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Judiciary chief demands release of Iranians jailed in U.S.

POLITICS TEHRAN — Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larjani on Monday demanded Washington to immediately release Iranian citizens held in U.S. prisons, saying the "Americans have violated the rights of our people for forty years".

Speaking at a meeting of top judiciary officials in Tehran, Ayatollah Amoli Larjani said such moves are "illegal" and contrary to basic international laws and norms.

"We tell them: 'You should immediately release Iranian citizens held in American prisons in violation of international rules and based on baseless charges,'" he asserted.

"You have seized the property of the Islamic Republic of Iran in violation of all rules and in a form of open piracy, and these should be released."

The judiciary chief also criticized a recent White House statement that demanded the release of all Americans currently being held in Iran.

The White House statement, which was released on Friday, said Iran would face "new and serious consequences" unless all "unjustly detained" American citizens were released and returned. **→2**

Iran's higher growth raises IMF's 2016 global forecast

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has raised its forecast of global economic growth by 0.1 percent partly due to higher growth in Iran.

In its "World Economic Outlook Update, July 2017" the IMF said global growth for 2016 is now estimated at 3.2 percent, slightly stronger than the April 2017 forecast (3.1 percent), primarily reflecting much higher growth in Iran and stronger activity in India following national accounts revisions.

The 2017-2018 forecast is broadly unchanged in the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan region, but the growth outcome in 2016 is estimated to have been considerably stronger in light of higher growth in Iran, IMF said.

IMF had previously forecasted that Iran's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth is expected to rebound to 6.6 percent in 2016/17.

According to an IMF executive board report released on February 27, Iran's economic growth rebounded over the course of 2016/17 on the back of higher oil production. Real GDP grew by 7.4 percent in the first half 2016/17, rebounding from recession in 2015/16.

Also, in its Global Economic Prospects (June 2017), the World Bank (WB) estimated Iran's GDP growth at 6.4 percent in 2016 and predicted a four-percent growth for Iran's GDP in 2017.

Iran ready to build field hospital for Palestinians: official

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Secretary General of the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada Hossein Amir Abdollahian condemned recent Israeli attacks against Muslims in the occupied territories and said Iran is prepared to launch a field hospital to treat injured Palestinians.

Speaking in a Sunday meeting with Nasser Abu Sharif, the representative of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement in Tehran, Amir Abdollahian decried the "savagery attacks" of the Israeli regime's forces on al-Aqsa Mosque that have led to the killing and injuring of a large number of Palestinians.

"These acts by the Zionist regime, which are based on aggression and slaughter, will not remain unanswered," the official, who is also a special adviser to Iran's parliament speaker, warned.

He further emphasized that the Islamic Republic is ready to send medical aid, dispatch a team of experienced physicians and launch a makeshift hospital in the nearest possible place to the occupied territories to help hundreds of Palestinians injured in the Israeli attacks.

Abu Sharif, for his part, stressed the need for all Muslims around the world to boost unity and adopt a firm stance against the Israel regime's crimes.

Several Palestinians have been killed and hundreds more injured in recent weeks amid mass protests over new Israeli security measures at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

Tillerson looks for an exit: sources

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson may be considering parting ways with the White House amid widening differences with President Donald Trump on a number of subjects, including Iran, sources say.

The CNN reported on Monday that Tillerson faced "a growing list of differences with the White House, including a new debate over Iran policy and personnel."

A former CEO at the oil and gas giant ExxonMobil, Tillerson was appointed secretary of state after Trump secured an upset victory in the U.S. presidential election in November last year. As America's top diplomat, Tillerson would have been expected to play a considerable role in policy-making and have the

president's ear on foreign policy in particular.

■ Frustration at boiling point?

But since assuming office in January this year, Tillerson has seen room shrinking for him in the president's inner circle. On a number of major issues, he has either been sidelined, overruled, rebuked, or ignored altogether.

However, he had been hoping that the status quo would change for the better.

Until now, that is.

Two sources "familiar with Tillerson[s] conversations with friends outside Washington" told CNN that the U.S. secretary of state was growing increasingly frustrated and was losing hope that a shift in the presidential mood was in order.

While he had previously signaled determi-

nation to stay at the job for at least one year amid the differences, the sources said "they would not be surprised if there was a 'Rexit' from Foggy Bottom sooner than [sic] that."

Tillerson's differences with the White House first emerged when the administration proposed to drastically slash State Department funding in May. In a leaked internal State Department memo, Tillerson said he was "deeply concerned about the timing and the size of the reductions." He did not get his way, and ultimately offered a public defense of the cuts, a sign that he was unwilling to let the matter turn into an open dispute.

(Source: Press TV)

OPEC moves to cap Nigerian oil output, boost compliance

ST PETERSBURG (Reuters) — OPEC moved on Monday to cap Nigerian oil output and called on several members to boost compliance with production cuts to help clear excessive global stocks and support flagging prices.

OPEC has agreed with several non-OPEC producers led by Russia to cut oil output by a combined 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) from January 2017 until the end of March 2018.

OPEC states Libya and Nigeria were exempted from the limits to help their oil industries recover from years of unrest.

The deal to curb output propelled crude prices above \$58 a barrel in January but they have since slipped back to a \$45 to \$50 range

as the effort to drain global inventories has taken longer than expected.

Rising output from U.S. shale producers has offset the impact of the output curbs, as has climbing production from Libya and Nigeria.

A ministerial committee of OPEC and non-OPEC states that monitors the global oil pact said it had agreed Nigeria would join the deal by capping or even cutting its output from 1.8 million bpd, once it stabilizes at that level from 1.7 million bpd recently.

The monitoring committee, known as JMMC and which met in the Russian city of St Petersburg, did not give the timeframe for when this would happen, saying it would track Nigerian

production patterns in the next weeks.

The committee did not back capping Libyan output as it said its production was unlikely to exceed 1 million bpd in the near future compared to its capacity of 1.4 million-1.6 million bpd before unrest erupted in 2011 and plunged the nation into chaos.

Brent oil prices rose about 1 percent at about \$48.50, helped by news of a cap on Nigeria and by comments from Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih that the kingdom's exports would fall to 6.6 million bpd in August as demand at home was rising, effectively representing a cut of 1 million bpd year-on-year.



Tradition wheat reaping in Isfahan province

Reaping wheat in a traditional way in a village in Isfahan province, central Iran, renews memories of the not-too-distant years when farmers had to collect their crops traditionally, mostly using sickle.

This picture shows reaping in the village called Soh, which is about 3000-years old.

Still in the not-too distant past Iranians greatly cherished wheat or bread as the breadbasket of the families. Even today Iranians eat bread a lot, ranking among the first two countries in the world.

Yemeni naval forces target, torch Saudi military vessel in western Yemen

Yemeni naval forces, backed by fighters from allied Popular Committees, have targeted and torched a Saudi regime military vessel in a missile attack off the coast of the country's western province of Hudaydah, military says.

Yemen's official Saba news agency, citing an unnamed military source in the Navy, reported that the destruction of the Saudi regime-led coalition's gunboat occurred on Monday, when Yemeni forces hit the intruding vessel with a missile.

The military official further asserted that the Saudi regime vessel was carrying out radar jamming and deception against Yemeni army when it was targeted.

On January 30, Yemeni army forces fired a guided missile at Saudi Arabia's al-Madinah battleship in waters near the city of Hudaydah, and on June 25, another Saudi regime war boat was hit and destroyed by Yemeni forces on Yemen off the coast of Mukha port city in Ta'izz Province.

On January 21, the Yemeni coast guard warned enemies' battleships against using the strategic Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, to bomb civilian targets, emphasizing that such a practice poses grave threats to international maritime navigation in the area. **→13**

KSC

INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER

No. 371846

KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY

INTENDS TO PURCHASE 1,000 MT CALCINED PETROLEUM COKE WITH THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATIONS:

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CEO of EORC Announces in Annual Ordinary General Assembly:

Implementation of 26 Projects, Costing 4,100b Tomans, in Esfahan Oil Refining Company

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Larjani: Palestine occupation is Muslims' common suffering

POLITICS TEHRAN — In a statement on **d e s k** Monday, Majlis Speaker Ali Larjani said the occupation of the Palestinian territories and Al-Quds by the Zionist regime constitutes a common suffering shared by Muslims.

The recent regretful incidents in Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Zionists' violent actions which resulted in the killing of four Palestinians and injuring of over 400 citizens impressed all freedom-seekers in the world, the statement read, IRNA reported.

These painful accidents which are taking place in line with Judaization of Al-Quds are an indication of the inhumane nature of Israeli regime, he added.



Jahangiri will stay as vice president: advisor

POLITICS TEHRAN — Issa Kalantari, advisor to **d e s k** First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, has said Jahangiri will likely keep his position in the next government.

Kalantari made the comments in a message published on Tehran's chamber of commerce website on Monday.

In a related statement, pro-reform activist Mohammad Atrianfar said President Rouhani is not the only person who decides about the future ministers.

He also underlined that more than concentrating on who is appointed to what position, care should be taken that the moderation goes on its path to completion.



Principlists not unified around one person: Bahonar

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mohammad Reza **d e s k** Bahonar, secretary general of the Islamic Society of Engineers, has said that his fellow principlists are not united around a single figure.

"It is an extensive current, people in it ranging from quick-tempered to others who speak more softly. They gather around at times such as elections and try to speak one thing," Bahonar told Khabaronline in an interview published on Sunday.

He added, "The time of charismatic faces is ending in politics and it is about time structure took the stage."



Majlis to receive comprehensive bill on elections in months

POLITICS TEHRAN — A comprehensive bill on **d e s k** elections is expected to go to the Majlis floor in the month of Aban (October 23-November 21), the head of Majlis Committee on Councils said on Sunday.

Asqar Salimi told Tasnim that the bill had been referred to the government for corrections shortly after the May 19 presidential election, but the government failed to return it within a one-month deadline because it is busy with the future cabinet makeup.

He added the government has already passed 140 articles of the bill and will hand it down to the committee in days.



Iran demolishes house of Tehran attackers

POLITICS TEHRAN — A house was demolished **d e s k** in the western province of Kermanshah which Iranian security forces relate to twin terrorist attacks by Daesh in Tehran on June 7.

The house had been used as a hideout for terrorists related to the twin attacks that targeted the Majlis and the Imam Khomeini shrine, Mehr quoted an unnamed security official as having said on Monday.

The source added the house had been used to store ammunition and explosives.



Iran Army releases second version of computer game

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Army on **d e s k** Monday officially introduced the second version of a computer game it first developed five years ago.

Gulf of Aden II was unveiled by Navy Commander Habibollah Sayyari and some other high-ranking Army officials, ISNA reported.

A first-person battle game, Gulf of Aden II uses a Unity 3D graphic motor and professional sound.

It depicts the heroic acts of Iranian naval forces in the Gulf of Aden, including commando operations.

No outright denial from Tehran on Omani mediation with U.S.

By Ali Kushki

TEHRAN — Iran neither rejected nor confirmed on Monday that Oman had acted as a go-between to pass messages between Tehran and Washington while highlighting "ongoing consultation" with the Arab sultanate.

"There is ongoing consultation (between the two countries) and the visit of Oman's foreign minister to Tehran was part of bilateral and regional affairs," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi told a press conference in Tehran on Monday.

Qassemi was replying to a question from The Tehran Times on if the Friday sit-down between U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi in Washington had got anything to do with Alawi's visit to Tehran on July 12.

One week after the Iran visit, U.S. President Trump spoke with Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id Al Sa'id of Oman, discussing "ways to resolve regional conflicts" and "the need to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region," according to a White House statement.

The Trump administration coyness up to Muscat indicates the recognition of Oman's historical role in facilitating talks with Iran.

Oman has traditionally resisted Persian Gulf Arab states' bid to close ranks against Iran. It helped to mediate secret



Iranian foreign ministry spokesman says there is ongoing consultation (between the two countries) and the visit of Oman's foreign minister to Tehran was part of bilateral and regional affairs.

U.S.-Iran talks in 2013 that led to the historic nuclear deal signed two years later.

Tehran shipped its surplus low-enriched uranium, as limited by the nuclear accord, to Oman early 2017 for later sale to a foreign buyer.

Ever since inauguration as president, Trump has taken a hostile stance on Iran, and urged regional countries, led by Saudi

Arabia, to "work together to isolate Iran" as he was visiting Saudi Arabia in May.

The administration also has spoken of a regime change in Iran, what Tehran followed up with a letter to the United Nations as "a brazen interventionist plan" that flies in the face of international law.

In a most recent development, Trump

and his administration warned Iran in a statement on Friday to release and return what they called "unjustly detained" American citizens, otherwise, it should brace itself for "new and serious consequences".

Mediation between Tehran and Washington is more imperative than ever as there are concerns the two sides are back to a brinkmanship policy which runs the risk of direct confrontation.

In a recent op-ed, The New York Times wrote outright threats and actions - from President Trump and some of his top aides as well as Sunni Arab leaders and American hawks - is raising tensions that could lead to armed conflict with Iran, urging dialogue between the sides.

Iran has implicitly embraced a communication platform with Washington.

In a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations last week, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif stressed that the nuclear deal "can lay the foundation, not the ceiling."

A happy piece of news in mid-July was a measure by the U.S. House of Representatives which requires the Pentagon to consider options for negotiating an Incidents at Sea Agreement with Iran and other countries operating in the Persian Gulf.

The communication hotline is expected to soothe concerns over the escalation of sea incidents in the Persian Gulf into direct military engagement between Iranian and U.S. naval forces.

Iran downplays friction with Kuwait, keeps 'constructive view' toward neighbors

By Negar Asadi

TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Monday downplayed the recent diplomatic row with Kuwait, saying the two countries have always enjoyed "good ties" and that Tehran has a "constructive views" toward neighbors.

The comments followed a few days after Kuwait told Iran to close down its cultural and military missions and to reduce its embassy staff over Tehran's alleged links to a "spy and terror" cell.

Yet the ministry did not hide Tehran's dismay over the decision by Kuwait.

"The recent action by Kuwait was not good and is

condemnable," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said in a news briefing.

"Despite this we still can have our dialogues and contacts," Qassemi added.

The spokesman also dismissed rumors that Kuwait has ordered the top Iranian diplomat to leave the country, saying Iran's ambassador will remain in his post in Kuwait.

"The ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue to be present in Kuwait and the embassy will be active at the ambassadorial level, and there is no problem in this regard," he stated.

"Kuwait has not expelled the Iranian diplomats and

did not call them persona non grata. Kuwait has just announced that Iran should reduce number of diplomats in its embassy," he added.

The Foreign Ministry official went on to say that Tehran "reserves the right to take retaliatory action".

Following the decision by Kuwait, the Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned Kuwait's charge d'affaires on Thursday.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has no implications in case and the Kuwaiti authorities had been notified of this from the outset," the ministry said.

"Iran has always acted responsibly toward regional countries, including Kuwait in trying times," it added.

Shamkhani: Security of Iran, Afghanistan intertwined



POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's **d e s k** Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Shamkhani said on Monday that the security of Iran and Afghanistan is "intertwined" and "inseparable".

During a meeting with Afghan National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar in Tehran, Shamkhani said that "coordinated actions" are needed by the neighboring countries to fight terrorist groups.

Pointing to commonalities between the two countries, he said that continuation of dialogue on countering instabilities and insecurities would lay the ground for common benefits.

The top security official also

expressed concern over supplying money, arms and intelligence to terrorist and Takfiri groups by some reactionary countries in the region, saying this issue will spread insecurity and fuel sectarianism.

Elsewhere, Shamkhani condemned terrorist blast in Kabul on Monday which left over 29 people dead and at least 40 ones wounded.

For his part, Atmar said spread of instability and political division in Afghanistan will affect other regional countries negatively.

The Afghan national security advisor also said that his country's military and security forces are making the most efforts to eradicate terrorism.

Tehran strongly condemns terror attack in Afghanistan



POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian **d e s k** Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi strongly condemned a terrorist attack in Afghan capital Kabul on Monday which left at least 29 people dead and 40 injured.

"In spite of such violent, inhuman and brutal actions by the terrorist and extremist groups, the Afghan government and people will continue the path of fighting extremism and violence more powerfully," he said.

And the Iranian people and government will be on the side of the Afghans in this "difficult path", Qassemi added.

Qassemi also offered condolences to the Afghan government and people over the deadly attack and expressed sympathy with the families of the victims.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the suicide car bomb attack in Kabul. According to CNN, in a statement released by Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid, the group said the bomb's target was a bus carrying Afghan intelligence staff.

The blast hit an area close to the home of Mohammad Mohaqiq, the deputy government Chief Executive.

The UN figures show that more than 1,600 civilians were killed in Afghanistan in the first half of the year.

Rouhani thanks IRGC, urges unity

Mohammad Homaeifar

TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani has thanked the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) forces for their efforts and services to the country and stressed the need for unity among all the forces and institutions in the country.

Rouhani made the remarks in a meeting with a number of senior IRGC commanders in Tehran on Monday.

The generals in the meeting were IRGC Chief Mohammad Ali Jafari, Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani,

IRGC Aerospace Commander Amir Ali Hajizadeh, Basij Commander Gholam-Hossein Gheybparvar and Deputy Chief of Sarallah unit Esmael Kosari.

Rouhani expressed hope that during his second term in office, all the armed forces of the country would come to the aid of his administration to meet the needs of the Iranian nation.

He also said that the enhanced combat power of the IRGC and the Army through new technologies will guarantee national security.

IRGC Commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, for his part, congratulated Rouhani on his reelection as president in the May 19 polls and voiced the IRGC's readiness for all-out cooperation with the administration.

Other IRGC commanders attending the meeting briefed the president on the latest activities of their military units and expressed gratitude to the Rouhani administration for its support in promoting the country's security and fighting terrorism.

Judiciary chief demands release of Iranians jailed in U.S.

1 → It came after a U.S. citizen, Xiyue Wang, was sentenced by Iran's Judiciary to 10 years in jail for spying.

"The trials in Iran are based on law and sharia," Amoli Larjani said. "Moreover, our judges

are faithful and pious, so they are not affected by what the likes of Mr. Trump would say."

"They do their job regardless of one's nationality," he added.

On Saturday, Iran's Foreign Minis-

try slammed the Trump administration's statement as "interfering and threatening", stressing that Iran's judiciary is an independent body dealing with the violations of national security.

"As usual, the White House's comments are an example of interference in the internal affairs of Iran and (are therefore) unacceptable and rejected," spokesman Bahram Qassemi said.

Dozens killed in Kabul suicide car bomb attack

At least 35 people have been killed and more than 40 wounded after a suicide car bomb targeted a bus carrying ministry staff in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, officials said.

Intelligence officials told Al Jazeera that the bus was carrying staff of the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum when it came under attack on Monday.

The attack happened just before 7am local time (02:30 GMT) and took place close to the house of the deputy government Chief Executive Mohammad Mohaq, officials said.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement sent to Al Jazeera.

The bus was destroyed, along with three other cars and several shops in the area, said Kabul's police chief spokesman, Basir Mujahed, adding children were among the wounded.

Najib Danish, an acting interior ministry spokesman, added that the casualty toll could rise.

"It was a very loud blast, and my shop is completely destroyed," Baqi Mohammedi told Al Jazeera.

"The Taliban has attacked innocent people. Who has ever benefited from killing innocent people?"

Spokesman Mujahed said the "bomb-er struck at one of the busiest times of the day".

"There were traffic jams with people going to work and to the university and schools. Many of the shops had just opened," said Mujahed.

Al Jazeera's Jennifer Glasse, reporting from Kabul, said the Hazara community had called a demonstration for Monday to commemorate a suicide bombing that killed 84 in the same area on July 23 last year.

The Hazaras are one of Afghanistan's



largest ethnic minorities, accounting for up to 20 percent of Afghanistan's 30 million inhabitants.

The demonstration was postponed because of security risks.

"Security has been very tight in Kabul," she said. "This morning, new barrier gates went up that limit the height of trucks coming into the city."

Hazaras are often the target of sectarian violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

■ One-year anniversary

On Monday, Kabul's Hazara community was due to mark the one-year anniversary of an attack in the capital that killed 84 and wounded more than 300 people, mostly members of the ethnic minority.

That attack was the first in Afghanistan

claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, which has since carried out multiple attacks targeting the country's Shia minority.

The latest suicide bombing adds to the unrelenting violence in Afghanistan, where at least 1,662 civilians were killed in the first half of the year.

Kabul is regularly rocked by suicide bombs and attacks. A recent United Nations report showed that attacks on the capital accounted for nearly one-fifth of all Afghan civilian casualties in the first half of 2017.

Many died in a single devastating attack in Kabul in late May when a truck bomb exploded, also during the morning rush hour, killing more than 150 people

and injuring hundreds.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan put the civilian death toll at 92, saying it was the deadliest incident to hit the country since 2001.

NATO's (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) combat mission in Afghanistan ended three years ago, handing sole responsibility to the country's security forces, which have also suffered casualties as they try to beat back the Taliban and contain the growing threat from the ISIL terrorist group.

Kabul has accounted for at least 20 percent of all civilian casualties this year, including at least 150 people killed in the massive truck bomb attack at the end of May, according to UN figures.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

China demands India pulls back troops in border dispute

China has demanded that India pull back its troops from a contested region high in the Himalayas, warning New Delhi not "to push your luck" amid a festering border dispute.

According to Indian officials, about 300 soldiers from either side face each other about 150 meters apart on the Doklam plateau, an area also claimed by India's ally Bhutan.

The standoff began in June when Chinese troops started building a road onto the plateau towards India's border.

Bhutan sought help from India, which sent troops across the border from the northeastern state of Sikkim.

On Monday, Colonel Wu Qian, a Chinese defense ministry spokesman, said India must not underestimate Beijing's determination to safeguard what it considers sovereign territory belonging to China in the Doklam plateau.

"China's determination and resolve to safeguard national security and sovereignty is unshakable," Wu told reporters.

"Here is a wish to remind India, do not push your luck and cling to any fantasies," he added.

■ Shake up status quo

Meanwhile, India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said the border road has serious security implications.

"If China unilaterally changes the status quo of the tri-junction, it becomes a matter of security concern for India," Swaraj said in parliament last week.

Although the Doklam plateau is not part of Indian territory, India is sensitive to Chinese building activity in the region as it would give Beijing access to the so-called "chicken neck", a thin



strip of land that connects India and its remote northeastern states.

India has called for a withdrawal of forces and a negotiated settlement to the standoff.

Wu, however, reiterated that the withdrawal of Indian border guards was a precondition to resolving the situation.

"Shaking a mountain is easy but shaking the People's Liberation Army is hard," he said.

"We strongly urge India to take practical steps to correct its mistake, cease provocations, and meet China halfway in jointly safeguarding the border region's peace and tranquility," he said.

He added that the military had taken emergency measures in the region and would continue to increase focused deployments and drills.

The crisis is expected to be discussed when India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval visits Beijing this week for a security forum under the BRICS group of large developing nations that includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

China and India share a 3,500km frontier, large parts of which are disputed.

The two nuclear-armed powers fought a bloody border war in 1962.

(Source: Xinhua)

Hezbollah fighters liberate key Aarsal valley from terrorists' grip

Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement says its fighters have wrested control over a strategic valley in the highlands of Aarsal in their latest push against militants on the Syrian border.

The media bureau of Hezbollah Operations Command announced on Monday the recapture of Wadi al-Khayl Valley, which has served as a stronghold for the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri terrorist group, formerly known as al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra).

The development came after the resistance fighters advanced on the area from several directions, it added.

The Hezbollah fighters, backed by Lebanese and Syrian armies, launched an operation to dislodge terrorists from the border on Friday.

Hezbollah has reported rapid gains in its battle. On Sunday, the Lebanese fighters retook the Aarsal areas of Wadi al-Owaini and Shubut al-Qala'a.

Local media reported that the next stage of the offensive will focus on the region held by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.

The operation has so far killed 19 Hezbollah resistance fighters and 143 militants.

Separately on Monday, Lebanese lawmaker Amal Abou Zeid hailed the "dauntless endeavors of the resistance fighters" and the Lebanese army in dislodging militants from Aarsal.

Aarsal was hardly hit by the spillover of the Syria crisis in 2014, when militants managed to overrun the town for a brief period.

Thousands of Syrian refugees live in informal camps in Aarsal after having fled the foreign-sponsored militancy in their



home country.

Hezbollah has played a critical role in campaigns against militants along Lebanon's border and fought for years alongside Syrian army troops against terrorists wreaking havoc in the country.

■ Surrender & guarantees safety

Meanwhile, Hezbollah commanders called on remaining militants from Jabhat Fateh al-Sham to lay down their weapons and surrender, offering guarantees for their safety.

"The battle with the al-Nusra Front is almost over and so we call on all gunmen who remain in the outskirts of Aarsal to spare their blood by laying down their weapons and surrendering themselves with guarantees for their safety," the message from Hezbollah's operations room near Aarsal read, the group's War Media Center reported.

The news comes as Hezbollah forces press their attack against the militants for the fourth day, making fresh gains and taking over the last major outpost of Jabhat Fateh al-Sham near Aarsal.

The Hezbollah run TV station Al-Manar reported that with the fall of Wadi al-Khayl and several other positions in the area, it appeared that Hezbollah had control of around 80 percent of the territory.

(Source: agencies)

Deadly shooting incident at Israeli embassy in Jordan

Two Jordanians have been killed and an Israeli wounded by gunfire in a residential building in the heavily fortified Israeli embassy compound in Jordan's capital Amman, the kingdom's Public Security Directorate said.

The shooting took place on Sunday evening in a residential building used by embassy staff.

On Monday, Israel's Foreign Ministry said a security guard shot and killed the Jordanians in a confrontation.

Police said that the two Jordanians worked for a furniture company and entered the embassy compound to carry out repairs.

Israeli media say the guard opened fire, killing the 17-year-old Jordanian. The reports say the Jordanian owner of the

apartment was hit by gunfire inadvertently and later died.

Israel's Foreign Ministry says its embassy security guard, who killed two Jordanians in the city of Amman, has diplomatic immunity under the Vienna Convention in response to Jordan demanding an investigation.

Jordanian authorities have refused to allow the guard to leave the country and demanded an investigation into the deadly shooting.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry, however, claimed in a statement on Monday that the guard had "acted in self-defense" and had immunity from questioning and prosecution.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was in contact with the

head of the embassy and the guard, the statement read.

"The Foreign Ministry and security officials are working via different channels with the government of Jordan," it added.

A security source in Amman said the first Jordanian, 17-year-old Mohammed Jawawdeh, succumbed to his injuries at the scene. The second, Bashar Hamarneh, a doctor who was in the residential quarter of the embassy at the time of the incident died of his injuries after midnight in hospital.

The incident came at a time of heightened tensions over Israel's imposition of restrictive measures at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Palestinians say the restrictions are meant to expand the Tel Aviv regime's control over the highly-sensitive site and change its status quo.

Jordan, the custodian of the compound, has protested the fresh Israeli measures.

Tensions erupted on July 14, when a deadly shooting took place outside the Noble Sanctuary (Haram al-Sharif) which Jews call Temple Mount.

Following the incident, Israeli police briefly shut down the al-Aqsa compound and canceled Muslim Friday prayers at the holy site.

Israel reopened the compound on July 16, but with metal detectors and surveillance cameras put up at entrances.

(Source: agencies)

Saudi Crown Prince in charge as King Salman takes holiday

The House of Saud regime Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, named heir to the Saudi throne last month, took temporary charge of the country on Monday as the King Salman left on holiday.

The Custodian of the Two Holy places King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, issued a royal decree deputizing his son to "manage state affairs and guard the interests of the people" during the monarch's "personal break", state news agency SPA reported.



On June 21, King Salman stripped the title of crown prince from his nephew Mohammed bin Nayef, naming 31-year-old Prince Mohammed, often known as MBS, as heir to the throne.

Apart from his role as crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman also serves as defense minister and leads an ambitious reform agenda to end the Saudi regime's reliance on oil.

(Source: Khaleej Times)

Trump's son-in-law Kushner: 'I did not collude' with foreign government

The United States President Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior White House adviser Jared Kushner said on Monday that he "did not collude" with Russia and had roughly four meetings with Russian officials during the 2016 campaign and presidential transition.

In a written statement released ahead of his appearance before lawmakers in closed-door sessions, Kushner said his initial security clearance form had been submitted prematurely in error and had omitted all foreign contacts.

"I did not collude, nor know of anyone else in the campaign who colluded, with any foreign government," Kushner said.

"I had no improper contacts. I have not relied on Russian funds to finance my business activities in the private sector," he said.

Kushner faces two days of closed-door questioning from Congress this week as lawmakers try to determine whether Trump's campaign enlisted Russia's help to win the White House in last year's election.

He is expected to face questions about his contacts with Russian citizens and officials when he testifies before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Monday and the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee on Tuesday.

Trump has been dogged by allegations that his campaign aides worked with Russia, which the U.S. intelligence agencies have accused of interfering in the election. Moscow has denied any interference, and Trump says his campaign did not collude with Russia.

Trump's son Donald Trump Jr. released emails this month that showed he appeared to welcome the prospect of damaging information from the Russian government about Trump's Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton.

Members of both committees say they are eager to hear about the June 2016 meeting involving Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya. Trump's son, Kushner and former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort all participated in the meeting.

Kushner described the meeting as a waste of time. "I actually emailed an assistant from the meeting after I had been there for ten or so minutes and wrote 'Can u pls call me on my cell? Need excuse to get out of meeting.'"

■ Starting a Dialogue

Another congressional panel, the Senate Judiciary Committee, is negotiating with Manafort and Trump Jr. about testifying in a public hearing.

Kushner will also face questions about reports he tried to set up a secret back channel to Moscow, as well as other contacts with top Russian officials and business leaders during the presidential campaign and the transition period before he took office.

Kushner said he first met Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak in Washington in April 2016 and shook hands. He said he did not recall phone calls with Kislyak between April and November of that year as reported by Reuters, had not found evidence of the calls in phone records and was skeptical they took place.

In a meeting with Kislyak after the election, on Dec. 1, Kushner said he articulated a desire for the United States to have a fresh start with Russia.

"The fact that I was asking about ways to start a dialogue after Election Day should of course be viewed as strong evidence that I was not aware of one that existed before Election Day," he said.

Kushner did not initially disclose any meetings with Russians on forms he filed to get a government security clearance. He has since revised those forms several times.

Kushner said the form was initially submitted prematurely in error and omitted all foreign contacts he had had, not just those with Russian officials.

Trump says the investigations in Congress and the Justice Department are politically motivated.

"As the phony Russian Witch Hunt continues, two groups are laughing at this excuse for a lost election taking hold, Democrats and Russians!" the president wrote on Twitter on Sunday.

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Over \$264m of facilities to be paid to mining sector

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy Industry Minister Jafar Sarqini said 10 trillion rials (about \$264.5 million) worth of facilities will be paid to those active in the mining sector in the current Iranian calendar year (to end on March 20, 2018).

According to IRNA, the official made the remarks during a visit to a gold mine in West Azarbaijan Province in northwestern Iran.

Iran produces over 400 million tons of different minerals annually and more than \$6.6 billion worth of such products is being exported every year.



Cabinet approves currency denomination change

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The administration of President Hassan Rouhani approved on Monday a bill to drop a zero from the national currency, revaluing its rial tenfold and revert to the currency's old name, the toman.

The move aims to make the monetary and banking system more stabilized and facilitate transactions by the public.

However, the measure requires approval from the parliament and the Guardian Council before taking effect.

Currently, the U.S dollar is 32,678 rials at the official rate and 37,630 rials in the open market.

Bank officials argue that the move will not affect the inflation rate or any other macroeconomic indices.

The currency was called the toman until the 1930s and most Iranians still refer to it by that name.

French growth slows even as manufacturing touches 6-year high

France's private-sector economy slowed in July as the best manufacturing numbers in more than six years couldn't compensate for a weakening in services.

A composite Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 55.7 from 56.6 in June, IHS Markit Economics said Monday. That's worse than the 56.4 predicted by economists in a Bloomberg survey. While service growth retreated more than forecast, manufacturing unexpectedly increased, and all readings were well above the 50 mark the separates expansion from contraction.

"The French private sector continued to expand at a robust pace in July, despite losing a little momentum from the previous quarter," said Annabel Fiddes, an economist at IHS Markit. It "marks a solid start to the second half of the year."

German and euro-area PMI data are expected to be little changed when they are published at 9:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. Frankfurt time, respectively. (Source: Bloomberg)

IMF downgrades U.S. and UK growth

The UK and U.S. economies will expand more slowly in 2017 than previously predicted, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).



It said "weaker-than-expected activity" in the first three months of the year meant the UK would grow by 1.7%, compared with an earlier 2% forecast.

And the IMF revised down its U.S. outlook from 2.3% to 2.1%.

However, its overall global economic predictions - of 3.5% growth in 2017 and 3.6% in 2018 - remain unchanged.

Meanwhile, the outlook for several eurozone economies is brighter than initially thought, with countries including France, Germany, Italy and Spain seeing growth forecasts revised up.

In its latest World Economic Outlook, the IMF said the "pick-up in global growth" that it had anticipated in its previous survey in April remained "on track."

But it added that while the global growth projection was unchanged that masked "somewhat different contributions at the country level."

The UK growth forecast for 2018 remains unchanged at 1.5%, but US growth for next year is now predicted to come in at 2.1%, instead of the 2.5% previously forecast.

President Donald Trump's administration had been widely expected to pursue policies including tax cuts and infrastructure investment, which would have given a boost to the U.S. economy. However, that outcome now appears less likely.

"The major factor behind the growth revision, especially for 2018, is the assumption that fiscal policy will be less expansionary than previously assumed, given the uncertainty about the timing and nature of U.S. fiscal policy changes," the IMF said.

"Market expectations of fiscal stimulus have also receded." (Source: BBC)

Alstom inks joint venture deal with Iran's IDRO, IRICO

ECONOMY TEHRAN — French multinational rail transport company Alstom signed a deal with the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) and Iran Khodro Rail Transport Industries Company (IRICO) in Tehran on Monday for establishing a joint company to cooperate on railway projects.

The signing ceremony was attended by Iranian Industry Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh, representatives of the French company, IDRO's Chairman Mansour Moazami, and IRICO's Board Chairman Gholamreza Hassan-Nejad, IRNA reported.

As the Iranian minister mentioned during the event, "railway" share is low in Iran's transportation and given the country's requirements in the industrial and mining sectors we need to develop railway-related industries."

Earlier in July, Saeid Mohammadzadeh, head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI), also announced that the country's railway network requires 28,000 new wagons.

In this regard, IDRO has been awarded a project to build 2000 new passenger wagons and the company is looking for foreign investors for the implementation of the project.

According to Nematzadeh, Germany's Siemens has



also dispatched a delegation to Iran to explore investment opportunities in this area.

"Signing such deals means accessing the world's

latest knowledge and technology and it will definitely solve the country's issues of wagon shortage," IDRO's chairman said in the ceremony.

Iran's power generation capacity surpasses 77,000 MW

ENERGY TEHRAN — The nominal electricity generation capacity reached 77,068 megawatts (MW) in Iran through putting two small gas-fueled power plants into operation in the fourth Iranian calendar month of Tir (June 22-July 22), Tasnim news agency reported on Monday.

One of the mentioned power plants has the generation capacity of 75 megawatts and the other one generates 34 megawatts of electricity.

Iran's nominal electricity generation capacity will reach 80,000 MW by summer 2018, according to Iranian Deputy Energy Minister Houshang Falahatian.

Iran increased its electricity generation capacity by 2.199 gigawatts (GW),

boosting it to 76.302 GW, in the past Iranian calendar year 1395 which ended on March 20, according to a report by Iran Power Grid Management Company released in late March.

Gas-fueled power plants accounted for 75.5 percent of the increased generation capacity, equaling 1.66 GW, IRNA reported.

Combined cycled power plants, hydroelectric power plants, distributed generation power plants, and renewable energy power plants also accounted for 14.6 percent, 3.4 percent, 5.7 percent, and 0.9 percent of the total rise in the country's electricity generation capacity, respectively, the report added.

Iran-Thailand business forum held

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran-Thailand business forum was held on Monday at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in Tehran, IRNA reported.

The forum was attended by entrepreneurs from both countries' food industry, the report said.

"Iran is keen on attraction of investments from Thailand in various sectors such as oil, gas, petrochemicals, fishery, road construction, manufacturing auto parts, development of horticulture and orchards, and construction of airports and stores as well," a deputy head at ICCIMA, Mohammadreza Karbasi, said addressing the forum.



Calling Iranian president's last year visit to Bangkok a turning point in bilateral relations, Thailand's Ambassador to Tehran Kallayana Vipattipumiprathes said that some economic agreements have been signed between the two sides since then which should become operational in future.

IMF maintains global growth forecasts; China, eurozone revised higher

KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) — The International Monetary Fund kept its growth forecasts for the world economy unchanged for this year and next, although it revised up growth expectations for the eurozone and China.

In an updated World Economic Outlook published on Monday, the IMF said global gross domestic product would grow 3.5 percent in 2017 and 3.6 percent in 2018, unchanged from estimates issued in April.

"While risks around the global growth forecast appear broadly balanced in the near term, they remain skewed to the downside over the medium term," the IMF said in updated forecasts released in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur.

The IMF shaved its forecasts for U.S. growth to 2.1 percent for 2017 and 2018, slightly down from projections of 2.3 percent and 2.5 percent, respectively, just three

months ago. The Fund reversed previous assumptions that the Trump administration's planned stimulus measures would boost U.S. growth, largely because no details of those plans have been made public.

Maurice Obstfeld, the IMF's economic counselor and director of research, said the global economy has been the subject of considerable protectionist rhetoric, such as President Donald Trump's proposed tariff on steel imported from China, but such talk had yet to translate into much action.

"What will happen in the future, we don't know. These threats are in our downside thinking. They're not built into our baseline (forecast) because hopefully they don't happen, but there are risks," Obstfeld told a news conference here.

The IMF said growth in the euro zone was now expected to be slightly stronger in 2018 and pointed to "solid momentum".

It upgraded 2017 GDP growth projec-

tions for the eurozone to 1.9 percent, up 0.2 percentage point from April. The IMF said eurozone growth would be slightly stronger at 1.7 percent, a 0.1-percentage-point change from just three months ago.

It said the expected higher growth in the eurozone indicated "stronger momentum in domestic demand than previously expected".

The IMF revised down its 2017 forecast for the United Kingdom by 0.3 percentage point to 1.7 percent, citing weaker-than-expected activity in the first quarter. It left its 2018 forecast unchanged at 1.5 percent.

The IMF said it expected slightly higher growth in Japan this year of 1.3 percent, revised from a forecast of 1.2 percent in April. It cited stronger first-quarter growth buoyed by private consumption, investment and exports. Its forecast for Japan's 2018 growth was unchanged at 0.6 per-

cent.

For China, the IMF expected stronger growth of 6.7 percent in 2017, up 0.1 percentage point from the April forecast. It said China's growth would still moderate in 2018 to 6.4 percent, but noted that estimate was up 0.2 percentage point from the April forecast on expectations that Beijing would maintain high levels of public investment.

But Obstfeld expected China's economic expansion to slow down over the second half of 2017 as Chinese authorities looked to manage rapid credit growth and non-performing loans.

"In the first two quarters of this year, growth has come in very high. Part of this is the general upsurge in world growth and the upsurge in trade in Asia. But there is also a component that has been fueled by expanding domestic credit, and that's the part that worries us," Obstfeld said.

BMW denies diesel cheating as EU, Germany probe auto cartel

BMW AG sought to defuse concerns about possible collusion with other German automakers by rejecting allegations of cheating on diesel emissions and downplaying talks with rivals as being focused on promoting exhaust-treatment technology in Europe.

With uncertainty clouding the German auto industry, BMW said it has gone farther than competitors to ensure its diesel cars meet regulatory guidelines while still performing well on the road. The company says it combines AdBlue fluid to neutralize pollutants as well as a system that stores nitrogen-oxide emissions, adding it sees no reason to recall or upgrade its latest diesel vehicles. The company is of-



fering a voluntary upgrade on older Euro 5 models.

"We compete to provide the best exhaust treatment systems," the Munich-based automaker said in statement Sunday afternoon. "Unlike other manufacturers, BMW Group diesel vehicles employ a combination of various components to treat exhaust emissions" and thereby "fulfill all legal emissions requirements and also achieve a very good real-life emissions performance."

German automakers are under intense scrutiny after a report in Der Spiegel magazine on Friday said BMW, Daimler AG and Volkswagen AG, including its Audi and Porsche brands, may have colluded

for decades on technology, including the size of AdBlue tanks. European Union and German authorities are studying possible collusion among German automakers, according to a statement released Saturday.

"It will be extremely complex and difficult to assess the financial damage that these collusions have triggered," Arndt Ellinghorst, a London-based analyst with Evercore ISI, said by e-mail. "There is also a large gray area between legal and illegal collaboration."

Extending declines from Friday, BMW fell 2.5 percent, Volkswagen declined 3.1 percent and Daimler dropped 2.6 percent at 9:23 a.m. in Frankfurt trading.

(Source: Bloomberg)

After China-induced price spike, coal set to resume long-term decline

LONDON/SINGAPORE (Reuters) — Coal prices' march to eight-month highs, driven by China's huge appetite for power consumption, looks like an interlude in a longer-term decline and is seen losing traction later this year.

Investors widely anticipate a slow demise for coal use due to policies encouraging cleaner natural gas and renewable energy generation, but the shorter-term outlook for the industry has seen a sharp reversal of fortunes.

Asia's benchmark physical coal prices have gained more than a third from lows seen in May to nearly \$98 per ton, while European benchmark API2 2018 coal futures

are at eight-month highs of around \$74 a ton.

Recent gains are largely due to high demand in China, where power consumption has jumped more than 6 percent since the beginning of the year.

This month, torrential rains forced China to cut capacity by as much as two thirds at its Three Gorges and Gezhouba hydro-power plants in an effort to ease pressure on the Yangtze river, forcing utilities to switch to coal.

Three Gorges is by far the world's biggest power station, with an installed generation capacity of 22.5 gigawatts - equivalent to around 20 coal-fired power plants.

Heatwaves in the north also boosted air-conditioning demand, while coal mining and shipping were hampered due to adverse weather in Indonesia and South Africa. Production in Australia was disrupted by a strike.

Many of these conditions should ease next month, however.

"Downside (to prices) is likely from the end of August but a lot depends on China," said Wayne Bryan, analyst at Alfa Energy.

China's decision last year to cap domestic mining output resulted in a sudden surge in overseas orders by its utilities and triggered a price spike.

However, there have been several Chi-

nese policy changes since, surprising traders and contributing to a price slump in late 2016 and earlier this year.

Singapore-listed commodity merchant Noble Group, a major global coal trader, reported a \$129.3 million loss in May for the first quarter this year to which coal prices heavily contributed.

China had cut coal capacity by 111 million tonnes by the end of June, representing 74 percent of its target for this year.

"China is likely to continue the consolidation of its coal mining industry, yet will probably try to avoid production being slashed in the way that happened in the past," analysts at Commerzbank wrote.

Iran's multibillion-dollar gas deals could lead to a "gas OPEC"



The French energy giant Total just clinched a 50.1 percent stake in a \$4.8 billion deal to develop Iran's South Pars gas field alongside China and Iran's national energy companies. This represents the first major post-sanctions investment by a Western company, and Reuters quoted experts who analyzed that it could also give France a unique opportunity to expand its investments in neighboring Qatar, which shares the world's largest gas field with Iran and calls its South Pars-abutting offshore deposits the North Dome. Qatar, which is already the world's largest LNG exporter, just announced that it wants to increase its gas exports by 30 percent, so it'll clearly need some more investment to do that and France's Total might be the perfect partner for it.

While all of this is going on, India also offered Iran \$11 billion in what it called its "best offer" for the Farzad-B gas field. Although Iran has yet to accept or decline the deal at the time of this recording, it nevertheless sets the benchmark price that Tehran will eventually receive for this, whether from New Delhi right now or someone else who might come in with a higher offer. Altogether, it can be expected that the LNG price will eventually drop in the future once Iran and Qatar's latest large-scale gas investments hit the market and contribute to a glut. Moreover, Papua New Guinea and Mozambique, both of which have enormous LNG potential, are also supposed to enter the marketplace in the coming years too, as will Russia's own Yamal and Sakhalin LNG projects, all of which

will drive down the price for this resource. However, the processing and transport expenses are still unusually high for LNG, so unless the costs fall due to the introduction of some new technology or industrial scaling, then it's almost certain that prices will eventually bottom out at some level or another. The opposite is true for oil, however, because that commodity has a price ceiling which can't be passed without kicking the U.S.' costly shale gas extraction back into operation and forcing the price down again. What's most interesting in all of this is that the prices for oil and gas are indexed with one another, so each resource is affected by the price floor and ceiling of the other, despite the opposite dynamics.

The oil price has relatively stabilized because of OPEC and the deal that its members and most important partners agreed to last year, but no similar organization or coordination exist between the world's largest natural gas players, though the predictable resource glut and price drop that's set to hit the LNG marketplace might compel them to form their own "gas OPEC" and initiate cooperative price-fixing measures with one another. The main takeaway here is that the multibillion-dollar Iranian gas deals that have been reached or are under negotiation stand to completely upset the market fundamentals for this commodity by provoking a glut of LNG which could crash the price and compel the formation of a "gas OPEC" between Russia, Iran, and Qatar to stabilize it.

(Source: Global Research)

Russia top crude oil supplier to China in June at 1.27m bpd: customs

Russia shipped 5.22 million tons of crude oil, or 1.27 million barrels per day (bpd), to China in June, up 27 percent from a year ago, data from Chinese customs showed on Monday.

Russia was China's top oil supplier for the fourth month in a row, the data showed.

June shipments from No. 2 monthly supplier Angola

rose 10.6 percent from a year ago to 1 million bpd, while Saudi Arabia's crude exports to China fell by 15.8 percent to 936,607 bpd.

Shipments from Iraq surged 47 percent compared with a year ago to 834,788 bpd, while supplies from Brazil jumped 118 percent to 689,969 bpd.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil markets need regulator in face of speculators: Eni CEO

Energy markets might need to be regulated to put a brake on widespread financial speculation that is distorting crude prices, the head of Italian oil major Eni told Il Sole 24 Ore newspaper.

Eni CEO Claudio Descalzi said OPEC and Saudi Arabia were not in a position to push prices higher by cutting output, adding that geopolitical tensions, growing U.S. shale oil production and heavy speculation in crude futures were hurting the sector.

"The financial speculation is so strong that it has transformed even those with long term strategies into short term investors,"

Descalzi was quoted as saying.

"Perhaps we should adopt in the oil sector the sort of regulations and market controls that were imposed on banks. Banks have a central watchdog, while in the past, our regulator was OPEC, which is no longer playing the role it once had."

He said hedge fund speculators no longer believed that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was in a position to introduce radical output cuts.

(Source: Reuters)

IN THE NAME OF GOD



K S C

INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER

No. 371846

KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY INTENDS TO PURCHASE 1,000 MT CALCINED PETROLEUM COKE WITH THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATIONS:

WITH THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATIONS:

SPECIFICATION	PERCENT	
Fixed Carbon	98.0%	MIN
S	0.5%	MAX
P	0.2%	MAX
ASH	1.0%	MAX
V.M.	1.0%	MAX
MOISTURE	0.5%	MAX

SIZE		MIN	%
1 - 3 mm		88	%
Less than 1 mm		6	%
Over than 3 mm up to 5 mm		6	%

INTERESTED BIDDERS MAY OBTAIN SET OF DOCUMENTS, CONTAINING THE RELEVANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS BY SUBMISSION OF A WRITTEN APPLICATION AND PAYMENT OF A NON-REFUNDABLE FEE OF EUR 50 "FIFTY EURO" TO THE ACCOUNT NO. 0100013543943 OR RIALS 2,000,000 "TWO MILLION RIALS" TO THE ACCOUNT NO. 0100014511008 AT "EXPORT DEVELOPMENT BANK OF IRAN, GENERAL BRANCH", AND PRESENT THE PAYMENT RECEIPT TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

RAW MATERIALS & ENERGY PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
ROOM NO. 201 OF HEAD OFFICE
KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY (KSC)
KM 10 OF AHVAZ - BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI ROAD
P.O. BOX: 1378
POST CODE: 61397 - 31398
AHVAZ - IRAN

NOTE 1: ALL BIDS MUST BE DELIVERED TO THE AFORESAID ADDRESS ON OR BEFORE THE CLOSING DATE 05TH AUG. 2017. THE OPENING DATE OF ENVELOPES WILL BE AT 11 AM ON THE 08TH AUG. 2017 IN THE BUYER'S CONFERENCE ROOM LOCATED AT THE HEAD OFFICE OF KSC, AHVAZ-IRAN AND THE BIDDERS OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES CAN ATTEND THE MEETING OF THE TENDER.

NOTE 2: THE OFFERED PRICE SHOULD BE VALID UP TO 30 DAYS AFTER THE OPENING DATE FOR OUR FIRM PURCHASE ORDER SENDING AND UP TO 45 DAYS AFTER THE OPENING DATE FOR ISSUING L/C.

NOTE 3: DELIVERY TIME MUST BE "SEPTEMBER 2017".

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A Pearl on «The Road» Shenzar Industrial Complex On The Silk Road

A private sector Industrial development

Ali Yazdani, Deputy Minister and CEO, Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade; Iran Small Industries & Industrial Parks Org:
"Introduction of new Technology, and correct implementation in the design and development of Industrial Parks by the Private Sector, can provide beneficial guidelines for the betterment of all Industrial developments . . ."

Some weeks ago, I accompanied the Deputy Minister on one of his many site visits. Shenzar is located about 35 kms south east of Tehran with a frontage of about 1.5 kms on the Tehran-Mashad International Highway, better known Internationally as «The Silk Road» Although I had been to this particular site in the earlier stages of its development, the extent of the progress since my previous visit surprised me. Accompanying senior government officials on site visits has great advantages.

Whereas I would not know what technical details to question, the senior visitor questions the host in every aspect of the project. Going through the Progress Chart. Questioning the financial aspects of the development. Checking the design of the structures. Wanting to see if the technical designs farmed out have the correct approvals. Making suggestions on the improvement of methods of Quality Control. Inspecting Health and Safety procedures. Asking for clear demonstration of steps taken toward Environmental



Protection. For me, always an education.

I had accompanied the Deputy Minister on previous visits, but as time went on during this particular visit, I could see the arousal of detailed interest of the Deputy Minister in this project. I thought the Managing Director of the company, Nima Moghadam was surprised by the extent of questioning and the extent of technical details in the questions in all aspects of the work. The Deputy Minister was obviously satisfied with the statements given by the MD. The quality and progress of the work was an attestation to his explanations.

Moghadam clearly demonstrated that the standard of works done, did

not only meet the Ministry's requirements, but went ways beyond this, based in the belief of the owners of the company, that

■ We need to set new standards

Moghadam pointed out a substantial looking steel structure being lowered into a recess, explaining that this was the temporary waste-treatment plant sufficient for 2,000 people. The main waste treatment plant, under construction will cater for 8,000 personnel. The recovered «Grey Water», will be pumped to the highest point on the project to facilitate irrigation of the Green Areas. Other major facilities and services either installed and operating, or under construction, are a Power Generation system with a ca-

capacity of 12 MW. (this being a fraction of the total power requirement). Each individual unit is being connected to the National Gas supply network. Much of the street lighting is installed

and operational. The remainder was under development section by section.

Shenzar is the first and only private sector Industrial Development that is connected to the International Fiber Optic system. All common and public areas will be monitored by CCTV, connected to a Data Center, where security personnel will be on duty 24/7. Individual security systems will be available for each client. Contrary to standard practice in Iran, there will be no boundary walls. Galvanized steel fencing and green areas where ever possible. It is all happening.

Shenzar's efforts have come to fruition. The Deputy Minister has instructed managers and senior technical staff of all Industrial Development sites to visit this particular complex. Shenzar has been nominated as the «Model Industrial Development», for which the Chairman of the Board, Hassan Fateh, was rightfully and appropriately awarded



Philippines' Duterte vows not to come to the U.S.: 'I've seen America, and it's lousy'

By Kristine Phillips

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, previously praised and invited by President Trump to come to the White House, said he will not visit the United States during or after his term because the country is "lousy."

Duterte's remarks about one of the Philippines' oldest allies was in response to Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.), who said he would protest if the Filipino leader utilized Trump's invitation.

"There will never be a time that I will go to America during my term, or even thereafter. So what makes that guy think I'll go to America? I've seen America, and it's lousy," Duterte told reporters Friday about McGovern.

McGovern led a hearing in Congress Thursday on Duterte's drug war that has resulted in a mass killing of suspected addicts and dealers in the Philippines. More than 7,000 deaths have been reported from July 1, 2016, to Jan. 21, according to the Philippine National Police. The deaths were carried out by both police and unknown vigilantes.

The Filipino leader's method

Human rights groups have strongly criticized the Filipino leader's method in eradicating his country's drug problem, citing lack of due process and killings that targeted the poor.

"We should be clear what an extrajudicial killing or execution is: It is the purposeful killing of a person by governmental authorities without the sanction of any judicial proceeding," McGovern said in his opening remarks. "No arrest. No warrant. No judge. No jury. Simply, murder."

McGovern added that someone with Duterte's abysmal human rights record should not be invited to the United States. "If he comes, I will lead the protest," the congressman said. "We ought to be on the side of advocating for human rights, not explaining them away."

Duterte shot back Friday, telling reporters that he, too, can — and will — investigate the United States' history of human rights violation.

"You're investigating me and the internal affairs of my country? I'm investigating you, and I will investigate you, and I will expose it to the world what you did to the Filipino, especially to the Moro Filipino," Duterte said, likely referring to the Battle of Bud Dajo in 1906 in the island of Jolo in the southernmost part of the Philippines. American troops killed more than 600 Moro people as they tried to take control of Mindanao, home to the country's Muslims.

Duterte has frequently brought up the massacre when confronted with criticisms of his drug war.

The Philippine Congress on Saturday approved his appeal to extend martial law in Marawi on the island of Mindanao to the end of the year, the Associated Press reported. The city has been besieged by militants linked to the Islamic State [ISIS].

In his statement to reporters Friday, Duterte also used the U.S. presence in the Middle East to hit back at McGovern's criticisms.

"It would be good for the U.S. Congress to start with their own investigation of their own violations of the so many civilians killed in the prosecution of the wars in the Middle East. Otherwise I will be forced to investigate you, also. I will start with your past sins," he said, according to Reuters.

Storied relationship

The United States and the Philippines have had a long and storied relationship, dating back to the Spanish-American War. The relationship soured during the Obama administration, after the president criticized the mass killings under Duterte. Not one to take criticism lightly, Duterte snapped at former president Barack Obama on a few occasions, telling him to "go to hell" and, at one point, calling him the Tagalog phrase for "son of a b---" or "son of a w---". Last September, Obama canceled a meeting with Duterte, whom he called a "colorful guy."

But the relationship between the two countries had appeared to be shifting with Trump in office. The president praised the war on drugs and invited Duterte to the United States during a phone call in April.

"I just wanted to congratulate you because I am hearing of the unbelievable job on the drug problem. Many countries have the problem, we have a problem, but what a great job you are doing and I just wanted to call and tell you that," Trump said, according to a transcript of the call obtained by The Washington Post.

Trump also called Duterte "a good man" and toward the end of the conversation, told him that he's "invited anytime" to the White House.

The prospect of the Filipino strongman coming to the United States, however, quickly set off alarm bells among critics, including an international human rights group that advocates for a UN investigation of Duterte's administration. Duterte later told reporters that he cannot promise he will accept the invitation, citing his busy schedule.

"It would be good for the U.S. Congress to start with their own investigation of their own violations of the so many civilians killed in the prosecution of the wars in the Middle East" Duterte said, according to Reuters.

(Source: Washington Post)



Trump administration looks to Oman for help navigating Middle East

Three days before U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson hosted his Omani counterpart, Yusuf bin Alawi, in Washington — Sultan Qaboos became the latest [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) head of state to speak directly with U.S. President Donald Trump.

In their conversation, Trump stressed the urgency of countering Iran's ascendancy shortly after Washington implemented new sanctions on Iranian individuals and businesses despite the Trump administration's certifying Tehran's compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), at the same time claiming that Iran has breached the JCPOA's "spirit." This call also came one week after Alawi visited Tehran to discuss the ongoing Qatar crisis after he spoke by phone with Tillerson about Qatar and Yemen.

It is no secret that the Trump administration and Muscat have not been on the same page on a host of regional issues. The JCPOA, which Oman played a pivotal role in helping the Obama administration and Iran negotiate, was in Trump-the-candidate's words "the worst deal ever" and he vowed to "rip up" the historic accord. In April, each [P]GCC member, save Oman, strongly endorsed Trump's decision to launch dozens of missiles at Syrian regime military infrastructure near Homs. On the Yemen front, the Saudi/United Arab Emirates-led military campaign, which the Trump administration has stepped up U.S. support for, has irked Oman. Also, Trump's urging of U.S. allies throughout the Muslim world to help Washington counter Iran has not prevented Muscat and Tehran from continuing to maintain a close defense relationship as neighbors and co-owners of the Strait of Hormuz.

In the grander picture, Oman and the Trump administration's not seeing eye to eye on regional security issues has much to do with Muscat's uniquely cooperative and normalized relationship with Tehran. While the Trump administration sees Iran as the Middle Eastern state



The Trump administration might be encouraging Oman to step up its own role in the ongoing row to help defuse the crisis in pursuit of reconciliation.

most responsible for the outgrowth of terrorism and regional instability, Muscat views Iran as an important strategic partner across a diverse host of sectors. Furthermore, ongoing developments within the [P]GCC in light of the Qatar crisis are prompting some smaller member states, including Oman, to constantly assess the strategic depth from Saudi Arabia that Iran offers them.

Omani-Iranian relations have led Muscat to conduct a foreign policy that is quite interactive with a host of state and nonstate actors across the Middle East, making Oman unique in the [P]GCC. For example, Oman was the only [P]GCC state to maintain official relations with the Syrian regime throughout the past 6½ years. Earlier this year, Muscat responded to suicide bombings in Damascus that left scores of people killed and wounded by sending Bashar al-Assad's regime a message of condolence. Also, Omanis have strong feelings

about their country's historic ties with all of Yemen's communities, including the Houthis. There is also strong disagreement with the Saudi/UAE-led military campaign in Yemen, which Oman has been the only [P]GCC member to have stayed out of since the March 2015 launch of the operation.

Trump, Oman and the Qatar crisis

When Trump delivered his speech at the Arab Islamic American Summit in Riyadh two months ago, he commended all [P]GCC states, save Oman, for their counterterrorism cooperation with the United States. While Trump was in Saudi Arabia, Oman's Deputy Prime Minister Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said had a scheduled meeting with the American president that was canceled for reasons unknown to the public, as was Tillerson's meeting with Alawi. This administration's budget blueprint for the next fiscal year hints at a 35% decrease in U.S. military aid to Oman, which is notable given the

extent to which the White House has been inking landmark arms sales with other [P]GCC states.

Perhaps the main variable that led to Trump and Qaboos' first conversation was the Qatar crisis, which has likely prompted Washington to turn to Muscat as a regional mediator between [P]GCC states. To be sure, Kuwait, and not Oman, has been leading inner-[P]GCC diplomatic efforts to resolve this year's row, and Washington has fully supported the Kuwaiti emir in doing so. Yet the Trump administration might be encouraging Oman to step up its own role in the ongoing row to help defuse the crisis in pursuit of reconciliation. Last month, the White House communicated to Qaboos that Oman's economic relationship with Iran is not one Washington expects the sultanate to sever; this message was delivered when CIA Director Mike Pompeo and Trump's deputy national security adviser, Army Reserve Maj. Gen. Ricky Waddell, held a secret meeting with Qaboos.

Most likely the Trump administration is not going to be entirely welcoming of Oman's independent foreign policy and unique relationship with Iran. An unsettling question for Oman is the following: If the Houthi fighters obtain long-range missiles capable of striking Riyadh from Yemen, would the Trump administration believe that some blame belongs on Muscat's doorstep? In any event, as the Qatar crisis threatens to disintegrate the [P]GCC, the Trump administration is turning to Oman, whose relationship with America dates to 1790, for help mediating the row.

Over the years, Muscat has been a useful ally of the United States during challenging times. Now, with Washington deeply concerned about the [P]GCC's future, the White House has seemingly, albeit slowly, begun to show appreciation for the value of Oman as a unique ally that can help this administration navigate the Middle East.

(Source: Al Monitor)

A year after Chilcot, Blair is still not in jail. He should be

By Asa Winstanley

One year ago this month Sir John Chilcot, a leading former civil servant, finally published the report of his long-awaited enquiry into the British role in the illegal and immoral U.S. imperial invasion of Iraq in 2003.

That war destroyed an entire country. More than 1 million Iraqis were killed, with untold numbers injured, orphaned, widowed and traumatized for life. Even worse than that, the war never ended. The invasion set off a deadly chain of events — one that resulted in the creation of the horrific entity which calls itself "Islamic State"/ [ISIS].

A brutal and bloody civil war closely followed the invasion — one sparked in large part by very deliberately sectarian policies perused by U.S. occupation authorities. Following the pattern set by U.S. imperial involvement in Latin America's dirty wars, former U.S. Special Forces colonel James Steele set up sectarian death squads in Iraq. These "commando units" were a major factor in the rise of the horrific group Al-Qaeda in Iraq — a forerunner organization to "Islamic State."

The wars that still rage in Iraq until this very day have a direct continuity with that fateful day in March 2003. Tony Blair is to blame for all of this.

Apart from particulars and certain aspects of detail, Chilcot's report was never really going to tell us much we didn't already know.

Negative consequences

Literally millions of people warned Tony Blair not to go to war in Iraq, because it would become a disaster — hurricane of death and destruction for the Iraqi people, with negative consequences for the world in general. It gives those of us who marched against the war at the time no pleasure whatsoever to be proved completely correct.

But Blair has always despised ordinary people and held us in utter contempt. He is part of the political



Chilcot, being appointed to lead the enquiry by Blair's New Labour successor Gordon Brown, was never going to be incisive, or criticize Tony Blair with the outright hostility he deserves.

class of professional politicians who believe humanity should be ruled by a divine class of enlightened technocrats — superior beings to the rest of this, or so they claim. His entire political philosophy is completely contemptible. It's a disgrace that he ever came to hold a death-like grip on the Labour Party.

According to Labour Party expert Robin Ramsay, "Blair hated the Labour Party and viewed it as his enemy," but nonetheless saw it as his most likely route to power. Power for power's sake has always been the mantra of the Blairites. Thankfully they have now been decisively rejected by the Labour Party membership, with their detritus hopefully soon to be swept away completely.

Chilcot, being appointed to lead the enquiry by

Blair's New Labour successor Gordon Brown, was never going to be incisive, or criticize Tony Blair with the outright hostility he deserves. But even he could not avoid reaching the most obvious of conclusions: "Military action at that time was not a last resort ... there was no imminent threat from Saddam Hussein."

This month, Chilcot broke his public silence, maintained since the publication of his report a year ago. He told the BBC that Blair had not been "straight with the nation" in giving his justification for war.

Blair notoriously lied to the country, claiming that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had had chemical weapons and could deploy them against British targets with 45 minutes. Even at the time, this was a transparent lie, which could not fool too many people. But now even such an establishment figure as the leader of the Chilcot enquiry has to admit that Blair lied (even though he would not use those words, that is the clear implication).

The Chilcot report contained a key supporting document, from 28 July 2002. In it Blair wrote to then U.S. President George W. Bush saying that "I will be with you, whatever." Despite the play-acting of UN and parliamentary debates that were to follow, the prime minister had in reality already taken the unilateral decision to go to war — at the behest of his political masters across the Atlantic.

It is bad news that Blair remains on the political scene. He still has the temerity to chime in with his fully unwanted opinions from time to time, and has even made noises about starting a new "moderate" political force. But the good news is that that seems unlikely to succeed — recent polling shows that any return by Blair to lead Labour would cause a "voter exodus."

"I will be with you, whatever" should now be Blair's political epitaph, and Exhibit A at his trial for war crimes in the Hague.

(Source: middleeastmonitor.com)

Russia and China heighten tensions as joint navy drills sparks NATO concern

By Fraser Moore

JOINT military drills between Russia and China have kicked off in the Baltic sea, sparking widespread concern among Nato members.

Dozens of warships from the two superpowers started a series of drills near the Russian port of Baltiysk on Friday, set to last until July 28.

The exercises are expected to include anti-ship, anti-submarine and anti-aircraft defence manoeuvres.

But senior Nato figures have stressed

they will closely monitor the drills amid accusations that the proximity of the drills is an act of provocation.

The US's European Command said it would be "closely tracking Russian exercises with other participants, like China".

Its statement continued: "While we support their rights to train in international commons, we expect all nations adhere to international norms and laws."

But experts and observers have stressed Russia and China have the right to carry out drills wherever "na-

tional interests" require it.

Yang Mian, from the Centre for International Relations at the Chinese Institute of Communications, said: "The trend for the development of Chinese-Russian relations has been excellent in recent years, and favourable progress can be noted in military cooperation as well."

"Earlier, the two countries conducted drills in various areas of the Pacific Ocean."

"This time, the joint exercises in the Baltic Sea reflect the close coopera-

tion between the two countries in the military sphere — their mutual strategic support for one another"

Mr Yang stressed the drills were "not directed against any third country".

Royal navy ships were scrambled earlier this week when the Chinese vessels passed through the English Channel on their way to the Baltic.

Russian president Vladimir Putin and Chinese president Xi Jinping have further escalated pressure on Nato by deciding to go ahead with the drills.

(Source: express.co.uk)

CEO of EORC Announces in Annual Ordinary General Assembly: Implementation of 26 Projects, Costing 4,100b Tomans, in Esfahan Oil Refining Company

A number of 26 development projects, costing 4,100 billion tomans, became operational in Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC).

Chief Executive of Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) announced the above statement in the Annual Ordinary General Assembly meeting.

It should be noted that the Annual Ordinary General Assembly of Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC), for the fiscal year closing on March 20, 2017, was held on July 21, 2017 in the presence of 85 percent (85%) of its shareholders.

In the Assembly, performance and financial statements of the company, for the fiscal year closing on March 20, 2017, were presented after the determination of members of Presiding Board of the Assembly, reports of Board of Directors, independent auditor and legal inspector of the company. In addition, decision was made with regard to the distribution of dividend, selection of legal inspector and independent auditor of the company for the fiscal year closing on March 20, 2017, determination of premium bonus for the members of the Board of Directors. It should be noted that widely circulated paper was determined for the publication of advertisements of the company.

■ Influential Decisions in Future of Refineries of Company

Then, the managing director of Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) presented a comprehensive report to the shareholders on the situation of his company, programs and projects at hand.

In the beginning, managing director and member of the Board of Directors of Esfahan Oil Refining Company Lotfali Chavoshi pointed to the elapse of less than 10 years since the privatization of refineries in the country and said: "During these years, various decisions were taken for the refineries of the country, each of which has had serious and deep impacts on the destiny of these companies."

Until before privatization, all refineries of the country were running under the strict supervision of public sector, he said, adding: "In all countries of the world, refining industries are one of the strategic industries, so that countries cannot play a key role in these industries."

In the beginning of privatization, it was decided that 20 percent of stocks in each refinery will remain in the hands of government. In addition, one representative should attend in the Board of Directors and the Assembly in order to follow up the governance issues at the refineries.

Such decision was then changed and there is still some discussions in this regard, he said, adding: "These decisions are very influential in the future of the oil refining companies."

He pointed to the Value-Added Tax (VAT) as one of the main challenges facing oil refineries in the country and said: "Over the past few years, problems related to the Value-Added Tax (Vat) and lack of transparency of the law were prolonged until the account of refineries was blocked."

■ Trying to Achieve Main Position of Refineries in Country

Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director of the company pointed to the key role of refineries over the past 10 years in fuel basket of the country and added: "Energy basket is so important that signifies the importance of refineries in the country, so that lack of production in refineries can influence the economic situation of the country."

Regarding the challenges facing refineries in the country, he said: "Refineries face challenges in terms of changes that occur in the country and world."

Generally speaking, production in oil refineries should be continued using short-, mid- and long-term planning, he maintained.

■ EORC Stands at 1st Rank in Terms of Receiving Crude Oil Feedstock and Producing Oil Gas Products

The senior official of the company also pointed to the establishment



of Esfahan Oil Refining Company in 1998 as a subsidiary company of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) and said: "According to the bylaw ratified at the General Assembly of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) in 2007, the legal entity of the company was turned from Private Joint Stock to the Public Joint Stock. Stocks of the company were admitted at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) on the same year. The stocks of the company were first transacted in 2008."

Then, he expounded on the subject of the company as follows: constructing, commissioning, operating and launching industrial factories for producing, marketing, selling and issuing different types of oil products, chemicals and similar products, receiving and exchanging feedstock of refinery from the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) and/or any other domestic and foreign suppliers, fulfilling the operation of refining and processing crude oil and other hydrocarbons, manufacturing oil products such as gasoline, kerosene, oil gas, fuel oil and other derivatives and lateral products, fulfilling all other activities in order to supply the materials within the framework of articles of association of the company, etc.

Currently, a number of nine refining companies are busy active in the country in this field, he said, adding: "According to the statistics, Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) stood at the first rank in terms of receiving crude oil feedstock in the reported fiscal year period."

It is worth mentioning that EORC stood at the first rank in terms of production of oil gas products, second rank in terms of production of kerosene and gasoline and also third rank in terms of production of liquefied gas and fuel oil.

■ Compiling Strategic Program and Defining Perspective of EORC

Elsewhere in his remarks, the senior official of the company pointed to the compiling and drafting a strategic program and defining vision of this prestigious company after years of conducting expert-level studies and said: "According to the vision, macro objectives were defined in the country and strategies were defined for these objectives in line with materializing most economic objectives of this industrial unit."

It is hoped that the management of the company will take giant strides in line with realizing most economic objectives of the company in national



and international levels, he maintained. He also referred to the environmental dimensions and said: "The Company has taken effective steps in line with observing requirements of international environmental standards."

■ Belief in Environmental Promotion and Observing Requirements of Environmental Standards in EORC

As approved and confirmed by Esfahan Province Department of Environment (DoE), Esfahan Oil Refining



Company was excluded from the list of pollutant industries from 2012 to 2015, he said, adding: "In these years, the company did not pay any pollutant tax and toll since it observed all requirements of environmental standards."

It should be noted that EORC paid the pollutant tax and toll, worth 96 billion tomans, in 2016 in a four three-month periods in line with observing environmental costs and abiding by its social responsibility, he added.

■ Management of Water Resources, Challenges Facing EORC

He pointed to the management of water and energy resources as one of the other challenges facing the company and added: "It is for about 30 years that Esfahan Oil Refining Company uses water of Zayandehroud River, ranging from 900 to 1,000- cubic meter/hour."

Turning to the recent meeting of Crisis Management in Esfahan Oil Refining Company and said: "The refinery was on the verge of closure due to the emptiness of water tanks but the said problem was removed under the unsparring and unflinching efforts of senior officials of the province."

Drastic measures taken by the company in order to supply water required in this industry, he said, adding: "For this purpose, the company purchased 220 lit./second wastewater of Shahinshahr and paid approx. 7 billion tomans in this respect."

Also, a wastewater treatment



plant was considered, costing 50 billion tomans, in Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC), he opined.

■ All Challenges Facing EORC Identified

All challenges facing Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) were identified, he said, adding: "Of course, company's outlook document will be scrutinized strictly but efforts are underway in order to turning the company into a profitable and lucrative industry."

of the company will hire the most experienced and expert manpower in order to materialize most objectives, he maintained.

■ Winning 1st Rank in HSE Terms in Three Consecutive Years

In the course of these years, refineries of the country were evaluated. It is for about three consecutive years that Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) has managed to win first rank in 2012, 2013 and 2014 in the field of Health, Safety and Environment (HSE).



Given the above issue, the company showed brilliant performance in the reported fiscal year period, the managing director opined.

Turning to the legal cases of this prestigious company, he said: "Most legal cases of the company led to the satisfactory results except one case. Currently, we are following up necessary measures in order to settle the existing problem."

■ Changing Main Production Pattern in EORC

Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director pointed to the three main products of the company and said: "The products which are manufactured in the refinery are not convertible, so that their quality and quantity can be increased as well."

Turning to this point that production pattern is changed in the refinery wholly and said: "For example, we managed to increase gasoline production capacity through commissioning Euro 4 Gasoline Production Complex, so that it brought about profitability for the company."



■ EORC Should Be Empowered to Materialize Its Most Objectives

The managing director put the volume of products produced in Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) at 21 billion liters, so that the company sold product, valued at approx. 3,800 tomans, for each barrel of crude oil but the said figure hit 10,700 tomans in the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2017) i.e. almost threefold.

Accordingly, some part of this profitability is due to the optimization of production, he said, adding: "Since we cannot change the international price, we should be empowered in order to stand in our own foot. Under such circumstances, the company will be profitable and lucrative."

■ 26 Active Projects in EORC

At the other part of his speech, the managing director of the company put the number of projects active in Esfahan Oil Refining Company at 26.

These projects have mainly been activated in 2014, costing approx. 4,100 billion tomans.

Some part of this figure is actual and the contracts which have been specified may experience a considerable change in its price, he maintained.

He put the cost spent for the implementation of these projects at approx. 1,000 billion tomans.

He pointed to the underway projects of the company as follows: Refining gas oil, launching 3rd distillation project (YRP), construction of two 227-ton boilers and DM water, engineering, purchasing and constructing new flares at the refinery, purchasing power connection, designing 33/230KV substation, monitoring workshop on the construction and installation of 33/230KV substation, constructing and installing power transmission line, optimizing recycling unit and completing construction operation of "Ro" system, construction of pumping station and wastewater treatment house, modernizing refinery's power systems, conducting feasibility studies for the construction of railway, construction of lubricating system, etc.

■ Expanding on Strategies Targeted in EORC

In the end, the managing director of the company elaborated on the strategies and future programs envisioned at the company as follows: Accelerating construction operation of gas oil refining (DHT) and 3rd distillation (URP) units in line with standardization of products, observing requirements of environmental standards, removing bottlenecks, accelerating in construction operation of projects, gaining customers' satisfaction, backing interests of stakeholders and beneficiaries, reducing or removing risks and hazards caused by the activities, boosting quality and quantity of products, optimizing processes, implementation of a plan dubbed "Reforming Consumption Pattern", preventing environmental pollutions, promoting technical knowhow and knowledge, establishing very sound cooperation and collaboration with other industries, etc.

■ EORC Takes Giant Strides in Realizing Most Objectives in 2016

Chavoshi then pointed to the management and development of human capital in the company and added: "Esfahan Oil Refining Company is no longer hires employee and manpower due to the privatization affairs, therefore, we follow up the case through organizing employment test."

Up to the present time, "We have organized employment test at three stages and efficient and competent manpower has recently been employed."

Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, the management

Divided Europe seeks a long-term answer to a refugee crisis that needs a solution now

With thousands of people marooned in Greece, Serbia and Italy, Europe is split down the middle about how to deal with the influx of migrants.

Many are running for their lives. Nearly 95,000 people, a majority from sub-Saharan countries, have arrived by boat in southern Italy so far this year, up 17% on 2016. About 2,200 have died in the attempt.

European efforts to deal with the influx, hastily enacted two years ago at the height of Syria's civil war, are faltering. A burden-sharing deal agreed by all 28 EU states in 2015, when Germany took nearly 1 million people, has arguably never worked. Of 160,000 refugees due to be accepted under the scheme, fewer than 21,000 have been relocated.

Europe is split down the middle. Poland and Hungary have refused to take anyone. The Czech Republic initially accepted 12 people but has since slammed the door. The European commission has begun legal action against all three. Italy and Greece, so-called "frontline states", are at

odds with their northern neighbors, notably France and Austria. Dashing hopes of a new approach, the new French president, Emmanuel Macron, is proving inflexible on the issue.

As we report today, hundreds of migrants are effectively kettled in Ventimiglia on the Italian side of the border with France. Paris is preventing vessels carrying rescued migrants docking in French ports. Nor has France met its share of the European Union relocation quota. Austria is paying refugees to leave, amid a rise in far right and neo-Nazi attacks. The Vienna government says it will close the Brenner Pass if Italy issues temporary travel visas for the migrants.

The Italian government, facing elections in 2018 and under pressure from the populist Five Star movement opposition, is furious about perceived French hypocrisy.

The new refugee crisis is playing into a bigger, EU-wide battle about respect for national sovereignty. Hungary's rightwing prime minister, Viktor Orbán, says he will "not give

in to blackmail from Brussels". Poland says the EU relocation scheme encourages more migrants, arguing most refugees do not genuinely fear persecution but are economic migrants seeking a better life.

If this summer's crisis continues to escalate, it could influence Britain's Brexit debate on continued freedom of movement while boosting populist, racist and xenophobic narratives across Europe about a "flood" of 6.6 million migrants this year alone.

Britain's contribution is unimpressive, but not as bad as some. The UK pledged to accept 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020. Official figures say 5,453 Syrians were resettled in the UK in the year ending March 2017. There were also 1,507 grants of asylum.

A separate EU deal with Turkey last year, overseen by Angela Merkel, Germany's chancellor, is also proving problematic. In return for Turkish help in stemming the flow of Syrians via Greece and the Balkans, An-

kara was offered €6bn to assist with nearly 3 million refugees on its soil. The EU also pledged to take more Syrians over time.

But Amnesty International says the basic premise – that Turkey is a safe place for refugees – is flawed. As of February this year, only 3,565 people had been accepted by EU states from Turkey. And as Europe-Turkey relations deteriorate, the repressive government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is threatening to turn on the refugee "tap" again.

Meanwhile, increased rates of depression, self-harm and suicide are reported among 70,000 refugees marooned in holding camps in Greece and Serbia.

Confusion and division also characterize Europe's policy towards Libya, the main stepping-off point for migrants. Much of Libya is ungoverned following the U.S., British and French-backed overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011, and UN-led efforts to restore order are floundering. ➔

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Young drivers with ADHD 36% more likely to have an accident, study says

By Daniella Emanuel

Adolescents with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder are 36% more likely than other adolescent drivers to get into a car accident, according to a study published Monday in JAMA Pediatrics.

Previous research has found much higher rates of crash risks for young people with ADHD. One 1993 study said adolescents who have ADHD are four times more likely to get into car accidents than those who don't.

The new study's authors noted that the earlier research had limitations, such as using small samples of teens from specialty clinics and relying on self- and parent-reported accidents. The JAMA Pediatrics study used a much larger sample: 18,500 electronic health records for young people, including nearly 2,500 with ADHD. The records came from six New Jersey primary care practices that are part of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia network and were linked to statewide driver licensing and crash databases from 2004 to 2014.

Thomas Power, a psychologist and co-author of the new study and the director of the Center for Management of ADHD at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, said the research indicates that the risks around adolescent drivers with ADHD are manageable.

"The presence of ADHD among young drivers warrants concern," Power said. "But the findings suggest that, as a general rule, we shouldn't be extremely concerned or fearful for allowing these youths to drive."

ADHD is a chronic condition marked by symptoms such as hyperactivity, impulsive behavior and difficulty sustaining attention. If untreated, these symptoms can impair a driver in a way that resembles intoxicated driving, according to the nonprofit National Resource Center on ADHD.

People with ADHD are particularly at risk for driving while distracted, especially during long-distance or highway driving, the nonprofit said. Laws across the country prohibit certain actions while driving, like talking on the phone, texting, eating, drinking or fiddling with the stereo, according to the National Highway



The new study found that adolescents with ADHD are less likely to get their driver's licenses in general and are more likely to receive it at an older age.

Traffic Safety Administration.

The new study found that adolescents with ADHD are less likely to get their driver's licenses in general and are more likely to receive it at an older age.

Power said he does not think there should be any changes made to state laws to regulate licensing of adolescents with ADHD, but parents should ensure that these children are emotionally ready before getting behind the wheel.

"The first stage is to make sure the youth has sufficiently strong

communication skills, problem-solving skills, decision-making ability, judgment and level of responsibility, in order to advance to the learning-to-drive stage," he said.

If an adolescent with ADHD is struggling with learning how to drive, it may be a good idea for them to work with a driving rehab specialist, Power said. Such a specialist works with drivers with special needs to help them feel safe and confident while operating their vehicle.

But Stephen Hinshaw, a professor of psychology at the University of

California-Berkeley who specializes in ADHD, does not see a lower-than-expected risk of accidents as a reason to worry less about young drivers with ADHD.

"If I'm the victim of a car crash and there was a one percent chance of an increase, I think it's a major concern," said Hinshaw, who was not involved in the new research.

The study notes that the adolescents with ADHD were diagnosed based on assessments from primary care physicians, rather than more rigorous testing. This doesn't guarantee every adolescent in the study actually has ADHD, he said, adding that one major cause of fast-rising rates of ADHD diagnoses is primary care doctors' involvement in place of a specialist.

Besides informing adolescents with ADHD about the seriousness of operating a vehicle, Hinshaw said, it is important to make sure they have a treatment plan in place. It can be medical or therapeutic, depending on the youth's needs.

In May, a study published in JAMA Psychiatry said that drivers with ADHD who are medicated have a dramatically lower rate of car accidents.

The new study found that out of the 2,479 adolescents with ADHD, only 12% were medicated in the 30 days before they received their license. That's a similar percentage to the overall amount of adolescents with ADHD who take medication, Hinshaw said.

Power wrote in an email that researchers were surprised that such a low percentage of young people with ADHD were prescribed medication by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia system doctors at the time they received their driver's licenses.

"This suggests that a high percentage of novice drivers with ADHD are not taking medication when they drive," he said.

Power said this finding raises questions that warrant more research. "Why are adolescents not being prescribed medication? And why are they not using medication?" he asked. "Because there clearly is evidence that using medication can reduce crash risk."

(Source: CNN)



Yoga in the office? Firms should help us stay well, says public health chief

Yoga clubs, 'walking meetings' and standing desks are among the strategies small and medium-sized companies should adopt, according to Duncan Selbie.

Lunchtime yoga classes, providing help to remove ingrowing toenails and holding meetings while walking around the office – these are just some of the strategies that employers should use to boost staff fitness, according to the NHS public health chief.

Duncan Selbie, chief executive of Public Health England, is also backing workplace running clubs, standing desks to improve posture and staff uniting to try to quit smoking as useful ways businesses can improve employee wellbeing.

In an interview with the Observer, Selbie made clear that Britain's 5.5 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) could do much more to tackle the £29bn annual bill for sickness absence while improving productivity and increasing profits at the same time.

"SMEs are the backbone of the nation's workforce and can kickstart a revolution in helping their staff to improve their health. People spend 30, 40 or sometimes 50 hours a week at work. That's a unique opportunity for employers to use that big chunk of someone's week to care for their health," said Selbie. His plea is aimed at the 5.5 million firms which make up 99% of all private sector businesses and employ 60% of those who work in the private sector.

"Forward-thinking companies are already offering help such as podiatry services to employees who are on their feet all day or group posture exercises for people who stand in the same position for a long time because of their job.

"Employers could adopt group exercise challenges, such as 'Couch to 5k' or lunchtime run clubs, and promote active travel like cycling to work. Being regularly active is one of the best ways to prevent and manage poor musculoskeletal health and combat stress, which are both major causes of sickness absence," he added.

Employers should take a "bottom-up" approach to improving staff health and wellbeing by putting in place ideas that employees want, rather than things that would be "nice to have", he said.

"We want to see every business take a custom-made approach to employee health by looking at what staff need. We encourage employers to create



SMEs are the backbone of the nation's workforce and can kickstart a revolution in helping their staff to improve their health.

dynamic environments, workplaces where people can be more active, move more and change positions, with things like standing desks."

Firms could encourage staff to hold "walking meetings" in the local park rather than sitting down in an office and always eat lunch somewhere other than their desk, Selbie said. Ergonomic assessments of posture could help identify stiffness and pain that may indicate that back problems are emerging which can then be tackled early.

He wants action to encourage more staff to cycle to work. HR Magazine recently found that 33% of employers believe that cyclists are more productive at work than non-cycling colleagues. In addition, 44% of bosses polled said cyclists were more productive and 89% thought that those who used two wheels had more energy during the day. Research by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has found that physically active staff take 27% fewer sick days.

Firms could also use camaraderie between staff to help smokers quit. Selbie suggested using group workplace challenges, such as smokers all signing up to take part in Stoptober together, and that employers could alert workers when mobile bus clinics were due to be in the area.

The PHE boss wants businesses to help staff with

their mental health too. "The main way to reduce stress levels is through training line managers in mental health and educating workforces to increase their mental health literacy, and to recognise the signs which indicate that they need support," he said.

Mike Cherry, national chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses, said that small firms did not have the advantage of large corporations in being able to use their employees to get discount deals for gym memberships or private health providers, for example.

"The average small employer has around seven employees and their approach is often more akin to a family unit than it is a large business. So while many small businesses are not sedentary or desk-based in their work, we know that many are encouraging fitness breaks for running or gym classes, while others have indeed innovated through things such as walking meetings.

"The key is not to instruct or compel them, but for the small business owner and their team to come up with ideas that work for them."

Selbie added: "Everyone benefits from a healthier workforce: employees, who will enjoy better health and be less likely to be off sick; employers, who will reap the benefits of increased productivity; and the NHS, which will have less poor health to deal with."

(Source: The Guardian)

12 foods that fight belly fat

The Abs Diet revolves around a dozen delicious, convenient foods called the Abs Diet Powerfoods. All you need to do is eat the acronym: Almonds and other nuts, Beans and other legumes, Spinach and other green vegetables, Dairy (low-fat), Instant oatmeal, Eggs, Turkey and other lean meats, Peanut butter, Olive oil, Whole grain breads and cereals, Extra-protein (whey) powder, Raspberries and other berries.

Yep, you read that right: You get to eat healthy protein, healthy fats, healthy carbs—there's hardly anything you need to give up on this program. Ice cream? Sure, have it. Grilled cheese sandwiches? Yep. You're in.

These are among the best sources of protein, fiber, and all the other ingredients and nutrients that help fight fat. In fact, they're so good for you that they'll just about single-handedly exchange your fat for a toned, lean body and nice abs. You can base entire meals and snacks around them, but you don't have to. Just be sure to follow these simple rules.

- Incorporate two or three of these foods into each of your meals and at least one of them into each snack.
- Diversify your food at every meal to get a combination of protein, carbohydrates, and fat.

- Sneak a little protein into each snack.
 - A - Almonds and other nuts (with skins intact)
 - Superpowers: Builds muscle, reduces cravings
 - Fights: Obesity, heart disease, muscle loss, wrinkles, cancer, high blood pressure
 - B - Beans and legumes
 - Superpowers: Builds muscle, helps burn fat, regulates digestion
 - Fights: Obesity, colon cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure
 - S - Spinach and other green vegetables
 - Superpowers: Neutralizes free radicals, molecules that accelerate the aging process
 - Fights: Cancer, heart disease, stroke, obesity, osteoporosis
 - D - Dairy products (fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese)
 - Superpowers: Builds strong bones, fires up weight loss
 - Fights: Osteoporosis, obesity, high blood pressure, cancer
 - I - Instant oatmeal (unsweetened, unflavored)
 - Superpowers: Boosts energy, reduces cholesterol, maintains blood sugar levels
 - Fights: Heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, obesity
 - E - Eggs
 - Superpowers: Builds muscle, burns fat
 - Fights: Obesity
 - T - Turkey and other lean meats
 - Superpowers: Builds muscle, strengthens immune system
 - Fights: Obesity, various diseases
 - P - Peanut butter
 - Superpowers: Boosts testosterone, builds muscle, burns fat
 - Fights: Obesity, muscle loss, wrinkles, cardiovascular disease
 - O - Olive oil
 - Superpowers: Lowers cholesterol, boosts immune system
 - Fights: Obesity, cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure
 - W - Whole-grain breads and cereals
 - Fights: Obesity, cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease
 - E - Extra-protein (whey) powder
 - Superpowers: Builds muscle, burns fat
 - Fights: Obesity
 - R - Raspberries and other berries
 - Superpowers: Protects heart, enhances eyesight, improves balance, coordination, and short-term memory; prevents cravings
 - Fights: Heart disease, cancer, obesity



Ways you can make a good first impression, according to science

Alexander Todorov is a professor of psychology at Princeton University.

His research on how we're influenced by people's faces is world-leading, and he says it happens quicker than you think.

He says that he expected in a study that it would take people a substantial amount of time to make complex judgments about people, like as to whether they seem trustworthy or aggressive:

Now we know that essentially you don't need more than a 200 millisecond exposure to a facial image. So literally these are single-glance impressions.

It turns out it's only a fraction of a second that you have to make a good first impression.

Here's how you make that time work for you:

1. Trim your eyebrows

Todorov explains that eyebrows play a huge role in how we perceive emotion:

It turns out that for recognising emotional expressions, the eyebrows are much more important than the eyes, simply because they move to a much larger extent than the eyes.

And in fact even for recognition of individuals, familiar individuals, the eyebrows are more important than the eyes.

2. Get a good night's sleep

Generally when we appear to be happy and rested, we will be perceived more positively.

3. If you want to be trustworthy, try to 'feminise' your face

Todorov explains that faces that appear more feminine tends to be ranked as more trustworthy in studies:

So, one, it's obviously the shape of the face, for example the chin, the eyebrows change, and they are different for men and women. But the other thing is the darkness of the skin. Within every culture that have been studied so far, if you compare men and women, generally the male skin tends to be darker than female skin, so that's a good signal for gender.

(Source: indy100.com)

CHTHO appoints new deputy director for tourism

TOURISM TEHRAN — Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization Director Zahra Ahmadipour on Saturday appointed Mirhadi Qareseyyed-Romiani as the new deputy for tourism affairs.

Qareseyyed-Romiani replaced Morteza Rahmani-Movahhed who assumed the position in 2013.



Mirhadi Qareseyyed-Romiani in an undated photo

"A testament to your commitment, expertise, experience, and merit, you are appointed as the deputy for tourism while maintaining your [existing] position," Ahmadipour wrote in a decree.

"The cultural, social, and economic points of view toward tourism industry should be seriously developed as a cornerstone of the non-oil economy. It calls for paying special attention to science and research, and taking new approaches toward the international community."

Iran has launched extensive plans to bolster its tourism sector. Under its 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country is expecting to increase the number of tourism arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Gorgan to host culinary festival

TOURISM TEHRAN — Gorgan, the capital of Golestan Province in northern Iran, will host a culinary festival from August 2 to 4.



A poster for "Iranian Cuisine, Tourism Culture" festival

The event comes as part of nationwide campaign for promoting gastronomy tourism, Mehr reported on Saturday.

Titled "Iranian Cuisine, Tourism Culture", the festival will turn the spotlight on local appetizers, desserts, herbal drinks, and main courses dominated by indigenous dishes.

Organized by the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, the event will also embrace cooks and chefs from Mazandaran, Gilan, and Qazvin provinces, as well.

The Iranian cuisine, usually dominated with fragrant herbs, varies from region to region, but it principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

Under tourists' eyes: Challenging Babak fortress

TOURISM TEHRAN — High in the mountains at an altitude of 2,300 meters lies the relatively well-preserved Babak fortress, a tourist destination near Kaleybar in West Azarbaijan Province, northwest Iran.

Locally known as Qaleh Babak, it consists of several stone towers and lodging areas stretched in an area of nearly ten thousand square meters, attributed to the Sassanid-era (224-651).

The fort is named after Babak Khorramdin, an Iranian warlord who managed to resist Arab invaders until his death in 838 CE.

Access is challenging and involves an arduous uphill walk that takes one to two hours. There are several paths to the castle, though the normal route soars stairs behind the seasonal Babak Hotel. The hike is not recommended for the infirm, elderly or those afraid of heights.

Once at the top, onlookers are highly rewarded with some matchless vistas of the encircling Arasbaran oak forests, jagged cliffs and some steep gorges.

Here is a select of comments that visitors to the historical fortress have posted to TripAdvisor, one of the most popular travel websites in the world:

■ **"Beautiful way up and amazing castle"**

We booked a taxi ride to this place at our guesthouse in Tabriz. It took us around two hours and a half to get there by taxi; once we got to the base of the hill, we started the walk up and it took us one hour and a half to get to the castle.

It's a rough climb, but totally worth it, as the views of the castle and from the castle are really beautiful. At the base, where there is a parking lot, you will find a shop selling water and some other drinks, but no food. There is also a public toilet near the parking lot. (FerTarran from Apucarana, PR; visited May 2017)

■ **"Stunning scenery and amazing people"**

One of my best experiences in Iran (even though I had many).

As a 28-year old in fairly average/good shape, I found it to be a difficult trip. The weather was very hot since it was in the middle of July and there's not really anything to buy once you get there. Luckily we had brought soooo much water and we had just enough.

I also recommend wearing hiking boots or really solid shoes. I wore sandals and it was not a good idea. I fell once and was close numerous times. It was



A view of Babak fortress, a tourist destination in West Azarbaijan Province, northwest Iran

amazing though - once we actually reached the top there were locals yelling out / singing poetry and some were playing instruments while walking down. The atmosphere was unbelievable. (CarinaCPH from Denmark; visited July 2016)

■ **"Very steep hike to reach the castle"**

Please be prepared to a very long and quite arduous hike to Babak Fort (Castle). Taxi driver will leave you at the start of a long flight of stairs and after you'll need to climb through rocks and little paths.

There is basically no sign to the Castle and got almost lost in the climbing. There is a pathway on the right hand side once you're on top of the stairs, take it, it is a bit longer but less strenuous. At the end of

the path, you'll finally see the black board for the Fort and lot of stairs again.

Once on top, you'll have to go down again a lot of stairs to get to the other side of the mountain before you reach the castle. Wear good hiking shoes and expect the hike to take 1.5-2 hours to go up and about 1h to go down. There is a little house with a man to buy drinks and hot tea, I would say 3/4 from the base. It is very cold at the top (2500m) wear accordingly. (Magman from Switzerland; visited April 2016)

Babak fortress is embraced with Arasbaran Protected Area, which is a candidate for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage list for 2018.

Urmia gears up for major handicrafts exhibit

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Urmia, the capital of northwestern West Ararzbaijan Province, will host a major handicrafts exhibit from July 31 to August 4.

Organized by the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, the event is to bring the country under the spotlight in terms of its lavish natural and historical sites.

Artisans and craftspeople native to 25 provinces are scheduled to showcase their works in the exhibit that will include some 120 stalls, Jalil Jabbari, the director of West Ararzbaijan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department said on Sunday.

"In addition, there will be some stalls that

will be dedicated to various nomads and their products," he added.

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



U.S. Cuba tour operators gird for Trump travel crackdown

U.S. tour operators that send Americans to Cuba are banding together to try to limit damage to business from tighter restrictions on travel to the communist-run island expected in September from the Trump administration.

U.S. President Donald Trump in June rolled back parts of Barack Obama's historic opening to Cuba, saying his predecessor negotiated a "terrible and misguided deal."

The revised approach includes stricter enforcement of a longtime ban on Americans going to Cuba as tourists. Among changes are limiting visits to 12 existing categories of non-tourist travel and a ban on the use of hotels and other facilities owned by Cuba's military.

Cruise ships are permitted, the administration said, but not independent visits by solo travelers and families under the popular people-to-people travel category which Trump charged was being used to violate the tourist ban.

Many Americans took Trump's message to mean travel to Cuba, except on cruise ships, was again off limits, U.S. tour operators said. It is a misconception they hope to change with a trade group formed in the last month to influence the debate on Cuba and help would-be visitors navigate new rules. (Source: CNBC)

Dublin to get an extra 3,000 hotel rooms by 2020

There will be 3,000 extra hotel bedrooms in Dublin by 2020, according to the Irish construction industry, which said the increase would support demand from tourists and provide an economic boost.

Construction Information Services, which monitors projects in development, said Dublin's hotel room stock would rise 15 percent over the next three years as new hotels in the Docklands, near Dublin Airport and in other parts of the city open their doors.

Some 393 bedrooms will be added to the total stock in the capital by one development alone: in April, Irish investment group Tetrarch lodged a planning application for a €65 million commercial scheme that will include an eight-story budget hotel on a site bounded by Moss Street, Gloucester Street South and Townsend Street. (Source: Irish Times)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic Quarter of Colonia del Sacramento

Founded by the Portuguese in 1680, Colonia del Sacramento is located at the tip of a short peninsula with a strategic position on the north shore of the Rio de la Plata, facing Buenos Aires.

In the region, the Historic Quarter of Colonia is the only example of an urban plan that does not conform to the rigid "checkerboard" grid imposed by Spain under the "Laws of the Indies." Instead, this city has a free plan adapted to the topographical features of the site, although strongly influenced by its military function.



Calle San Pedro, a typical street in the historic district

Throughout the successive destructions and occupations of its territory, the Historic Quarter acquired the urban and architectural heterogeneity that characterizes it: to the contributions of the Portuguese and Spanish, were added those of the artisans who emigrated there during the second half of the 19th century.

All of its modest buildings, in regard both to their dimensions and their appearance, are a particularly interesting testimony to the singular fusion of the Portuguese and Spanish traditions that is evident in the construction methods used.

The civil and religious buildings with long stone walls, wooden trellis and tiled roofs reveal an excellent knowledge of traditional construction systems and contribute to the architectural unity specific to the Historic Quarter.

(Source: UNESCO)



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National Iranian Drilling Company

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					
32,643	1,142,500,000	22,850,000,000	P/F CAMERON B.O.P TYPE 'U' 13-5/8" 5000 & 10000 PSI	1,493,282	Tender No. :FP/12-96/023 Indent No. :08-22-9545016	1

Brief description of subject:
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase spare parts of cameron b.o.p 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 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, Ahvaz, IRAN
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurement department in due date and participates in tender .

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 received deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, 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 ۹۶/۵/۳ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۵/۴

Microsoft just released an app that destroys barriers for the blind

Businesses routinely apply artificial intelligence (AI) with the goal of simple convenience. But sometimes, AI means changing lives in wildly positive ways, removing hurdles and dangers individuals face. That's 100 percent the case with the Seeing AI app, just released to all iOS users from Microsoft.

As Dave Smith of Business Insider reports, the new, completely free app is the brainchild of Saquib Shaikh, a software engineer who lost his sight at age 7. The program uses the camera on your smartphone to capture images of who and what's around you. That includes everything from your wallet to your coworker pouring coffee. Once your camera has captured the image, the app tells you aloud what's in it. Emotions, gender, estimated age -- the app can describe it all.

Another feature of the app is its ability to guide visually impaired people to take pictures of text, which it then can read. That's useful for everyday situations like reading menus at restaurants, but also for professional work like reviewing business documents.

Smart glasses

Right now, the app only works with iOS or Pivthead SMART glasses. But the hope is to get a version for Android out



there soon.

Seeing AI is very much about allowing blind individuals to be as independent as possible. But to really understand the significance of the app, you have to consider why that independence is valuable. Yes,

there are the obvious convenience and safety elements. But independence yields confidence.

Confidence encourages people to try and experience new things. It changes how they interact with others, influencing

Once your camera has captured the image, the app tells you aloud what's in it. Emotions, gender, estimated age -- the app can describe it all.

their ability to create fulfilling relationships. If Seeing AI tells you the person you're talking to is smiling, for example, you have less reason to be nervous or stressed as you continue.

Preventing discrimination

There's equality, too. In the United States, for example, blind working-age adults are employed at a rate of just 36.8 percent. That's despite the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is intended to prevent discrimination. The situation is similar in other areas of the world. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the rate is less than 27 percent.

Although there are many reasons for employers turning blind people away, much of it has to do with the underlying (and often unspoken) beliefs that the visually impaired person somehow will create more work for the employer or cannot do a job with the efficiency and accuracy of a sighted individual. Technologies like Seeing AI, however, might reassure employers, offering a simple accommodation.

The more companies like Microsoft develop technologies like Seeing AI, the more likely it is that we'll see people, not their disabilities. That, when you get down to it, is the ultimate vision.

(Source: inc.com)

Plastic-plucking robots are the future of recycling

We are living in the Age of Plastic. In 2015, the world's industries created 448 million tons of it -- twice as much as it did in 1998 -- and the rate of production is only accelerating. However, our recycling efforts have not matched pace.

In fact, according to the EPA, barely 14 percent of plastic products are recycled globally. But a new generation of recycling technology is here to keep the world's plastics in circulation and out of our landfills.

The World Bank estimates that we generate 1.3 billion tons of solid municipal waste annually, with that figure expected to eclipse the 2-billion-ton mark by the middle of the next decade.

Out of the 9.1 billion tons of plastic produced since the industry's boom began (around 1950), 7 billion tons of it is out of use -- according to a study out of the University of California at Santa Barbara published in the journal *Science Advances* on Wednesday. Barely 9 percent of it has ever been recycled, 12 percent of it was incinerated and the rest -- some 5.5 billion tons of plastic -- now resides in our waterways and landfills.

Toward plastic planet

"At the current rate, we are really heading toward a plastic planet," the study's lead author, UCSB industrial

ecologist Roland Geyer, told the AP. "It is something we need to pay attention to."

Luckily, it's something that a number of researchers are already paying attention to. Take AMP Robotics, for example. Working in collaboration with the Carton Council and Denver-based municipal waste facility Alpine Waste & Recycling, AMP has taken a two-decade old mechanical trash-sorting system and given it something not even the Great and Powerful Oz could: robotic eyes and an AI brain. Say hello to Clarke.

Clarke has been installed in the Alpine facility for about a year. It uses a visible-light camera to spot milk, juice and food cartons amid a conveyor belt of recyclable waste, plucking them from the line using a robotic arm and twin suction cups. Clarke can pick a steady rate of 60 items per minute, 20 more than the average human worker does, with 90 percent accuracy.

Recycling facility

The "fundamental platform that we've created was a system to sort pretty much all the commodities that are in a recycling facility today," AMP Robotics founder, Mantanya Horowitz told Engadget, "whether it's cardboard, No. 1 plastics, No. 2 plastics, or cartons -- cartons just



ended up being a great place for us to start."

Because this program took shape with the help of the Carton Council, Clarke is on the hunt for -- you guessed it -- cartons of various varieties. But the genius of this system is that it learns as it works.

"Even though this first system is picking cartons, it's actually watching and learning from all the other commodities that it's seeing as well," Horowitz continued.

(Source: engadget.com)

Tardigrades could probably survive complete annihilation of life on Earth

Not everyone is familiar with the tardigrade (also known as the water bear, also known as the moss piglet, previously known as "animalcules"), and that's a damn shame. They're less than a millimeter long, sure, but they're almost certainly the most indestructible animals on the planet.

You can expose them to the unforgiving vacuum of space, starve them for decades, dehydrate them for literally-who-knows-how-long, boil them, mash them, stick them in a stew, whatever, and as soon as you return them to normal conditions they'll perk right back up and go on their merry way. Their abilities are so obscenely awesome that some scientists are convinced they contain an unprecedented ratio of DNA that's "stolen" from other organisms by way of horizontal gene transfer, though these results proved controversial.

Now, scientists have taken the logical next step and tried to figure out just how much a tardigrade might survive.

Post-apocalyptic fates

Even if you love tardigrades as much as we do, a study on their post-apocalyptic fates might seem a little wasteful.

But it makes a lot of sense if you stop to think about it: we know that tardigrades can survive basically anything that we can throw at them, to an extent we don't see with any other animal. So for researchers who want to understand how hard it would be to wipe out all life on Earth in one go, the water bear makes a great mile marker: if these eight-legged swimmers don't make it through a natural disaster, nothing else stands a chance -- in the animal kingdom, anyway.

Asking that question is about more than figuring out the odds of Earth's survival. What the researchers are really trying to figure out is how likely it would be for life to evolve on another planet but get wiped out before we had the chance to find it. Space is big and time is long, so it wouldn't be surprising if our first encounter with a planet with the evolutionary potential to host life happened at a less-than-ideal point in that world's history. Take Mars, for example: some scientists hold out hope that this relatively Earth-y rock teemed with microbial life billions of years ago, before its atmosphere slipped away into space.



Based on the humble moss piglet, scientists from Oxford and Harvard say it does. They calculated the risks posed to tardigrades' marine habitats by asteroids (conclusion: nothing big enough to totally boil up our oceans should ever intersect with Earth's orbit), supernovas (conclusion: the probability of a star explosion massive and close

enough to totally boil up our oceans happening during our Sun's lifetime is "negligible"), and gamma-ray bursts (conclusion: again, the probability of this even-more-powerful-but-even-more-rare stellar explosion happening in close enough proximity to boil up our oceans is "minor").

(Source: Popular Science)

Creating the largest neutrino detectors in the world

A new era in neutrino physics in the United States is underway, and UW -- Madison's Physical Sciences Laboratory (PSL) in Stoutenon is playing a key role.

The Long-Baseline Neutrino Facility, home to the \$2 billion Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment (DUNE), will eventually send particles 800 miles through the earth from a lab outside Chicago to a mile-deep detector in an inactive gold mine in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Neutrinos are little-understood, but their role in understanding matter and the dynamics of the universe is growing as science continues to learn more about the enigmatic particles through a constellation of new and exotic detectors, including the new DUNE experiment.

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the Long-Baseline Neutrino Facility (LBNF) will be held simultaneously today at the Sanford Lab in South Dakota and at Fermilab in Illinois.

The facility will provide the neutrino beam and the infrastructure that will support the DUNE detectors, taking advantage of Fermilab's powerful particle accelera-

tor complex and Sanford Lab's deep underground areas within a long, existing tunnel carved out during the gold mining days of the 1930s.

Huge underground caverns

Once the first shovel of earth is turned, crews will excavate more than 800,000 tons of rock -- approximately the weight of eight aircraft carriers -- to create huge underground caverns for the assembly of enormous particle detectors, all to better understand the mysterious neutrino. DUNE was conceived, designed and will be built by a team of 1,000 scientists and engineers from more than 30 countries and 160 institutions, including UW -- Madison.

In fact, when DUNE is operational years from now, it will rely on anode panel assemblies (APAs) built at the Stoutenon UW laboratory.

The detectors will be made up of large panels (the APAs) that will be submerged in liquid argon. The APAs consist of ultrathin wires wound around metal. Each assembly created at the UW's PSL consists of a stainless steel frame that is 20 feet long, a layer of copper mesh,

and almost 15 miles of very thin (150 micron diameter) copper beryllium wire wound around it in four layers. The wire is then attached to a circuit board to track neutrinos.

Overseeing PSL's work on DUNE is the lab's director, Bob Paulos. The "APAs are really the heart of the detector," Paulos says.

PSL will build three APAs for a prototype experiment called ProtoDUNE. UW-Madison is collaborating with several institutions in the United Kingdom, which will build three more prototype APAs utilizing PSL's design. They have built an exact copy of the PSL wire-winding robot along with all of the other tooling necessary to build the devices.

The "ultimate plan is to build four detector modules underground in South Dakota. Each module will be two-thirds the size of a football field and comprise 150 APAs," Paulos says. Construction on the modules is expected to begin in 2020.

(Source: phys.org)

Rainforests can make their own rain

Chances are that at some point in a school geography class you were told that rainforests only grow in tropical climates, but a recent investigation of water evaporation patterns in the southern Amazon provides evidence that the relationship goes both ways.



This discovery is important because it explains why the Amazon rainforest receives such an early wet season south of the equator, which is an enigma that has perplexed environmental scientists for years.

While there are two seasonal forms of wind that typically control the onset of the wet season in tropical regions (monsoonal winds and the Intertropical Convergence Zone), neither one affects the southern Amazon until months after the beginning of the wet season, which is currently in mid-October.

The new research, led by Jonathon Wright from Tsinghua University in China, provides an alternative explanation, suggesting that the onset of the wet season in the southern Amazon is caused by transpiration, the process of water evaporating from the leaves of plants.

This theory, published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, is supported by evidence in the form of water vapor data that was picked up by the Tropospheric Emission Spectrometer (TES) on NASA's Aura satellite.

Specifically, the TES was used to examine the proportion of deuterium -- a heavier isotope of hydrogen -- in water vapor as the amount of this material is lower in vapor from the ocean than it is in the byproduct of transpiration.

The results of this analysis show that during the dry season, water from vegetation in the southern Amazon is pumped into the middle troposphere, where it can turn into rain and thus instigate an earlier wet season.

(Source: Cosmos Magazine)

New bizarre giant sunfish species 'Hoodwinker' discovered

A new species of sunfish has been discovered by researchers for the first time in 130 years. The giant new sunfish, named the "Hoodwinker Sunfish" (*Mola tecta*), has been found in the cold ocean waters of New Zealand, South Africa, southern Chile and the southeast coast of Australia. According to researchers, the previously unnamed species has eluded discovery for almost three centuries.

The discovery was made by an international team of researchers led by Marianne Nyegaard, a Ph.D. student at Murdoch University. The new species was discovered while researching the population genetics of ocean sunfish. According to Nyegaard, although Japanese researchers had first found genetic evidence of the bizarre sunfish species in Australian waters 10 years ago, it still eluded discovery because the scientific community didn't know what the fish looked like.

The "new species managed to evade discovery for nearly three centuries by 'hiding' in a messy history of sunfish taxonomy, partially because they are so difficult to preserve and study, even for natural history museums," Nyegaard said. "That is why we named it *Mola tecta* (the Hoodwinker Sunfish), derived from the Latin *tectus*, meaning disguised or hidden. We retraced the steps of early naturalists and taxonomists to understand how such a large fish could have evaded discovery all this time.

Nyegaard collected data from 27 specimens of the new species over a three-year period, sometimes travelling thousands of miles to the most remote beaches. "Finding these fish and storing specimens for studies is a logistical nightmare due to their elusive nature and enormous size, so sunfish research is difficult at the best of times," she said.

(Source: IBT)

Is parabiosis the fountain of youth?

To what lengths would you go to stay forever young? For vampires, just a sip of human blood is enough to do the trick. And according to some scientists, young blood could potentially work for the rest of us, reports MIT Technology Review.

The hopeful notion that we can turn back the clock and combat aging isn't new, and the possible anti-aging procedure that's gaining steam isn't really that new either. The procedure that some think can be used for anti-aging purposes -- or at least the regeneration of old and deteriorated tissues -- is what's called parabiosis.

Parabiosis is an experimental surgery that was first utilized in the 1864 by physiologist Paul Bert, according to Nature. Bert sought to conjoin two albino rats -- using their skin -- to create a shared circulatory system between the two animals. His experiment produced the desired outcome and the two mice's bodies worked together to pump each other's blood.

The practice of parabiosis eventually declined over time, but in the past few years, some scientists have revisited the procedure to see how parabiosis might be of benefit to the regeneration of deteriorated tissues in mice -- and possibly beyond.

(Source: MNN)

Iran to mark national day of girls

WOMEN TEHRAN — Iran is to hold nationwide celebrations called Dokhtaran-e Mah, literally meaning the moon's daughters, today on the occasion of the national day of girls.

The events mark the birthday anniversary of Hazrat Fatemah Ma'soomah (SA), who is the sister of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam.



Girls hold a great share of the society and their role in cultural promotion of the society is significant, IRNA quoted Maryam Maleki, the cultural deputy of the Union of Students' Islamic Associations as saying.

The national day of girls aims at improving girls' awareness and helping them to value their identity and character, Maleki explained.

The event provides an opportunity for exchanging of views about girls and introducing them a proper Islamic lifestyle, Maleki stated.

Creating a close relationship between mothers and girls is another objective of the event, the official noted.

This year's celebration follows the slogan of "Today's aware girls, tomorrow's successful mothers", she said.

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Fried ice cream

"Vanilla ice cream with a crunchy coating. Serve with whipped cream, honey, and cherries."

Ingredients:



1 quart vanilla ice cream
3 cups crushed cornflakes cereal
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3 egg whites
2 quarts oil for frying

Directions:

Scoop ice cream into 8 - 1/2 cup sized balls. Place on baking sheet and freeze until firm, about 1 hour.

In a shallow dish, combine cornflakes and cinnamon. In another dish, beat egg whites until foamy. Roll ice cream balls in egg whites, then in cornflakes, covering ice cream completely. Repeat if necessary. Freeze again until firm, 3 hours.

In deep fryer or large, heavy saucepan, heat oil to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).

Using a basket or slotted spoon, fry ice cream balls 1 or 2 at a time, for 10 to 15 seconds, until golden. Drain quickly on paper towels and serve immediately.

LEARN ENGLISH

Funeral Arrangements

A: Hi Daniel, how are you **holding up**? I am greatly sorry for your loss.

B: Thank you, I'm doing much better. I've begun organizing everything for the funeral.

A: How's that going?

B: It's a lot harder than I imagined. There are many things that you have to arrange. I booked a time and date with the **funeral home**, but I still have a lot of things to do.

A: Have you bought a **burial plot** and a **casket**?

B: No. Wendy is being **cremated**. She always talked about how she didn't want to be buried. I already chose a cremation urn and we plan to spread the ashes in the ocean.

A: I see, that sounds like something she would have really liked. I am sure the **memorial service** will be **tasteful**. You are doing a great job.

B: Thanks, it hasn't been easy, but luckily we have life insurance and Wendy left behind a detailed will that will **sort out** any other legal matters.

Key vocabulary

hold up: continue to live through hardship

funeral home: the place where a body is kept before a funeral

burial: the act of burying, esp. the interment of a dead body

burial plot: a piece of property within a cemetery purchased for a burial

casket: coffin

cremate: burn up something and reduce to ash

memorial service: done or made in order to remind people of someone who has died

tasteful: a being in keeping with good taste

sort out: deal

Supplementary vocabulary

arrange: to make preparations

morgue: a place where dead bodies are stored

funeral home: a place where memorial services are held

to book: to set a specific time to do something

to grieve: to be sad

(Source: irlanguage.com)

The birth of the Holy Lady Fatemah Ma'soomah and her childhood

After the martyrdom (Shahadat) of our 7th Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS), his son and our 8th Imam Ali ar-Ridha (AS) took care of his family and his sisters. Bibi Fatima al-Masoomah loved her brother immensely [similar to the love of Bibi Zainab (SA) towards her brother Imam Husayn (AS)].

In 200AH Mamoon Rashid, the Abbasid caliph called Imam Ali ar-Ridha (AS) to Khorasan from Medina and no family member was allowed to accompany him. Bibi Fatima al-Masoomah missed her brother very much and left Medina for Khorasan, Iran.

When she reached Sawa, she learnt the news of Shahadat of her brother. On learning this, she became very ill and asked to be taken to Qum. Within a few days after her brother's death, she died. She was buried in Qum on 8th Rabi-ul-Awwal 201AH. She was only 22 years old at the time of her death. People pay great respect and visit her grave from all the different corners of the world and have their wishes (Hajat) fulfilled.

The beginning of the Islamic month of Dhu al-Qi'dah marks the birth anniversary of Bibi Fatima al-Masoomah (SA). She was born in the holy city of Medina.

The holy household was awaiting the arrival of a new born. In the house of Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS), Najma, the wife of the honorable Imam was eagerly looking forward to the arrival of the child; she was counting days and nights for that special day. The Imam's house was overwhelmed with happiness and joy.

Finally, the day arrived, on the 1st of Dhu al-Qi'dah 173 (AH) when Allah blessed our 7th Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS) with a daughter. The child's appearance was brilliant and cheerful and she opened



her pure bright eyes to this world in the house of Imam.

All the members of the Holy Household were in utter happiness for the newborn and after the Imam, maybe there was not anybody as happy as his wife Najma. This was because this was the second child that was granted by the grace of Allah to Najma after 25 years. 25 years ago, in the same month of Dhil-Qa'dah, Najma had given birth to a baby boy who after his father was to become the Imam and was to shoulder the responsibility of Imamate and guiding the Muslims.

Yes! That was 148 (AH), when the eight Imam, Ali (AS) was born and who was given the title of Ridha. Najma got immense pleasure in her first child and after years God blessed her and her husband Musa Kazem (AS) with a daughter and a sister to Imam Ridha (AS).

Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS) named his

daughter Fatimah, for the sake of love and special attachment he had with his grandmother Fatimah Zahra (SA). Fatimah's purity, modesty, and piety were such that after sometime she was referred as "Ma'soomah" (the infallible). This was because like her honorable Father, she used to keep away from all evils and sins.

Fatemah, was a name that was remembered among the Ahlul bayt who had hundreds of sad and sweet memories of the life of Bibi Fatimah (SA).

If anybody chose the name Fatimah for their daughters, they used to give the same respect as the prophet (S) used to give his daughter. She was never neglected. Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS) also followed this tradition and used to love the new girl very much and never failed to show and express his kindness to and love for her.

Fatemah Ma'soomah was growing

under the shelter of her father and dear mother and was day by day learning new things from both of them. If the father of Fatemah was the Imam of the Muslims and was matchless in his piety and chastity, then her mother was also pious and faithful who had accomplished her essential studies of Islam in the school of the wife of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (AS). In those days she was the most intelligent amongst all women and it was for reason that the mother of Imam Kazem (Hamideh) asked him to propose and marry her.

Hazrat Fatimah Ma'soomah took advantage of studying in the presence of her father, brother and pious mother. All her young life was full of Islamic education. Every Friday Muslims would come to Medina with their religious questions. After getting their questions answered by Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS), they would return to their town. Incidentally, once Imam Kazem was away and Imam Reza (AS) was also not around. The Muslims without getting their question answered were returning home very sad.

Fatemah Ma'soomah noticed the sadness and took the papers from them and answered their questions. The Muslims became happy and left. On the outskirts of Medina they met Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS) and they informed him of all that had transpired in his house. The Imam asked to read his daughter's answers and after reading expressed his happiness, praised her and in a short sentence said, "May her father be sacrificed for her."

Today, July 25, 2017, is the birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatimah Ma'soomah (SA), and the national Girls' Day. TEHRAN TIMES felicitates the occasion to all readers.

(Source: ezsofttech.com)

Muslim woman assaulted, hijab pulled off in UK

A Muslim woman's hijab was pulled off allegedly by a man in a vicious assault in London, amid a spike in hate crime incidents following a series of terror attacks by Islamists in the UK.

Aniso Abdulkadir was waiting for a tube at Baker Street station on July 16 when she says the man grabbed her headscarf before lashing out with his fists and pinning one of her friends up against a wall, the BBC reported.

"This man at Baker Street station forcefully attempted to pull my hijab off and when I instinctively grabbed hold of my scarf he hit me," Ms. Abdulkadir tweeted and posted a picture of the man who allegedly attacked her.

"He proceeded to verbally abuse my friends and I, pinning one of them against the wall and spitting in her face," the tweet read.

Ms. Abdulkadir added that a woman who was present was also threatening and verbally abusive, the report said.

A British Transport Police spokesman said it was being investigated as a hate crime.

"Behavior like this is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated... This incident has been reported to us and we're investigating," the official said.

However, a man claiming to be the man in the image tweeted on July 17 to protest his innocence, claiming he had been defending his partner from what he called a "racist attack", the Guardian reported.

He said the allegation against him was "completely false".

"I would like to confirm I never hit or attacked anyone I simply defused the situation by separating them," Pawel Uzcziwek wrote.

"The police is fully cooperating with me and will be able to obtain CCTV footage showing the three women attempting to attack my partner because we are in an interracial relationship," he claimed.

The assault comes amid a spike in hate crime incidents in the UK following a suicide bombing at a concert in Manchester that claimed 22 lives and an attack in London by three terrorists, who drove a van into pedestrians and then went on a stabbing spree, killing eight persons before being shot dead.

Anti-Muslim crimes in the British capital increased fivefold since the London attack, London Mayor Sadiq Khan had said, warning that police would take a "zero-tolerance approach".

(Source: The Hindu)



N.I.O.C
1396.1766



National Iranian Drilling Company

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					
68,000	2,377,000,000	52,836,000,000	P/F " CORE" FULL BORE DRILL STEM TEST TOOLS	1493013	Tender No.:FP/04-96/ 021 Indent No.:08-22-9545019	1

Brief discription of subject:
National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements 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.
Reciving 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, Ahvaz, IRAN
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurement 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 qualification worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document received deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor, Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, 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 ۹۶/۵/۲ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۵/۳

Dahlan reveals controversial Hamas deal on Gaza

An exiled Palestinian politician, Mohamed Dahlan, has for the first time discussed the details of a power-sharing deal with former rival Hamas movement for governing Gaza.

Dahlan, a former Gaza security chief, said in a phone interview with the AP news agency that he expected the quietly negotiated agreement to lead to opening the blockaded Palestinian territory's border with Egypt in late August and an easing of crippling power outages.

Funding has been secured from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for a \$100m power plant to be built on the Egyptian side of the border, said Dahlan from the United Arab Emirates.

Several dozen of Dahlan's lieutenants and key supporters are expected to return from exile as part of the arrangements. But he said he will remain in exile.

"It's better for Gaza that I stay in the diaspora and approach everyone who can extend a helping hand to Gaza," Dahlan said.

The 55-year-old said his chemistry with Gaza's newly-elected Hamas chief, Yehiyeh Sinwar, helped forge the once-unthinkable alliance backed by Egypt and the UAE.

The two grew up in the streets of southern Gaza's Khan Younis refugee camp before joining rival camps, Hamas and the mainstream Fatah movement, respectively.



"We both realized it's time to find a way out" for Gaza, Dahlan said in an hour-long conversation.

The deal, which gives Dahlan a chance to return to Palestinian politics, is still in the early stages of implementation.

If it goes ahead, the accord could further sideline Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, 82, who presides over autonomous enclaves in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Abbas has a toxic relationship with Hamas, which seized Gaza from him in

2007, and with Dahlan, a former top aide.

The objectives of the Dahlan-Hamas deal - ending the border blockade, reviving Gaza's battered economy - could also weaken Palestinian statehood aspirations by creating a "mini-state" in Gaza.

For more than two decades, Palestinian leaders, including Abbas, have unsuccessfully sought to establish a state in the West Bank, Gaza and East al-Quds (Jerusalem) in negotiations with Israel.

■ Not separatists

Dahlan dismissed concerns that his

deal with Hamas will gradually turn Gaza into a separate entity.

"We are patriots, not separatists," he said, adding that he would do everything in his power to prevent a further drifting apart of the Palestinian territories.

The multi-millionaire with far-flung business interests in the region and close ties to leaders of Egypt and the UAE said he no longer aspires to replace Abbas.

"I have no ambitions to be president," he said. "Maybe that was the case when I was younger, but now I see the situation: 70 percent of the land is in the hands of the Israelis, and they have no intentions to give us a state."

Azzam al-Ahmed, an Abbas aide who negotiated with Hamas in the past, said on Sunday that the Dahlan-Hamas understandings "are going nowhere".

He said Abbas' Palestinian Authority supports Gaza with \$1.2bn every year, covering wages of ex-loyalists, social welfare payments and electricity. He suggested Dahlan and Hamas would be unable to cover such sums.

Al-Ahmed also said Egypt assured Abbas "that they are not going to help any new entity in Gaza".

However, the lengthy negotiations between Dahlan's representatives and a Hamas team in Cairo last month would not have been possible without Egypt's blessing, participants said.

(Source: AP)

Venezuela crisis enters pivotal week, Maduro foes protest



Venezuela's opposition planned to plaster election centers with banners and rally in honor of dead protesters on Monday in a final week-long push to force President Nicolas Maduro into aborting a controversial congress.

The unpopular leftist leader is pressing ahead with the planned vote for a Constitutional Assembly next Sunday despite the opposition of most Venezuelans, a crescendo of international criticism, and some dissent within his ruling Socialist Party.

Critics say the assembly, whose election rules appear designed to ensure a majority for Maduro, is intended to institutionalize dictatorship in the South American OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) nation.

But Maduro, 54, whose term runs until early 2019, insists it is the only way to empower the people and bring peace after four months of anti-government unrest that has killed more than 100 people and further pummeled an imploding economy.

"This is a crucial week for the future of our country. Democracy, liberty and peace depend on us," said lawmaker and protest leader Juan Andres Mejia, urging people onto the streets.

The opposition, which has now won majority backing after years in the doldrums during the rule of Maduro's predecessor Hugo Chavez, has asked supporters to demonstrate their rejection of the new congress by gathering on Monday morning at sites that will be used to conduct Sunday's vote.

That is to be followed by a rally in the afternoon on a Caracas street where a young protester died.

■ 48-Hour National Shutdown

The Democratic Unity coalition has raised the stakes by calling a two-day national strike for Wednesday and Thursday, after millions participated in a 24-hour shutdown last week. It says it will step up its tactics if Maduro does not concede.

Young members of a self-styled "Resistance" movement said the moves outlined by the formal opposition were not tough enough, and have announced their own plan to blockade streets beginning on Monday.

In various speeches on state TV over the weekend, Maduro said his government was "ready for any scenario" and blasted his foes as "terrorists" servile to Washington.

"We're not surrendering to anyone," he said.

The government says more than 230,000 soldiers will keep the peace next Sunday. Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino said election centers had been declared "zones of special protection" given "provocations" issued by some political parties.

With the United States President Donald Trump threatening economic sanctions on Venezuela, potentially aimed at the oil sector accounting for 95 percent of its export revenues, Maduro said he could count on "great friends" like China and India if needs be.

Venezuela was rife with rumors of more arrests of opposition leaders, splits within government, and a possible role for the influential military in any denouement to the crisis.

(Source: Reuters)

Philippines' Duterte vows to continue his drug war



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has vowed that his campaign against illegal drugs will not ease despite mounting criticism over the rising death toll, calling on the nation to keep supporting him.

Duterte, in his annual State of the Nation address, before Congress, said that the illegal drug campaign was part of efforts to ensure peace and order in the country to encourage investment.

"I have learned that the economy surges only when there is peace and order in places where investors can pool their capital and expertise," the 72-year-old president said.

"That is why I have resolved that no matter how long it takes, the fight against illegal drugs will continue because that is the root cause of so much evil and so much suffering that weakens the social fabric and deters foreign investments from pouring in," he added.

The president also called on his critics not to trivialize his drugs war by demanding human rights.

Thousands of people have died since Duterte took office last year and ordered an unprecedented war on crime that has drawn global criticism for alleged human rights abuses.

The move, however, has been popular with many in the mainly Catholic nation.

Duterte also said he wanted all mineral resources extracted from the country to be processed domestically and, if possible, to stop exporting such commodities.

He said he would hold mining companies responsible for the clean-up

and rehabilitation of areas damaged by mining.

He added that the government on Friday would draft a new law for the country's mining industry, which he said pays too little in tax and not enough in compensation for any environmental damage.

Ahead of the address, several thousand left-wing protesters marched in the capital Manila with an effigy of Duterte to the House of Representatives to demand that he deliver on promises.

Riot police, without batons and shields to underscore a policy of maximum tolerance towards demonstrators, separated the protesters from a smaller group of Duterte supporters outside the heavily guarded building, where Duterte delivered the speech.

Inside the hall, left-wing legislators sought ingenious ways to protest. Representative Emmie de Jesus, who represents the Gabriela women's party-list group, wore native clothes with beadwork reading "Regular Jobs Now", a criticism of contractual work without benefits.

Another representative, Arlene Brosas, wore a black dress with a hand-painted message by a former political prisoner saying "No to Martial Law".

Duterte won congressional approval on Saturday for an extension of martial law in the south to deal with the siege of Marawi city by an armed group, the worst crisis he has faced since taking power last year.

(Source: agencies)

Trump asks for 'dummy' Britain visit before main trip

The United States President Donald Trump has asked to make a "dummy" visit to Britain before accepting British Prime Minister Theresa May's invitation for a full state visit.

The low-profile visit, which if true is likely to be arranged sometime before the end of the year, would lack the royal pomp of a state visit, the Daily Mail reported Sunday, citing a senior diplomat.

"A low-profile trip followed by a formal State one is among the ideas being considered," the official told the daily.

May extended Queen Elizabeth II's invitation to Trump during a visit to the White House only a week after Trump's inauguration on January 20.

Trump has delayed the visit so far out of fear that widespread protests would embarrass him and the royal family, the report added. Recent surveys have found that more than half of people in Britain believe Trump is a threat to global stability.

May has complied with all of Trump's requests so far in a bid to avoid upsetting him. The embattled prime minister, whose position is already weakened after the June general election, has big plans for a possible trade deal with the U.S. that could guarantee her position after Britain's exit from the European Union.

The alleged decision to downgrade the trip would go down well with millions of Britons who protested the state visit in an online petition.

It would also please major political figure like Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn and London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who both have called for the trip to be scrapped.

Corbyn has called Trump a "threat" to the world and said he should not be allowed in to Britain because of his "reckless" policies, specifically his ill-fated visa ban against people from several Muslim countries.

"State visits are different from normal visits and, at a time when Trump has many policies that many in Britain



disagree with, I'm not sure it is appropriate to roll out the red carpet," Khan said last week.

(Source: Press TV)

New U.S.-led airstrikes kill tens of civilians in eastern Syria

Tens of civilians have lost their lives when the United States-led coalition purportedly fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group carried out a series of aerial attack against an area in Syria's eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr.



Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the airstrikes targeted al-Fansh crossroad in the city of Mayadin, located about 44 kilometers southeast of the provincial capital city of Dayr al-Zawr, during the morning rush hour on Monday, killing and injuring tens of civilians, Syria's official news agency SANA reported.

The sources added that the air raids also damaged scores of public properties and residential buildings in the areas.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported on July 19 that at least 15 civilians had been killed after the U.S.-led coalition struck the village of Zur Shammar, about 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the ISIL-held northern city of Raqqah.

Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Britain-based monitoring group said "three children and four women" were among the victims.

The development came a day after several civilians also lost their lives, when U.S.-led military aircraft bombarded Kaskieh village in Dayr al-Zawr Province.

Nearly a dozen civilians were killed on July 13, when U.S.-led military aircraft targeted al-Diriyah neighborhood of Raqqah. Seven of the victims were members of one family.

The U.S.-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes against what are said to be ISIL targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate.

The Western military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of fulfilling its declared aim of destroying ISIL.

The city of Raqqah, which lies on the northern bank of the Euphrates River, was overrun by ISIL terrorists in March 2013, and was proclaimed the center for most of the Takfiri's administrative and control tasks the next year.

Syria has been fighting different foreign-sponsored militant and terrorist groups since March 2011. UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura estimated last August that more than 400,000 people had been killed in the crisis until then.

(Source: Press TV)

Yemeni naval forces target, torch Saudi military vessel in western Yemen

According to Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network, during the past two years, the Yemeni army has managed to destroy 11 Saudi regime ships and battleships and sink over 10 gunboats and frigates of the Saudi regime in the strategic Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Since the beginning of the House of Saud regime war on Yemen on March 2015, which was carried out in an attempt to reinstall the former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh, Saudi regime warplanes have pounded the nation day and night, killing over 12,000 people, including many women and children, and displacing over three million others.

The Yemen war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's facilities and infrastructure, destroying many hospitals, schools, and factories. The humanitarian situation in Yemen has also dramatically deteriorated amid a Saudi regime blockade, which has put the impoverished country on the brink of widespread famine.

Riyadh, has however, failed to reach its goals despite suffering great expense.

(Source: Press TV)

Divided Europe seeks a long-term answer to a refugee crisis that needs a solution now

Overwhelmed by sheer numbers, Italy has been trying to limit its at-sea rescue efforts. But as elsewhere, political and humanitarian responses are in conflict. About 3,000 people from Libya were picked up in one day in May in more than 20 rescue operations mounted by the Italian coastguard and navy, ships from the EU's Mediterranean mission, its Frontex border agency, and merchant vessels.

Merkel was widely praised for her open-door response in 2015 but public attitudes have hardened, and she faces a general election in September.

Her focus now is her new "compact with Africa", showcased at the Hamburg G20 summit, which seeks more state and private investment in Africa to combat poverty and the effects of climate change, and thereby deter mass migration to Europe.

But Merkel's solution is long-term. Europe's new refugee crisis is happening now, as British beach-goers may soon testify.

(Source: The Guardian)

Near perfect Froome claims fourth Tour title

Chris Froome put on a near-perfect performance to claim his fourth Tour de France and move within one title of cycling's greatest on Sunday as Team Sky tightened their grip on the classic race.

The Briton suffered a few wobbles throughout the 3,540-km race but was always in control over the three weeks thanks to his high-caliber team mates who sheltered him when it mattered in the mountains, leaving the lanky rider to make the difference in the time trials that book-ended the 104th edition.

Sky, who have the biggest budget of the peloton, have now snatched five of the last six titles and came within a whisker of placing two riders on the podium as Spain's Mikel Landa missed out on the top three by one second.

Froome is now one title behind all-time greats Belgian Eddy Merckx, Spain's Miguel Indurain and French duo Jacques Anquetil and Bernard Hinault.

He is the first to win three consecutive titles since Indurain, who prevailed from 1991-95.

The disgraced Lance Armstrong's seven titles since then have been erased from the record book.

"I'm speechless, it's amazing," Froome said after getting off his bike and hugging his wife Michelle and son Kellan.

(Source: Reuters)

Olympics: Door to Pyeongchang still open for North Korea, says Moon

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in said on Monday the North will be given until the very last minute to decide on its participation at next year's Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.

Moon, speaking as the countdown to Asia's first Winter Olympics outside Japan ticked down to 200 days, has been keen to get North Korea involved in the Feb. 9-25 event, despite none of its athletes meeting the qualification standards.



His proposal for a unified team has already been shot down by a top North Korean sports official as unrealistic due to the current political climate.

While the two Koreas technically remain at war, 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.

North Korea claimed to have conducted the first test of an intercontinental ballistic missile earlier this month, and said it had mastered the technology to mount a nuclear warhead on the missile.

Moon urged the North to participate and said the international sporting community would welcome it at the Games.

"We will not rush nor be pessimistic, but will keep the doors open until the very last moment," Yonhap News quoted Moon as saying.

"The International Olympic Committee too has opened the doors for North Korea's participation, and now all that is left is North Korea's decision."

The IOC said earlier this month that it was trying to find ways for North Korean athletes to take part.

(Source: Reuters)

Cassano quits Verona as saga takes another twist

Antonio Cassano has left Hellas Verona but says he will not retire from football in the latest twist to his remarkable short spell at the club.

The former Real Madrid forward signed for the Serie A side on July 10 but told club officials that he would be retiring just eight days later, only to reverse that decision within a matter of hours.

Cassano dismissed the incident as "a moment of weakness" after saying he had found it difficult to spend pre-season training away from his family.

The 35-year-old promised fans he would commit fully to the club for the 2017-18 season but he has now confirmed that he will leave as he no longer feels "stimulated to continue".

"I'm not going to leave football, I simply don't feel I can continue with Hellas Verona..." Cassano said in a statement that was tweeted by his wife, Carolina Marcialis.

"Physically I'm really good, as I've shown in the last 15 days of training, but mentally I don't feel stimulated to continue at this club!"

"I thank president [Maurizio] Setti from my heart... the [director of sport Filippo] Fusco, [head coach Fabio] Pecchia and the squad for accepting me!"

Setti later confirmed to ANSA that Cassano had struggled to settle mentally at Stadio Marc'Antonio Bentegodi.

"The guys' head isn't right, even though he's very good physically and athletically," he said.

"You can't accuse him of doing anything wrong professionally. It's clear that he can't stay calm and clear-headed in a group and wants to stay at home."

Reports in Italy suggest Cassano could now join Genoa, having held talks with the club before moving to Verona.

(Source: Soccerway)

Michael Phelps calls for rematch after losing race against great white shark by two seconds

Michael Phelps may be a 23-time Olympic gold medalist, but he's still no match for a great white shark.

The American swimmer's much-anticipated man-versus-beast race aired on Sunday night as the Discovery Channel kicked off their annual shark week.

Sadly, fans were left doubly disappointed as Phelps not only finished two seconds slower than the great white he was up against, but they were never even in the water at the same time.

Rather, Phelps' swim was superimposed alongside that of the great white shark, who swam the 100-meter-long course in South Africa in 36.1 seconds compared to Phelps' 38.1 seconds.

Phelps went to extreme lengths to try and match the great white's speed, donning a monofin and wearing a special wetsuit that was only 1 millimeter thick to increase his speed.

He also decided to 'act like a shark', unveiling a sort of sideways butterfly stroke to try and compete with the great white.

"I've raced the fastest swimmers on the planet, except for one," he said of the experiment.

"Honestly, my first thought when I saw the shark was, 'There's very little chance for me to beat him'."

Incredibly, while Phelps was not able to beat a great white - which has a top speed of 26 miles per hour compared to the 5.5mph Phelps hit when he set the butterfly world record - he is quicker than a reef shark.

Donning his monofin, Phelps swam 50 meters in the ocean off the Bimini coast and clocked a time of 18.7 seconds, beating the reef shark by 0.2 seconds.

"Clearly, we can't put Michael in one lane and a shark in the far lane. We have to do simulation. We'll use our speed data that we've [collected] in all our testing," said



Dr. Tristan Guttridge.

"This is like the tortoise and the hare, where Michael is the tortoise, steady as he goes, consistently in the race, while the white shark is slow and cruising with bursts of speed."

Phelps, who reached a speed of 8.8 miles an hour and initially took a lead over the shark, challenged the great white to a rematch in warmer water on Twitter.

"Before I dove in, I knew how cold it was going to be, and I knew that for me, as a swimmer, we don't swim in this, and it basically just shocked your entire body," he said. "And I have this little tiny wetsuit on, so it's absolutely freezing."

"I think it's impressive to see an animal survive this [cold water] and still have a top speed of 25 miles an hour."

(Source: Metro)

Cristiano Ronaldo motivated by success of Barcelona's Messi, Neymar



Cristiano Ronaldo has told ESPN that competition with players like Lionel Messi and Neymar is what keeps him motivated to stay at the highest level.

Ronaldo, 32, ended last season by winning La Liga and retaining the Champions League, a feat that has made him favourite to land the Ballon d'Or for a record-equalling fifth time.

The Portugal international says that "healthy" competition with the Barcelona duo and other elite players is what makes him strive for more.

The Real Madrid forward said when asked what other player or players makes him the best: "To mention one is hard, but the level that I am in like in other sports: Formula One, NBA ...The best players always follow the best players."

"They want to be in the top of the game because the other ones are there. You cannot rest or sleep because the other ones will pass you."

"Of course we fight with everyone,

with Neymar, with Messi, [Robert] Lewandowski, [Gonzalo] Higuain, with the best players in the world. This is not "fighting" but it's healthy. We fight to be the best.

"It's my motivation: to be better than them, year after year."

Despite the success he has achieved professionally and everything that has come with it, Ronaldo said that family remains the most important thing in his life.

He told ESPN during a visit to China: "I was with Peter Lim, the owner of Valencia, and he said to me: 'Cristiano, we have money, fame, everything. I have millions and billions. But the most important thing is family. Keep your family healthy, good. Take care of them.'"

"You have your private life, your girlfriend, your cars, your houses, your fame, but in the beginning, your family is always with you, in good moments or bad moments."

(Source: ESPN)

Inter announce board shake-up



Inter have announced a shake-up of their management structure, including the appointment of a Nerazzurri-supporting new CEO.

A statement on Inter's official website confirms Alessandro Antonello has been promoted from Chief Operating Officer to Chief Executive Officer.

He arrived from Puma Italia in 2015, initially as the club's Chief Financial Officer.

"I am very proud and honoured to have been appointed as Chief Executive Officer of Inter and I thank the Board for their support," said Antonello.

"Inter is a great club with a proud and long history of competing regularly at the highest level. It is important for the club that we focus our efforts on the performance on the pitch."

"And we will also continue to drive improvements off the pitch through our management team."

"Inter belongs to our millions of fans all around the world. Together with their support, and that of our partners, we

are committed to building a strong and successful future for this historic club."

Board member Steven Zhang, son of Suning Group owner Zhang Jindong, added: "Inter is an Italian Club with its roots in Milan."

"That's why we chose Alessandro, who is not only a strong manager with international experience but crucially he has been a Nerazzurri fan since childhood."

"Alessandro is hugely respected by his colleagues, is a true professional and has the full backing of the company for the challenge ahead."

Elsewhere, a new position of Chief Marketing Officer has been created, which will be taken up by Chief Communications Officer Robert Faulkner on an interim basis.

Chief Football Administrator Giovanni Gardini has also had his role changed to Chief Football Operations Office, while Corporate Director Michael Williamson is named Chief Strategy Officer.

(Source: Calcio Mercato)

Why Instagram posts mean Kenedy's Chelsea career could be over

Chelsea turned up in China to build bridges and sell shirts - it just seems Kenedy missed the memo. Dan Levene on a young talent who may be more trouble than he's worth.

With a pair of quickly-deleted Instagram posts, the hopes heaped on another young Chelsea star's embryonic career all but evaporated this weekend.

Firstly the case for Kenedy's defense: there isn't any real argument about whether Kenedy's posts were racist - as they simply weren't. This wasn't the blatant racially aggravated offensiveness of Ezequiel Lavezzi in China, or the Brazilian Ronaldo in South Korea - pulling faces to mock the locals.

But there is no need to apply that inflammatory tag to the player in order to see that he has crossed a line - and that he really doesn't have the reputation or potential to solidly recover from this at Chelsea.

What those social media posts undoubtedly were was stupid, juvenile and disrespectful to the people of a country who only rarely offer the sort of adulation and even adoration as has been afforded Chelsea during their trip to Beijing.

In a society where honor and respect could not be of greater value, profane messages about being allowed to play in front of tens of thousands of Chinese citizens paying top dollar, and a pic mocking an exhausted worker sleeping on the job, appeared spoilt and embarrassing.

Chelsea's quick, shame-faced apology for their employee - in English and Cantonese - will have hurt, make



no mistake about that. But it was 100% the right thing to do. China is the world's biggest untapped marketplace for football, and the Blues' romp there over Arsenal would, in other circumstances, have created an incredible buzz around the team.

What they did not need was for a young player's presence in the Bird's Nest stadium to be jeered by people who believed their national identity had been insulted by him. Whatever the player's worth, there is a good chance he has just cost his club as much, or more, in shirt sales alone.

This wasn't even about political correctness - just about how to not go about doing business in China.

There has long been a feeling that Kenedy has been drinking in the last chance saloon with Chelsea. His loan to Watford last season broke down: officially because of injury,

though there were whispers about his lack of application while at Vicarage Road. There have been reprimands in the past for training ground misdemeanors and late nights out. None of this is a smoking gun, but cumulatively it shows a lack of the sort of dedication expected of a player paid tens of thousands of pounds a week to deliver the absolute height of professionalism.

The arguments that Alan Hudson or George Best would put young Kenedy's antics to shame just don't rub: the game is different now and, be it desirable in your view or otherwise, every player is a representative for a global brand these days. They are also expected to live the life that enhances their talents and, possibly most damaging for his potential Chelsea career, there have been few signs of Kenedy delivering on his early promise.

There is evidence in the past of Chelsea letting ability impact upon disciplinary matters. Compare the slap on the wrist Ashley Cole received in that unfortunate incident with the air gun, and the sacking doled out to a trainee who let off a smoke grenade in training.

The question will surely be asked, at a high level, whether Kenedy is worth the bother. And it is difficult to see many at Chelsea rushing to his defense. A loan now looks likely. But a rushed transfer before the window closes surely cannot be ruled out.

Either way, it seems unlikely any deal will be taking Kenedy to China in the foreseeable future.

(Source: Eurosport)

Iran open Asian Men's Volleyball Championship with victory

S P O R T S Iran defeated Iraq 3-0 (25-17, 25-16, 25-21) at the 19th Asian Men's Volleyball Championship opener on Monday.

The Iranian team, who are participating in the tournament with U23 team, will face Pakistan and Chinese Taipei in Pool B in the following days.

The 16 teams have been split into four-team pools for the First Round. In the Second Round, the top two teams from each pool advance to the Winners Bracket, Pools E and F. While the bottom two teams advance to the Losers Bracket, Pools G and H. The results of the First Round carry into the Second Round. The Knock-out Round starts after two Second Round matches. Winner Bracket teams will play for 1st through 8th. With the Losers Bracket, the top two teams in Pools G and H will play for 9th through 12th, and the bottom two teams play for 13th through 16th.

Indonesia as the hosts have been placed in Pool A with Kazakhstan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

The FIVB highest ranked Asian team and 2015 tournament 2nd place team, Iran, are in Pool B with Chinese Taipei, Iraq and Pakistan.

Defending 2015 Champions, Japan are in Pool C with South Korea, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

2018 World Championship Qualifier Australia will be in Pool D with China, Hong Kong and Thailand.

The event is being held in Surabaya, Indonesia from 24 July to 1 August 2017. It will be the second time that the Indonesia hosts the tournament after the 2007 Asian Championship.



Iranian woman cyclist Sasanian killed in car crash



S P O R T S Iranian national team cyclist Zeinab Sasanian was killed in a car crash on Monday.

The crash happened at her hometown Ardabil, northwest Iran.

The 19-year-old woman was killed when her car collided with a tree.

She was a member of Iran national

team and represented Iran in the 2017 Asian Cycling Championships.

Sasanian had won medals in time trial and track events in the Iran's Cycling Championships.

She was laid to rest in Ardabil's Mir Ashraf Cemetery.

The Tehran Times staff offer heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family.

Iran come 18th at World Para Athletics Championships



S P O R T S Iranian 20-athlete delegation finished in 20th place at the World Para Athletics Championships 2017.

The Persians won three gold medals, 12 silver and five bronze in the competitions held in London.

After 202 medal events and 32

world records the World Para Athletics Championships came to an end.

China finished top of the medals table with 30 gold, 17 silver and 18 bronze; the U.S. were second with 20 gold, 19 silver and 20 bronze and hosts Great Britain finished in third place with 18 gold, eight silver and 13 bronze.

Baggio: My heir & penalty hell...

Italy legend Roberto Baggio claims Ricardo Centurion is the closest thing to his heir and that the "bitterness" of his penalty miss in 1994 will never pass.

Speaking to Corriere della Sera about his football career, Baggio also discussed the differences between the past and present and his position of a '9.5', while revealing his toughest opponent and the forward he most wanted to partner.

"My heir? I watch a lot of South American football and, as a fan of Boca Juniors, I really like Centurion, but he has to improve his behaviour off the pitch," he began.

"Comparisons? I think that today, I'd have been able to play for a few more years. And it wouldn't be just me.

"In my time, you'd wait for a kick and only after that did you think about how to win the ball back. Today, you sometimes risk a red card with your first foul.

"It was a time when you'd get a kick and you wouldn't even know who had kicked you. It was a time of man-hunting.

"Parma? I didn't want Parma because Ancelotti didn't know where to play me in his 4-4-2, but the important



thing is that he then regretted it!

"In today's football, I'd be the second striker in a 4-3-1-2, next to a targetman. Platini gave me the perfect definition: I was a '9.5'.

"Zola? He had to go to England to find a place. How much would I cost today? I have no idea... [before a suggestion made by someone else of \$150m].

"Maldini? He's the best defender I played against. When you faced him, you knew you wouldn't pass him.

"He was big and strong with his head and feet... You'd have to put together 15 players to make another one like him.

"Van Basten? I'd have liked to play with him. He's the player that I exchanged shirts with most willingly.

"My penalty miss in the 1994 World Cup Final? I've thought about it, but the bitterness remains, even after all this time.

"It hasn't diminished and I don't think it'll ever pass. I'd like to go back to those years, apart from the Final.

"The path we took was full of meaning, for the fatigue and difficulties we suffered, and the character and determination with which we came out.

"I never thought that people would ever want to step into the shoes we wore back then.

"It means that you've left something beautiful and profound behind, although it was the 1990 World Cup in which I felt I could do anything."

(Source: Football Italia)

Giti Pasand achieve group stage target with last-gasp victory

Sanaye Giti Pasand sealed their position as Group C winners after battling to a 3-2 victory over Japan's Shriker Osaka in their final AFC Futsal Club Championship Vietnam 2017 group match on Monday.

With both teams having clinched their spots in the quarter-finals, Giti Pasand and Shriker Osaka were battling for Group C supremacy. Adding to the mix, with no way of predicting the outcome of their Group D opponents who only play tomorrow, both sides knew a victory would increase their chances of avoiding competition heavyweights and current Group D leaders Bluewave Chonburi.

Giti Pasand boast the more decorated trophy cabinet, but it was Shriker Osaka who took the lead with virtually the game's first chance through Sota Shibano who rose above his marker before connecting exquisitely to Nobuya Osodo's deflected cross inside 57 seconds.

The early goal served as wake-up call for the Iranians as they stormed forward with greater intent and purpose. It took

Giti Pasand just three minutes to respond after Ali Asghar's driving effort was redirected by Mohammad Zarei Savarchi who made no mistake from close range.

The 2012 champions were beginning to find their rhythm, reaping their reward six minutes later when Osodo gifted possession, rather uncharacteristically, to Savarchi who was just metres away from the Shriker goal-frame, and the Iranian did not require a second invitation to give his side the lead.

Soichiro Kakihara was unquestionably the busier of the two custodians and his quick reflexes kept his side in the game when he was forced to produce a double save, first from Abolghasem Orouji's low drive, then again from Ahmad Esmaeilpour's rebound.

The second half began with the same intensity as the first with Giti Pasand dominating possession, interchanging swiftly but patiently, attempting to break the stubborn Japanese formation. The best chance in the opening stages fell to Esmaeilpour but the forward failed to

keep his pile-driving effort from sailing over the bar.

Nine minutes into the second half, the Japanese side's resilience finally paid dividends after some individual brilliance by Shibano. With his back facing the goal, the forward showed sublime control to juggle the ball twice as he turned from his marker before unleashing a powerful effort beyond a well beaten Sepehr Mohammadi.

In a last ditch attempt, the Japanese then took the risky decision to deploy the power play with just two minutes remaining, but saw their hopes diminished when Asghar scored to secure Giti Pasand a flawless group stage campaign.

Giti Pasand now await the runners-up from Group D in the quarter-finals. Second placed Shriker will battle the Group D winners, with both matches on Thursday.

Kenichiro Kogure (Shriker Osaka Head Coach)

"We came here to win, to be the group leaders. Yes, it was a risk to use the power play but we have been training



for this situation for some time. It is just unfortunate today that it did not work in our favour. I am happy with our performance and now we look to prepare for the quarter-finals."

Alireza Afzal (Sanaye Giti Pasand Isfahan Head Coach)

"The Japanese team came here with nothing to lose. It was a high risk game with the pressure on us to deliver and I am happy with my players. We kept our composure throughout. We ran well, we cooperated and we defended as a team. We deserve our victory against a very good team.

(Source: AFC)

Iran win bronze at FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour

Iran defeated Morocco to win the first ever medal in the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour.

The Iranian duo Bahman Salemi and Rahman Raoufi defeated Morocco 2-1 (19-21, 21-19, 16-14) at the Agadir, Morocco and won the bronze medal.

France's Youssef Krou and Quincy Aye claimed the title, beating Qatar's Julio Cesar Do Nascimento Junior and Ahmed Tijan 2-0 (21-18, 21-14).

The FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour is the worldwide professional beach volleyball tour for both men and women organized by the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB).

The World Tour was introduced for men in 1989 while the women first competed in 1992.



(Source: Tasnim)

Iranian U-23 players lack enough experience: coach Peyravani

Iran U-23 coach Amirhossein Peyravani said that his boys lost to Oman since they have no enough experience.

Iran were defeated against Oman 2-0 in Group A of the AFC U-23 Championship Qualification on Sunday.

"We knew that we would have problems in this game. The opponent was very disciplined. They played better than us in many moments," Amirhossein Peyravani said in the post-match news conference.

"In general, we came to this tournament with a risky composition. Our young players did not have enough experience. I congratulate to Oman for the win. They deservedly won a ticket to the final," he added.

"We very much hope that we will get to the final part as one of the best teams that took the second place," Peyravani concluded.

(Source: AFC)

RB Leipzig's Demme escapes serious injury after reported Keita bust-up

RB Leipzig have confirmed that Diego Demme has only suffered bruising following a heavy challenge by Naby Keita during training on Monday.

The duo were involved in an altercation during the session at their pre-season camp in Austria and Keita later caught his teammate with a robust tackle.

Demme was pictured hobbling from the pitch with the support of coaching staff and is said to have been taken to hospital in Innsbruck for assessment.

Leipzig have since stated that the 25-year-old has not sustained any serious damage.

"Let off for Diego Demme. He suffered a bruised knee from a tackle in training, but his meniscus & ligaments are fine. Get well soon, Diego!" the Bundesliga club said on Twitter. The training session was ended shortly after the incident and head coach Ralph Hasenhuttl reportedly demanded an apology from Keita.

The 22-year-old has been consistently linked with Liverpool, with the Premier League side said to have had a bid of £66million rejected in the past week.

Leipzig have repeatedly stressed that they will not sell the midfielder.

(Source: Soccerway)



Manchester City sign £52m left-back Benjamin Mendy from Monaco

Manchester City have completed the signing of full-back Benjamin Mendy from Monaco in a deal believed to be worth £52m.

The left-back excelled during Monaco's title-winning campaign in Ligue 1 and was instrumental in the club's Champions League run.

"I am absolutely delighted to be joining Manchester City," Mendy said. "They are one of Europe's leading clubs and in Pep Guardiola they have a manager committed to playing attacking football.

"I am sure that over the next few years we will be successful." City's director of football, Txiki Begiristain, added: "Benjamin has all the qualities we are looking for in a full-back. For such a young player, he has a wealth of top-level experience.

"He is undoubtedly one of the world's best full-backs, our number one target in this position. We are all delighted to have him here at Manchester City.

"I'm sure he will prove a fantastic addition to the squad." Mendy is the third full-back City have purchased this summer, following the additions of Kyle Walker and Danilo, with the trio believed to have collectively cost over £130m.

(Source: Sun)

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Iran's Armed Forces unveils computer game "Fighting in Aden 2"

A R T TEHRAN — Iran's Armed Forces unveiled the computer game "Fighting in Aden 2" during a ceremony held at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground on Monday.

The ceremony was attended by Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari and a number of officials, personal media reported.

The game features the brave Iranian naval forces in combat with pirates in the Gulf of Aden.



Book on Japanese kyogen appears in Persian

CULTURE TEHRAN — A Persian translation of "Kyogen Book: An Anthology of Japanese Classical Comedies" by Don Kenny, an American who performs kyogen in English in Japan, has recently been published in Tehran.

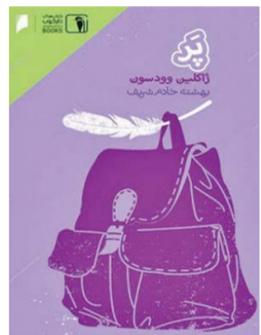
Published by the Iranian Academy of Arts, the book has been translated into Persian by Azadeh Salahshur.

Kyogen is a form of traditional Japanese theater that developed as a sort of intermission and comic relief between the solemn acts of noh, which is a traditional Japanese masked drama with dance and song.

The kyogen is very short, and the costumes, masks and props are simple and minimal.

Jacqueline Woodson's "Feathers" published in Persian

CULTURE TEHRAN — The novel "Feathers" by American author of books for children and adolescents, Jacqueline Woodson, that grapples with concepts such as religion, race, hope and understanding has been published in Persian.



The front cover of the Persian version of "Feathers"

Beheshteh Khademsharif is the translator of the book, which was published at Donya-ye Eqtesad, the major Tehran-based publishing house announced in a press released on Monday.

Originally published in 2007, the historical novel is about a sixth-grade girl named Frannie growing up in the 1970s. One day an unexpected new student causes much chaos in the class because he is the only white boy in the whole school.

The book examines what it was like to grow up right after segregation had been outlawed, how all people are equal, and that hope is everywhere.

In 2008, "Feathers" won a Newbery Honor, a literary award that is presented by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association.

The award is given to an author that has made a distinguished contribution to American literature for children.

"Star Wars" fan clubs honor Carrie Fisher at Comic-Con

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Four "Star Wars" costuming clubs held a tribute to their favorite fallen princess at Comic-Con.

The fan groups celebrated the life and work of Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia at the pop-culture convention in San Diego on Sunday.

Several women dressed in Leia's flowing white gown and iconic twin buns spoke about how much the character inspired them. One said she walked down the aisle at her wedding to Leia's theme. Another said, "You put on a pair of buns, and you're unstoppable."

The presentation included an exhibit of fan art created after Fisher's death last year.

The fans also celebrated the life of Kenny Baker, the actor who played R2-D2, who also died last year. Members of the R2 Builders Club honored him by bringing out four replica droids they built.

Rakhshan Bani-Etemad on panel of Venice festival

A R T TEHRAN — Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, the Iranian director of numerous acclaimed fiction and documentary films, was selected for the jury of the Orizzonti (Horizons) section at the 74th Venice International Film Festival, the organizers announced on Sunday.

Her "Tales" won the award for best screenplay at the 71st International Venice Film Festival.

The Orizzonti section focuses on the new trends in world cinema.

The Italian director Gianni Amelio will preside over the jury, which also includes American director Ami Canaan Mann and Irish-Scottish director and screenwriter Mark Cousins.

Argentine screenwriter Andrés Duprat, Belgian director and screenwriter Fien Troch and French screenwriter and director Rebecca Zlotowski are the other members of the jury.

Over 30 films from around the world will be screened in the section.

The 74th Venice International Film Festival will be held on the Italian Lido from August 30 to September 9.



Director/writer Rakhshan Bani-Etemad poses onstage with the best screenplay award she received for her movie "Tales" during the closing ceremony of the 71st Venice Film Festival on September 6, 2014 in Venice, Italy. (Getty Images/Vittorio Zunino Celotto)

"The Switchman" wins Signor Rossi Award at Italian festival

A R T TEHRAN — "The Switchman", an animation directed by Mehdi Khorramian at Iran's Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC), won the Signor Rossi Award at the Rimini Cartoon Club in Italy on Sunday, the DEFC announced on Monday.

The Signor Rossi Award is dedicated to animated films produced by students at Italian and foreign animation schools.

"The Switchman" tells the story of a switchman who is waiting for his lover for many years, but the lover exists only in his imagination.

The Rimini Cartoon Club — the International Film Festival of Animation Cinema and Comics was held in the northern Italian port from July 17 to 23.

"The Servant" by Farnush Abedi and "Inflated Head" co-directed by



A scene from "The Switchman"

Ruhollah Saadatmand and Amir-Puya Afzalipur were other DEFC's productions screened at the event.

Six other animated films from Iran, including "Dogbin" by Atusa Ghaffari, "Redpoint" by Motahareh Ahmadpur, and "Shakrak, the Hero" by Hutan Purzaki and Naeim Tadayyon, also competed in the festival.

Scalpers run rampant on tickets for "Confession"

A R T TEHRAN — Tickets for Shahab Hosseini's play "Confession" are in such high demand that asking prices are reaching ten million rials (about \$265).

In an advertisement appearing on one of the popular social networks, a user scalped two tickets each for 10 million rials, almost 16 times more than the face value, the Persian service of ISNA reported on Monday.

Similar advertisements have also been published by ticket scalping rings over the past week.

In a published statement, Peyman Shariati, the director of Tehran's City Theater Complex, where the play is on stage, said that there would be serious reactions to ticket touts.

All the tickets for the play were sold out by the end of August.

The play was written based on a text by Brad Mirman, the American



Actor/director Shahab Hosseini poses next to a poster of his play "Confession" underway at Tehran's City Theater Complex. (Irranamayesh/Bahar Nikpur)

screenwriter and filmmaker. "Meeting" was Hosseini's stage directorial debut at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center in 2012.

Hosseini won the Palme d'Or for best actor for his role in Asghar Farhadi's Oscar-winning drama "The Salesman" at the Cannes Film Festival in 2016.

Victory for "Dunkirk" and "Girls Trip" at the box office

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It's victory for "Dunkirk" and "Girls Trip" at the box office this weekend. Both original and well-reviewed films smashed expectations and enticed diverse audiences to the theaters, even though cumulatively summer remains down from last year.

Christopher Nolan's World War II epic brought in an estimated \$50.5 million to easily top the charts, according to Warner Bros., while the raucous comedy "Girls Trip" broke the R-rated comedy slump of 2017 with \$30.4 million to take second place.

"Dunkirk" was far from an inevitable summer success. But stellar reviews, awards buzz and hype around the film's large-scale production helped drive people to the theater and large-format screens.

"We're beyond thrilled with this exceptional achievement for 'Dunkirk,'" said Jeff Goldstein, who heads distribution for Warner Bros. "The critical reception worldwide has been consistently effusive. It really propelled this movie that wasn't an obvious win."

Audiences were 60 percent male and 76 percent over the age of 25 for the PG-13 rated film, while IMAX audiences represented 23 percent of the market share (or \$11.7 million of the total grosses from only 402 screens).

"It became a must-see event," said Paul Dergarabedian, a senior media analyst for comScore.

Drawing quite a different audience was the buddy comedy "Girls Trip", starring Regina Hall, Tiffany Haddish, Jada Pinkett Smith and Queen Latifah as a group of girlfriends who head to New Orleans for a weekend of fun. The Universal film drew in an audience that was 79 percent female and 50 percent under the age of 30. Fifty-nine percent of attendees were estimated to be African-American.



Actor Tom Hardy arrives for the world premiere of Dunkirk in London, Britain, July 2017. (Reuters/ Peter Nicholls)

Notably, audiences gave the film a stellar A+ CinemaScore, suggesting the film will have long-term playability.

"Girls Trip" was a perfectly counter-programmed box office surprise, Dergarabedian said. "It broke the R-rated comedy curse that has afflicted this summer with 'Baywatch,' 'Snatched,' 'Rough Night' and 'The House.'"

For Universal, the formula is more simple: "Girls Trip," unlike the aforementioned comedies, is resonating with audiences.

"When the taste for entertainment and comedy has been somewhat underserved, it is not because people aren't interested in laughing, it's that they're waiting for something funny to come along," said Nick Carpou, Universal's president of domestic distribution. "One of the great things about this comedy is that it's really

funny."

Not so successful was Luc Besson's nearly \$180 million sci-fi epic "Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets," which earned \$17 million from North American theaters over the weekend for a fifth-place start. It came in behind "Spider-Man: Homecoming," in third in its third weekend with \$22 million and "War for the Planet of the Apes" in fourth place in its second weekend with \$20.4 million.

Besson's film, starring Dane DeHaan and Cara Delevingne and based on the French comic "Valerian and Laureline," was produced by EuropaCorp. STX Entertainment distributed it in North America.

The film's financial exposure was limited, however. EuropaCorp says 90 percent of the budget was already covered by foreign pre-sales, equity financing and tax subsidies.

Dergarabedian said it's more about the international returns for "Valerian," but it's hard not to see Besson's return to sci-fi as a disappointment. Not adjusted for inflation, "Valerian" earned basically the same as "The Fifth Element," which came out 20 years ago. For comparison, his film "Lucy," starring Scarlett Johansson, opened to \$43.8 million in 2014.

Overall, the year remains around flat from last year, and the summer season looks unlikely to make up for its deficit through the end of July and August.

Still, Dergarabedian thinks there is a silver lining in the quality of the films that have come out this summer.

"Despite the weekend being down close to 10 percent, the currency that was most valuable is the currency of goodwill," Dergarabedian said. "Nobody can say that Hollywood threw the same old stuff at the wall this weekend."

Wonder Woman the star among Warner Bros' expanding superhero franchise

SAN DIEGO (Reuters) — After smashing box office records this year, Wonder Woman received the loudest cheers among the DC superheroes gathered on Saturday at San Diego's annual Comic-Con to present new footage and trailers for Warner Bros' expanding comic book film franchise.

A teaser of Warner Bros' upcoming superhero films shown to the 6,500 attendees at the panel gave a glimpse of "Wonder Woman II," a presumed sequel to June's "Wonder Woman" movie that is on track this weekend to become the second-highest grossing movie of 2017.

No further details were revealed about "Wonder Woman II," but star Gal Gadot joined Ben Affleck (Batman), Ezra Miller (Flash), Ray Fisher (Cyborg) and Jason Momoa (Aquaman), to present the latest trailer for November's "Justice League" movie, which will unite the DC superheroes.

Affleck said he was "the luckiest guy in the world" and "so thrilled" to play the caped crusader, dispelling trade publication The Hollywood Reporter's report this week that his future as Batman was uncertain.

The latest trailer picks up after the death of Superman from last year's "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice," and shows Batman and Wonder Woman joined by the Flash, Cyborg and Aquaman to fight supervillain Steppenwolf.

Wonder Woman says "They said age of heroes would never come again," as Batman tells her, "it has to."

"All of these characters are dealing with personal issues and they come together and are able to use those circumstances to save the world, which is beautiful," Fisher said.

In his excitement after watching the new trailer, the muscle-bound Momoa threw his chair across the stage, breaking it and briefly sitting on the floor.

Momoa also debuted the first look at the standalone "Aquaman" movie, and revealed the aquatic superhero will be battling his brother, the supervillain Ocean Master, in the film due out next year.

The avid fan base at Comic-Con, a gathering of pop and nerd culture fans, were also shown footage of Warner Bros' upcoming sci-fi films "Ready Player One" and "Blade Runner 2049."