary of the 1953 armistice agreement that ended the Korean War. Since no truce was agreed, the two sides remain technically at war.

When asked if South Korea was willing to "be flexible" on military drills with the United States should North Korea be open to talks, Cho said the government had not discussed the matter specifically.

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Stock market index rises 72 points in a day

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Stock index climbed 72 points to 79,692 in Iran's stock exchange market on Monday, Tasnim news agency reported.

The report said 1.9 billion shares worth 2.28 trillion rials (about \$60.158 million) were dealt in the stock market.

Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), rose 0.3 percent to stand at 910 points on Monday, as 140 million securities worth 1.49 trillion rials (about \$39.313 million) were dealt.

Singapore June exports rise 8.2% — topping expectations

Singapore's annual non-oil domestic exports (NODX) grew for the first time in two months in June, thanks to an extended uptick in electronics sales on the back of improving global demand.



Exports rose a higher-than-expected at 8.2 percent in June from a year earlier, data from trade agency International Enterprise Singapore (IE Singapore) showed on Monday. A Reuters poll predicted an expansion of 4.1 percent.

In May, non-oil exports grew a revised 0.4 percent from a year earlier.

On a seasonally adjusted month-on-month basis, exports in June declined 2.7 percent after rising a revised 9.4 percent in May. The poll projected 2.1 percent drop in June.

Electronics sector exports - a major driver of shipments in recent months - rose 5.4 percent in June 5.4 year-on-year. *(Source: cnbc)*

Trump administration learns lesson from health care, plans for tax reform

Stung by the public relations debacle of Republican's attempts to change health care, President Donald Trump's administration is said to be planning a more coordinated effort for its tax reform efforts, Axios reported.

Citing sources familiar with the matter, the publication said the White House has engaged in high-level planning and organization of its efforts to reshape the tax code — the centerpiece of Trump's economic policy and a linchpin of the rally that's carried the market to new record highs.

Axios cited unnamed activists and business leaders that have met with National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Press Secretary Sean Spicer, who is leading the communications strategy. Those involved in the effort said the administration is hoping to avoid tax reform meeting the same fate as the GOP's health care reform, currently mired in the Senate, where passage is uncertain.

The stakes are high, as Trump — who revels in an image as a political outsider — was partly blamed for the failure of the GOP's first stab at passing a health care bill, which lacked crucial party support. The current version is widely seen as lacking the necessary votes for passage in the Republican-led Senate.

As part of the push to bolster public support, Trump will make the case to Midwest states he won in the general election while the White House enlists CEOs to serve as influencers, speaking at town halls and making the case to employees and the media. In addition, traditional tax reform grassroots advocates are expected to throw their weight behind the effort, Axios said.

(Source: cnbc)

ECB eyes review of Deutsche Bank shareholders

FRANKFURT (Reuters) — Europe's top banking regulator, the European Central Bank (ECB), is considering carrying out a review of Deutsche Bank's two largest shareholders, a regulatory source said on Monday.

The ECB may launch so-called ownership-control procedures to scrutinize both Qatar's royal family and China's HNA (0521.HK), which each owns just under 10 percent of the shares of Germany's flagship lender.

"That the ECB is investigating or considering to investigate the shareholdings is indeed accurate," said the person, speaking on condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to speak publicly about a review that is ongoing.

News of the possible review was first reported by the Sueddeutsche Zeitung on Sunday.

The ECB, Deutsche Bank, and HNA have declined to comment.

Energy deals inked with Russian, Japanese firms

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran inked two memorandums of understanding (MOUs) on three of its oil and gas fields with Russian and Japanese companies in Tehran on Monday, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) announced.

An MOU was signed between National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), a subsidiary of NIOC, and Russia's state-controlled oil company Zarubezhneft on studying two oilfields in Iran.

The MOU was signed by Hamid Derris, a director in NISOC, and Ilyus Khamitov, a director in Zarubezhneft.

Based on the MOU, conducting development studies on Rag Sefid and Shadegan oil fields in Iran's southwestern Khuzestan province is handed over to Zarubezhneft.

The Russian company is committed to submit the results of its studies to NISOC within nine months as of signing the MOU.

NIOC signed the other MOU with Iran's Petropars Group and Japan's Toyo Engineering Corporation on rehabilitation of facilities and upgrading gas production from Salman gas field in the Persian Gulf.

The MOU was signed by Gholam-Reza Manouchehri, NIOC's deputy managing director for development and engineering, Hiroshi Sato, Toyo's director of energy business unit, and Hamid Akbari, Petropars' managing director.

"The deal, in the form of a heads of agreement (HOA), will be signed in near future," the report said.

Based on the MOU, Petropars will finance the study phase of the project and Toyo will fund the execution phase.



Hamid Derris (R) from NISOC and Ilyus Khamitov from Zarubezhneft exchanging documents of an MOU on studying two Iranian oilfields

Petchem sector inks MOUs on \$10b FDI in 1.5 years

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian petrochemical industry has signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) on attraction of \$10 billion foreign direct investment (FDI) with European and East Asian countries over the past one and half years, according to a petrochemical director.

Hossein Alimorad, director for investment affairs in Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC), told IRIB news that the MOUs have been mainly with Germany, Britain, France and China.

The official did not elaborate on details of the MOUs.

He said Iranian petrochemical industry achieved desirable self-sufficiency during the sanctions time; adding that foreigners' willing for cooperation in Iran's petrochemical sector has doubled after they were informed about the sector's potentials.



After the implementation of Iran's nuclear deal (officially called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

which lifted sanctions against Iran in January 2016), NPC has received high willingness from European companies for cooperation with Iran in the petrochemical sector both in financing and licensing, according to Farnaz Alavi, the NPC director for planning and development.

Also, addressing the inaugural ceremony of the 13th edition of Iran Petrochemical Forum (IPF), which was held in Tehran on April 22 and 23, Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said that the future of Iran's petrochemical industry is promising after the implementation of JCPOA.

Given that Iran ranks the first and fourth in the world in terms of gas and oil reserves, respectively, no country enjoys feedstock as much as Iran to develop its petrochemical industry, the minister highlighted.

UK business confidence at lowest point for six years, say forecasters

The UK needs to prepare itself for weaker economic performance, two major forecasting groups have said, in the latest studies predicting the downsides of the Brexit vote.

Fragile business sentiment linked to Brexit-related anxiety, domestic political uncertainty and squeezed consumer budgets have caused UK business confidence to drop to its lowest point for almost six years, the economic consultancy IHS Markit reports.

Meanwhile, Britain's economic growth will continue to weaken this year due to a Brexit-related consumer-spending squeeze and muted earnings growth, the EY Item Club said in the latest downgrading of its forecasts.

Chris Williamson, chief economist at IHS Markit, said: "Companies have be-

come increasingly worried about the business outlook, largely as a result of heightened political uncertainties and the potential impact of Brexit."

He added: "Business optimism about future prospects has sunk to its lowest for nearly six years, adding to a growing body of data which points to a slowing economy."

"The drop in confidence pushed the level of UK optimism below that seen in the eurozone for the first time in seven years, and contrasts with multi-year high levels of optimism in the United States and Japan. As such, the survey results suggest the UK is at risk of falling behind in an otherwise solid-looking global economic outlook."

In a report published on Monday, IHS Markit said the "net balance" of UK

firms expecting a rise in business activity over the next 12 months stood at +35% in June, markedly down from +52% in February and the lowest reading since October 2011.

However, the headline figure masks vastly different views of the world depending on the respondents' business sector. The service sector recorded a score of +32%, while more upbeat manufacturing firms, who are hoping for gains in new export markets, scored a balance of +49%.

Meanwhile, the EY Item Club nudged down its forecast of GDP growth from 1.8% to 1.5% in 2017. Peter Spencer, the group's chief economic adviser, said: "The outlook for this year has deteriorated since our spring forecast."

He said consumer spending, the

economy's main engine of growth, would continue to lose momentum as the pound's collapse since the Brexit vote continued to stoke inflation. "The inflationary squeeze on consumers has been painful and shows little sign of easing any time soon," he said.

Sterling's sharp drop is yet to fully feed through to the consumer price index, with inflation expected to reach up to 3.3% this autumn — well ahead of the growth in average earnings.

Real household disposable income is forecast to fall by 0.2% in 2017, before recovering by 1.1% next year, while with the household saving ratio at a record low of 1.7% in the first quarter of 2017, consumers will have limited scope to mitigate the impact.

(Source: The Guardian)

Australia moves to dial down financial stability risks in home loans

The Australian government is seeking to broaden the powers of the country's prudential regulator to include non-bank lenders as concerns about financial stability take center stage amid bubble risks in the nation's sizzling property market.

A draft legislation released by the government on Monday, if passed, will help the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority (APRA) dial down some of the risky lending in the A\$1.7 trillion (\$1.33 trillion) mortgage market, the size of the country's economic output.

Australia's four biggest banks have already cut back on home loans in recent months and pulled away from institutional lending to real estate developers, as regulators force them to keep aside more capital and slow lending to speculative property investors.



Non-bank lenders have been quick to pick up the slack, with their loan-books expanding at a much faster

China's strong second quarter GDP growth paves way for deeper reforms

BEIJING (Reuters) — China's economy expanded faster-than-expected in the second quarter, setting the country on course to comfortably meet its 2017 growth target and giving policymakers room to tackle big economic challenges ahead of key leadership changes later this year.

The boost to growth was in part driven by firmer exports and production, in particular steel, which could heighten trade tensions as both the United States and China begin economic talks this week. U.S. President Donald Trump has made the U.S. trade deficit with China a top agenda item in bilateral talks and has

also flagged the steel trade as a point of contention.

China's gross domestic product rose 6.9 percent in the second quarter from a year earlier, the same rate as the first quarter, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Monday. That was higher than analysts expectations for the economy to expand 6.8 percent.

Economic data from the second quarter has prompted a number of analysts to upgrade their GDP forecasts for China for 2017, although some moderation in growth is expected later this year as policymakers' efforts to rein in property and debt risks weigh on activity.

"In general, we expect GDP growth to remain robust in the second half but slower than the first half, due to the high base," Citi economists said in a research note. "Looking ahead, uncertainty remains on investment and trade."

The bank has raised its 2017 annual GDP projection to 6.8 percent on-year from 6.6 percent previously.

The robust data briefly helped China's major stock indexes recoup earlier losses, before retreating later in the session.

The second quarter numbers put the economy on a strong footing to meet China's growth target of around 6.5 percent in 2017, which would give policy-

makers room to defuse financial risks.

While growth in the high-flying property sector has cooled this year, a rebound in exports after several years of decline has helped prevent any broader slowdown in China's economy.

Retail spending and factory output were also bright spots in the first half. Retail sales growth picked up to 10.8 percent in the second quarter from 10.0 percent in the first quarter, a Reuters calculation based on official data showed.

Factory output also picked up in the second quarter, though the 6.9 percent growth for the first half was only a slight pickup from recent quarters.

Gazprom's year-on-year gas output growth up by 19% in 2017



N.I.O.C
1396.1744



National Iranian Drilling Company

First Announcement

Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First Publish/Seconed Publish) One-Stage(compressed)						
TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
16771	587000000	11734092000	P/F ORIENT ENERGY & TECH. 8" DOWN HOLE MOTOR	1492797	Tender No. : FP/09- 96/020 Indent No. : 08-22-9645001	1

Brief discription of subject:

National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Sqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase spare parts of Lang Fang DOWN HOLE MOTOR from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender (compressed) upon following terms and conditions:

A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:

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

B) Preparation of tender documents:

Purchasing of documents:

In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.

Receiving of documents:

Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign

Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN

Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date will be known as tenderer from tender committee.

C) Delivery of envelopes of bids and call quality evaluating:

Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including bank guarantees(A), financial offer(C) and stamped and signed of tender documents(B) along with qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document recived deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.

Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) Tender Guarantee:

Type of guarantee:

A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.

Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:

This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. WWW.NIDC.IR

Foreign Procurement Dept
National Iranian Drilling Company

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۴/۲۷ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۴/۲۸

Trump is killing the Republican Party



By Joe Scarborough

Former member of the U.S. House of Representatives

I did not leave the Republican Party. The Republican Party left its senses. The political movement that once stood athwart history resisting bloated government and military adventurism has been reduced to an amalgam of talk-radio resentments. President Trump's Republicans have devolved into a party without a cause, dominated by a leader hopelessly ill-informed about the basics of conservatism, U.S. history and the Constitution.

America's first Republican president reportedly said , "Nearly all men can stand adversity. But if you want to test a man's character, give him power." The current Republican president and the party he controls were granted monopoly power over Washington in November and already find themselves spectacularly failing Abraham Lincoln's character exam.

It would take far more than a single column to detail Trump's failures in the months following his bleak inaugural address. But the Republican leaders who have subjugated themselves to the White House's corrupting influence fell short of Lincoln's standard long before their favorite reality-TV star brought his gaudy circus act to Washington.

When I left Congress in 2001, I praised my party's successful efforts to balance the budget for the first time in a generation and keep many of the promises that led to our takeover in 1994. I concluded my last speech on the House floor by foolishly predicting that Republicans would balance budgets and champion a restrained foreign policy for as long as they held power.

I would be proved wrong immediately.

As the new century began, Republicans gained control of the federal government. George W. Bush and the GOP Congress responded by turning a \$155 billion surplus into a \$1 trillion deficit and doubling the national debt, passing a \$7 trillion unfunded entitlement program and promoting a foreign policy so utopian it would have made Woodrow Wilson blush. Voters made Nancy Pelosi speaker of the House in 2006 and Barack Obama president in 2008.

After their well-deserved drubbing, Republicans swore that if voters ever entrusted them with running Washington again, they would prove themselves worthy. Trump's party was given a second chance this year, but it has spent almost every day since then making the majority of Americans regret it.

■ The enemy of the people

The GOP president questioned America's constitutional system of checks and balances. Republican leaders said nothing. He echoed Stalin and Mao by calling the free press "the enemy of the people." Republican leaders were silent. And as the commander in chief insulted allies while embracing autocratic thugs, Republicans who spent a decade supporting wars of choice remained quiet. Meanwhile, their budget-busting proposals demonstrate a fiscal recklessness very much in line with the Bush years.

Last week's Russia revelations show just how shamelessly Republican lawmakers will stand by a longtime Democrat who switched parties after the promotion of a racist theory about Barack Obama gave him standing in Lincoln's once-proud party. Neither Lincoln, William Buckley nor Ronald Reagan would recognize this movement.

It is a dying party that I can no longer defend.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Jon Meacham has long predicted that the Republican and Democrats' 150-year duopoly will end. The signs seem obvious enough. When my Republican Party took control of Congress in 1994, it was the first time the GOP had won the House in a generation. The two parties have been in a state of turmoil ever since.

In 2004, Republican strategist Karl Rove anticipated a majority that would last a generation; two years later, Pelosi became the most liberal House speaker in history. Obama was swept into power by a supposedly unsailable Democratic coalition. In 2010, the tea party tide rolled in. Obama's reelection returned the momentum to the Democrats, but Republicans won a historic state-level landslide in 2014. Then last fall, Trump demolished both the Republican and Democratic establishments.

Political historians will one day view Donald Trump as a historical anomaly. But the wreckage visited of this man will break the Republican Party into pieces — and lead to the election of independent thinkers no longer tethered to the tired dogmas of the polarized past. When that day mercifully arrives, the two-party duopoly that has strangled American politics for almost two centuries will finally come to an end. And Washington just may begin to work again.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Incessant scandals threaten U.S.-Russia progress on Syria

By Maxim A. Suchkov

No sooner had Presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump had their first face-to-face encounter, July 7 at the G-20 summit in Hamburg, than a new Russia-themed scandal engulfed Washington. Natalia Veselnitskaya, a Russian lawyer who had met with Donald Trump Jr. on June 9, 2016, may not have been sent by the Kremlin, as some Moscow insiders argue. However, the scrutiny of the meeting limits the Trump administration in its dealings with Russia, presumably affecting agreements reached in Hamburg, including on Syria. To understand why, one must take into account a number of contextual and structural factors in Russian foreign policymaking and current U.S.-Russia relations in general.

Asked what Russia made of the allegations of collusion involving the U.S. president's campaign and his son, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said he had learned about the story from TV reports. "This morning, when I turned on the TV, all the Western TV channels were discussing that. It is amazing how serious people can blow things out of proportion," he remarked.

Lavrov went on to criticize reporting on the story, stating, "If journalists are ready to work only on the basis of unsubstantiated statements and are not prepared to take into account the fact that there is no hard evidence, then I can't do anything."

In Washington, the president was on the defensive, trying to alter the impression that he had been too soft on Putin at their meeting. In an interview with Reuters, Trump claimed that he had been "tough" with Putin, which some Russian reporters interpreted as an "evolution" of his previous statements. Commenting on the situation, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, "The U.S. president was asking clear and direct questions that were of interest to him, and Putin gave him comprehensive and reassuring answers. I don't see any 'evolution' here."

Peskov had mentioned earlier that Putin's confidence in Trump would not be affected by potential U.S. backtracking on establishing a joint cybersecurity program with Russia. "No one promised anything to one another, and there was no such goal. The positive outcome is that the readiness to work in this direction was stated," Peskov emphasized. A Kremlin insider, however, told Al-Monitor that Washington's refusal to cooperate on cybersecurity is seen by some Russian decision-makers as a "pretext for massive or occasional cyberattacks, as well as a buildup of its own cyber capabilities."

The two accounts actually reflect what has become an interesting pattern in Moscow's public reasoning on the United States' Russia-related actions and, arguably, broader U.S. foreign policy. The Kremlin is walking a fine line of distinguishing the Trump administration from the rest of the U.S. policymaking establishment, recognizing that the push-back against cooperating with Moscow is sharp, even among various factions in the Trump government and Congress, let alone its natural opponents.

President Barack Obama once called him "the most popular politician on earth." But on July 12, former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was sentenced to almost a decade in prison for corruption and money laundering. Known widely as Lula, he is the biggest fish caught so far in a graft probe that has spread across dozens of countries and snared dozens of politicians. The current Brazilian president, Michel Temer, also faces corruption allegations while his predecessor, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached last year under a cloud of suspicion over a massive kickback scheme involving the state-owned oil company Petrobras.

Yet even as the world notes Lula's downfall, it should also learn why Brazilians have come to demand honesty in their leaders – and in their daily interactions with government. What is perhaps the world's largest anti-corruption investigation carries lessons for other nations that assume they are trapped in a culture of impunity as Brazil once was.

"In Brazil there is a consciousness about this problem as there never was before," said federal prosecutor Del-tan Dallagnol in an April talk at Harvard Law School, his alma mater. "Society gave us a lot of support."

The key idea now more widely supported in Brazil is that of equality before the law, even for someone who was once immensely popular and powerful as Lula. "No matter how important you are, no one is above the law," said Judge Sérgio Moro in handing down his verdict against the former president, who held office from 2003 to 2011.

Brazil restored its democracy only about a quarter



The agreement on Syria and potential dealings on other issues represent a tiny opportunity to drag the two states back from the abyss of a direct collision.

■ Russia's perspective

Russia sees the former as pragmatic "Make America Great Again" nationalists with whom a limited, mutually beneficial agenda can be devised. Moscow views the latter, however, as those who believe America, by its political nature, is second to none. This belief virtually denies any reconciliation, let alone recognition, of Russia's own interests and concerns, which are often portrayed as inherently malignant. In turn, Russia's perspective is rooted in its own perceptions of U.S. foreign policies and domestic politics.

In the long run, this framing could result in an acute confrontation. Yet at present, the former are seen as potential, even desirable, partners, while the latter are deemed spoilers served by the mainstream media. This picture occasionally leads Russia to expect more of the Trump administration than it can deliver and to fear that the rest of the U.S. establishment is more dangerous than it really is. These are the narrow straits of America's political waters that Russian policymakers, and others elsewhere, must navigate.

There are signs, however, that Moscow is not willing to build its foreign policy around the potential of a "reset" with Washington. Even if Trump manages to shake off the immediate criticisms, he is unlikely to be able to implement his ideas on how to better engage with Russia. Despite widespread claims of the opposite in the United States, no one in Moscow expects Trump to be able to lift sanctions, recognize Crimea as part of the Russian Federation or agree to let Russia fully have its way in Ukraine and Syria. In this respect, the agreement on Syria and po-

tential dealings on other issues represent a tiny opportunity to drag the two states back from the abyss of a direct collision.

Dmitry Suslov, a program director at the Valdai International Discussion Club, told Al-Monitor, "The Hamburg agreements do not create premises for a quality improvement of U.S.-Russia relations, but Putin and Trump agreed to work on the issues where prospects for a direct military clash are real. In Syria, Moscow and Washington have not yet divided 'zones of responsibility' and continue to operate in one space. Similarly, cyberspace is one area that looks particularly tempting to take advantage of to inflict damage on each other — politically, economically, even militarily."

Suslov added, "Given the current circumstances, this kind of cooperation is the maximum possible. In the coming years, U.S.-Russia relations will be focused on ensuring control over the confrontational interaction, not letting the confrontation loose."

Unless one opposes U.S.-Russian cooperation, there is little merit in trying to argue who got the best "deal" in Hamburg. The agreements are not meant to fix the fundamental problems dividing the two countries, but they might make for some progress on the issues immediately important to them both.

■ New kind of relationship

In the meantime, the Kremlin is waiting to see what new kind of relationship develops. The Kremlin insider said, "What Trump is facing now in terms of opposition from the media is what we have been facing for decades on the international stage: all those stories, fake investigations,

etc. The problem is how to adequately respond to this information warfare and not antagonize the administration."

Indeed, occasionally issues arise that require a strong public reaction from Moscow, but one balanced with its own view of constructing pragmatic and limited cooperation with Washington. Until recently, that issue has been U.S. airstrikes in Syria, but the matter of the seized diplomatic compounds also seems to fall into the category where Russia's claims cannot go unsatisfied for a long time.

Lavrov has dodged the subject of what exactly Moscow might be up to stating. "We are thinking about particular steps now. I do not believe this should be discussed in public, with all respect for the mass media and your wish to get this information," he said. The most drastic measures on the table now are believed to be an expulsion of as many as 30 U.S. diplomats as well as freezing a warehouse and a U.S. Embassy house in Moscow. There's plenty of room for speculation about what might follow if these steps are taken, but certainly they would not improve the relationship.

Against this backdrop, it is even more important now than it was a week ago for the joint work of Russians and Americans in Jordan to succeed, and for Washington and Moscow to observe the conditions designed for a southwest Syrian de-escalation zone. If making progress from the top down is not currently an option, trying it the other way might be worth it. In any case, the ultimate risk is more mutual disappointment and further escalation.

(Source: Al Monitor)

Best lesson yet in Brazil's anti-graft drive



A prison sentence on corruption for a once-popular president helps illustrate how deeply Brazilians now uphold equality before the law.

century ago, but the system has been flawed by too many political parties relying on too much money for campaigns and in winning votes in Congress. As political scandals have grown, so too has a small cadre of idealistic and well-paid civil servants as well as a popular movement that has steadily pushed legislation and emboldened the justice system.

Yet it is not enough to simply prosecute powerful people, said Mr. Dallagnol. Society, he says, has "pro-

vided a shield."

Justice officials, for example, have created comic books and board games with anti-corruption themes for children. They have also opened up public records about how politicians spend money. For the first time, prosecutors set up a website to expose pending criminal cases. A popular drive to pass anti-corruption proposals drew more than 2 million signatures. And more than 15,000 people in law enforcement took newly designed courses in how to combat corruption and money laundering.

In 2013, as people became aware of overspending for the 2014 World Cup soccer games in Brazil, anti-corruptions protests began to escalate. Also, prosecutors got a big break in a case known as Operation Car Wash, which exposed huge payoffs to politicians by contractors for Petrobras. The new attitude among Brazilians was essential. "We are pretty aware that without public support that this case is not going anywhere," says Dallagnol. One poll in January found that Brazilians support the investigations of political figures "to the end, regardless of the outcome."

Many reforms are still needed and prosecutors fear ruling politicians can still thwart their work. "It's not enough to take out rotten apples from a basket. You need to change the conditions which make those apples to get rotten," says Dallagnol.

Yet the momentum toward transparency and accountability seems assured – especially when the mightiest of politicians can fall before the public's heightened demand for equality before the law.

(Source: CSM)

Iran-Denmark all-out transactions speeding up after JCPOA

INTERVIEW

By Lachin Rezaian

Danish Ambassador to the Islamic Republic Danny Annan voiced content over the huge rise in bilateral relations between Iran and Denmark following the implementation of JCPOA.

Annan expressed satisfaction with the development of political and economic transactions between the two countries following the removal of sanctions and implementation of JCPOA since 14th of July, 2015.

"Many Danish business delegations have visited Iran and we expect many other ones this year; we also have had an Iranian business delegation going to Denmark and we hope to see more Iranian business delegations going to Denmark in near future so our commercial links can be further developed," Annan noted in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times, while responding to economic achievements of Iran's historic nuclear deal.

Pointing to the tourism industry, Annan underlined that there is a huge interest among the Danish tourists to go to Iran; "Iran has a rich culture, a rich past and equally important is the security provided to foreign visitors who come to Iran," he told Tehran Times correspondent:

■ How do you evaluate Tehran-Copenhagen relations in the wake of JCPOA and removal of sanctions?

Since the signing of the agreement in July 14 and implementation of JCPOA and even before, developments in Danish-Iranian relations have been very positive in all aspects. If we look at the political issues, we had the Danish minister of foreign affairs in January last year and he was accompanied by the biggest Danish business delegation since 1974, 128 businessmen. The minister had very fruitful consultations with Dr. Zarif. He also met with President Rouhani. Besides, the minister of taxation and deputy ministers visited Iran early this year. Iranian minister for energy Mr. Chitchian has been to Denmark spending several days in Denmark with a very good program. And as I mentioned before, we also have at least two other Danish ministers coming to Iran later this year. We have a broad range of subjects to discuss and I am happy that the nuclear issue is no longer on top of the agenda.

As we have all noticed, there is a full European and EU member states' support for the JCPOA. IAEA has confirmed on several occasions that Iran is fully living up to its obligations according to the agreement so from a political perspective, things are definitely moving in right direction and that is also clear from the facts that we have over the last 6 months established government-to-government cooperation within intellectual property rights between the Iranian IPO (Iranian Patent Organization) and Danish Patent and Trade-mark Office and the cooperation is actually really taking shape because first of all we will have at the embassy one dedicated employee sent from Copenhagen just to focus on the cooperation within that area between Denmark and Iran.

Another area where we have government-to-government cooperation is within



very important that a large share of government expenditure is actually coming through taxes because you see oil prices going down so the Iranian government cannot expect to have a big chunk of its expenditures covered by oil revenue, we have to get the money another way and here I believe taxation is the right way to do it.

■ What are major economic fields for cooperation between Denmark and Iran?

Last year we had four or five business delegations visiting Iran, this year we have not had so many. We expect our minister for business to come to Iran in mid-November and he is going to be accompanied by a business delegation who will come here looking to opportunities. But we also have had an Iranian business delegation going to Denmark and we hope to see more Iranian business delegations going to Denmark in near future so our commercial links can be further developed. So basically your initial question was how does bilateral relation developed from a political perspective; it was very good, from economic perspective. We had a significant increase in bilateral trade last year between Denmark and Iran and if you look at the number of Iranian exports to the EU, they were just staggering 375 per cent increase in Iranian exports to the EU last year. That is quite important and that could of course not have been possible without the JCPOA.

From a more people-to-people point of view, also we have seen good progress. We have had 53 per cent more Danish tourists visiting Iran last year and the travel agencies I am in contact with say that there is a huge interest among the Danish tourists to go to Iran and I understand why. Iran has a rich culture, a rich past and equally important is the security provided to foreign visitors who come to Iran. What most visitors mention to me after and during their visit to Iran is the hospitality they see when they come here. In addition, we at the Embassy have been able to handle a lot more visa applications from Iranian businesspersons and people who want to go visit their families in Denmark over the last year compared to the previous year – a significant higher number. We of course continue our

it close to Karaj and it will generate around 2,000 jobs for Iranians and of course contribute to economic growth of the country. Novo Nordisk is one of the biggest investors in Iran and I know that other Danish companies are very active, since 2015 and in spite of sanctions, they have continued to supply the medicine needed by the diabetes patients in Iran. I know other com-



IAEA has confirmed on several occasions that Iran is fully living up to its obligations according to the agreement so from a political perspective and things are definitely moving in right direction.

panies are also looking at opportunities for investment in Iran, as well as employing Iranians. We have had six major Danish companies opening up their offices in Iran over the last year. And each and every one of these companies are of course employing Iranians to do the work for them. Therefore, the JCPOA has been a very good deal; it has opened up a lot of investment opportunities and increased economic growth and increased job creation in Iran.

■ Has there been any issues or obstacles on banking relations between the two countries?

Banking transactions are still of course a major challenge. The US financial sanctions are making things complicated for European businesses to do business in Iran. While it is a big challenge, I hope that we can find a solution to make it easier for European companies to do business here. Because they are not breaching any sanctions. The issue is how you get them the money out of the country after you have sold their products in Iran.

If you look at the increase in Iranian exports last year, which has been by 55 per cent, I do believe that companies have found ways to do the financial transactions, and let me stress, in a legal way. But for a lot of smaller companies, it is difficult, even though they would like to try the Iranian market and may find a need for their products and services in the Iranian market. If they are not a company of a certain size, they'll find it too challenging to find out how financial transactions are actually done in Iran. For bigger companies it is easier because they have more employees who have their own banking connections. I am working with my colleagues at the Embassy to find legal ways on how we can do these bank transfers so we can increase our bilateral trade to the benefit of both countries.

■ Danish companies have good experiences in environmental issues, including managing water resources; how Iran and Denmark can cooperate on environmental fields in Iran?

If you ask an average Danish person about this, s/he would say we have way too much water because it is raining all the time.

And while it does rain a lot in Denmark, we have focused very much on using our water resources in the most sustainable way.

I remember in Copenhagen we had a public display showing how the water is being consumed and you may see it is reducing down and down and down. It is not because people take less shower, or cook less, it is because there is the consciousness about how to use water resources and that is also why some times it is frustrating for me to drive around Tehran and see people with the water hose in their hands removing leaves with the water. We should not waste the limited water resources. We have a lot of Danish companies, specialized within how to use water resources in a sustainable way and most of it is of new technologies which can limit the water resources being used. I know Madam Ebtekar, I think about 6 month ago she said that the water challenge in Iran is a threat to Iranian civilization and that sounds very bombastic. It is actually not far from the truth, it is a big threat to Iranian civilizations.

As you mentioned that there are some areas in Iran with draught and some times more than draught, Iran border is completely at low level in water resources. Pistachio plantation is dying in Kerman province because there is no water. So Iran has a huge need for new technologies, but also



IAEA has confirmed on several occasions that Iran is fully living up to its obligations according to the agreement so from a political perspective and things are definitely moving in right direction.

a need for the Iranian population to get a better understanding of how to use a limited natural resource like water. I know that several Danish companies within the water, say very much with interest on Iran, focus areas at the embassy and how we can make that link to the benefit of Iran, but also Denmark, so we have increasing our knowledge sharing within water resources. As I mentioned we are planning a ministerial visit by a minister for business in November. I hope that the border companies were also participating in that delegation since it is a very important delegation.

■ How do you evaluate technological, educational and university cooperation between the two countries?

I think we have seen good progress as I mentioned before within university cooperation. We have now cooperation in neurology, forestry and archeology. So three concrete areas of university-to-university cooperation. I know some Iranian universities are willing to establish cooperation with Danish universities. We have a special branch for Persian studies at the University of Copenhagen. They are cooperating with universities in Iran and Danish students can come here and take three month of language studies to have access to Farsi and go to Iran. Iran and Denmark are active in capacity building, new technologies and in some government-to-government areas there are also technology cooperation. In all aspects of our cooperation, I see very good progress which I am sure will continue to be developed further.

Danny Annan has achieved his law degree from the University of Copenhagen and has served in a number of embassies and organizations across the world, including in New Delhi as deputy head of Embassy, in Beirut as 1st secretary at Embassy, in Sri Lanka as political advisor to Cease-Fire Mission and Damascus as deputy head of Embassy. He was appointed as Denmark's ambassador to Islamic Republic since 15th of August, 2015. Annan has taught international law and EU law at the University of Copenhagen between 1998 and 1999.

Trump's embrace of the Saudi crown prince, and a Qatar nightmare scenario

By Gary Leupp

The failure of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, in four-day talks with the Qatari emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and a Kuwaiti official, to mediate an end to the inter-Arab dispute over Qatar, suggests that U.S. influence in the Middle East is waning. Even in the wake of the most recent massive Saudi arms deal announced during Trump's visit to Riyadh on June 5, and the president's receipt of the King Abdulaziz al Saud Collar, Washington is unable to dissuade its "enduring partner" from its highly rash course of action.

The New York Times reports that Tillerson flew out from Jeddah Wednesday night "without even attempting the usual tight-smiled announcements of incremental progress." Maybe because there was none.

The Saudis, along with their Egyptian, UAE, and Bahraini allies, are determined to ostracize and isolate Qatar. Not for the stated reason—repeated by a clueless Donald Trump on June 9—that Qatar supports terrorism.

Trump, claiming credit for leading the effort, declared, "The nation of Qatar, unfortunately, has historically been a funder of terrorism at a very high level."

He claimed (alluding to his Saudi visit) that "nations came together and spoke to me about confronting Qatar over its behavior... I decided, along with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, our great generals and military people, the time had come to call on Qatar to end its funding—they have to end that funding, and its extremist ideology in terms of funding. Do we take the easy road or do we finally take a hard but necessary action? We have to stop the funding of terrorism."

This is bulls.t. It rests upon the Saudi and Egyptian assumption that tolerating the Muslim Brotherhood, allowing media criticisms of Persian Gulf Cooperation Council regimes, and refusal to condemn Hezbollah all constitute support for terrorism.

The real reason for the pressure on Qatar is Iran, and the Saudis' long term campaign to undermine the Islamic Republic and its Shiite allies and "proxies" (real or imagined) in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere in the region. Riyadh is concerned about the prospects of Shiite rebellion within the Saudi Arabia itself, where over 10% of the population are Shiites oppressed by Wahhabi rule; and in Bahrain, where 70% are Shiites, ruled by an absolute monarch who shares the Saudis' Wahhabi Islam.

Young Crown Prince Salman clearly feels he has received the green light from Trump to lead, in tandem with Egypt, an anti-Iranian coalition. (The NYT states: "Part of the reason a deal could not be reached...is that the president's embrace for King Salman...is thought to have given the kingdom the confidence to start and then stick by the embargo regardless of Tillerson's increasing urgent and frustrated feelings.") This anti-Iran effort requires the ostracizing of Doha, and its expulsion from the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, unless it accepts a list of non-negotiable demands (including the closure or complete reorganization of the Qatar-based al-Jazeera news network which sometimes reports critically on the countries now targeting Qatar).

This rupture among some of its closest Mideast partners is most certainly not in Washington's interests.

Qatar hosts 11,000 U.S. troops at Al Udeid Air Base. This is the largest concentration of U.S. forces in the region.

Bahrain meanwhile hosts the Fifth Fleet, with 5,000 U.S. sailors and Marines in port at any time. It's awkward for the two countries to be at odds with one another. And it's embarrassing for the U.S. to be so conspicuously unable to reconcile its allies. What if the crazed and vicious Saudi prince, who has unleashed pure hell on neighboring Yemen with unqualified U.S. support, were to call Trump at 4 A.M. sometime soon, and ask what he thought about a Saudi annexation of Qatar, in order to fight terrorism?

He might remind Trump, or inform him for the first time, that Saudi Arabia intervened in Bahrain in March 2011 to aid the Sunni king in suppressing Shiite protests. So there is successful precedent.

Trump—fondly remembering that sword dance with the king—just might say, sounds good to me, I just need to check with my generals since we have troops there as I recall. The prince would say, "The troops can stay, of course. And we will pay all their expenses from this point. We will hurt Iran and its terrorist allies in the region."

Later that morning Tillerson and Secretary of "Defense" James Mattis will perhaps say: "No, Mr. President, this is not a good idea. Congress will surely react with horror, and attempt to sanction Saudi Arabia. You're already in deep political danger. Siding with the one country in the world that doesn't allow women to drive against a neighbor that has a far more liberal culture and civil society does not look good politically, even if the latter does have a cordial relationship with Tehran. It would be a hard sell, and very much complicate the already difficult relationship with Turkey, a NATO member and also a Doha ally. The Europeans would be very upset." Donald will listen, frown, and maybe nod his head in apparent understanding.

But let's say the prince calls back mid-afternoon and Trump, preoccupied with Junior's situation—and disregarding advice as he often does, and being impulsive as he often is—says: "Well, you gotta do what you gotta do, I guess. Just don't attack our base. Say hello to your dad, he's doing a terrific job."

Then the chaos unleashed by George W. Bush in 2003 will enter a new stage. Turkey, which has troops stationed in Qatar and has offered assistance to Doha to cope with its current difficulties, will perhaps break ties with Riyadh and draw closer to Iran. Iran may move to seize control of the Persian Gulf oil field jointly owned by Qatar and Iran. Trump will declare the Saudi-Egyptian led war on Iran a war against terrorism and the Iranian nuclear threat. Pandora's box has been open for many years now, and the hope that remained in the box may have escaped by now too.

(Source: Dissident Voice)



veterinary services, quality of meat, quality of poultry, but also basically having a direct link, direct contact between our two organizations so they can work closer together.

A new area I believe that somewhat would be formalized later this year is within taxation and an Iranian taxation delegation would be going to Denmark at the end of August to learn more about the Danish tax system. Hopefully we can be of help to the Iranian authorities in providing some practices and maybe some new ideas for the Iranian authorities because I believe it is

efforts to provide even better services to Iranians who want to go to Denmark.

■ What do you say are the major fields for cooperation between the two countries?

Close to 50 per cent of Danish exports to Iran is medicine or medical devices, but also just to illustrate the importance of the Iranian market, you can look at the biggest pharmaceutical company, Novo Nordisk, making insulin. They are now in the process of establishing a factory in Iran, with an investment of \$80 million. They are building

The increase in Danish exports last year, which has been by 55 per cent, shows that companies have found ways to do the financial transactions, in a legal way.

Why America's Army is falling apart

By Douglas Macgregor

Senator John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, told President Trump's nominee for Army Undersecretary, Ryan McCarthy, a Lockheed Martin Executive and former aid to Secretary of Defense Bob Gates, that the "U.S. Army is facing a crisis." Senators drew attention to the Army's ever-growing multibillion-dollar acquisition graveyard including the titanic \$20 Billion Future Combat System and the Warfighter Information Network-Tactical, a six-billion dollar failed communications program.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that qualified, fresh blood is desperately needed in the Army's general officer ranks, as well as, in the office of the Army Secretariat. The Army does not need an unqualified hedge-fund manager, a flamboyant social engineer, or another "revolving door" defense industry executive committed to "business as usual."

The Army is on track to lose more than money unless President Trump appoints a forceful and informed Secretary of the army — one who is prepared to impose accountability on his generals and demand sweeping change. It's

going to lose the first battle of the next war. And, in the twenty-first century, Americans may not get a chance to fight a second battle.

The army's problems are not financial. Thanks to the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act, the U.S. Army will receive an annual sum of \$137 to \$149 billion — a sum that is vastly larger than the Russian National Defense Budget.

■ Failures in army

The failures in army modernization and readiness are due to the army generals' fanatical resistance to fundamental organizational reform, prudent modernization and change in the way the army must fight in the future.

Gen. George Washington told his officers, "If we are wise, let us prepare for the worst." Washington's wise words are being systematically ignored by the army.

Today the 173rd Airborne Brigade, along with allied NATO airborne units, will conduct a Joint Forcible Entry exercise near Bezmer Air Base, Bulgaria. The goal is to demonstrate an airfield seizure operation that will then allow for the "all wheeled" Second Cavalry Regiment to "build up combat power" and prepare for follow-on operations.

This exercise equates to practicing for suicide. Our

East European partners know it and the Russians know it.

Any joint theater-entry operation requires U.S. aerospace and maritime supremacy, as well as, overall battle-network superiority in the objective area. Try this "forced entry" against a defended Russian, Chinese or North Korean Airfield and the "exercise" would end in minutes with the total annihilation of the paratroopers and the brigade of light, armored trucks. The army four-star generals are stuck in a World War II fantasy.

Civilians frequently assume that general officers are ruthless and unsentimental when it comes to discarding obsolescent tactics, organizations and technologies. They are not. How else did the U.S. Army enter World War II with regiments of horse cavalry long after the German Army had overrun most of Europe with armored forces?

However, the army four-star generals are ruthless when it comes to crushing innovation inside the regular army that threatens the status quo. They are more comfortable sinking billions into unproven technologies that promise war-winning capabilities in the distant, uncertain future, as well as spending money on the upgrade of old platforms and

systems designed in the 1970s. Clearly, few in Congress object to these actions.

To the aforementioned disasters must be added the relentless commitment of nearly two hundred thousand of the regular army's 475,000 soldiers to overseas "train and advise," "presence," and special operations support missions in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

■ U.S. Army's capabilities eroded

It's no secret that counterinsurgency operations seriously eroded the U.S. Army's capability for high-end conventional warfare, but the dispersion of two hundred thousand soldiers around the world is even more dangerous.

In 1932, General Douglas MacArthur, who was the Army Chief of Staff at that time, told members of the Senate and the House that the "dispersion of the Regular Army in small detachments throughout the continental United States makes it impracticable to have immediately available, an adequate balanced and efficient force of regular troops to meet the first phases of an emergency." Congress punted, MacArthur retired and ten years later in 1942, Americans played catch-up in a war the U.S. Army was not prepared to fight. ➔13

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Alternatives to coffee for your caffeine fix

Is getting your buzz on a natural part of your daily routine?

For most Americans, the answer is a resounding yes.

Most choose to caffeinate with coffee...

Lots and lots of coffee.

But coffee is hardly the only energy-boosting option out there.

While it works great when you've had an all-nighter and as a smooth sip to accompany an alternative poetry reading, coffee packs a very high punch of caffeine.

You may find yourself more jittery than jumpstarted.

Whether you want to cut back on the caffeine because you're interested in improving your overall well-being, or have been advised to do so by a medical professional, consider some of the following coffee alternatives.

Your body will thank you, and you'll feel less agitated while still getting your caffeine fix.

Pregnant moms and people who want to cut back to reduce their dependency on caffeine are often interested in healthier options to the daily java fix.

Maybe you want to supplement one or more of your coffee mugs a day with something that's healthier for you or are quitting the cold brew cold turkey.

These healthy options give you a bit of caffeinated comfort without the full blast that comes from coffee.

■ Green teas

Green tea is one of the world's most powerful beverages.

It offers a small amount of caffeine that's enough to boost your mood and kickstart your metabolism, which adds to its popularity.

Matcha green tea is a particularly potent blend of ground green tea leaves that have an interesting flavor and the perfect amount of buzz.

■ Wheatgrass juice

While wheatgrass juice doesn't contain any caffeine, it sure is a great wake-up beverage.

Whether you chug a glass in the morning or during your afternoon slump, the easily digestible nutrient punch that this beverage has to offer will perk you right up in no time flat.

■ Caffeine edibles

Caffeinated peanut butter

Of course, maybe you're not into drinking your caffeine at all.

Maybe you would prefer something that you can toss into a backpack or bike bag for a quick boost during a hike or for a mid-ride refresher.



Edibles deliver caffeine without the inconvenience of drinking a cup.

Plus, you can still feel that buzz.

■ Snacks

Whether you're out and about or crunching numbers in the office, grabbing a caffeine-infused snack will help to improve your focus and fill you up.

From caffeine-laced Cracker Jacks to caffeinated peanut butter, you can get a double whammy energy boost from a caffeinated snack.

■ Desserts

Of course, where would we be without listing one of the most popular caffeinated edibles: chocolate?

From straight-up chocolate bars to ice cream and cake, desserts containing some type of cocoa derivative are laced with just the right amount of caffeine to make you smile.

■ Drink up

Energy drinks

While we covered drinks in our previous section on healthy caffeine alternatives, it's worth mentioning drinkable coffee alternatives aren't necessarily quite as healthy.

Some caffeine alternatives aren't considered health food in a technical sense.

After all, drinkable caffeine is the most popular form of delivery.

■ Energy drinks

Energy drinks became crazy popular

in the past few decades, and we're still riding the wave.

From quick shots that promise hours of energy to extra-large cans fueled by multiple days' worth of sugar content, the energy drink market is one of the biggest coffee-alternative caffeine machines.

■ Soda

Along with energy drinks, though much older, soda provides a quick caffeine fix paired with a whole lot of sugar.

Between the caffeine and the sugar, drinkers ride high and then crash pretty hard not too long afterward.

Diet sodas offer an alternative to their sugar-laden counterparts, but nutritionists aren't convinced of the long-term health benefits of consuming large quantities of artificial sweeteners.

■ Water with lemon

While it's certainly not unhealthy, water with lemon isn't exactly a health food.

It's just, well, water.

However, drinking infused water can help you to stay more hydrated throughout the day than drinking plain water alone.

People who are well-hydrated tend to have clearer thinking and more steady energy than those who aren't.

■ Supplements and pills

Drinking and eating your caffeine, while enjoyable, can add unnecessary

calories to your daily intake.

And if you're a super picky eater or on a strict diet, using up precious calories for caffeine purposes alone might seem like a colossal waste.

Supplements and pills that promise a caffeine boost are a good alternative to the regular methods.

■ Caffeine pills

Designed to offer powerful focus through an incredibly high dose of caffeine, these pills are fairly straightforward and can certainly help you power through the occasional all-nighter.

They're pretty intense, and the crash after a caffeine pill wears off might negate some of the energy you had while it was in effect.

■ pureLYFT

An all-natural, calorie-free supplement, pureLYFT offers Clean Caffeine that helps you achieve a caffeine boost without tipping the scale or scrounging up a special snack.

Simply add it to your water or smoothie – anything really – and get on with your day.

What's simpler than that?

Just a bit of pureLYFT in your ordinary bottled water stands in for the unwellcome effects of a full cup (or multiple cups) of coffee.

(Source: purelyft.com)

Shopping without dropping: How to avoid 8 common grocery store mistakes

By Lisa Lillien

Grocery stores are full of bustling people, carts competing for aisle space, and a seemingly endless array of choices. Supermarket mistakes can spell diet disasters, but don't worry: I have your back! I'm Hungry Girl Lisa Lillien, and here are the top 8 food-shopping pitfalls and how to avoid them.



1. Going to the grocery store hungry or distracted

It's probably the biggest and most common mistake people make: grocery shopping on an empty stomach.

Maybe you forgot to pack a snack after a workout, or you're heading to the store straight from work and your body's demanding dinner. Either way, your choices will be made by your appetite rather than your brain.

Distractions also play a factor. Are you trying to multitask by shopping while gabbing on the phone with your parents? Checking social media and the ripeness of avocados at the same time? Focus on the task at hand: getting healthy and delicious food for you and your family. Keep your car or purse stocked with smart emergency snacks, and you'll avoid this supermarket slipup.

2. Not reading or comparing nutrition labels

That snack looks healthy. The word "natural" is on there, and it only has 150 calories! But then you get home and discover that despite its all-natural appeal, it's loaded with fat and sugar. And that 150-calorie price tag? It's for a teeny-tiny serving!

Read the nutrition panel carefully, and don't just read one—compare labels!

Yes, this makes for a longer shopping trip, but you'll be happy in the long run.

3. Not bringing a list

While you're being intentional with your shopping, please make a list. But don't just make a list! Stick to it! Budget for money and nutrition. Your bank account and scale will thank you.

Don't know where to start?

Plan an aisle-by-aisle supermarket list and use it as a guide. And always keep an eye out for new healthy treats. That's the fun part!

4. Not knowing when to buy in bulk

Buying in bulk is great: You save money, and you stock up on healthy staples. It's a win-win—until it isn't.

Don't load up on things you've never tried before just because the bulk price is low, and don't over-buy your trigger foods—the ones you can't stop eating—either! Know yourself, and have your grocery list reflect your needs.

Look for healthy shelf-stable staples and things you can freeze, and get creative with eating them so that you don't get bored.

5. Ignoring frozen foods

Fresh produce is fabulous: colorful, ripe (you hope!), and just waiting to be picked. But frozen fruits and veggies can be just as good. Same goes for meat!

Keep a bag of frozen berries in your freezer for smoothies and straight-up snacking. Check the freezer section for individually packaged chicken breasts or fish fillets. You no longer have to scramble to use fresh ingredients before they go bad. Take back control from nature, and cook your produce and protein when you're ready.

Worried about getting the most nutrition out of your produce? Frozen fruits and vegetables are often flash-frozen at peak freshness, so go ahead and stock up on these handy staples.

6. Stocking up just because something is on sale

Saving money is great, but you're not really saving cash if you're buying things that you don't need. Check the store's website ahead of time and only add discounted foods to your list that you truly need. Then stick to the list. Trust your careful planning, and don't fall prey to impulse buys.

7. Getting enamored with the snack aisle

The glorious snack aisle is also the pitfall of many hungry humans! Don't worry; you can outsmart temptation.

Remember: Take your time to look at the nutrition labels. Check your list. Check it twice. And avoid those trigger foods!

It's okay to try something new (or stick to classics if you're a boredom snacker); just make sure the stats meet your standards.

8. Not checking your pantry before you shop

Powdered peanut butter, whole-wheat flour, apple cider vinegar, spices, natural no-calorie sweetener... These are just a few items that you're likely to use again and again. Bonus: They have a nice long shelf life! Keep that pantry fully stocked, and save yourself from a frustrating grocery store run in the middle of making your next meal.

(Source: verywell.com)

7 ways to step out of your own shadow

By Rebecca Perkins

Living in the shadows is somewhere many of us women have spent our lives. Many of us got used to introducing ourselves as so-and-so's mother or wife. Somewhere along the line we lost our identity as it merged with the family or the husband's.

I chose (and was lucky to have been able to choose) to be a mum at home, I wanted this more than anything when I had my first child and then second and third. I wanted to teach them, to nurture them, to keep them close to me, to share my values with them as they grew. I wanted to be the first to see them walk and talk and wave them goodbye each and every morning as they went to school. I wanted to be there to sit at the kitchen table and catch up on their day, to listen to their friendship woes, to ferry them to different after-school clubs and sporting events. I wanted to be available for them as they became teenagers in case they should need an ear... and I wouldn't have had it any other way. However, somewhere along the line I lost myself. I lost my identity, I became a shadow of who I now know I am.

I have no regrets. Regrets are futile. They steal the pleasure we now find in life as we relive the past. I am grateful I did wake up. I'm grateful for the depression I suffered because it did wake me up to life. I knew I wanted more. I knew there was more. Life in the shadows is a miserable place. We know the sensation of sun

on our face and we know how the shadows leave their mark as a chill inside. I felt this chill to my core. I look at photos of myself from that time and see a coldness in my eyes, a sadness too.

I write from a place, today, of having made that step out of the shadows. It takes courage but we can do it tentatively at first, a little stretch as we feel our way gently and slowly, surrounded by those close to us. There is a richness in living life out of the shadows. It takes getting used to.

Maybe it's time now for you to step out of the shadows. It's that time of transition, change is on the horizon, kids are leaving home, or it's the menopause, or it's facing life after divorce or loss.

Self nurture - this is key. Show yourself the love you've been so used to showing others. Loving kindness, the Buddhist way of being, must be shown to ourselves too. We cannot fully love without loving ourselves.

Regrets are futile. They steal the pleasure we now find in life as we relive the past. I am grateful I did wake up. I'm grateful for the depression I suffered because it did wake me up to life.

Your smartphone is a pain in the neck

Chances are you're reading this while leaning over a table or slumped back in a chair. Your head is tilted forward; your shoulders are curved.

If you're on a mobile device, your arms are bent by your side and your back hunch is even more profound.

Am I right?

The position you're in is probably causing you pain, whether you're aware of it yet or not. Don't worry, physical therapists have a diagnosis for the headaches, neck cricks and achy shoulders. They call it "Text Neck."

"Text Neck is not just a texting problem,"

said Dr. Dean Fishman. "Text neck is a gaming problem. Text neck is an e-mailing problem."

■ Ways to straighten out smart-phone slump with yoga

Fishman originally coined the term in 2008 while examining a 17-year-old patient. The teen came in complaining of headaches and neck pain. As Fishman was trying to explain to the patient's mother exactly what the problem was, he glanced over and saw her posture.

The teen was sitting in a chair, hunched over her smartphone, texting away.

"I knew I had something," Fishman said.

A recent study published in Surgical Technology International's 25th edition says texting may be hurting your back. Conducted by New York spine surgeon Kenneth Hansraj, the study found that bending your head to look at your mobile device held in your hands can put up to 60 pounds of pressure on your neck.

Hansraj's study includes illustrations of what happens when mobile users bend their heads at 15, 30, 45 and 90 degrees to look at their devices. He advises users be cognizant of their bodies.

"We recommend that people should

continue to enjoy their smart devices, but that they pay specific attention to where their head is in space," Hansraj told the Huffington Post. "You want to be careful that your head is straight up with you're using a smart device."

The average human head weighs 10 pounds in a neutral position -- when your ears are over your shoulders. For every inch you tilt your head forward, the pressure on your spine doubles. So if you're looking at a smartphone in your lap, your neck is holding up what feels like 20 or 30 pounds.

(Source: CNN)

Spain’s tourism heads for bumper year

Spain’s tourism sector is poised for another bumper summer season as security concerns continue to lure visitors away from rival destinations to its cities and beaches, industry lobby group Exceltur said late last week.

Tourism activity will increase by 4.1% in 2017, Exceltur — which groups Spain’s major hotel chains, travel agents, tour operators and airlines — said in a statement. It had previously forecast an increase of 3.5%.

The body said the higher forecast was mainly due to the “strong increase in foreign demand, which was higher than forecast.”

Spain has also benefited from a sharp rise in visitors to its cities during the first half of the year due to the arrival of tourists “who should have visited other European capitals but finally chose Spain” due to recent attacks in other capitals like London and Paris, Exceltur vice president Jose Luis Zoreda told a news conference.

About 2.7 million foreigners visited Madrid between January and May, a jump of 19% over the same period last year, according to the latest figures from national statistics institute INE.

At the same time, coastal regions continue to benefit from western European tourists shunning rival sunshine destination such as Turkey and Egypt over security concerns, according to Exceltur.

Turkey and Egypt have seen their visitor numbers rebound, but this is mainly due to a rise in the number of tourists from the Middle East and Eastern Europe, Zoreda said.

Nearly 14 million tourists have been “loaned” to Spain by other destinations that have suffered terrorist attacks, he added.

Britons remain the biggest group of tourists to Spain by nationality, Zoreda said.

“The Brexit effect has not been felt, quite the opposite,” he said.

The number of visitors from the United States jumped by around 19% during the first five months of the year, while visitor numbers from Asia were up by around 35 percent during the same period.

But Exceltur said it was worried about a decrease in the average length of stays and of the “congestion” of visitors at tourism hot spots like Barcelona and the Balearic Islands which is sparking a backlash from locals.

It blames the sharp rise in the number of illegal lodgings for tourists — a jump of 37% between March and May alone — for the problem.

Spain received 75 million visitors in 2016. It was the fourth consecutive year of record numbers of arrivals. (Source: AFP)



ROUND THE GLOBE Old City of Salamanca

Salamanca is an ancient university town situated in the west of Spain in the Autonomous Community of Castilla and Leon.

The Carthaginians first conquered the city in the 3rd century BC. It then became a Roman settlement before being ruled by the Moors until the 11th century.

The university, one of the oldest in Europe, reached its high point during Salamanca’s Golden Age. The city’s historic canter has important Romanesque, Gothic, Moorish, Renaissance, and Baroque monuments. The Plaza Mayor, with its galleries and arcades, is particularly impressive.



A view of Salamanca in Spain

Beginning with the Roman Bridge that spans the River Tormes southwest of the city, numerous structures still testify to the two thousand year-old history of antique Salmantica.

The remarkable examples include the Old Cathedral and San Marcos (12th century), the Salina and the Monterrey Palaces (16th century), and above all the Plaza Mayor (1729-1755). But the city owes its most essential features to the University.

The remarkable group of buildings in Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque styles, which, from the 15th to 18th centuries, rose to the institution that proclaimed itself “Mother of Virtues, Sciences, and the Arts” makes Salamanca an exceptional example of an old university town in the Christian world, such as Oxford and Cambridge.

Salamanca provides one of the oldest examples of university facilities conceived as such rather than as colleges. However, the city also boasted many colleges, which were generally charitable institutions with close ties to the University.

(Source: UNESCO)

Budget brand easyHotel set to make Iran debut

TOURISM TEHRAN — The **d e s k** London-based super budget hotel brand easyHotel has signed a master development agreement to expand activity in Iran.

The company said the agreement is anticipated to deliver more than 500 new rooms in the country.

EasyHotel, part of the group that owns budget airline easyJet, said on Monday it signed deals with British companies 3SV Limited and MHA Hatfield Limited for the development plan, which will comprise a combination of new-build hotels and takeovers.

Currently the only easyHotel outside of Europe is in the UAE, StockMarketWire reported.

In May, an Iranian tourism official said a total of 20 four- and five-star hotels will be inaugurated across the country by the end of the current calendar year (March 20, 2018).

An initiative for building hotels to jumpstart the tourism industry is the most important measure taken by the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, Mehr quoted Saeed Shirkavand, as saying.

Spurring foreign investment to improve the country’s hospitality industry has been a main strategy of the department. However, the investors have mainly been involved in hotel management rather than hotel construction so far, he said.

Last October, the deputy economy



This file photo shows the extensively renovated Abbasi Hotel located in the central city of Isfahan. Built around 300 years ago, under the Safavid dynasty, it was originally used as a pit stop for merchants traveling the ancient Silk Road.

minister Mohammad Khazaei unveiled an incentive plan based on which Iran grants years of tax exemption to both domestic and foreign businesses and individuals who invest in hospitality

industry of the country.

“The tax exemption [strategy] has been envisaged for a period of 13 years for investments in underprivileged areas, and five years for other parts of the

country,” ISNA quoted Khazaei as saying.

Under a national outlook plan, the country is projected to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Tourists eye Cambodia’s new world heritage site

PHNOM PENH (Reuters) — Tourists flocked to Cambodia’s newest world heritage site on the weekend, the 16th and 17th century forest temple of Sambor Prei Kuk after it was recently added to the U.N. cultural organization’s heritage list.

With its inspiring and tumultuous history, Cambodia attracts tourists from around the world who often make a beeline for the Angkor Wat temple complex, another world heritage site.

On July 8 UNESCO added Sambor Prei Kuk or “temple in the richness of the forest” in the Khmer language to its heritage list. Located 206 km (128 miles) north of the capital Phnom Penh, it is home to numerous temples, 10 of which are octagonal.

UNESCO said Sambor Prei Kuk had been identified as Ishanapura, the capital of the ancient Chenla Empire, a Khmer civilization that flourished in the late 6th and 7th centuries and preceded the Khmer Empire.

It joins the Angkor Archaeological Park and the Preah Vihear temple, located on the Thai-Cambodia border, as world heritage sites.



Sambor Prei Kuk, or “the temple in the richness of the forest” an archaeological site of ancient Ishanapura, is seen after being listed as a UNESCO world heritage site, in Kampong Thom province, Cambodia.

Tourists visit Sambor Prei Kuk, or “the temple in the richness of the forest”, an archaeological site of ancient

Meet your new data-driven travel agent

By Elaine Glusac

Unlike big, impersonal online agencies, the best travel agents know a great deal about their clients and their travel choices. Now several new travel companies are creating data-driven, automated agents that rely on users’ personal preferences to make the travel-planning process easier.

Whether they use human knowledge or artificial intelligence (or both), these next-generation travel agents do the search-culling for you, tailoring the results to your stated preferences and potentially cutting down on web-browsing time. They also use text messaging as their primary communications mode, often via a chatbot, a computer program designed to converse in text.

“Rather than going into an online travel agency and doing a search and seeing a list of 150 hotels, you enter in your profile what you’re looking for and a chatbot serves up a curated list of three to four in a messaging interface,” said Douglas Quinby, a senior vice president at the travel research firm Phocuswright. “The ideal is fewer options more tailored to your request.”

Most of these services are challenging the do-it-yourself system of browsing as offered by services like Expedia. New-wave agents — human, robotic or a combination — will also allow users to continue a search over time, rather than start anew with a browser each session.

“This is very much the early alpha stage of all of this,” said Henry Harteveltdt, a travel industry analyst and the president of Atmosphere Research Group. “It’s very much the first wave, which is exciting, but the use of artificial intelligence is far from established and also, frankly, far from perfect.”

The following pioneers are tinkering with the way travel is planned and

booked, with payment models that vary from subscriptions to pay-per-use.

■ Membership Services

Using a blend of technology and human interaction, Pana caters to frequent travelers, charging \$49 a month for its services, available around the clock. Computer programs funnel requests and member profiles, including past trips, to human agents who text back.

“Pana was borne out of two pain points,” said Devon Tivona, its chief executive. “First, all the technology pulled me away from just emailing to get something done because I’ve become my own travel agent. Second is getting access to real-time help.”

On the human end of the neo-agency spectrum, Savanti Travel tends to its clients’ plans as the founders, Dan Lack and Leigh Rowan, said they do their own, with an eye to saving money and maximizing loyalty programs.

“It’s our strategy, not just a computer’s,” said Mr. Rowan, describing the service as managing airline and hotel bookings not just to travel cheaply but to accrue status with travel companies. “The downside of working with us is the onboarding is intense. We get to know you as a human, not just a set of data points.”

Membership fees start at \$1,000 a month for unlimited travel planning, which they say eliminates the conflict of interest inherent in a commission-based system, where revenue rises with more expensive bookings. They recommend status-conferring credit cards and help manage the programs to use points for free travel.

“We sit at the intersection of hustle and hospitality,” Mr. Lack said. “We’re old-school hospitality and new-school intelligence.”

■ On-Demand Services

More accessible to casual travelers, free travel planning services, like bricks-

and-mortar travel agencies, make their money through commissions.

Originally launched in 2015 as a personal assistant tackling tasks from shopping to travel booking, Mezi shifted to handling travel exclusively last year. The company’s chief executive, Swapnil Shinde, who is also a founder, said its chatbots handle most transactions in five or fewer messages. In complex cases that robots cannot handle, human agents act as troubleshooters who, after solving problems, train the bots in that resolution. “We’ve built it so that every morning it’s smarter than the previous night,” he said.

The more travelers use Mezi, the more it knows about their preferences, making it likely that Mezi will suggest a boutique hotel in a museum district for those who have shown an interest in design and art.

The online agency Hipmunk operates Hello Hipmunk, a free messaging system for travel planning using Facebook Messenger, Skype or Slack that can start with a flight request, wander into a conversation about hotels and resume flight bookings in a style that mimics human conversations.

“This is in a sense going back to the future,” said Adam Goldstein, the chief executive of Hipmunk. “We’re talking about doing things that you could have done or could today do with a travel agent, except this travel agent is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

One entertaining aspect of Hello Hipmunk is probing it for planning tips, asking questions like what’s the cheapest week to travel in October and where can I fly direct to the tropics from Chicago in February?

Expedia now offers messaging-based searches and bookings on Facebook Messenger, Skype and other platforms. Its goal is to provide more creative

advice to customers.

“We’re supporting hotel changes and flight cancellations through the bot, but the longer-term goal, and it’s aspirational, is to have a conversation about what to do when it’s raining in Hawaii,” said Dave Fleischman, the vice president of global product for Expedia.

Flightfox, which books airfares only, works differently. Founded in 2012, it originally tried to crowdsource flight savings by distributing requests to freelance bookers who would compete to find the best fare for a fee.

“It was nice in theory, but we realized we needed someone to be responsible for your trip,” said Todd Sullivan, a founder.

Now, users submit a flight request, and Flightfox’s network of agents takes on the booking task, usually for a \$50 fee, though it can go to \$100 or more for complicated itineraries. The agency specializes in knowing the ins and outs of points systems to maximize value, especially for business-class flights or complex itineraries.

Instead of booking the trip for you, agents provide links for self-booking to maintain transparency about costs and to avoid collecting personal information like passport numbers.

■ Free-and-Fee Hybrid

Entirely powered by chatbots, HelloGbye introduced its app in March, offering both a free service for booking hotels and flights and a \$19-a-month subscription that offers preferred hotel rates, 2 percent cash back on hotel bookings and no change fees on itineraries.

“It’s like the Costco model,” said Greg Apple, the marketing chief for HelloGbye, which targets frequent and business travelers. “You get savings in bulk and if you spend a lot you get a check back at the year end.”

(Source: The New York Times)

The world's first power plant combining hydroelectricity and solar energy

The world's first hybrid hydroelectric and solar power installation is now operational in Portugal. The station uses floating photovoltaic cells to collect sunlight during the day and makes use of hydroelectric power at night and during peak hours.

The world's first power plant combining hydroelectric and solar power is now operational in Portugal. The Alto Rabagão dam has been outfitted with 840 floating solar panels, which increase the plant's total capacity of 68 MWh by 220 kWp. Within its first year, the station should generate 332 megawatt hours, enough to power 100 homes for a year.

The panels were created by Ciel & Terre International (C&T), developers of the floating solar system Hydrelío. The system is designed to allow ecologically friendly floating photovoltaic (FPV) panels made out of recyclables to be installed on large bodies of water rather than eating up valuable space on land.

■ Panels reduce waves

Additionally, the panels partially shield the water, which helps to slow evaporation and the growth of algae. The panels also reduce waves within the reservoir, cutting down on the erosion of its banks.



The main goal behind C&T's FPV panels is to generate energy while maximizing the use of an artificial body of water.

plants more profitable and produces more energy.

The panels collect sunlight during daylight hours, and hydropower can be

The main goal behind C&T's FPV panels is to generate energy while maximizing the use of an artificial body of water.

used during peak demand times and after dark.

C&T estimates that if only 10 percent of the world's 50 largest dams were outfitted with FPV panels, 400 gigawatts (GW) of solar electricity could be produced.

According to The Huffington Post, if the Alto Rabagão dam project succeeds, the system might be used to meet the power demands of other countries.

■ All ingredients to succeed

One of those could be Brazil, where the utility behind the project, Energias de Portugal (EDP), does business on a large scale. "It has all the ingredients to succeed, a solution of this kind," EDP project manager Paulo Pinto told the Diário de Notícias.

Portugal has created the right climate for the project's success by promoting strong renewables policies.

The country also enjoys annual sunshine duration of 2,500 hours and a high potential for FPV solutions due to its existing hydropower capacity.

The hybrid solution in this case presents a great example of how existing energy systems can be enhanced by newer technologies to create better clean energy solutions.

(Source: futurism.com)

China could be using nuclear fusion power in 50 years, scientists say

Significant progress could be made on artificial sun technology by 2023 – and it could be used to generate clean energy for China in 50 to 60 years, a senior government nuclear scientist says.

Song Yuntao, a lead scientist on the country's largest fusion energy project, told the official Science and Technology Daily on Thursday that they expected to double the burn time of man-made sun every 16 to 17 months.

Earlier this month, scientists on the project kept extremely hot plasma at a temperature three times that of the sun's core for more than 100 seconds during an experiment at their Hefei research facility. It was almost double the record set by the team last year.

They're aiming to sustain the burn for more than 1,000 seconds – using a ring-shaped device known as a tokamak – at which point the scientists expect the plasma to produce a self-sustainable nuclear chain reaction, an important step for power generation.

■ Six-year-away milestone

That milestone would be less than six years away, based on Song's estimate. "We hope to go into business in 50 to 60 years," he told the newspaper.

At the Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak facility in Anhui province, the chain reaction that

takes place in the sun to provide life-giving energy is simulated using plasma – two hydrogen atoms merge into one helium and in the process release a large amount of energy. This extremely hot gas – whose temperature can reach up to 10 times that of the sun's core – is contained by a strong magnetic field to prevent it from coming into direct contact with the inner wall of the reaction chamber.

The tokamak fusion device was invented by Soviet physicists in the 1950s.

The development of fusion technology – particularly the idea of applying it to nuclear reactors to generate clean energy – has been held back by the difficulty of containing the reaction so that heat is released in a slow and controllable way.

■ Superconducting wires

But Song said the Chinese scientists were a step ahead, in part because they could mass-produce some of the world's most advanced superconducting wires that can create a strong magnetic field using a lot less power than others.

Hundreds of tons of these wires – which are as fine as hair – are rolled out in Chinese factories every year at a cost of 30,000 yuan (US\$4,400) per individual wire.



China is a key contributor to the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor, or ITER, the world's largest fusion reactor which is being built in southern France. But delays and budget blow-outs mean its first experiment is not expected until at least 2025.

Song said a Chinese test reactor would make "daring innovations" and learn lessons from the ITER.

(Source: Business Insider)

Unabated climate change would reverse the development gains in Asia: study

Unabated climate change would bring devastating consequences to countries in Asia and the Pacific, which could severely affect their future growth, reverse current development gains, and degrade quality of life, according to a report produced by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK).

Under a business-as-usual scenario, a 6 degree Celsius temperature increase is projected over the Asian landmass by the end of the century. Some countries in the region could experience significantly hotter climates, with temperature increases in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the northwest part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) projected to reach 8 degree Celsius, according to the report,

titled "A Region at Risk: The Human Dimensions of Climate Change in Asia and the Pacific."

■ Drastic changes

These increases in temperature would lead to drastic changes in the region's weather system, agriculture and fisheries sectors, land and marine biodiversity, domestic and regional security, trade, urban development, migration, and health. Such a scenario may even pose an existential threat to some countries in the region and crush any hope of achieving sustainable and inclusive development.

The "global climate crisis is arguably the biggest challenge human civilization faces in the 21st century, with the Asia and Pacific region at the heart of it all," said Bambang Susantono, ADB

Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development. "Home to two-thirds of the world's poor and regarded as one of the most vulnerable region to climate change, countries in Asia and the Pacific are at the highest risk of plummeting into deeper poverty -- and disaster -- if mitigation and adaptation efforts are not quickly and strongly implemented."

■ Low-lying areas

Coastal and low-lying areas in the region will be at an increased risk of flooding. Nineteen of the 25 cities most exposed to a one-meter sea-level rise are located in the region, 7 of which are in the Philippines alone. Indonesia, however, will be the most affected country in the region by coastal flooding with approxi-

mately 5.9 million people expected to be affected every year until 2100.

Climate change will also make food production in the region more difficult and production costs higher. In some countries of Southeast Asia, rice yields could decline by up to 50% by 2100 if no adaptation efforts are made. Almost all crops in Uzbekistan, meanwhile, are projected to decrease by 20-50% by 2050 even in a 2 degree Celsius temperature increase (Paris Agreement scenario). Food shortages could increase the number of malnourished children in South Asia by 7 million, as import costs will likely increase in the subregion to \$15 billion per year compared to \$2 billion by 2050.

(Source: EurekAlert)

IDRO Ready to Broaden Cooperation with Neighboring Iraq in Energy and Industrial Sectors

Industries Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) is ready to cooperate and collaborate with the neighboring Iraq in the field of energy, renovation of industries and training managers.

Chief Executive of Industries Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) Mansour Mo'azami announced the above statement in his meeting with the visiting Iraqi Minister of Industries Mohammed Shia 'Al Sudani.

The two sides exchanged views in the field of enhancing and strengthening bilateral ties, the Public Relations Dept. of IDRO reported.

While congratulating the liberation of Iraqi Mosul city, CEO of IDRO said: "Iraq is a strategic friend to us and for this purpose, we have voiced our readiness to enhance cooperation with this country in various fields especially industrial and investment sectors."

He pointed to the Industrial Management Institute

(IMI) and said: "With more than 60 years of fruitful experience, IMI is equipped with training and educating relevant managers in the best form possible."

Given the above issue, IDRO enjoys high capability in training Iraqi managers and industrialists, he opined.

In addition, IDRO is ready to invest in oil, gas, petrochemical, downstream, upstream, shipbuilding, auto manufacturing and car parts production sectors in neighboring Iraq, he emphasized.

In the end, IDRO senior official urged to set up a joint Working Group by the two sides in the field of strengthening bilateral ties.

For his part, Iraqi Minister of Industries pointed to the high interest of Iraqi side to follow up matters of mutual concerns and said: "We will study these proposals in an expert-level session meticulously in line with solving pertinent problems facing the two countries."

It should be noted that the visiting Iraqi delegation,



comprised of Iraqi minister of industries, his deputies, managers of public and private companies, met with the Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Eng. Ne'matzadeh and also visited Shamsabad Industrial Park.

SINA BANK's Accounts Opened in Prestigious Intl. Banks at 13: CEO

A number of 13 accounts have thus far been opened by SINA Bank in prestigious and leading international banks, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Streamlining, facilitating and promoting power of competitiveness in domestic and foreign arenas in order to take advantage of international capacities

has been cited as the main aim behind opening accounts in foreign banks, the report added.

It should be noted that SINA Bank opened its international accounts in Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Russia and Spain.

To create fields of accessibility of dear fellow countrymen to the international banking services and also fulfill foreign

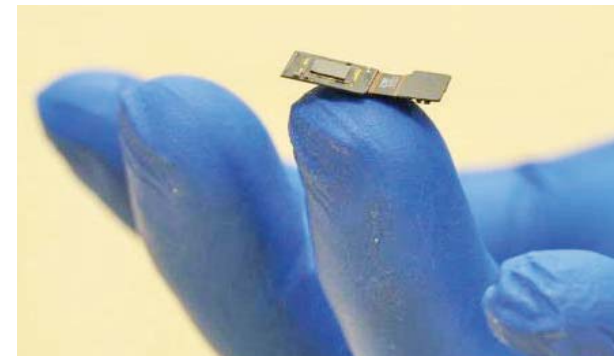
exchange transactions, the Bank has presented forged brokerage ties with 25 reliable banks in the world including Russia, Germany, France and China.

Considering the measures taken in this regard, the bank has established cooperation and collaboration with the international banks using brokerage relationship and opening relevant account.

It should be noted that SINA Bank offers quality currency services to dear importers and exporters of the country without imposition of additional costs such as granting facilities, opening various types of credit, documentary drafts, and currency warrantees and also quality consultation services to its dear customers, the Public Relations Dept. ended.

Flat microscope for the brain could help restore lost eyesight

You'd probably prefer that doctors restore lost sight or hearing by directly repairing your eyes and ears, but Rice University is one step closer to the next best thing: transmitting info directly to your brain.



It's developing a flat microscope (the creatively titled FlatScope) that sits on your brain to both monitor and trigger neurons modified to be fluorescent when active.

It should not only capture much more detail than existing brain probes (the team is hoping to see a "million" neurons), but reach levels deep enough that it should shed light on how the mind processes sensory input. And that, in turn, opens the door to controlling sensory input.

FlatScope is part of a broader DARPA initiative that aims to create a high-resolution neural interface.

If technologies like the microscope lead to a way to quickly interpret neuron activity, it should be possible to craft sensors that send audiovisual data to the brain and effectively take over for any missing senses.

Any breakthrough on that level is a long way off (at best) when even FlatScope exists as just a prototype, but there is some hope that blindness and deafness will eventually become things of the past.

(Source: Engadget)

Alphabet's Verily is about to release 20 million mosquitos in Fresno

It may sound counterintuitive, but Alphabet's life sciences unit Verily is releasing about 20 million mosquitos in Fresno, California in order to fight Zika, the mosquito-borne illness. It's part of Verily's Debug Project, an initiative announced last October with the mission of reducing the "devastating global health impact that disease-carrying mosquitoes inflict on people around the world." And now, Verily is launching Debug Fresno, the company's first field study in the U.S. that will test a mosquito control method that involves sterile insect technique.

In essence, the 20 million mosquitos Verily is releasing are all sterile males that have been treated with Wolbachia, a naturally occurring bacterium. The test is said to be the largest release of sterile male mosquitos in the U.S. thus far. Over the next 20 weeks, these bugs will be released in two neighborhoods around 300 acres large.

The hope is that when these sterile males mate with wild females, which can carry and transmit a number of diseases including Zika, dengue, and chikungunya, the resulting eggs will not hatch. Verily will determine the success of its test by comparing the adult population density and egg hatching of this particular kind of mosquito in the targeted neighborhoods to two control neighborhoods.

Linus Upson, a senior engineer at Verily, told the MIT Technology Review that this could ultimately become a cost effective way to control mosquito populations, and get rid of diseases (though he didn't say how much exactly this experiment actually costs). "If we really want to be able to help people globally, we need to be able to produce a lot of mosquitos, distribute them to where they need to be, and measure the populations at very, very low costs," he said.

(Source: Digital Trends)

This glove translates sign language to text

It may not be speedy, but it works. A gloved hand forms letters in sign language, and like magic, the motions are translated to text. "U-C-S-D" the hand slowly spells out in text, referring to the University of California San Diego, where researchers developed the glove.

The achievement is detailed in a video posted this week by UCSD. As it stands now, the glove, which the team built for less than \$100 using flexible electronics that are available commercially, can translate the entire American Sign Language alphabet into text.

The leather athletic glove (which looks quite similar to what a batter might wear in baseball) uses flexible sensors to detect the movement of the signer's knuckles, which creates a nine-digit binary key (0s and 1s) that corresponds to a letter. The glove also has an accelerometer and a pressure sensor to help distinguish the movements of letters that look similar to one another.

While translating sign language is a practical use for the glove, the engineers at UCSD have more in mind going forward. "Gesture recognition is just one demonstration of this glove's capabilities," Timothy O'Connor, a nanoengineering Ph.D. student at UC San Diego and the first author of a study on the researchers' work, said in a statement.

"Our ultimate goal is to make this a smart glove that in the future will allow people to use their hands in virtual reality, which is much more intuitive than using a joystick and other existing controllers. This could be better for games and entertainment, but more importantly for virtual training procedures in medicine, for example, where it would be advantageous to actually simulate the use of one's hands."

(Source: Newsweek)

UN official urges protection of survivors released from ISIL-held Mosul

The United Nations official advocating against the use of sexual violence in conflict on Wednesday urged all Iraqis to shun stigmatization, and called for women and girls returning from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) captivity to be embraced into their communities and supported, espe-



A gender-based violence caseworker (right) listens to a refugee.

cially if they have children as a result of rape.

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, urged "all relevant stakeholders to ensure the return of women and girls from Daesh captivity in safety and dignity," in a statement.

The Under-Secretary-General also called on everyone to welcome the women and girls back into their communities and to support them in healing, as well as "to address all their human rights protection needs, in particular those of children born to survivors of rape."

Ms. Patten commended the efforts of religious leader in issuing public statements in support of the women and girls, and urged them to continue working within the communities to promote acceptance of the children.

The Special Representative's Office has been working with the government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan regional government, to implement a joint communiqué on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence signed in September 2016.

Meanwhile, the UN World Food Program (WFP) said that it is working to support almost one million people displaced from Mosul during the nine months of violent conflict.

Sally Haydock, WFP representative and country director in Iraq, said "while we have done our best to support those who arrived to camps weak and hungry, our hearts go out to the thousands of people who lost their lives."

(Source: UN News Center)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Fresh cherry crisp

"A cherry crisp using sour pie cherries that has an oatmeal crunch topping. This is delicious warm from the oven with ice cream. Fresh, frozen, or canned cherries may be used."

Ingredients:



- 4 cups pitted sour cherries
- 1 1/2 cups white sugar
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup old-fashioned oats
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup shortening

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).

In a large bowl, combine cherries, 1 1/2 cups white sugar, and 4 tablespoons flour. Pour into 9x13 inch baking dish. In a medium bowl, combine 1 1/2 cups flour, oats, and brown sugar. Cut in butter and shortening until crumbly. Sprinkle over cherries.

Bake in preheated oven for 45 to 50 minutes, or until topping is golden brown.

Tip:

Aluminum foil can be used to keep food moist, cook it evenly, and make clean-up easier.

LEARN ENGLISH

Ordering at an Italian Restaurant

A: Good evening ladies. My name is Josh and I'll be your **server** tonight. May I take your order?

B: Do you have any **recommendations**?

A: Well, I personally like the chicken **penne** with cream mushroom sauce, but the **prawn fettuccine** is also very nice.

B: Hmm. I'd like to have the grilled chicken, but can I have **spaghetti** instead of penne?

A: Of course, mam. And for you?

C: I... ah...I'll have the **horse tripe**.

Key vocabulary

server: a waiter or waitress

recommendation: a suggestion or proposal

penne: a type of Italian pasta

prawn: a large shrimp

fettuccine: pasta in the shape of long narrow strips

spaghetti: pasta dish originally from Italy

horse tripe: the stomach of a horse used as food

Supplementary vocabulary

parmesan: a type of cheese, usually goes with spaghetti

calzone: a turnover made of pizza dough, usually containing cheese

ricotta: a soft Italian cheese that resembles cottage cheese

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Iranian women's presence in job market up 40%: report

WOMEN TEHRAN — The number of women **d e s k** in the Iranian job market has experienced a 40 percent growth over the past three years, Irantalent.com reported.

The report, which is related to the previous Iranian calendar year (March 2016-March 2017), puts women's share of employees in branches of international companies at 29 percent, in privately-owned companies at 32 percent, and in state-run organizations at 20 percent.

About 39 percent of Iranian women are active in non-managerial positions, according to the report.

Women make up 25 percent of mid-level managers and 19 percent of high-level managers in the country.

About 60 percent of women are active as secretaries and administrative staff, and 54 percent are working in the field of translation.

Another study in Irantalent.com report shows that about 50 percent of Iranian women are working in art fields.

Data has been provided based on a survey on 100,000 employees in 28 different job groups all around the country.

Irantalent.com is the leading job site and online recruitment service in Iran, with a database of over half a million Iranian professionals, specialists and managers across all industries and job categories.



Riyadh in no position to speak on behalf of women at UN: analyst

Members of the European Parliament have slammed as repugnant and unacceptable the April election of Saudi Arabia to serve on the UN women's right commission. The UN vote, which paved the way for Riyadh, viewed as the world's leading oppressor of women, to sit on the council prompted outrage from human rights groups worldwide.

Press TV has asked Catherine Shakdam, director of the Shafaqna Institute for Middle Eastern Studies from London, and Jihad Mouracadeh, lecturer and political analyst from Beirut, to express their views on the issue.

Shakdam said that the Saudi kingdom has no right to represent women in the international community, because the regime does not even recognize the basic rights of its own female citizens.

"Saudi Arabia does not recognize women as human being," the expert said on Wednesday night.

The regime in Riyadh "is in no position to be speaking on behalf of woman," because women in the kingdom are "less than nothing," and are treated as "commodities," she noted.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has come under intense pressure by rights groups for mistreating



A file photo of Saudi women in Jeddah

women. In 2016, the kingdom was ranked 141 out of 144 on the Global Gender Gap Index.

Shakdam went on to say, "Saudi Arabia right now is lobbying enough Western capitals, Washington and London of course, to try to push their agenda and to try to reach the highest office in the international community"

"The United Nations has no clue whatsoever" and "the only thing that the UN is responding to right now

is money and how much political attraction one can have," the analyst complained.

The international community "is desperately trying to present and portray Saudi Arabia as a legitimate power," but the reality is that the state is a reactionary power "living and breathing on sectarianism" and denying the rights of religious minorities, ethnic groups and women, she argued.

"When you have a country such as this to be sitting anywhere in the international community, is an insult to the rest of the world," she added.

Meanwhile, Jihad Mouracadeh said, "Within the rules of the United Nations, women's rights are very different from what they are in Saudi Arabia."

He said there are different rules and regulations when it comes to treating women throughout the world and in various countries.

"You cannot impose on Saudi Arabia the rules that are existing in England or in France," Mouracadeh explained.

Therefore, he urged, "One must respect the way people deal with women as long as women's rights are not subordinated."

(Source: Press TV)

Without women, local government in England is 'not fit for the future': report

LONDON (Thomson Reuters Foundation) — Despite having a female prime minister, local government in England and Wales is still dominated by men and held back by outdated practices and attitudes, a report said on Thursday.

A year-long study by the women's rights organization the Fawcett Society and the Local Government Information Unit found about 17 percent of council leaders in England and Wales are women, a figure that

has hardly shifted for 10 years.

Only one in three local councilors is female - with the slow pace of change meaning it will take county councils until 2065 to have equal numbers of men and women - and almost a third of female councilors experiencing sexist comments.

Digging into the reasons for this, the report found only four percent of local councils have formal parental leave policies in place and 80 percent of seats go

to incumbents at election time, making it hard for women to break in.

Sam Smethers, chief executive of the Fawcett Society, said "significant barriers" remained in place for women - even though Britain will next year mark 100 years since women could first be elected into parliament.

"We are going backwards and that is fundamentally unacceptable in 21st century," Smethers said in a statement.

Chairwoman of North Tyneside Council, Cath Davis - a single mother who works full time - said she was initially encouraged by other women to join the council but on arrival found the demographics were "a lot of retired, white men".

Although this has changed, there remain hurdles deterring women such as time, childcare and transport, she said, adding, that key roles were still predominantly filled by men.

Why Trump's travel ban hits women the hardest

Trump's "Muslim ban" is a frontal assault on many universal human rights principles. But the latest temporary reinstatement of the order's 120-day refugee ban - pending an anticipated October Supreme Court ruling - is already quietly undermining the most fundamental universal humanitarian rule: it puts women and children ... last.

The Executive Order is being challenged primarily for discriminating against citizens of six Muslim-majority countries - Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen - with an arbitrary 90-day travel ban (with arbitrary, potentially illegal exceptions for those with "bona fide relationships" to U.S. residents.)

But on top of alienating an entire religious community, Trump's even longer ban on future refugee admissions deepens a hidden dimension of the crisis: the endemic gender injustice of warfare.

The ban exposes a brazenly hypocritical convergence between Trump's War on Women and his War on Terror.

In contrast to the menacing stereotype of male ISIS warriors invading U.S. shores, which Trump has framed in his speeches seeking to justify the ban, the demographic realities of the crisis place women in an unheard majority: nearly three-quarters of Syrian refugees who have entered the U.S. since the war began (about 13,000) were women and young children. Women and children under age 14 actually make up most admissions from the top countries of origin for refugees in the U.S., including Iraq, Somalia and Syria.

While Trump's ban is supposed to be temporary, four months is long enough to inflict irreparable harm on those facing gender-based violence every passing hour. Women remain deeply vulnerable whether they are escaping military air raids or "safe" in an official refugee camp overseas.

According to U.S. humanitarian organization Tahirh Justice Center, which focuses on gender-based human rights abuse, women face a disproportionate share of the trauma because at every stage in the refugee journey, even outside of the direct conflict zone, they "find themselves unable to get out of situations that might threaten their safety ... either because they are in domestic violence situation ... internally displaced, or ... vulnerable to trafficking or other forms of harm."

Moreover they face ancillary gender-based human rights violations that tend to explode in conflict situations, including epidemics of sexual abuse and labor and sexual trafficking.

In any society at war, conflict unravels civil society, but the violent aftermath may strengthen institutionalized oppressions. In a 2015 survey of one of the largest Syrian refugee communities, in Jordan, UNHCR observed that since "traditional protection networks have broken down" for women and children, multiple forms of gender-based violence have intensified.

But while military violence had triggered displacement, the primary type of violence against women wasn't a war crime but domestic abuse, usually within a household. The prevalence of child marriage, which typically targets young girls who have become economic "burdens" to the family, had more than doubled over the already high pre-war marriage rates.

Ironically, the further women "escape" from war-zones, the deeper the threats they face on the refugee trail. Across Africa and the Middle East, women, often migrating alone with children, spiral into vast trafficking networks that profit from the overlap of gender and social barriers at the region's militarized borders.

According to a UN survey of refugees who crossed through the Libyan militia-controlled detention camps, about half of women and children reported suffering sexual abuse, often repeatedly. The phalanx of sexual predation blurs lines between legal and criminal: about one in three reports of abuse involved a violator who was in uniform or associated with the military; incidents often occurring at border crossings and checkpoints. Though both boys and girls faced abuse, attacks on girls were more prevalent, often exacerbated by extreme deprivation.

Currently, advocates hope the Muslim ban's 120-day timeline will have simply lapsed by the time the Supreme Court reviews the case. In the long run, they're pushing for a definitive ruling, to send an international message that the president is not above the constitution.

But even if Trump's ban is ultimately struck down, the administration and Republican Congress will continue to



inflict disproportionate harm on refugee women. In May, amid his legal crusade to exclude even more refugees, Trump enacted the "Global Gag Rule," which restricts humanitarian funding for groups that the administration deems to be in any way facilitating abortion - even if their services focus on basic family planning, or care for rape survivors.

According to the latest analysis of the Interagency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises, several "banned" countries are suffering disastrous gaps in reproductive healthcare.

Women across Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Sudan, including those displaced within borders and those who become refugees in other countries, are in dire need of contraceptives and other essential women's services; aid groups warn that ongoing social upheaval and displacement is aggravating the gaps in social counseling, family planning and birth control resources.

Rape has become so prevalent on some smuggling routes, women report that traffickers are now in the business of reproductive health, injecting women with contraceptives to avoid pregnancy en route.

As Trump drives to harden the borders of Terror War, he's quietly expanding his assault on refugee mothers, sisters and daughters - an invisible war on women that, tragically, knows no boundaries.

(Source: The Guardian)

Turkish government seeks three-month extension to emergency rule

The Turkish government asked parliament on Monday to extend emergency rule for another three months, almost a year after it was imposed in the wake of last July's failed military coup.

The request is expected to be approved by parliament, where President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party has a comfortable majority. It followed weekend ceremonies to mark the anniversary of the abortive coup in which around 250 people were killed.

Since emergency rule was imposed on July 20 last year, more than 50,000 people have been arrested and 150,000 people have been suspended in a crackdown which Erdogan's opponents say has pushed Turkey on a path to greater authoritarianism.

The government says the purge is necessary to confront security challenges facing Turkey and to root out supporters of the U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen who it says was behind the coup attempt. Gulen has denied any involvement.

In a series of public ceremonies to mourn people killed in the coup attempt and celebrate those who thwarted it, Erdogan defiantly stepped up his condem-



nation of the European Union and said he would bring back the death penalty if parliament approved it.

Ties with the West were strained when European governments voiced alarm at the scale of the crackdown, which continues. Another 7,000 police, civil servants

and academics were dismissed last week according to a decree published on Friday.

A statement from Prime Minister Binali Yildirim's office said the cabinet requested that parliament extend emergency rule by three months from Wednesday.

■ 115 more people detained

Meanwhile, Turkish authorities have ordered the detention of 127 people on suspicion of links to the attempted military coup a year ago, the state-run Anadolu news agency said.

In a report late on Sunday, Anadolu said 115 of the suspects including businessmen, midwives and journalists had so far been detained in operations in the northwestern province of Tekirdag. It said the remaining suspects were being sought by police.

The suspects were believed to be users of ByLock, an encrypted messaging app the government says was used by the network of U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom Ankara blames for orchestrating the abortive coup, Anadolu said. Gulen has denied involvement in the attempted military takeover.

On Saturday, hundreds of thousands of Turks rallied to mark the anniversary of the failed coup in an outpouring of mass support for Erdogan that lay bare the divisions of a society riven by the widespread purges.

(Source: agencies)

100s of Iraqi soldiers, fighters killed in U.S.-led airstrikes: Iraqi MP

An Iraqi lawmaker has blamed the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the ISIL (Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group in the country and neighboring Syria for killing hundreds of army soldiers and pro-government fighters from the Popular Mobilizations during airstrikes against alleged militant hideouts.

Faleh al-Khazali, a member of the Iraqi parliament's security and defense committee, said in a statement on Sunday that U.S.-led military aircraft have struck Iraqi forces in many areas, and killed hundreds of them, Arabic-language Iraq News Network reported.

Khazali noted that the Western military contingent is "not serious about fighting Daesh militants, and seeks to support them through maintaining safe and accessible supply routes."

The Iraqi legislator further called on the Joint Operations Command (JOC) to "coordinate, control and provide more accurate information regarding the strikes of the U.S.-led coalition in a bid to reduce the loss of innocent civilians as well as government troops."

Khazali underlined that the extent of the damage caused by the U.S.-led coalition warplanes could be best surveyed in the troubled western province of Anbar, where the substantial level of destruction has delayed

the return of displaced people to their native areas.

■ Iraqi police arrest female Daesh leader in Mosul

Meanwhile, Iraqi security forces have arrested a woman in the Old City of Mosul, who is considered as the female leader of Daesh terror outfit.

Arabic-language Shafaaq news agency reported on Sunday that the woman, identified by the nom de guerre Ahlam Mohsen Ali, was arrested less than a week ago with her brother, a prominent terrorist, as the pair were trying to escape from the western quarter of Mosul and sneak into the eastern side.

The woman grew up in al-Houd village of Qayyarah subdistrict, which lies on the western bank of Tigris River and some 60kilometers (35 miles) south of Mosul. She left her husband months before the fall of Mosul in June 2014, while collecting sensitive intelligence about Iraqi security personnel and their fortifications.

On July 10, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi formally declared victory over Daesh extremists in Mosul, which served as the extremists' main urban stronghold in the conflict-ridden Arab country.

In the run-up to Mosul's liberation, Iraqi army soldiers and volunteer fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units, commonly known by the Arabic name Hashd al-



Sha'abi, had made sweeping gains against Daesh since launching the operation on October 17, 2016.

The Iraqi forces took control of eastern Mosul in January after 100 days of fighting, and launched the battle in the west on February 19.

An estimated 862,000 people have been displaced from Mosul ever since the battle to retake the city began eight months ago. A total of 195,000 civilians have also returned, mainly to the liberated areas of eastern Mosul.

(Source: Press TV)

Afghan forces retake district in southern province of Helmand

Afghan security forces have retaken a southern district from the Taliban as part of a drive to weaken the insurgents' hold on Helmand province and push them back from around its capital, Lashkar Gah, officials said on Monday.

A two-day offensive launched on Saturday saw security forces take the district centre of Nawa, to the south of Lashkar

Gah, killing more than 50 fighters and destroying vehicles and equipment, said defence ministry spokesman, General Dawlat Waziri.

The operation would continue with security forces moving further south along the main road to the town of Garmsir, officials said.

The recapture of Nawa district, from

where the insurgents threatened Lashkar Gah, reflects renewed focus by Afghan forces and their U.S. advisers on Helmand, an insurgent heartland that is source of much of the world's illegal opium.

The Taliban, fighting to re-establish strict conservative rule in Afghanistan and drive out international forces back-

ing the government in Kabul, control large stretches of the province and have targeted Lashkar Gah.

It was not possible to independently verify the defense ministry's casualty figure and no comment on insurgent losses was immediately available from the Taliban.

(Source: Daily Star)

Could death end drug-related offences?

➔ In case of opiates, the offenders who do not have any criminal records and did not succeed in distribution or sales of 20 kilograms of drugs or less would face life imprisonment. More than 20 kilograms of drugs is a capital offence in any case.

■ Pros and cons

Not unlike other bills or amendments, there are some who are either in favor of the newly adopted law or against it.

Those in favor of the law reason that some are victims of poverty and unemployment especially in cities adjacent to border areas and do not deserve death sentence.

"Most drug offenders, especially those in border areas would commit such crimes due to poverty and the felons manage to escape punishment. Capital punishment is not an effective deterrent, we must figure out another alternative," Jalil Mohebbi, a jurist, said on Sunday.

"An unemployed young guy who makes a mistake must be given another chance; they should not be charged with felony offense," Mohebbi added.

Majlis Judicial Committee spokesmen Hassan Norouzi also voiced his consent, saying that harsh punishment is not effective and would not decrease illicit drug trafficking.

"We are not planning to overturn sentence for violent offenders and drug lords; what we are saying is to spare those first-time offenders from severe sentences," Norouzi stated.

Big shot drug lords would usually escape death pen-

alty by spending big money and hiring experienced lawyers, Norouzi lamented.

However, lawmakers who were against the law, argued that the new law would increase manufacture and distribution of drugs but death penalty sends a strong signal to would-be offenders and deter them from committing crimes. They believe that the bill needs to be discussed for further modification.

Crimes punishable by death in Iran include murder, rape, child molestation, sodomy, drug trafficking, armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism and treason.

Human rights organizations and groups as well as Western media outlets have frequently criticized the Tehran government for high number of executions in the country. However, Iranian officials say they are fighting a large-scale drug war along its eastern borders and cite an increase in number drug lords and dealers as a reason for a rise in

"Capital punishment should be limited to drug lords. This will cut the number of executions (in Iran) immediately," Larijani said in what seemed to be a setback from a tougher stance taken previously.

number of executions.

Last October Iran's Human Rights Council secretary Mohammad Javad Larijani said drug-related offences account for 93 percent of executions in Iran though all in compliance in law.

"Capital punishment should be limited to drug lords. This will cut the number of executions (in Iran) immediately," Larijani said in what seemed to be a setback from a tougher stance taken previously.

Iran is a neighbor to Afghanistan, a leading producer and supplier of the world's drugs. It also faces big challenges at home with a young population susceptible to a variety of cheap and abundant addictive drugs.

The country is also located on the Balkan route which traverses Iran (often through Pakistan), Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria across South-East Europe to the Western European market.

The Balkan and northern routes are the main heroin trafficking corridors linking Afghanistan to the huge markets of the Russian Federation and Western Europe.

According to Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Yury Fedotov, Iran is directly or indirectly involved in almost 40 percent of all drug confiscations around the world.

Nevertheless, the newly introduced bill, adopted to limit death penalty for drug-related crimes most significantly for first-time offenders with clean criminal records, will demonstrate Iran's flexibility in applying its policy on the international scale.

much of northern Yemen.

In Yemen's southern city of Aden, banks closed for three days following an armed robbery at one bank.

(Source: AP)

EU sanctions 16 more Syrians over chemical attacks

The European Union Monday imposed sanctions against 16 more high-ranking military Syrian officials and scientists over chemical weapons attacks on civilians, a statement said.

The move by the bloc's foreign ministers brings to 255 people now facing a travel ban and an assets freeze during a five-year civil war.

"The EU added these 16 persons for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons against the civilian population," an EU statement said.

The EU will release the names of those hit by the sanctions on Tuesday, it said.

The UN's chemical watchdog, the OPCW, last month concluded that sarin was used as a chemical weapon in the April 4 attack in the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhun that killed at least 87 people including children.

The sanctions decision "shows the resolve of the UK and the rest of our friends in Europe in dealing with those who are responsible for chemical weapons attacks," British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson told reporters just before the decision was announced.

Syria is already subject to an oil embargo, restrictions on certain investments, a freeze of the assets of the Syrian central bank held in the EU, as well as export restrictions.

It also is under sanctions on equipment and technology that might be used for internal repression as well as on equipment and technology for the monitoring or interception of internet or telephone communications.

(Source: AFP)

Lavrov calls U.S. preconditions to return Russian property 'robbery'

U.S. attempts to set preconditions for the return of Russian diplomatic property seized in New York and Maryland are "daylight robbery," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday, the RIA news agency reported.

Barack Obama, then U.S. president, ordered the seizure of two Russian diplomatic compounds and the expulsion of 35 Russian diplomats in December over what he said was their involvement in hacking the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign, something Russia flatly denies.

Moscow has said a lot will depend on the outcome of a meeting in Washington later on Monday between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and U.S. Undersecretary of State Thomas Shannon who will discuss the continued diplomatic row.

Lavrov, on a visit to Belarus, was also cited as saying that "anti-Russian feeling" in the United States meant it was not certain that Moscow and Washington could agree on key global issues.

On a separate issue, RIA cited Lavrov as saying that Russia and the United States would do all they could to address Israeli concerns about the creation of de-escalation zones in Syria.

He was responding to comments by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who told reporters in Paris late on Sunday that the arrangement perpetuated Iran's presence in Syria and that Israel was therefore "utterly opposed" to it.

The public objection was rare for Netanyahu, who has sought to avoid confrontation with Moscow and Washington over Syria.

(Source: AP)

PGCC may be about to eject member Qatar

➔ Speculation already existed that the PGCC might eject Qatar. But as the dispute escalates into a battle between hegemony and sovereign independence, there is also a likelihood that the GCC would cease to exist at all.

Oman and Kuwait, the only two other PGCC members beside Qatar, have refused to take the tough line of cutting ties with Doha, a policy believed to have been largely directed by Saudi Arabia. Muscat and Kuwait City have been trying to work out a negotiated solution and have even been sending foodstuffs to Qatar to mitigate the impacts of the blockade imposed by the three other members.

In his Monday speech, Gargash attempted to downplay such speculation.

"Understandably, many of our friends in Europe and beyond are concerned about this crisis," he said. "They see the region as a haven of stability in an unstable Middle East, and as an important and functioning common market... But as we know from meetings with American and European officials, they are also aware of Qatar's duplicity."

(Source: Guardian)

Why America's Army is falling apart

➔ Bad news is never welcome in Washington, DC but it's necessary. The fighting power of an army lies in its combat formations, not in gross numbers of soldiers. Today's army is spread too thinly around the world and its fighting formations are Cold War relics. If today's Brigade Combat Teams faced an air-defense threat, rocket artillery and loitering munitions (drones that loiter over the battlefield for hours and attack targets by flying into them), let alone a capable, opposing Army, then it would face certain defeat.

None of this means the nation needs a warmed-over version of the World War II/Cold War Army. Another transformation scam like the Future Combat System — a "Potemkin Village" system designed to attract money yet changes nothing of substance — is the last thing Americans need. Instead, the nation needs new combat formations designed for joint, integrated, "all arms" warfare in a battlefield environment more lethal than anything we've seen since World War II.

The world Americans have known for fifty years is crumbling. The potential for a 1950 Korean-style emergency grows with each passing month. History may well judge the Trump presidency by the selection of the next Secretary of the Army.

(Source: nationalinterest.org)

UN envoy to Yemen proposes plan on how to run disputed port

A UN envoy has proposed a plan on giving the world organization a mandate to run a key Yemen port now under control of the country's Houthis.

Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said on

Monday that the Hodeida port should be run by a third, neutral party, under UN supervision.

He spoke after Arab League meetings in Cairo where he presented a "Hodeida

Plan" - a possible blueprint for a wider solution for Yemen's conflict.

A Saudi-led coalition backing Yemen's fugitive government has long planned to seize Hodeida from Houthis who control

Aguero to Chelsea: Guardiola approves deal - Spanish journalist

MANCHESTER CITY manager Pep Guardiola has approved a deal for Sergio Aguero to move to Chelsea, according to a sensational claim from Spanish journalist Manu Sainz.

Chelsea are in the market for a striker after boss Antonio Conte told Diego Costa he is not in his plans for the upcoming season.

They missed out on Romelu Lukaku as Manchester United snuck in ahead of them and sealed a £75million deal for the Belgian.

Real Madrid's Alvaro Morata, Torino's Andrea Belotti and Borussia Dortmund's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang are three others who have been linked.

But now it seems they are in for the two-time Premier League winner Aguero.

Sainz tweeted this afternoon: "They tell me that Chelsea want to Kun Aguero. Guardiola would have already given the ok to operation..."

Aguero has been linked with an exit from the Etihad following the arrival of Gabriel Jesus in January.

The Brazilian was starting ahead of Aguero until he suffered an injury in February which ruled him out until the end of April.

Arsenal were linked with a move for the Argentine earlier this summer in a potential swap deal for Alexis Sanchez.

The sale of Aguero to Chelsea would free up squad space as well as raise funds for a move for the Chile star.

City are keen on signing Sanchez despite Gunners boss Arsene Wenger saying he would not sell his prized asset to a direct rival.

Sanchez is out of contract at Arsenal at the end of next season and has said he wants to play in the Champions League, a competition Arsenal have not qualified for.

(Source: Express)

Ivan Perisic on verge of joining Manchester United - reports

Manchester United are inching towards a deal for Inter Milan winger Ivan Perisic, according to reports.



Top 11 Radio Club.

If Inter are able to secure a deal, then Perisic could then be free to join United.

(Source: Eurosport)

Manchester City fan wins big after seven-year Wayne Rooney bet comes in

A Manchester City fan has managed to pay off his honeymoon after a he won big on a bet about Wayne Rooney's future that he put on seven years ago.

Jordan Fawcett had never placed a bet before, but in 2010 put £20 on Rooney returning to his former club Everton.



on his Majorcan honeymoon next month.

"I was on a roof working with my uncle, talking football," the father of two told the Manchester Evening News.

"I decided to put a bet on to wind up Reds fans. At the time the talk was all about Wayne joining City or Barcelona. I never thought he would join City.

"I turned the house upside down to find the slip when Wayne did move to Everton - my brother was laughing, but I wasn't - it was a lot of money! It was my first ever bet, so I remembered it clearly.

"We originally could not afford a honeymoon with the cost of the reception, now with this £2,000 we are probably going to Majorca with our two children. I am over the moon.

(Source: Independent)

Roger Federer tells tennis's next generation to attack old order

Roger Federer, happy after his eighth Wimbledon title, had enough lucidity on Monday morning to throw down a challenge to the next generation to play more attacking tennis if they want to dislodge the old order.

The 35-year-old Swiss could easily return to No1 in the world and win his third slam of the season in New York next month after coming through Wimbledon without losing a set. He won in Melbourne, too, in vastly different circumstances, and he looks and sounds as content as when he was dominating the game alongside Rafael Nadal, then, in recent years, competing with Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray for supremacy.

He is happy, too, with his game, which has returned to its stunning best since he came back on the Tour in January. Federer can fairly be regarded as the best player in the world right now and maybe for a while to come, regardless of sitting behind Murray and Nadal in the rankings - and three places ahead of Marin Cilic, whom he beat 6-3, 6-1, 6-4 in the final on Sunday.

But Federer is less content with the mindset of the younger contenders, who still have not been able to remove the 30-plus elite from the top of the pile.

"I know you can easily get sucked into that [attritional] mode when you don't want to attack but, if you can't volley, you are not going to go to the net. Almost every player I played here wouldn't serve and volley. It's frightening to me, to see that at this level.

"I look at the stats and, whatever round it is, I see that the guy I'm going to face is playing two per cent of serve and volley throughout the championship. I'm going, OK, I know he's not going to serve and volley - which is great for me.

"And the grass was playing fast this



week. I wish that we would see more coaches, more players taking chances up at net, because good things do happen there.

"I do believe the depth in the men's game is as great as it's ever been but, because of the way they play, maybe not super-fast like they used to back in the 80s, the margins are bigger because of the surface speed, the ball speed and the racket technology. You have to hit a lot of good shots to come through a Murray or a Djokovic. Over five sets, it catches up with you and it's favourable for the top guys."

Federer also thinks the points system does not favour younger players. "Since my generation and Rafa's generation, yes, the next one hasn't been strong enough to push all of us out. A young guy, if he wants to make a breakthrough, he can beat me or any top player, but, if he doesn't make a run to the final or win the tournament, he's not making any move in the rankings.

"It's not so easy to win five straight matches [in Masters and lower tournaments]. The consistency that's required by the young generation is quite complex. Be-

cause of our different playing styles at the top - put Stan [Wawrinka] in there, put Cilic in there and then the big four - it's hard for young guys to make a run through that."

"What I feel is a bit wrong in the rankings system is, if you have a great run and play a quarters, like Andy did, for instance, fought, loses in five sets, walks away with 360 points. I walk away with 2,000 points. I feel the gap's too big. It's only been like this since a few years. To win eight 250s to make up for a Slam, I find it too much.

(Source: Guardian)

Muguruza will learn from past after Wimbledon success



Wimbledon women's champion Garbine Muguruza says she will savor her victory in order to prevent a similar slump in form to the one she suffered after winning the French Open in 2016.

The Spaniard earned her first grand slam at Roland Garros, beating Serena Williams in the final, but then meekly capitulated at Wimbledon to Jana Cepelova in the second round, also experiencing early elimination at the Rio Olympics and the US Open.

However, after defeating veteran American Venus Williams at the All England Club on Saturday to break a run of disappointing tournaments, the 23-year-old believes she knows how to handle victory better and will avoid the pitfalls of the last year.

"I will try to learn from what I felt after winning at Roland Garros, taking it all more calmly and enjoying it," Muguruza told Spanish newspaper Marca.

"Digesting success is difficult. In Paris

I won and the next day I was already playing again. I want to enjoy the moment a little more.

"I always try to keep my feet on the ground and I repeat, this victory will not change my life. Everyone tells me that I will change and I say I will not.

"I will have more pressure, more responsibility, but I will carry on the same."

The world number five emphatically dismantled Venus' challenge with a 7-5 6-0 victory for her maiden Wimbledon title, having lost to her opponent's sister Serena in the 2015 final.

Muguruza is the first player to beat both Williams sisters in grand slam finals, something which makes her feel particularly proud of her achievements.

"It feels like a dream come true," added Muguruza. "When you beat one of the Williams in the final, you feel like you've been the best player at the tournament."

(Source: Reuters)

Sebastian Vettel: Late British GP drama not a disaster



Sebastian Vettel insists his late drama and seventh-place finish at the British Grand Prix should not be seen as a disaster, despite seeing his championship lead cut to one point.

Vettel had looked on course to finish fourth at Silverstone when Ferrari teammate Kimi Raikkonen hit trouble with a front-left tyre delamination. That briefly promoted Vettel to third position but he suffered a similar issue on the penultimate lap, forcing him to pit.

He emerged in seventh, meaning race winner Lewis Hamilton cut 19 points out of his title lead, but Vettel asked if Silverstone turned out to be a disastrous weekend for him and the team, he replied: "Well I think it could've been a little bit better for sure. Disaster, I don't think so. I think we had a good car, especially in the corners. The balance was alright. In

the race obviously, brakes caught fire at the start, which compromised the start and from there it was a difficult race.

"Didn't get past Max, we did it with the pitstop. Then we were like P3, P4, it was clear that Valtteri would come because he benefitted at the beginning because I was stuck, but overall small things here and there that led into a busy afternoon."

Vettel had been complaining about his right fronts for several laps before his teammate hit trouble, though he does not think Ferrari could have done anything differently at the time.

"Hindsight is great it's easy but at the time it felt okay. Kimi I think had a similar issue, and his tyres were at least five, six laps fresher so I think it caught us both by surprise."

(Source: ESPN)

Anti-Trump protests staged at U.S. Women's Open

After three tranquil rounds at Trump National Golf Club, things heated up outside the ropes during Sunday's final round of the U.S. Women's Open as activist groups staged protests against U.S. President Donald Trump.

There had been calls for moving the tournament, which was awarded to Trump National in 2012 long before he officially entered politics, by women's groups angered by his campaign rhetoric and behavior they found to be misogynistic.

First local activists sported pink umbrellas on the warm, sunny day and spelled out messages written on their white tee-shirts as they posed in front of the Trump National clubhouse.

"RESIST!" was the message on the front as seven women wore one character each on their chest. They then turned around and formed the message "This is not NORMAL."

National group UltraViolet waited until they sighted President Trump enter his private viewing box that looks out on the 15th green, 16th tee and 18th green before



revealing a message on their purple tee-shirts - "USGA: DUMP SEXIST TRUMP".

"Our shirts are our message," said Melissa Byrne of Philadelphia, a spokesperson for the UltraViolet group.

"We want the USGA to dump sexist Trump because women and men deserve to make sure that they are safe and that sexual predators are not considered ambassa-

dors of sports."

Before the four protesters showed off their message with another member snapping pictures, Byrne told Reuters that they wanted to look President Trump right in the eye.

"He saw us, number 45 saw us, that we were out here and I could tell by the chatter and the way that they looked at us that they all saw us," she said about the 45th U.S. president and his staff.

Hope Singen of New York City was one of those demonstrating for UltraViolet, who earlier in the day staged a motorcade outside the grounds to express their displeasure with the U.S. chief executive.

"Like millions of women and men I am the victim of sexual violence," Singen told Reuters. "I've been nauseated by the fact that somebody with this guy's past and pleasure in abusing women is in this position of leadership.

"Anything that I can do to bring about a change in that situation, I will be there doing it."

(Source: Reuters)

Tehran derby in Bielefeld called off: report

S P O R T S Tehran derby between Iranian desk football giants Persepolis and Esteghlal, scheduled for July 22 has been called off.

The pre-season match was scheduled to be held at the Bielefeld Schüco Arena on July 22.

The match was originally scheduled for July 16 but has been delayed to July 22 and finally cancelled after Persepolis reportedly withdrew from the match.

The Reds, Iran Pro League title holder, will have to face Hazfi Cup champion Naft Tehran in super cup on July 21 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Iranian legend striker Ali Daei, currently the head coach of Saipa, who was a member of Arminia Bielefeld in 1997 had been invited to attend the match.

Tehran derby is also known as Red-Blue Derby is a football match between the two prominent Tehran clubs Esteghlal and Persepolis of Iran.

It is widely considered the major crosstown derby in the Persian Gulf Pro League, and also in the world.

This match was declared as the most important derby in Asia and 22nd most important derby in the world in June 2008 by World Soccer magazine.

It is considered as one of the world's most intense derbies. Despite being a derby between two teams from Tehran, the match has been played in other Iranian cities as well. Taking place at least twice during the year via the league fixtures, this cross-town rivalry has extended to the Hazfi Cup, as well as in minor tournaments and friendlies.



Persepolis striker Shahab Zahedi joins Iceland's IBV



S P O R T S The Iranian striker Shahab Zahedi desk has joined Íþróttabandalag Vestmannaeyja, known as ÍBV, on loan from Persepolis on Monday.

He is the first Iranian player to play in Icelandic Championships.

Zahedi has penned a one-year contract with the Icelandic club for an undisclosed fee.

Zahedi started his playing career as a member of the Persepolis Youth Academy since in 2013. He played for Persepolis in AFC Vision Asia U-21 Tehran Premier

League. He had also experience with Paykan and Moghavemat Tehran academies.

He made his debut for Persepolis in a Hazfi Cup match and made his professional debut for the club in 1-0 loss against Saipa.

Íþróttabandalag Vestmannaeyja, known as ÍBV, is an Icelandic sports club from Vestmannaeyjar off the south coast of Iceland.

It has both women's and men's teams competing in various sports, but is most known for the men's football team.

Iran U-19 volleyball team runner-up at Russia's tournament

S P O R T S Iran U-19 volleyball desk team finished in second place at the Russia's four-team tournament.

The Iranian team came third in the tournament with two wins and one loss. Mohammad Vakili's boys defeated

Russia 3-1 in their first match but suffered a 3-2 loss against Czech Republic.

Iran defeated Poland 3-2 in their third match.

Iran are preparing for the FIVB Boys Under-19 Volleyball World

Championship in Bahrain.

The Iranian team have been drawn in Pool D along with Argentina, Mexico, China and Czech Republic.

The FIVB Boys Under-19 Volleyball World Championship will be held in Bahrain from August 18-27.



101-year-old runner breaks 100 meter sprint record



Age is but a number, and someone who lives by this is 101-year-old great-grandmother Julia 'Hurricane' Hawkins.

Competing in the 2017 USA Track and Field Outdoors Masters Championships, Hawkins broke the over 100-years age group record for the 100 metre sprint by six seconds, completing the race in a speedy 40.12 seconds.

While she set the new record for the Championship, it wasn't her fastest time. In June, at the National Senior Games in Birmingham, Alabama, Hawkins ran the 100 in 39.62 seconds.

According to the Championship's Instagram page, Hawkins said she

"missed my nap for this," proving even the sport's best need some rest from time to time.

The Washington Post reports that Hawkins has always been an active person. Earlier in life she was an avid cyclist, and only began training for track and field events in 2016. She's also known to enjoy gardening and told The Washington Post that she likes "the feeling of being independent."

Running, cycling and grandmother-ing is how Hawkins spends her time when she's not out breaking records. You can see why they call her the 'Hurricane'.

(Source: Huffington Post)

Zidane angry at Danilo for Chelsea transfer - report



REAL MADRID manager Zinedine Zidane is reportedly angry at Danilo for negotiating a move to Chelsea behind his back.

Real Madrid defender Danilo is closing in on a move to Chelsea where he will compete for a spot in Antonio Conte's starting line-up.

The Brazil international will leave the Bernabeu aiming to bounce back from a difficult two-year spell in Spain.

Danilo has spent the majority of his time at the club playing second fiddle to Dani Carvajal, though has helped them win consecutive Champions League titles.

Conte wants more reinforcements at Chelsea as the Blues aim to become the first team since Manchester United in 2009 to retain England's biggest trophy.

However, Spanish outlet Don Balon claim Zidane is less than impressed about the defender's impending move to Stamford Bridge.

The Frenchman regularly launched a staunch defence of the player last term despite his performances leaving plenty to be desired. And he feels that, in negotiating a move away from Real without his permission, Danilo has betrayed him.

It also means that Real will now have to sign a right-back - something they were not counting on.

Their top target is Manchester United goalkeeper David De Gea and the prospect of signing ANOTHER player will represent more work for club president Florentino Perez.

(Source: Daily Express)

Neymar 'Uncomfortable' at Remaining in Messi's 'Shadow' at Barcelona

Barcelona superstar Neymar is reportedly "uncomfortable" being in Lionel Messi's "shadow" at the Camp Nou and is said to be looking to move away from the club.

According to Sport, interest from across Europe in signing Neymar, 25, has increased this summer, leading him to be "unsettled" and potentially open to the idea of joining Manchester United, Manchester City, Paris Saint-Germain or Real Madrid, where he could claim more individual glory.

Sport added he has been told by some of his advisers, "by the side of Messi you will always be second, you will always be in his shadow," and noted that the one major going he has not won in his time with Barca is the

Ballon d'Or.

Brazilian Neymar has endured a hugely successful four seasons at the Camp Nou since his move from Santos in 2013.

He has won two La Liga titles, a UEFA Champions League, the Copa del Rey three times, the Spanish Super Cup and the FIFA Club World Cup.

He has also formed one of the most devastating attacking units of all time with Messi and Luis Suarez.

However, reports that Neymar could be tempted away from the Camp Nou have been ever-present. Last summer, PSG were said to have agreed a deal to sign him, per AS (via French football writer Jonathan Johnson): 'Barcelona's Neymar has reportedly accepted

an offer from PSG to play for the club from 2017.'

Meanwhile, United manager Jose Mourinho tried to convince him at the end of 2016-17 to replace Zlatan Ibrahimovic at Old Trafford, per Sport's report.

Barca are at a relatively low ebb at the moment having fallen early in the UEFA Champions League knockout rounds last term and lost their La Liga title to Real.

It does seem conceivable Neymar could be tempted away to find glory elsewhere, but only a huge offer could persuade Barca to sell.

Per Sport, his release clause is currently set at €200 million (£175 million), rising to €250 million (£218.8 million) by 2020.

(Source: Bleacher Report)

Esteghlal oldest club in Iran: AFC

Esteghlal are the oldest club in Iran but sit fifth in the continent, Asian Football Confederation (AFC) reported.

Tehran giants Esteghlal were formed in 1945 making them the oldest in the Iranian Professional League at 71 years old.



India's Mohun Bagan were established in 1889 as Mohun Bagan Sporting Club, 128 years ago. And, indeed, they are generally considered to be Asia's oldest.

Indonesia's oldest club, PSM Makassar, were founded in 1915 as Makassar Voetbal Bond, when the country was known as the Dutch East Indies.

Since the 1940s, the name was changed to PSM Makassar and the club remain active today in the Indonesian top flight, winning the league in 2000.

In Saudi Arabia, Al Ittihad are the oldest club. The two-time AFC Champions League winners celebrated their 90th birthday in January having been founded in 1927.

And in Japan, Toyo Kogyo Soccer Club were formed in 1938 and are fourth in Asia.

(Source: Tasnim)

Iran medal tally at World Para Athletics Championships climbs to 6

Iranian sportsmen have continued to put in great performances at the ongoing 2017 World Para Athletics Championships in England, and earned four more medals to lift the Islamic Republic's medal tally to 6 at the multinational event.

On Sunday evening, Iran's Mohsen Kaedi vied for the top honor in the men's shot put F34 category at Olympic Stadium in London, and managed to pocket the silver medal with a throw of 10.93 meters.

Qatari competitor Abdulrahman Abdulqadir Abdulrahman threw 11.38 meters to receive the gold.

Colombia's Mauricio Valencia snatched bronze in this category, registering 10 meters and 89 centimeters.

Separately, Iran's 34-year-old Ali Mohammadyari claimed the silver medal in the men's discus throw F56 class, with his personal best throw of 43.53 meters.

Cuban Leonardo Diaz clinched the gold medal with 45.47 meters, while Ibrahim Ibrahim from Egypt threw the discus 37.75 meters to settle for bronze.

Furthermore, Chinese Paralympian athlete Fu Xinhan registered 15 meters and 30 centimeters in the men's shot put F35 final, and collected the gold medal.

Iranian shot putter Mehran Nikoemajd stood on the silver podium with a throw of 15.15 meters.

Seyyed Aliasghar Javanmardi, another representative from the Islamic Republic of Iran, threw 15.13 meters and scooped the bronze medal.

Iran's Paralympic discus thrower Mohsen Majidi Jamalabadi recorded a throw of 52.75 meters in his final attempt at the men's discus throw F37 category competitions on Saturday, and earned a bronze medal.

On first day of the tournament, Iran's Javad Hardani snatched a silver medal in the F38 shot put section after throwing 52.75 meters.

The 2017 World Para Athletics Championships started in London on July 14, and will conclude on July 23.

It is the 8th edition of the event, which was formerly known as the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Athletics World Championship prior to 2017, and features 213 medal events.

(Source: Press TV)

Iran B lose to South Korea at William Jones Cup

Iran B basketball team lost to South Korea 88-78 in the 39th edition of the William Jones Cup on Monday.

The Iranian team started the campaign with a loss to Atletas All-Star Lithuania but defeated Chinese Taipei White in its second match.

The Iranian team will face India on Tuesday in the Day 4 of the competition.

The R. William Jones Cup, also known as the Jones Cup, is an international basketball tournament held annually since 1977 in Taipei, Taiwan.

It was named in honor of basketball promoter Renato William Jones, who was one of the founders of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA). Like the Olympics and the FIBA Basketball World Cup, it has both men's and women's versions.

Iran has won the William Jones Cup five times.

(Source: Tasnim)

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NEWS IN BRIEF

**“Dad’s Fragile Doll”
to compete in U.S.
festival**

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Iranian director Ali Zare-Qatnoui’s animation “Dad’s Fragile Doll” will go on screen at the Millennial Film Festival, which will be held in Austin, in the U.S. state of Texas from August 16 to 18.
Based on a story with the same title by prominent Iranian writer Hushang Golshiri, the film tells the story of a girl, who reconstructs the events leading to her father’s imprisonment and execution using dolls her mother made.

“War for the Planet of the Apes” tops “Spider-Man: Homecoming” with \$56.5 million

LOS ANGELES (Variety.com) — “War for the Planet of the Apes” is officially the box office champ, during a weekend that demands a close look.

Fox and Chernin Entertainment’s latest “Apes” movie is coming in on the low end of expectations with \$56.5 million from 4,022 locations. It was pegged at \$60 million-\$65 million earlier in the week, but is ending up about the same as 2011’s “Rise of the Planet of the Apes,” which kicked off the modern trilogy with \$54.8 million during its opening weekend. 2014’s “Dawn of the Planet of the Apes” was a bigger hit with a \$72.6 million domestic opening, when it hit theaters against the third weekend of “Transformers: Age of Extinction.”

One way “War for the Planet of the Apes” stands out from other big-budget studio films is its rave reviews -- it currently has a 94% on Rotten Tomatoes.

The film, which depicts the titular war between apes and humans, is directed by Matt Reeves, who joined the franchise when he stepped in on “Dawn.” Much has been made of the noticeable updates in technology that have gone into bring Andy Serkis’ character Caesar, the lead ape, to life. Woody Harrelson, in human form, joins the franchise as the villain, while Steve Zahn, as a chimp, offers comic relief.

“First and foremost the movie came in right where we expected it to,” said Fox’s distribution chief Chris Aronson, who pointed to a potentially “soft” next few weeks that could give “Apes” a long runway. “We’re going to play for quite some time,” he said.

“Spider Man: Homecoming,” meanwhile, is landing in second with about \$45.2 million. That’s a 61% drop from last weekend’s heroic opening, which is probably a steeper falloff than Sony would have liked to see. That said, the movie’s total domestic gross in two weekend -- \$208.3 million -- is already higher than the entire run of “The Amazing Spider-Man 2.” “Homecoming” is a hit with critics and audiences (93% on Rotten Tomatoes; A CinemaScore), and dominated social media chatter for weeks leading up to its release. Tom Holland is the teen in the red suit, who first joined the Marvel universe in “Captain America: Civil War.”

The weekend’s other major release apart from “Apes” is the horror flick “Wish Upon” from Broad Green Pictures and Orion Pictures. The movie is entering the box office with a whisper, about \$5.6 million from 2,250 locations. The fright-fest is directed by John R. Leonetti based on a script by Barbara Marshall. Its primarily young cast, led by Joey King, includes two Netflix alums in “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt’s” Ki Hong Lee (aka Dong), and “Stranger Things” beloved Barb, Shannon Purser. The movie was largely panned by critics, with a 20% on Rotten Tomatoes, and it also carries a lackluster audience appeal with a C CinemaScore.

Universal’s “Despicable Me 3” is showing in third place for the weekend, expecting to earn an additional \$19 million from 4,155 locations. And Sony’s “Baby Driver” stays in the conversation with a strong 32% hold that should land it in fourth. Edgar Wright’s latest is racing to \$8.8 million from 3,043 locations. Rounding out the top five is the indie darling “The Big Sick” from comedian Kumail Nanjiani. The movie expanded to wide release (2,597 spots) during its fourth weekend in theaters, and should earn \$7.6 million.

“It’s amazing that this independent film has found its footing as a family movie among all the summer blockbusters,” said Amazon Studios’ marketing and distribution chief Bob Berney in a statement. “The comedy and universal themes are connecting with audiences across the country.”

“Retouch” crew pay tribute to Maryam Mirzakhani at Portuguese festival

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — The crew of the acclaimed short film “Retouch” paid tribute to their late fellow Iranian, math genius Maryam Mirzakhani, by dedicating an award the movie won at a Portuguese event on Sunday to her family.

Directed by Kaveh Mazaheri, the film received the audience award at the closing ceremony of the Curtas Vila do Conde International Film Festival held in Vila do Conde, the publicist of the film announced on Monday.

Adeleh Charaghi, who collaborated on the film as a set and costume designer, attended the ceremony, presenting the award on behalf her colleagues to the mathematician who died of breast cancer on Saturday.

“Unfortunately, we were informed yesterday that our world has lost Maryam Mirzakhani, one of the great math geniuses,” the crew wrote in a statement.

“In a tribute to Mirzakhani, our group has decided to dedicate the award to her family,” the statement added.

“Retouch” has been screened at numerous international events over the past year, winning awards in some of them, including the 16th Tribeca Film Festival in New York City and the 23rd Palm Springs International ShortFest.

The passing of Mirzakhani, who was known as the queen of mathematics, came as a shock to officials and her friends.

President Hassan Rouhani posted a recent picture of Mirzakhani on Instagram and wrote, “The grievous passing of Maryam Mirzakhani, the eminent Iranian and world-renowned mathematician, is very much heartrending.”

This file photo shows Kaveh Mazaheri directing his colleagues during a scene from “Retouch”.

Enrico Gerola to conduct performances in Tehran

Italian maestro Enrico Gerola (L) and Iranian vocalist Parvaz Homay

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Italian maestro Enrico Gerola will conduct an orchestra of Italian and Iranian musicians giving concerts in Tehran next week.

Iranian singer Parvaz Homay and members of his ensemble Mastan will accompany the orchestra during the open-air performances that will take place at Tehran’s Niavaran Cultural Historical Palace on July 26 and 27.

Homay, who is a Persian traditional singer and composer, is scheduled to perform a repertoire of his latest pieces as well as some of his hits.

Earlier last year, Gerola and Homay held a tour of the U.S. and in addition to his concert tour in America, they held some performances in Iran.

Mastan features Milad Alipur on tar, Moslem Alipur on kamancheh, Mohammad Nozari on santur and Pasha Hanji on ney.

Kazan festival to screen six films from Iran

A poster for “Papeli” by Mehdi Zamanpur Kiasari

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Six Iranian films will be competing in the 13th Kazan International Festival of Muslim Cinema, which will be held in the Tatarstan capital from September 5 to 11.

“Off-Key” by Amir Purkian will be competing in the feature films category, the organizers have announced.

In the short films category, “Voice” by Dariush Najafigol will go on screen.

“Overruled” by Iranian filmmakers Farnaz and Mohammadreza Jurabchi-an and “Papeli” (“Butterfly”) by Mehdi Zamanpur Kiasari are two films to go on screen in the full length documentary films competition.

The short documentary films “Light, Shadow, Life” by Shahrir Purseyeyedian and “Bakhshi” by Reza Gholami-Motlaq will be screened at the event.

A selection of 60 films from 27 countries will be competing in the festival this year.

Actor Davud Rashidi memorabilia on show at Tehran theater complex

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — An exhibition of personal handwritings, awards, books and photos of actor Davud Rashidi opened at Tehran’s City Theater Complex on the actor’s birthday on Sunday.

Rashidi, the 83-year-old star of memorable movies like Kiumars Puraahmad’s “Bibi Chelcheleh” and Ali Hatami’s “Kamalolmolk”, died of heart failure on August 26, 2016.

The ceremony was attended by Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Reza Salehi-Amiri, Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Ali Moradkhani, and a large number of artists and cineastes.

Speaking at the ceremony, his widow, Ehteram Borumand, said that Rashidi believed in the deep influence of theater on people and the society.

She also emphasized the need for the establishment of a department for theater and said, “Theater also

Tehran City Council Member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei (L) and director Marzieh Borumand (R) look at Davud Rashidi's memorabilia exhibited at Tehran's City Theater Complex on July 16, 2017. (Mehr/Shahab Qayyumi)

needs a separate department like cinema.”

In his brief words, Rashidi’s old friend Ali Nasirin said that Rashidi’s special privilege was his broad knowledge of dramatic arts and literature.

“His prudent choices of roles indicated his knowledge and intelligence. He was a fine actor on stage, in films and TV series. Of course, he used to teach theater to all and had good cultural deportment,” he remarked.

Culture minister called Rashidi a great man in the artistic society and an influential figure in Iran’s theater.

“We can say that many theatrical figures are indebted to Rashidi and the actors of his generation,” he added.

Moradkhani also announced that there are plans to open a museum of theater in the future and Rashidi’s memorabilia will be displayed in the museum.

The exhibit will be running in the complex until August 26, the death anniversary of the actor.

George A. Romero, father of zombie movies, dies at 77

NEW YORK (Reuters) — George A. Romero, creator of the zombie film genre with “Night of the Living Dead” and a series of sequels that left a lasting impact on horror movies, died of lung cancer in a Toronto hospital on Sunday, his business partner said. He was 77.

Romero wrote and directed the 1968 classic, in which the dead come back to life and eat the flesh of the living, and five sequels including the 1978 box office hit “Dawn of the Dead.”

“A true legend,” actor Kumail Nanjiani said on Twitter. “Started a new genre on his own. Who else can claim that?”

Besides the horror of flesh-eating zombies, the “Dead” films featured the theme of people who panic while under siege, turning on each other instead of uniting against their common enemy.

Romero, who was born in the Bronx borough of New York, was drawn to telling stories about monsters that are familiar to the people they terrorize, said his business partner, Peter Grunwald.

“They’re not crazy, fantastical monsters. They’re our neighbors, our rela-

tives, our friends. They’re kind of scarier for that, scarier than big, special effects, sci-fi monsters,” Grunwald said.

Romero influenced a generation of filmmakers including Quentin Tarantino, Guillermo del Toro, Robert Rodriguez and the late Wes Craven, according to Grunwald.

Romero owned a small commercial production company when he convinced nine others to put up a small amount of money to finance “Night of the Living Dead,” Grunwald said. Originally called “Night of the Flesh Eaters,” the title was changed by the film’s distributor, Walter Reade. Somehow, no copyright protection was filed after the name change, putting “Night of the Living Dead” into the public domain and allowing anyone to distribute it for free.

Romero told The New York Times in 2016 that many more people saw the movie as result, “keeping the film alive.”

Made for an estimated \$114,000, the black-and-white film has grossed some \$30 million worldwide, according to the internet movie database site IMDb.com.

“Dawn of the Dead” grossed \$55 million worldwide, the website said.

BBC names first female “Doctor Who”

LONDON (Reuters) — The lead role in British sci-fi television series “Doctor Who” will be played by a woman for the first time in its more than 50-year history, the BBC said on Sunday.

After much speculation over the role, Britain’s public broadcaster said 35-year-old British actress Jodie Whittaker, who starred in the award-winning television crime drama series “Broadchurch”, will play the 13th Doctor.

The news was announced in a one-minute video clip broadcast on television after the Wimbledon tennis men’s final match, showing the actress walking through a forest wearing a long coat and hiding her face with a hood until the final moment.

“I always knew I wanted the Thirteenth Doctor to be a woman and we’re thrilled to have secured our number one choice. Her audition for The Doctor simply blew us all away. Jodie is an in-demand, funny, inspiring, super-smart force of nature and will bring loads of wit, strength and warmth to the role,” said Chris Chibnall, the show’s new Head Writer and Executive Producer.

The Doctor, who travels through time in what from the outside appears to be a blue police telephone box, has the ability to regenerate, allowing a number of actors to play the role since the series was first broadcast in 1963.

Whittaker will replace Peter Capaldi, who took on the role in 2013 amid an increasing clamor that it should go to a woman. His final episode will be the 2017 Christmas special. Previous “Time Lords” include Tom Baker, Christopher Eccleston and David Tennant.

Whittaker said it was “completely overwhelming” to be taking on the role and she wanted to tell fans of the series “not to be scared” by her gender.

“As an actor, as a human, as someone who wants to continually push themselves and challenge themselves, and not be boxed in by what you’re told you can and can’t be. It feels incredible,” she said.

“This is a really exciting time, and Doctor Who represents everything that’s exciting about change. The fans have lived through so many changes, and this is only a new, different one, not a fearful one.”