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Defence Ministry

Iran goes big on clean energy

By Mahnaz Abdi

KERMAN — Through inaugurating a solar farm with a generation capacity of 20 megawatts and also breaking the ground for another solar farm with 100 MW capacity Iran took a big step toward harnessing renewable energies.

Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian inaugurated 20-MW Mokran Solar Farm in Mahan County in the south-eastern Kerman Province on Thursday.

Covering 44 hectares of land, the farm includes 76,912 solar panels, each having a generation capacity of 260 watts of electricity.

Putting this farm into operation, the country's generation capacity of photovoltaic systems reached 53 MW.

The farm includes two parts, each generating 10 MW of electricity. It was

built within six months.

The project to build this farm was jointly implemented by Iran's Mokran Solar Energy Company, as the general contractor, Germany's ADORE GmbH Company, as the program manager, and Switzerland's DURION AG Company, as the main investor that invested \$27 million.

Some 30 percent of the project was carried out through domestic manufacturing capability and it created direct jobs for 300 people and indirect jobs for 150 persons.

According to the data provided by Mokran Company, it is the largest solar farm in Iran.

In his trip to Kerman, the energy minister also participated in the ground-breaking ceremony of the project to build another solar farm with the capacity of 100 MW in Mahan by Mokran Solar Energy Company. **→4**

Pakistan Supreme Court disqualifies PM Nawaz Sharif

Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has stepped down after the Supreme Court disqualified him from office as leader of the country's government.

Friday's landmark ruling comes after months of hearings in a case instigated by the "Panama Papers" leaks, related to alleged corruption during his previous two terms in office. A five-member bench of the Supreme Court announced the verdict to a packed courtroom in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad.

"The prime minister and his family have failed in the court of public opinion and more importantly, in the Supreme Court, to establish credibility in terms

of where the money came from, how it's been accounted and how well it was reported in the nomination papers submitted to the elections commission."

"The failures here are of Nawaz Sharif and his family to establish a credible and coherent case in terms of explaining how their names ended up in the 'Panama Papers'."

"Every democratic government has faced a whole range of obstacles in sustaining themselves and remaining in power. However, the ultimate responsibility for where we are today, which potentially enormous political instability, is in the prime minister's camp." **→13**

Larijani calls for unity to counter U.S. sanctions

POLITICS TEHRAN — Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani on Thursday appealed to Iranians with different political persuasions to counter U.S. sanctions through unity.

"Politicians, parties and various groups should spend their time to serve the people through more unity and integrity and stand against the U.S. sanctions," he said in a conference in northeastern city of Gonabad.

His comments came as the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate approved a package of sanctions against Iran on Tuesday and Thursday respectively.

Larijani said that the main objective behind the U.S. Congress is to prevent foreign investment in Iran.

The top lawmaker pointed to Iran's paramount status in the Middle East and said imposing new sanctions on the country is harmful to the U.S.

Iran is ready to counter such acts reciprocally, he added.

"Today, Iran has turned into a democratic power in the region and sanctions against our country will definitely be harmful to the U.S.," he pointed out.

The sanctions bill was passed by a 419-3 vote in the House and 97-2 in Senate.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had downplayed the new move by Congress. However, he said Iran will surely retaliate.

Sanctions were introduced against Iran for its missile program, alleged human rights abuses and what the U.S. claims Iran's "destabilizing" role in the Middle East.

Bernie Sanders: Trump's approach 'could endanger' nuclear deal

POLITICS TEHRAN — Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent senator who caucuses with the Democrats, has said the approach that President Donald Trump is pursuing toward Tehran could "endanger" the July 2015 nuclear agreement.

"Following Trump's comments that he won't recertify Iran's compliance with the nuclear agreement I worry new sanctions could endanger it," Sanders tweeted on Thursday.

Trump said on Tuesday he would be surprised if Iran is in compliance with the nuclear deal when recertification comes up again in three months, according to an interview with the Wall Street Journal.

"We'll talk about the subject in 90 days but I would be surprised if they were in compliance," Trump told the Journal.

The president must certify to Congress every three months that Iran is complying with the 2015 nuclear deal.

Under the nuclear agreement Iran is obliged to slow down its nuclear work in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions against the country. The deal went into force in January 2016.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, as the UN body tasked to monitor Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal, has confirmed six times that Iran is living up to its commitments.

Sanders said, "I am strongly supportive of sanctions on Russia and North Korea. However, I worry very much about President

Trump's approach to Iran."

Sanders, who competed against Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primaries presidential elections in 2016, is a fierce critic of Trump.

"Please understand that when Trump speaks or acts he does not speak for the majority of the people of the United States," Sanders said in London on June 2. "He won the presidency as a result of winning the majority of the electoral votes. He lost the general election in terms of popular votes by almost three million votes."

He also spoke about his disappointment in Trump's decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate change agreement. "It is unacceptable and an international embarrassment for me to be here before you as a United States senator to tell you we have an administration in Washington which rejects science in regards to climate change."

Following Trump's comments that he won't recertify Iran's compliance with the nuclear agreement I worry new sanctions could endanger it.



Tehran Times/ Amirali Razaqhi

National Orchestra gives performance in Sari

Fereidun Shahbazian (L) conducts the National Orchestra during a performance at the Seyyed Rasul Hosseini Arena in Sari on July 27, 2017. Singer Mohammad Esfahani (R) performs with the orchestra at the concert.



Truth the first casualty in U.S. politics

The phrase "alternative facts" was first used by Kellyanne Conway, counselor to Donald Trump during a "Meet the Press" interview in January 2017.

Conway was answering the accusations that the White House Press Secretary had grossly exaggerated the size of the crowd that attended the presidential inauguration. Rejecting suggestions that the crowd estimates were a falsehood, Conway asserted: "Sean Spicer (former White House press secretary) gave alternative facts". Immediately afterwards, the expression became a popular catchphrase in English-speaking nations to describe statements that are held or expressed either in complete ignorance or with a total disregard for truth.

The increased frequency in which political and opinion leaders, especially the current president of the United States, are circulating alternative facts in recent years is associated with the rise of post-truth politics which means rely blatantly on emotion- or opinion-based appeals rather than fact-based discussion.

Since Trump entered the White House, he has been repeatedly accused of "either intentionally lying or not knowing the difference between lies and truth."

In his seminal book 'Truth in the Public Sphere', Jason Hannan, professor of communication at the University of Winnipeg, writes: "Trump has displayed more contempt for truth and civility than any politician in American history."

Iran deal and Trump's disdain for the truth

As a candidate and a president, Trump has denounced the 2015 nuclear agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as "the worst deal ever negotiated". He has also claimed that Iran was "not living up to the spirit of the agreement." **→13**

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For more information and obtaining tender's documents please refer to Iralco website: <http://iralco.ir>

Public Relations Department of Iranian Aluminum Company

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Rouhani congratulates Kovind as new Indian president

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has congratulated Ram Nath Kovind on his election as new president of India.

In a message to Kovind on Thursday, Rouhani expressed hope that relations between the two countries would be expanded.

"Ancient and golden culture and civilization [of the two countries], and also a history full of friendly cooperation between Iran and India have made it essential to expand interaction and open new chapter in relations," he said.

Kovind was elected president on July 20 winning 5000 votes by Indian lawmakers and provincial legislators from across the country.



Iran has all options on table, Velayati warns U.S.

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Velayati, the senior foreign policy advisor to the Leader, on Thursday reacted to a package of U.S. Congress sanctions against Iran, noting that the U.S. must know that Tehran has all options on the table.

Noting that what the U.S. has done "is not new to us," he said Iran will respond to sanctions move without violating the 2015 nuclear deal.

He added, "Mr. Trump is following internal and foreign policies that will weaken the U.S. both internally and at the international level."



Cleric calls for naming committed ministers

POLITICS TEHRAN — Tehran's provisional Friday prayers leader Hojatoleslam Kazzem Seddiqi has called on President Hassan Rouhani to nominate committed ministers in his next administration.

Pointing to the Ministry of Education, he said someone who takes the portfolio must respect moralities.

Commenting on the new U.S. sanctions on Iran, Seddiqi said there is no end to the U.S. "hostility" towards Iran.

He said "resistance economy" and "self-sufficiency" are the ways forward to counter sanctions.



German diplomat insists on nuclear deal implementation

POLITICS TEHRAN — Michael Klor-Berchtold, the German ambassador to Iran, said on Thursday that Germany insists on implementing the July 2015 nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA.

Germany is determined to follow the path of implementing the JCPOA and expanding ties with Iran, he said on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the Mahan solar power plant in Kerman province.

"Precise implementation of the JCPOA will boost trust and will also encourage European companies to be more active in Iran," he said.

Ambassador Klor-Berchtold also said that Germany can transfer its knowledge on renewable energies to Iran.



Sanctions are demonstration of U.S. hostility towards Iran: Kamal Kharrazi

POLITICS TEHRAN — Kamal Kharrazi, head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, has said that the U.S. Congressional sanctions against Iran prove Washington's hostility towards the Islamic Republic.

In an interview with Le Monde, he said that the U.S. has never had the tendency to have relations with Iran based on mutual respect, ISNA reported on Friday.

U.S. President Donald Trump is following the policies that the U.S. adopted against toward Iran after the Islamic Revolution, said Kharrazi, who was foreign minister from 1997-2005.

The U.S. House of Representatives and Senate have overwhelmingly approved new sanctions packages against Iran.



Support for Yemenis is slap in the face of Saudis: Rezaee

POLITICS TEHRAN — Expediency Council Secretary Mohsen Rezaee said on Friday that backing the Yemeni people is a "humanitarian" act and a slap in the face of Saudis.

In Ahl Al-Bayt World Assembly's meeting, he said that Saudi Arabia's attack on Yemen is not legitimate.

Iranians are highly motivated to help Yemenis due to their hatred towards the Saudi regime, he said.

Saudi Arabia has been leading the campaign against Yemen since 2015. Local Yemeni sources have put the death toll from the Saudi war at over 12,000, including many women and children.

Iran sends satellite-carrying rocket into space

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran successfully launched on Thursday an advanced rocket that can deliver satellites into space, a significant improvement in its fledgling space program.

The national television showed footage of the firing of the "Simorgh", which means "phoenix" in Persian, saying it is capable of carrying a 250-kilogram satellite as far as 500 kilometers high into orbit.

The successful launch officially inaugurated the country's Imam Khomeini National Space Station in Semnan province, some 220 kilometers east of Tehran.

The Simorgh is a two-stage rocket first revealed in 2010. It is larger than an earlier model known as the Safir, or "ambassador," that Iran has used to launch satellites on previous occasions.

The fluid-fuel Simorgh, about 26 meters (85 feet), is a two-stage rocket, propelled by a powerful engine.

The engine mounted on the Simorgh is a combination of four Safir engines.

The rocket, the largest unveiled ever, will be used to launch the domestically-built Earth observation satellite Tolou (Sunrise) in the near future.

"Today, space science and technology are of great importance to us," President Hassan Rouhani said in an Instagram post on Thursday night.

The test launch appears to be a direct, swift response to a Tuesday bipartisan bill by the U.S. House of Representatives that includes new sweeping sanctions against Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

The Iranian portion of the measure introduces new economic sanctions against Tehran over its ballistic missile program and what Washington calls the country's "destabilizing role."

Also, the rocket launch comes one week after the U.S. sanctioned 18 Iranian individuals and entities including two organizations for being involved with the nation's ballistic-missile program.

"This administration will continue to aggressively target Iran's malign activity, including their ongoing state support of terrorism, ballistic missile program, and human rights abuses," U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a press release.

Such tests of what are essentially carrier rockets are not prohibited under the landmark 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and a group of six world powers including the United States. The accord, officially



known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), removed economic sanctions on Iran in exchange for the country's verifiable promises to restrict its nuclear program.

Last week, the Trump administration announced new Iran-related sanctions it said were meant to show its toughened stance toward the country despite having grudgingly affirmed its compliance with the nuclear deal.

Reacting to the launch, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said on Thursday: "Even though the JCPOA was put together to address nuclear issues, not necessarily ballistic missiles, we believe that what happened overnight and into the morning is in violation of the spirit of the JCPOA."

"We would consider that a violation of UNSCR 2231," she added, a reference to a United Nations Security Council resolution which endorses the nuclear deal.

The resolution "calls upon" Iran not to "undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology."

It, however, does not expressly ban such activities, and Tehran denies it has missiles designed to carry nuclear warheads.

Back in February, Washington failed to form a consensus in the Security Council on a ballistic medium-range missile by Iran.

On Tuesday, U.S. President Donald Trump read the riot act to Tehran, saying lack of adherence to the terms of the deal is conducive to "big, big problems."

"If that deal doesn't conform to what it's supposed to conform to, it's going to be big, big problems for them. That I can tell you. Believe me," Trump said.

Trump's provocative words contradict numerous verifications by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which under the deal is charged with making sure Tehran keeps its side of the bargain.

Since the JCPOA went into effect January of last year, the IAEA, which is hardly a sympathizer of Iran, has verified the country's compliance six times, and when the IAEA has spotted minor technical violations, Iran has made rapid corrections.

The rocket launch comes one week after the U.S. sanctioned 18 Iranian individuals and entities including two organizations for being involved with the nation's ballistic-missile program.

Leader doesn't interfere in Rouhani cabinet picks: statement



Mohammad Homaeifar

TEHRAN — The official website of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a statement on Friday denying rumors that the Leader interferes in selecting the ministers of President Rouhani's next administration.

In recent days, there have been widespread rumors that Rouhani has issued a list of his cabinet nominees to Ayatollah Khamenei, asking his permission about his impending administration.

"Since nearly two weeks ago, a piece of news, suggesting that all cabinet members are appointed after the Supreme Leader approves of them, has been going around and received widespread attention by foreign media," read the statement which was released on Friday.

The statement noted that Ayatollah Khamenei's approach has always been to fully support all administrations.

"The Leader of the Revolution has in recent years insisted on resolving the

economic difficulties that people have been facing. The wicked, who bear nothing but ill-will toward Iran and its people, have attempted to translate such emphasis as the Leader's opposition toward the [Rouhani] administration," it said, adding that despite such wrong analyses, Ayatollah Khamenei has strongly supported the Rouhani administration in recent years.

Supreme Leader's main point is that all the appointed officials should show strong determination to resolve people's problems, the statement said.

It also said that under the constitution, the Supreme Leader has a say in the appointment of the ministers of defense, foreign affairs, and intelligence.

"Regarding some ministries including the ministries of science, education and culture, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution has some concerns, because any digression within them would lead to a major digression in the country's path towards ideals," it said.

Iranians condemn injustice against Palestinians, Rohingya Muslims



POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian worshippers staged massive demonstrations on Friday to express their solidarity with Palestinians and Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

The demonstrations, which were held after weekly Friday prayers, saw people from all walks of life condemning the heinous crimes committed against Muslims in Myanmar and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Holding anti-Israel placards during the rallies, the protesters shouted: "Death to Israel", "Defending Palestine is Our Honor", "Death to Zionism; Death to England; Death to America; Death to Al Saud Traitors."

The demonstrators also called for unity among Muslims in order to counter the hegemonic countries headed by the United States.

A statement was released at the end of the rallies, denouncing the atrocities committed by the Zionists

in comments after the U.S. sanctions move, Rouhani vowed retaliation, saying, "If the enemy breaches parts of the deal, we will breach parts of it," Rouhani said. "If they breach the entire deal, we will breach it in its entirety."

"We will reinforce our whole defensive weapons without paying attention to what others say," he added.

Experts now believe that Iran will monitor the U.S. to gauge its reaction to the missile launch. Hours before the launch was announced, senior U.S. officials told the Associated Press that the Trump administration was keen to test the strength of the JCPOA, hoping to eliminate what they claimed are "serious flaws" in the deal.

To start, the administration is considering a follow-up agreement that prevents Iran from advancing its nuclear program after the deal expires. Officials also said the U.S. hopes to procure convincing evidence that the International Atomic Energy Agency should inspect Iranian military sites.

Whether the latest rocket launch enhances or hinders these priorities remains to be seen, though one thing seems clear: "You want the breakup of [the JCPOA] to be about Iran," said Bob Corker, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, at an event on Wednesday. "You don't want it to be about the U.S."

However, Tehran has ruled out renegotiating the deal, saying it is already consolidated.

If negotiations were to restart, "the demands by all sides would be very different. So that is why Iran and all other participants in the negotiations have said very clearly that this is not a deal that is open to renegotiation, because this is a multilateral deal, approved by the Security Council, and it's not a bilateral deal to be withdrawn from or to be renegotiated," Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in an interview with CBS News on July 18.

Despite Iran's categorical rejection of renegotiation, Foreign Policy Magazine cited three unnamed sources close to the White House as having said that Trump has instructed a group of trusted White House staffers to make the potential case for withholding certification of Iran at the next 90-day review of the nuclear deal.

"The goal was to give Trump what he felt the State Department had failed to do: the option to declare that Tehran was not in compliance with the contentious agreement," FP maintained.

against the innocent Palestinian people in the occupied territories and the brutal killings of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

"The Zionist regime is afraid of Palestinians' Intifada and their resistance against such inauthentic regime," read part of the statement. "Israel is trying to rule over al Aqsa Mosque and all Palestine and has spared no deceit and crime in achieving this goal."

The statement condemned the deafening silence of the international community over the crimes committed against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, saying, "The massacre of Muslims across the world shows the false claims of human rights advocates."

It also called on Iran's Foreign Ministry to reflect the Iranian people's protest against such crimes to the world and take a firm stance to defend the rights of innocent Muslims in Myanmar.

Palestinian killed by Israeli forces after alleged stabbing attempt

A Palestinian has been shot dead after allegedly attempting to stab Israeli soldiers north of Hebron in the occupied West Bank.

The Israeli army reported the incident on Friday, but added that none of its soldiers were wounded.

The Israeli army published a picture of the man's identity card. It showed that the alleged attacker was 24-year-old Abdullah Taqatqa from Beit Lahm (Bethlehem).

Palestinian witnesses told local media that "Israeli forces shot at him while he was around 20 meters away from them" and that Taqatqa "didn't have any type of knife with him or any kind of weapon".

The incident occurred at the Gush Etzion junction near a large bloc of Israeli settlements south of Bethlehem.

It comes amid soaring tensions between Israeli authorities and Palestinians over discriminatory restrictions in place at al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

A few hours before the Friday prayers, Israeli police announced for the second week running that men under the age of 50 will not be permitted to attend the holy site, and closed several gates to the compound.

That announcement came hours ahead of Friday prayers, when thousands of Muslims typically worship in congregation at al-Aqsa Mosque.

Police fired water cannon and tear gas at protesters in Beit Lahm, and there was a high police presence close to al-Aqsa compound.

A few skirmishes broke out in different West Bank towns and cities after prayers were over.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said that they have received 52 cases of injuries across the West Bank and al-Quds (Jerusalem), in protests against the restrictions on Friday.

■ Palestinian dies as Israel restricts al-Aqsa access

Meantime, a 25-year-old protester has succumbed to his wounds, becoming the fifth Palestinian to be killed by Israeli forces and settlers in two weeks of violence as tension mounts over discriminatory restrictions at al-Aqsa Mosque.

Muhammad Kanan, who had been shot in the head three days earlier, died late on Thursday in a hospital in the central occupied West Bank city of Ramallah,



the Palestinian Ministry of Health said.

Kanan had joined thousands of Palestinians in the streets to rally against extra restrictions at al-Aqsa Mosque compound, protesting in Hizma, his hometown near al-Quds.

■ Israeli police threaten 'forceful' response to Palestinian protests

Elsewhere, Israeli police chief in East al-Quds (Jerusalem) has threatened a "forceful response" to possible Palestinian protests during Friday prayers at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound, warning that there will be "casualties" in case of such demonstrations.

"If there are people who try tomorrow to disturb the peace, to harm police or citizens, they should not be surprised: There will be casualties and people injured," Times of Israel quoted Yoram Halevi as saying on Thursday.

"Do not test us, because we know how to respond, and we know how to respond directly and forcefully," Halevi added.

He made the remarks after Muslim leaders called on Palestinian worshippers to return to prayers at al-Aqsa Mosque when Israel backed down in the face of days of angry protests and removed all the restrictions at the holy site.

Muslims had been refusing to hold

prayers at the mosque and prayed in the streets around the Old City for almost two weeks after Israel installed security equipment, including metal detectors and cameras, at the sacred compound following a deadly shooting incident there on July 14.

The demonstrations claimed the lives of five Palestinians and injured nearly 400.

Halevi pointed to the likelihood of "victory celebrations" and warned Palestinians to keep in mind that the Israeli police are still in charge of security at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The police chief pledged to continue checking worshippers entering the mosque, saying, "We will check anyone suspicious, anyone who we think could disturb the peace, anyone who could be an attacker. They will be stopped at the gate, they will be checked as we have done in the past."

■ Israel playing with fire

Israel's recent restrictive measures have drawn widespread international condemnations.

On Thursday, the Arab League warned that Israel's policies could ignite a "religious war" in the region.

Israel's actions are "playing with fire, and will only ignite a religious war and

shift the core of the conflict from politics to religion," Arab League chief Ahmed Abul Gheit said in a televised speech at an urgent meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo on the latest conflicts in al-Quds.

Abul Gheit further called on the "occupying" regime "to carefully learn the lessons from this crisis and the message it holds."

Following the urgent meeting, the Arab foreign ministers issued a joint statement, condemning the Israeli policies.

The Arab League "condemns in the strongest terms Israel's plans and policies that aim to Judaize the occupied city of Jerusalem and distort its Arab and Muslim character," the statement said.

The Tel Aviv regime has tried to change the demographic makeup of al-Quds (Jerusalem) over the past decades by constructing settlements, destroying historical sites and expelling the local Palestinian population. Palestinians say the Israeli measures are aimed at paving the way for the Judaization of the city.

The al-Aqsa Mosque compound is a flashpoint Islamic site, which is also holy to Jews. The mosque is Islam's third holiest site after Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia.

(Source: agencies)

Syrian army advances against ISIL in Raqqah: report

Syrian government forces and their allies have advanced against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorists in the countryside east of Raqqah City, a monitoring group says.

On Thursday, the Syrian forces advanced four kilometers (2.5 miles) within the town of Maadan and crossed the provincial boundary between Raqqah Province, the de facto capital of the ISIL terrorist group in Syria, and Dayr al-Zawr Province, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Syrian forces are now getting closer to the territory controlled by the United States-backed forces fighting against ISIL in Raqqah City, the report said.

On Thursday, the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a U.S.-backed group of mostly Kurdish forces, announced that it has wrested control over half of the Syrian city of Raqqah. The SDF launched its assault on Raqqah on June 6.

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 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 proclaimed the center for most of the Takfiris' administrative and control tasks the next year.

Over the past few months, Syrian forces have made sweeping gains against Takfiri elements, which have lately increased their acts of violence across the country following a series of defeats on the ground.

■ Putin signs deal allowing air forces to stay in Syria for 49 years

Meantime, Russia's president signs a law enabling the country's air forces to remain in Syria for 49 years as part of a protocol to a 2015 agreement with the Damascus

government.

The protocol was signed by Moscow and Damascus in January 2017, regulating issues related to the Air Forces' deployment to the Syrian territory.

It was adopted by the Russian State Duma, the Lower House of the Russian Parliament, on July 14, and approved by the Senate five days later.

Vladimir Putin signed it on Thursday, RT cited a Kremlin statement as saying.

Enshrined in the protocol is an option enabling automatic extension of the arrangement for another 25 years.

The protocol also features Damascus' agreement to provide the Russian air force with free land in its northwestern Latakia Province.

Russia has been using the Khmeimim Air Base there to carry out anti-terror operations since September 2015.

The Russian military has also been offering advisory support to Syria, helping the Arab nation make numerous gains in its battles on terrorists.

In March 2016, Moscow withdrew many of its forces from Syria, with Putin saying the goals of the anti-terrorist mission there had been "generally accomplished."

Russia, however, said it would keep a military presence at the port of Tartus and at the Khmeimim airbase to monitor the situation and the implementation of truce deals. (Source: Press TV)

Jordan charges Israel embassy guard with murder

Jordan's public prosecutor says murder charges have been filed against an Israeli embassy guard, who recently shot dead two Jordanians in Amman.

State media said on Friday that Attorney General Akram Masaadeh charged the guard with two counts of murder and possession of an unlicensed firearm.

The official argued that diplomatic immunity did not mean the "killer" could not be put on trial in his own country.

An Israeli government source, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said Israel was also "giving preliminary consideration to offering compensation to the family of the second Jordanian (the landlord) killed in the incident."

The development came after Jordan's King Abdullah angrily urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to put the guard on trial, warning that the issue jeopardizes Amman-Tel Aviv ties.

"We demand that the Israeli Prime Minister abides by his commitment and takes all measures to ensure the trial of the killer, and not handle this like a political show

to achieve personal political gains," Reuters quoted him as saying.

Abdullah made the remarks when he visited the family of one of the victims, during which he pledged that the state would "do everything within its means" to get justice for the two men.

King Abdullah lashed out at Netanyahu for giving the guard a hero's embrace after Israel brought him home under diplomatic immunity, saying the behavior was "provocative on all fronts and enrages us, destabilizes security and fuels extremism."

On Sunday, the guard shot dead Jordanian teenager Mohammad Jawawdah at Israel's embassy in Amman as well as the landlord of the house in the compound where the guard lived.

During the funeral procession of Jawawdah on Tuesday, thousands of Jordanians protested against Israel, calling on Jordanian authorities to close the Israeli embassy and scrap the country's peace treaty with Tel Aviv.

Israel claims that the guard had been defending himself in a "terrorist attack" after Jawawdah attacked him

with a screwdriver. It is still unclear how the landlord came to be shot.

However, the Jordanian police, who were unable to question the guard, say the guard shot the teenager, who worked for a furniture company and was delivering an order, after they got into a brawl.

King Abdullah also pointed to a previous incident in March 2014, in which an Israeli soldier shot dead a Jordanian judge at a border crossing. No investigation was ever conducted.

"The way Israel handles the embassy case and the judge's killing and other cases will have a direct impact on the nature of our relationship," he said.

Many Jordanians have accused the authorities of abdicating sovereignty by allowing the Israeli guard to leave the country, with lawmakers walking out of parliament in protest.

Jordanians are set to hold another protest on Friday to repeat their demand for closure of the Israeli Embassy and tearing up the unpopular peace treaty. (Source: Press TV)

Russia orders U.S. to cut diplomats over new sanctions

Russia has retaliated to tough new sanctions proposed by the United States Senate, ordering Washington to reduce its diplomatic staff in Moscow.

In a statement on Friday, Russia's foreign ministry said the United States must reduce its staff to 455 people by September 1. It added that it was seizing a compound and warehouse used by the U.S. diplomats.

"We propose to the U.S. side to bring the number of diplomatic and technical staff working in the U.S. embassy in Moscow and the consulates general ... in exact accordance with the number of Russian diplomats and technical staff in the U.S.," the statement said.

The sanctions, outlined in a new bill passed on Thursday, violated international law and demonstrated "extreme aggression of U.S. in international affairs," Russia said.

It also warned the U.S. it would respond in kind if Washington decided to expel any Russian diplomats.

The sanctions against Moscow are punishment for its alleged meddling in the 2016 presidential election and its military actions in Ukraine and Syria.

According to the bill, the U.S. President Donald Trump would be barred from easing the Russia sanctions without first getting permission from Congress, a demand that could imperil his bid for better relations with Moscow. (Source: Reuters)

Afghan forces re-take control of Ghor's Taywara district

Afghan ground forces backed by the air force have driven out Taliban militants from a district in Afghanistan's western Ghor Province after fierce fighting.

Abdul Hai Khateby, the provincial governor spokesman, said fighting raged for two days before Afghan soldiers drove the militants from the Taywara District center on Friday.

Khateby said 13 Taliban militants had been killed in the clashes. There had been no casualties on the side of the Afghan forces.

The residents who had fled their homes also began returning to the district capital, Khateby added.

Taliban took control of the center of Taywara — the main town of the rural area — on Sunday as part of a broad push that saw heavy fighting across much of the country.

Since then, government forces had been fighting to push the militants back.

Provincial Police Chief Mohammad Mustafa Moseni said the Taliban militants left behind mines, which demining teams had already begun to clear.

Ghor Province is located in a remote mountainous region, where the Taliban have long had a strong presence, and more recently, Afghan security officials say, militants loyal to the Islamic State in Iraq and the (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group, have established themselves in the province.

Taliban militants have stepped up their attacks over the past week. Earlier this week, around 30 Afghan soldiers were killed when the militants attacked an outpost in the southern province of Kandahar.

There has also been heavy fighting in the province of Helmand as well as the northern areas of Faryab, Baghlan, and Badakshan, among other places.

Fighting and insecurity prevails in Afghanistan despite the presence of thousands of foreign forces in the country, who have been there since a United States-led invasion in 2001.

An additional 4,000 U.S. troops are expected to be sent to Afghanistan to reinforce the U.S.-led foreign troops in the country. (Source: agencies)

Philippine police 'dumping bodies' of drug war victims

Fishermen in the Philippines have revealed that they have been dumping bodies of drug suspects, killed as part of the country's so-called war on drugs, on the orders of the police.

The bodies, called "trash" by authorities, have been thrown on the sides of highways and in Manila Bay over the past year.

"Police are the ones coming to my house ordering me to take out trash," said Manuel, a local fisherman who has personally disposed of 20 bodies.

"We usually throw them out in Manila Bay," he told Al Jazeera. "Sometimes we put weights on it, so it doesn't float up."

Al Jazeera's Yaara Bou Melhem, reporting from the capital Manila, verified the identity of one of the dumped corpses, who was known to police as a drug dealer.

"Once, I saw the body of a friend," said Manuel. "I'm scared and wonder if I could be next."

Manuel said he does not trust the authorities "who are playing both sides of the drug war."

Thousands of people have died since President Rodrigo Duterte took office last year and ordered an unprecedented crackdown on drug-related crimes that has drawn global criticism and allegations of widespread human rights abuses.

"You drug pushers, hold-up men and do-nothings, you better go out," he said during the election campaign last year. "Because I'd kill you. I'll dump all of you into Manila Bay, and fatten all the fish there."

Critics say the president has unleashed a campaign of mass murder by police and unknown assailants on the nation's most vulnerable. Police have reported killing some 3,200 people in anti-drug operations, while thousands of unlawful killings remain unexplained.

Human rights organizations cast doubt over the police reporting, saying more than 7,000 people have been killed in connection to the drug war.

"Before February 2017, they actually had a higher number, and they decided to lower it April and May which didn't make sense for us," said Wilnor Papa, a human rights officer at Amnesty International.

"Is it because the world is watching, is it because people are saying there are too many deaths? As far as we're concerned it's not just the numbers, but for us, one death is a death too many," he told Al Jazeera.

Philippine police, who vowed to continue their crackdown on drugs, said they would investigate the alleged dumping of bodies.

"If it's true, we will work on it," police spokesperson Diomardo Carlos told Al Jazeera. "We will not allow any member of the organization, the police organization, to continue these wrongdoings."

"There [have been] three focus [points] in the campaign from day one - drugs, criminality and corruption - which we are [tackling] through our internal cleansing process." (Source: Al Jazeera)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Boeing on track to deliver planes to Iran in 2018: CEO

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Boeing chairman and CEO James McNamara announced that the American manufacturer is in the way to begin delivering planes to Iran next year.

According to AP responding to questions from analysts and reporters, Dennis Muilenburg added that the company is benefiting as profitable airlines continue to order new planes.

Iran's flag carrier, Iran Air, signed a contract with Boeing in 2016 for purchasing 80 airplanes from the American manufacturer.

Also, in early June 2017, Iran's Aseman Airlines sealed a deal with Boeing on purchasing 60 aircrafts.



Liquidity at \$333b in a month

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's liquidity stood at 12.6 quadrillion rials (about \$333 billion) during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 22, 2017), according to a report released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

The figure shows 23.7 percent rise compared to the same time in the previous year, the report said.

Liquidity in Iran witnessed a 2.5-fold rise during the past four years, IRIB news quoted Hamidreza Hajibabaei, the chairman of parliament (Majlis) ad hoc committee for reviewing the Sixth National Development Plan (2016-2021), as saying in February 1st.

UK wants to avoid cliff edge Brexit but will leave single market: Hammond

LONDON (Reuters) — Britain wants to avoid a cliff edge Brexit that would sow chaos for business but leaving the European Union means leaving the single market and the customs union, finance minister Philip Hammond told the BBC.

Hammond refused to confirm or deny a Financial Times report that he had told business leaders that he wanted to negotiate a simple "off-the-shelf" transition deal with Brussels to maintain current trading relations with Europe for at least two years after Brexit.

Hammond said it was in the interests of the EU and Britain to have a transition that allows the economies to adjust. He said British ministers needed to understand the challenges that businesses face with Brexit.

Japan to hike tariffs on frozen beef imports from U.S., other nations

TOKYO/SINGAPORE (Reuters) — Japan will raise tariffs from August on imports of frozen beef from the United States and other countries, in a move to protect domestic producers, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) said on Friday.

Between Aug. 1 and the end of March next year, tariffs will jump to 50 percent from 38.5 percent now, as a "safeguard" mechanism is triggered to protect domestic farmers, the ministry said in a statement.

It will be the first time the tariff mechanism has been tripped for beef imports since August 2003, when it was triggered for chilled beef, the farm ministry said.

The hike threatens a significant sector of United States' access to the biggest Asian market for U.S. beef just as President Donald Trump seeks to expand American exports to Japan.

Last year, U.S. frozen beef exports to Japan were worth more than \$400 million.

"The safeguard will not only have negative implications for U.S. beef producers, but will also have a significant impact on the Japanese food service industry," said Philip Seng, president and chief executive of the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), in a statement on its website.

The hike will be especially hard on gyudon beef bowl restaurants, which use U.S. frozen beef cuts as a primary ingredient, he said.

An increase is automatic if quarterly imports of specific beef products - both from all nations and from those lacking economic partnership agreements (EPAs) with Japan - rise more than 17 percent from a year earlier.

In April-June, Japan's first fiscal quarter, frozen beef imports from all nations, at 89,253 tonnes, were up 17.1 percent on the year, while imports from non-EPA nations reached 37,823 tonnes, an increase of nearly a quarter, government data showed.

Nations that have EPAs with Japan, such as Australia, Mexico and Chile, escape the tariff hike.

Japan has been contacting affected nations, such as the United States, to explain the increase, Finance Minister Taro Aso told reporters, Kyodo news agency said.

Imports of chilled beef face no increase as their volumes did not exceed the trigger level.

Japan's beef bowl restaurants were "finally enjoying robust growth due to greater availability of U.S. beef," Seng said, following tremendous setbacks experienced during previous curbs of U.S. beef imports.

U.S. sales of frozen beef cuts to Japan last year were worth \$418 million, or around 18 percent of the U.S. total, U.S. Census Bureau data shows.

For the period January-May this year, total U.S. beef exports to Japan were valued at \$731 million, up 32 percent on the corresponding 2016 period, the same data showed.

By volume, total U.S. beef sales to Japan for January-May were 123,290 tonnes, up from 96,394 tonnes a year ago. Overall U.S. beef exports for the first five months were 497,323 tonnes.

Iran goes big on clean energy

1 → It will be built on 150 hectares of land and will be one of the largest solar farms in the Middle East.

Renewable power capacity to rise 600 MW by Mar. 2018

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of Mokran Solar Farm, the energy minister said the country's power generation capacity from renewable sources is planned to increase by 600 MW by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2018).

Chitchian put Iran's current renewable capacity at 420 MW.

He said since 20 years ago Iran has been planning to increase renewable energy share in the country's basket of energy and renewables account for 12,000 MW out of the 76,000 MW electricity generation capacity of Iran.

"For the moment, hydroelectric share is noticeable in the country's energy basket and we are currently boosting the shares of solar and wind farms", the minister added.

It is worth mentioning that all investments and activities in this field is done by private sector, he highlighted, adding that private sector has also embarked on manufacturing of related equipments.

"We have currently the capacity of manufacturing solar panels for generating 210 MW of electricity which is planned to reach over 500 MW by the yearend", Chitchian announced.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister referred to foreign direct investment

(FDI) in Iran's renewable energy sector and mentioned Germany, Switzerland, Spain, China and South Korea as some of the countries making investment in this sector of Iran at the present.

Reducing 22,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year

Addressing the same ceremony, Uwe Jorg Kuhnle, the managing director of DURION Company, said: "We avoid 22,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions every year by this solar plant."

"Through our German-Iranian joint venture we successfully realized the technology transfer between Iran and Germany", he said adding, "We received great support from the Iranian government and all involved officials and agencies."

All of the money that was needed in Iran was officially transferred through the banking system from Germany to Iran, he mentioned.

"We already decided to invest in a production facility for another photovoltaic plant in Mahan to generate at least 100 MW for domestic market and for exports by more than 150 employees", Kuhnle further announced.

JCPOA to bring more European companies to Iran

Also, German Ambassador to Iran Michael Klor-Berchtold said implementation of JCPOA (Iran's nuclear deal, known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) will bring more successes like this one (Mokran Solar Farm) to Iran as



© ILNA/Kianoosh Mohebian

it will bring more European companies to the country.

He expressed happiness over this project and said: "I am glad about this solar farm because it is some cooperation between Germany and Iran."

"This project is an investment making for Iran's technology and also for its future," he underscored.

"We are determined to continue this way in Iran and hope that this project will be a symbol for other German projects in Iran," he added.

Renewables to generate 2000 MW of electricity in Kerman

Kerman Governor General Alireza

Razm-Hosseini, for his part, said: "We have planned for implementation of projects to generate 200 MW of electricity per year from renewable sources in the province to reach the total capacity of 2000 MW within 10 years."

He also said a solar farm to be named "Sun City" is planned to be built in the province.

"We support investment making in renewable sector of the province", he further noted.

The governor general also said that \$2.5 billion foreign investment has been made in the province after implementation of JCPOA.

Iran, Germany mull over expanding economic, banking ties

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Minister of Transport Abbas Akhoundi and Germany's Minister of Economic Affairs and Energy Brigitte Zypries met on Thursday to discuss economic cooperation and expansion of banking relations.

During the meeting, the two sides explored ways of removing the barriers impeding the two countries banking relations.

The Iranian minister, who traveled to the European country on Wednesday for a two-day visit, was accompanied by his deputy, Asghar Fakhrieh Kashan, and Saied Mohammadzadeh, head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI).

The officials also visited Siemens industrial complex in Berlin and held talks with the company officials to discuss Tehran-Mashhad high-speed railway project.



The German company cooperates with Iran for implementation of this project and manufacturing trains for the mentioned line.

According to IRIB, Akhoundi also held talks with Ronald Pofalla, the board member for infrastructure at Deutsche Bahn AG (a German railway company operating in more than 130 countries), who said transferring knowledge and technology to Iran is on the agenda.

Non-oil trade up 6% in 4 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The value of Iran's non-oil trade has surged up to six percent during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-July 22), Fars news agency reported on Friday.

Based on the data released by Iran's Customs Administration, the total value of the country's non-oil exports and imports sums up about \$29.272 billion which tops the last year's \$27.635 billion by \$1.637 billion.

During the mentioned period, some \$13.459 billion worth of goods were exported from the country which was reported to be 9.54 percent less than the figure for last year's same time span.

Gas condensate, low-density oils and their products, polyethylene film grade, liquefied propane as well as methanol were among top exported commodities from Iran.

China, Iraq, United Arabic Emirate



(UAE), South Korea and India were top importers of Iranian goods, respectively.

The country also imported \$15.813 billion worth of goods in the mentioned four months to register a 23.97 percent rise year on year.

Rice, feeding corn for livestock, motor vehicles, soybeans and passenger cars' spare parts were at the top of imported items list.

Iran imported these commodities from China, UAE, South Korea, Turkey and India.

China Eastern buying 10% Air France KLM stake

SINGAPORE/SHANGHAI (Reuters) — China Eastern Airlines Corp Ltd said on Friday it is buying a 10 percent stake in Europe's Air France KLM SA, in what will be the first investment by one of China's three largest state-owned airlines in a Western carrier.

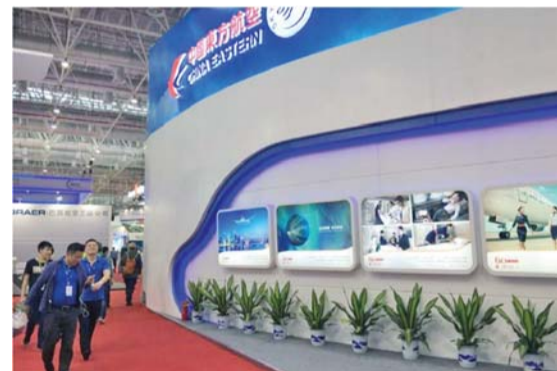
The deal is part of a broader plan between Delta Air Lines Inc, Virgin Atlantic and Air France-KLM that was announced on Thursday to combine two overlapping transatlantic joint-ventures, supported by equity deals worth \$1 billion.

Delta, which holds a 3.2 percent stake in China Eastern, is also buying a 10 percent stake in Air France KLM.

China Eastern said its 375 million euro (\$438 million) investment in Air France KLM was compatible with the government's "Belt and Road" initiative which seeks to improve trade and transport links between Asia and Europe.

"The parties will work together to build the China-Europe main routes market," China Eastern said.

China Eastern, along with rivals China Southern Airlines Co and Air China Ltd have been expanding their



global route networks as Chinese outbound tourism and trade investment increases.

While HNA, the parent company of China's largest private operator Hainan Airlines, has taken stakes in a number of Western airlines, none of China's three largest state carriers have done so. Air China has a cross-shareholding

with Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd.

"There has been interest from state-owned airlines to buy foreign airlines but those deals were never completed. So yes, this is the first," said Will Horton, senior analyst at Australian aviation consultancy CAPA.

"China Eastern may be different since it is part of state owned enterprise reform," he said, adding that Delta might have guided China Eastern on the equity investment.

Beijing has been advocating ownership reforms at its state-owned companies in a bid to revamp the country's bloated state sector and help such firms to become more competitive globally.

Air France KLM said in a statement that the alliance would give it a European leadership position in Shanghai, the main business travel market in China.

CAP: People walk past a booth of China Eastern Airline at an air show, the China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, China, November 3, 2016.

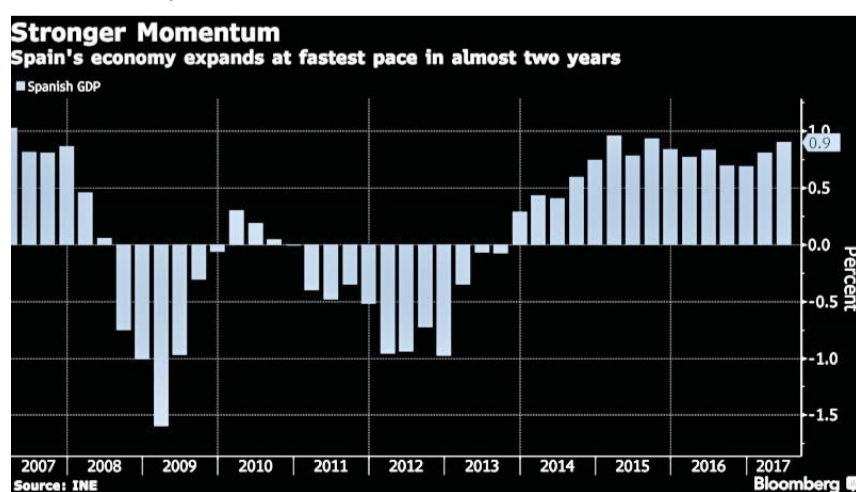
Spanish economy expands at fastest pace in almost 2 years

The Spanish economy accelerated at the fastest pace in almost two years, extending a recovery that shows no signs of abating.

Output grew 0.9 percent in the three months through June after expanding 0.8 percent in the previous quarter, the National Statistics Office said Friday in a preliminary report. That's the best reading since 2015 and matches the median estimate in a Bloomberg survey of economists. From a year ago, the economy accelerated 3.1 percent.

While market consensus initially pointed to a slowdown this year, the Spanish economy continued to outperform its euro-area peers. Renewed momentum has prompted string of GDP revisions from the International Monetary Fund, which now sees growth of 3.1 percent for 2017 compared to a previous estimate of 2.6 percent, and the Spanish government of Mariano Rajoy, which forecasts growth of 3 percent instead.

That prediction is still too conservative



according to economists at Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria SA and Bankia SA, who believe this will be the best year for the Spanish economy in a decade with output expanding 3.3 percent. The prospects of a continued recovery coupled with further budget consolidation has prompted

S&P Global Ratings and Fitch Ratings to upgrade their outlook on Spain's credit rating to positive from stable, hinting at a possible hike in the second half of the year.

While Friday's report didn't break down components of GDP, economists say growth probably benefited from ac-

celerating household consumption fueled by strong job creation, resilient exports and a pick up in services linked to tourism. Visitor numbers are on track to post yet another record year despite concern that Brexit will reduce the number of U.K. tourists.

"Household consumption has rebounded and that's going to manifest in the quarterly data," Miguel Cardoso, chief Spain economist at BBVA in Madrid said before the data were released. "Exports are still strong despite coming off from a high point and the tourism sector is very dynamic, that's having a positive impact on services."

The latest health-check on the Spanish economy comes on the back of Thursday's second-quarter unemployment report, which saw the nation's jobless rate fall to the lowest level in eight years. Retail sales data in June pointing to renewed impetus from consumers after spending lost some ground at the start of the year.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil extends gains, on track for biggest weekly gains this year

Oil prices edged higher on Friday, reaching fresh two-month highs and on track to post the strongest weekly gains this year as investors digested signs of an easing oversupply picture.

U.S. crude and gasoline inventories fell much more steeply than expected this week and the world's biggest oil exporter Saudi Arabia said it would further reduce oil output in August.

Brent crude futures were up 22 cents at \$51.71 a barrel at 0931 GMT after reaching a fresh two-month high of \$51.75 a barrel. The front of the crude oil curve jumped into backwardation, with the month-ahead trading above the subsequent month, showing investors are not expecting recent gains to last.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were flat at \$49.04 a barrel, near a two-month high of \$49.24.

"Positive signs came from the draw in gasoline stocks this week, as the U.S. moves into the peak driving season," said Ashley Kelty, oil analyst at Cenkos Securities.

U.S. crude stocks fell sharply by 7.2 million barrels in the week to July 21 due to strong refining activity and an increase in exports, according to data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA).



Brimming U.S. crude supplies have been a challenge to production cuts to prop up prices led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, meaning weekly U.S. inventory data is closely watched.

Despite these signs, analysts' assessments of the oil market remained bearish.

"We believe the latest price rise is on a fragile footing," said analysts at Commerzbank, adding OPEC production was likely to rise in the coming months as the

group has not officially capped output from members Libya and Nigeria.

Investors were eyeing an update on the U.S. rig count expected later on Friday to assess any signs of a slowing down in drilling activity. (Source: Reuters)

China diesel demand expected to return to growth as economy improves

Chinese demand for diesel will rise again this year after contracting for the first time in over a decade in 2016, buoyed as the world's No.2 economy shows signs of growth, traders and analysts said.

That could cap increases in exports of the fuel from the world's second-biggest oil consumer, while bolstering benchmark Asian diesel margins already near 8-month highs.

Diesel demand in China is expected to grow by up to 0.3 percent in 2017 and by 0.5 percent in 2018 after shrinking by 3.5 percent last year, said Sri Paravaikarasu, the head of 'east of Suez oil' at energy consultancy FGE.

"A variety of factors - improvement in mining and industrial activity, commercial vehicle sales and road freight movements - support a gradual revival in China's (diesel) demand," she said.

Diesel, which accounts for about 30 percent of China's appetite for petroleum, is largely used in the country to fuel trucks, along with mining and construction equipment.

Slower local demand coupled with new refining capacity drove Chinese diesel exports to a record high last year, which in turn depressed margins for the fuel in the region. Margins are the profits made on churning out a barrel of fuel.

"For quite a long time, there has not been a situation like what is happening now in ports and jetties in Dalian where ships are lining up fast to load diesel (for domestic delivery)," a Beijing-based trader said.

"This means inventory is low and buyers are keen." (Source: Reuters)



China's 2017 economic growth is expected to top the government's 6.6-percent target. First quarter growth was partly buoyed by higher government infrastructure spending that helped boost industrial output by the most in over two years.

Caterpillar Inc, the world's largest construction and mining equipment maker, said earlier this week that it had seen strong user demand for construction equipment in China, with heavy excavator sales surging about 130 percent in the first half of the year.

Regulations introduced late last year that imposed stronger penalties on the overloading of trucks also boosted truck sales.

Sales of trucks were up over 22 percent in the first half of 2017 from a year ago, data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers showed.

While China is a net exporter of diesel, it also imports the fuel through various channels, traders said.

Valero: U.S. import ban on Venezuela oil to raise heavy sour crude prices

If the United States imposes a ban on crude oil imports from Venezuela, prices for the heavy sour crude grades like the one Venezuela is supplying to the U.S. would increase, Valero Energy Corp's Vice President Gary Simmons said on Thursday, adding that a ban would send Venezuelan cargoes to markets other than the U.S. Gulf Coast.

The U.S. Treasury imposed on Wednesday sanctions against 13 officials of the Government of Venezuela, including on the former and current vice presidents of finance of state-owned oil company Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA). The sanctions were imposed ahead of a planned controversial vote on July 30 that will have the power to rewrite the Venezuelan constitution and may choose to dissolve Venezuelan state institutions.

According to Platts, a senior U.S. administration official said on Wednesday that if Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro goes forward with the Sunday election, President Donald Trump is expected to issue "strong and swift" sanctions on Venezuela, including a ban on Venezuelan crude oil sales into the U.S.

"The natural trade flow for a lot of Venezuelan production should be to the U.S. Gulf Coast," Reuters quoted Valero's Simmons as saying.

"If sanctions were imposed, those barrels will continue to flow to other markets. And then, we'll have to buy barrels away from other markets to supply our system," the manager not-



ed.

Last month, Valero Energy was the main recipient of Venezuela crude oil. Not only is the United States the main buyer of Venezuela crude oil, but companies such as Valero Energy, Phillips 66, Chevron, and PBF Energy were the major buyers of Venezuelan crude in 2016.

If the U.S. administration decides to impose sanctions on Venezuela that include a ban on crude oil imports from the South American country, refiners on the Gulf Coast might pay a price, according to PIRA Energy's managing director for oil, Rick Joswick.

At 795,000 bpd, Venezuela was the biggest foreign provider of crude oil to the U.S. Gulf Coast in April, the latest available monthly data by the EIA show. Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Mexico, and Canada followed down the ranking of the biggest providers of crude oil to the U.S. Gulf Coast in April. (Source: oilprice.com)

Oil companies trim drilling budgets in sign of rising caution

Caution lights are flashing for the oil industry. Facing lower-than-expected commodity prices, drillers from ConocoPhillips to Hess Corp. to Statoil ASA have slashed their capital spending plans in recent days, as companies lay out their plans to cope with oil prices stuck below \$50 a barrel.

The budget cuts won't necessarily mean less oil or natural gas on the market, with some of the companies saying they can now do more with less and expect to produce just as much oil and gas in 2017. But they speak to an investor community that's grown anxious as a global rally in crude prices has stalled out this year.

"The expectation was that oil would be at least above \$50 by this time," said Brian Youngberg, an energy analyst with Edward Jones & Co. in St. Louis. "Right now, the market wants you to spend within your cash flow, no exceptions allowed. It's just a response to that."

The "modest tweaks" in this week's second-quarter earnings reports will probably continue in the coming days, Youngberg said, as drillers focused on U.S. shale plays take center stage.

"Companies are going to be cautious," he said. "No one wants to be the outlier."

After surging above \$55 a barrel in January, crude prices fell amid a persistent glut in global oil supplies. West Texas Intermediate crude, the U.S. benchmark, hasn't topped \$50 since May, although it inched closer to that level on Thursday after a report that U.S. stockpiles had plunged. WTI rose 29 cents to settle at \$49.04 a barrel in New York.



In earnings reports Thursday, Norwegian producer Statoil reduced its 2017 forecast for exploration spending by 13 percent, to \$1.3 billion. Houston-based Conoco dropped its capital expenditure budget for the year by 4 percent to \$4.8 billion, after announcing more than \$16 billion in sales of what it considers lower-performing assets.

Hess announced a 4 percent cut the previous day, although it said it would still be able to boost annual oil production. The company said it was less certain of a plan to add two more drilling rigs to the four it has operating in the Bakken shale play in North Dakota.

Whiting Petroleum Corp., another Bakken driller, and Sanchez Energy Corp., which focuses on the Eagle Ford shale in Texas, also announced cuts. Earlier in the week, Anadarko Petroleum Corp. said its drilling budget would be \$300 million less than originally thought, about a 6 percent reduction.

"We sincerely believe that the volatility of the current operating environment requires financial discipline," Chief Executive Officer Al Walker told analysts on a July 25 conference call. "As I have said many times, pursuing growth without adequate returns is something we will avoid."

While oil companies have generally beat analyst profit estimates for the quarter, reaping the benefits of three years of painful cost-cutting and efficiency gains, investors still appear unimpressed. The energy industry has been the worst performer in the MSCI World Index this year. Brent crude, the global benchmark, remains in a bear market.

It's too early to say the industry discipline will lead to lower production, Goldman Sachs Group analyst Brian Singer, said in a research note Thursday. Anadarko's capital budget, for one, has been affected by "unique" circumstances, including a decision to temporarily shut 3,000 wells after an explosion in Colorado.

Exxon Mobil Corp. and Chevron Corp., the world's first and third biggest oil producers by market value, announced quarterly results Friday.

Royal Dutch Shell Plc kept its capital budget steady at about \$25 billion in an earnings report Thursday. Still, CEO Ben van Beurden said disciplined spending remains a priority.

"We are getting fit for the \$40s with the way we are going," he said, referring to oil prices. That way, the company can take advantage if prices rise to \$60, Van Beurden said. (Source: Bloomberg)

Kuwait joins U.A.E. in promising more OPEC oil cuts

Kuwait joined the United Arab Emirates in promising to pump less oil after Saudi Arabia called on fellow OPEC producers to cut more supply to help curb the global glut.

Kuwait Petroleum Corp. has agreed with customers in the U.S. to reduce contractual sales volumes of oil for 2017, state-run KPC said. The announcement came a day after U.A.E. Minister of Energy Suhail Al Mazrouei said Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. would trim shipments of Murban, Das and Upper Zakum crudes by 10 percent starting in September.

"Kuwait's compliance with the OPEC agreement has led to a decrease in its production and thus a reduction of its exports," KPC said in an emailed statement, citing Emad Al-Abdulkarim, acting managing director of global marketing. "The U.S. market was the most affected by this reduction."

Kuwait has complied at an average rate of 98 percent with its pledged reduction of 131,000 barrels a day, according to the International Energy Agency. The U.A.E. has implemented only 54 percent of its promised 139,000 barrel-a-day cut on average, the IEA said.

"The U.A.E. is committed to its share in the OPEC production cut," Al Mazrouei said in a tweet. (Source: Bloomberg)

France approves bids for 500 MW solar power generation

France has approved tenders to develop large-scale solar power projects with a total installed capacity of 500 megawatts (MW), Ecology Minister Nicolas Hulot said on Friday.

The average price proposed by the winners in the tender process was 55.5 euros (\$64.96) per megawatt-hour (MWh) for installations with a high capacity, and 63.9 euros MWh for the project as a whole, the minister said.

He added that the project was in line with the objective announced in the French Climate Plan on July 6 to reach 32 percent of renewable energies by 2030. (Source: Reuters)

Mexico to get its first public oil company in August

Vista Oil & Gas, a private company backed by Riverstone Capital, will launch its initial public offering on August 11, becoming the first public oil company in Mexico, four years after the start of reforms that removed the monopoly status of state-owned Pemex, according to sources close to the company who spoke to Reuters.

Vista Oil & Gas will be a special purpose acquisition company, it says on its website. This type of company raises funds and uses them for mergers and acquisitions to generate revenues and profits. In its IPO, Vista plans to place 50 million Series A units with a value of \$10 per unit, eyeing at least \$500 million in proceeds.

The unit placement will be private, targeting U.S. institutional investors and non-U.S. institutional and retail investors, the company also said. A road show for the IPO started this Monday in New York and will continue for two weeks in Toronto, London, and Boston.

The company says its acquisition priorities geographically center on Latin America, more specifically Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia. There are high-quality acquisition targets in these four countries, Vista notes, and the regulatory frameworks in recent years have shifted toward a more investor-friendly direction, enhancing the appeal of these targets.

Indeed, the last few years have seen some major changes in oil and gas regulation not just in Mexico, but also in Brazil and Argentina, for example, aimed at attracting more investors in local oil and gas. Argentina has been particularly eager to see more foreign investment in its hydrocarbons industry, amending laws and reducing royalties and taxes in a bid to stimulate the development of its oil and gas reserves.

Brazil, too, has changed the rules to motivate foreign companies to invest in its oil and gas. Most recently, the government relieved Petrobras, the state major, of its obligation to be the operator of all new projects offshore. In the past, the company was bound by law to be the operator of all fields to ensure the government's interests—now it is no longer under such obligation, and foreign operators are welcome. (Source: oilprice.com)

Aramco IPO team favors London for foreign listing

Saudi Arabia's financial advisors are recommending that London, not New York, should host Saudi Aramco's initial public offering, set to take place next year, according to sources that spoke to Reuters.

Earlier rumors had it that newly crowned Prince Mohammed bin Salman preferred New York for the listing due to its connections to deep-pocketed investors.

London stock market authorities have previously proposed creating a new category of listings on the exchange to accommodate Aramco's requirements, sparking much controversy.

A final decision on the location of the IPOs foreign listing had been due before Ramadan, but a month has passed since the end of the Islamic holy month and no decision has been made. The latest update on the listing suggests that a final proposal could be presented to the government in the fourth quarter 2017.

More information on Aramco's IPO is expected to come out of a conferenced organized by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund on October 24 through 26 in Riyadh, according to sources. (Source: oilprice.com)

Al-Qaeda strikes back

By Bruce Riedel

Al-Qaeda declared war on the Saudi royal family 15 years ago with a call to revolution by Osama bin Laden that precipitated the most serious and dangerous violence in the modern kingdom since its founding. Terror attacks hit every major Saudi city. Only after a prolonged counterterrorist campaign led by Mohammed, then interior minister, was al-Qaeda suppressed.

Bin Laden's favorite son has now issued two audio messages attacking the royal family. The first, released a year ago, hailed lone-wolf terror attacks and called for an uprising in the kingdom. The most recent recording is a history lesson and was issued by al-Qaeda's media arm, as-Sahab, from its hideout in Pakistan. In the message, Hamza charges that the founder of the modern Saudi kingdom, Abdul-Aziz bin Rahman Al Saud (Ibn Saud) was a British agent. Ibn Saud allegedly worked with the British to weaken the Ottoman Empire and its tribal ally in the Arabian Peninsula, the Rashids.



Hamza notes that when World War I began, the British sent an emissary to Ibn Saud, Capt. William Henry Shakespear, to propose a formal alliance against the Ottomans and the Rashids. Shakespear was later killed in a battle with the Rashids. Hamza charges that the Saudis betrayed Islam by working with the "crusaders" against the Ottoman caliphate. They were doing the bidding of the "crusaders," who used the breakup of the Ottoman Empire to create Israel.

Political theater

Hamza is being groomed by al-Qaeda to become its future emir, and his image as the heir apparent to his father is smart political theater. It is deeply ironic that al-Qaeda's attack on Mohammed bin Nayef has now come back to haunt the one-time Saudi heir apparent.

According to multiple press reports based on interviews with the prince's supporters, King Salman confronted Mohammed with the accusation that the failed attempt on his life had left him addicted to painkillers. One account said that Mohammed still has shrapnel from the attack in his body. The painkillers, it was alleged, were impairing the prince's judgment.

Saudi authorities have denied the reports, but have provided no alternative explanation for Mohammed's removal from the line of succession and command of the Interior Ministry. Al-Qaeda and bin Laden finally got revenge for Mohammed's campaign against them.

Mohammed's demotion has also led to a shake-up of the Saudi security establishment. The head of the Royal Guard has been dismissed and replaced without explanation, and the Interior Ministry is being reorganized. A few royal family members have openly criticized Mohammed's ouster, including Abdel-Aziz bin Fahd, son of the late King Fahd. Mohammed has not spoken in public since his dismissal and is said to be under house arrest.

At the moment, the new crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, is keeping watch over the kingdom as his father, King Salman, is on his annual vacation in Tangier, Morocco. As is normal when the king travels abroad, he deputized his heir to run the kingdom in his absence. Salman has rented more than 800 hotel rooms in Tangier for his entourage. He is expected to meet with foreign leaders while in Morocco, including French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Jordanian King Abdullah II. There is speculation, meanwhile, that Salman may abdicate and put his son on the throne.

Although Mohammed bin Salman is in charge at home, the line of succession is incomplete. Salman has not named a successor to the post of deputy crown prince that his son previously held. There is no rule requiring that a deputy crown prince be appointed if the king is fit. King Abdullah kept the position open for some time after he ascended to the throne. It is also very unlikely that Salman will pick someone older than Mohammed bin Salman — age still matters in the Saudi system — and there is no obvious younger twentysomething prince ready for the No. 3 slot. It can be left open for the meantime, but not if the king intends to turn power over to the No. 2. The necessary predicate to any possibility of Salman abdicating is for him to choose a new deputy crown prince and thus the putative successor to his son.

Al-Qaeda will no doubt test the new security team in Riyadh. Cells of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula remain active, and as-Sahab will go after the legitimacy of the new crown prince, painting him as unqualified for the throne. The kingdom is facing a complex and interrelated series of challenges with deadly enemies.

(Source: Al Monitor)

EU is uneasy, and divided, about U.S. sanctions on Russia

By STEVEN ERLANGER & NEIL MacFARQUHAR

European Union officials are worried about a move to toughen United States sanctions against Russia, saying they may cause upheaval in Europe's energy market.

But as usual, the 28-nation bloc is divided, with central European countries more willing to limit the bloc's dependence on Russian oil and gas.

The new round of sanctions has been driven by the United States Congress, which is intent on punishing Russia for its meddling in last year's presidential election. The House overwhelmingly approved sanctions legislation on Tuesday afternoon. Bipartisan support in Congress for the new sanctions is so strong that the White House has suggested that President Trump will sign the bill that emerges.

But the new sanctions have important implications for Europe because they target any company that contributes to the development, maintenance or modernization of Russia's energy export pipelines.

That would almost surely affect a controversial pipeline project between Russia and Germany known as Nord Stream 2, which is owned by Gazprom but includes financial stakes from European companies. The project aims to carry Russian natural gas under the Baltic Sea, bypassing countries like Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic States.

The new pipeline, in rough parallel to the existing Nord Stream 1, is being built to carry another 55 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year, underscoring Europe's continuing need for Russian energy.

"We are following the draft bill on Russia sanctions with some concern, notably because of its possible impact on the EU's energy independence," a European Commission spokesman, Margaritis Schinas, said on Monday.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, the bloc's bureaucratic arm, has called for an urgent review of how the European Union should respond.

EU concerns

Brussels should be prepared to act "within days" if the sanctions are adopted "without EU concerns being taken into account," argued a position paper drafted by the European Commission dated July 19. The paper said the sanctions could affect the maintenance or upgrading of existing pipelines from Russia into Ukraine and elsewhere around the Caspian Sea.

It also raised concerns that unity could be broken between the United States and the European Union on how to deal with Russia over its annexation of Crimea



Russia has been greeting the prospect of a new round of American sanctions with a certain coolness, waiting to see what the White House will do and expecting reciprocal action by President Vladimir V. Putin.

and its sponsorship of warfare in eastern Ukraine.

The European Union — which does much more business with neighboring Russia than the United States does — imposed a series of sanctions on Russia, including on specific energy companies, beginning in 2014 over its actions in Ukraine.

The new sanctions would add punishments against Russian energy, financial, rail, shipping and metals and mining sectors.

The European Commission is seeking assurances from Washington that, if passed, the new measures would not be applied in a way that affects European Union interests or energy companies. It has suggested that European law could be used to prevent the application of "extraterritorial" measures by the United States, and it hinted at trade retaliation.

The tensions over the potential new sanctions on Russia come on top of other recent disputes on trade issues with the Trump administration.

Mr. Juncker earlier threatened rapid retaliation in response to Mr. Trump's contemplated new punitive tariffs on steel imports, which would affect more than a dozen countries, including some in Europe. "We are prepared to take up arms if need be," he said this month at the G-20

summit meeting in Hamburg.

"I don't want to tell you in detail what we're doing," Mr. Juncker said then. "But what I would like to tell you is that within a few days — we won't need two months for that — we could react with counter-measures."

Russia has been greeting the prospect of a new round of American sanctions with a certain coolness, waiting to see what the White House will do and expecting reciprocal action by President Vladimir V. Putin. Russian analysts have focused more on the sparring between Congress and Mr. Trump over Russia policy than on any fallout at home.

Depending on the final version of the bill, the most immediate impact is expected in the oil and gas sector, including deals involving Russian-state-run companies outside its borders, and on investments from abroad.

"The sanctions bill leaves no space for compromises and cements America's hostile policy toward Moscow for decades ahead," Ivan Timofeev, program director of the Valdai discussion club, a Kremlin effort to court Russian experts abroad, wrote on the group's website.

Russia often accuses the United States of using sanctions to further its own interests, and this time is no exception. Alexey Pushkov, a legislator and frequent com-

mentator on international relations, wrote on Twitter: "The exceptional nation wants to block Russian gas supplies to Europe and to sell expensive shale gas from the U.S. to its European servants. That's the entire 'morality' of Congress."

Russians appeared to be giving little credence to the idea that American anger over Russian cyberattacks during the election might be playing a role.

Mr. Trump has opposed further sanctions on Russia. The push has come from a Congress that wants to tie the president's hands on Russia and prevent him from lifting earlier sanctions imposed by President Barack Obama over Ukraine.

That earlier round of sanctions was carefully calibrated between the United States and its European allies to keep everyone on board and preserve a united response to Russia's land grab in Ukraine. Energy, which divides even European partners, was a crucial part of that calculus.

Nord Stream 2 is important for Germany. But it has been fiercely criticized by central and eastern Europeans. Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council and a former Polish prime minister, is a vocal critic of the pipeline, urging strict regulation of a project he has said would strengthen Moscow.

(Source: The NYT)

Africa's youth could transform governance on the continent

By Kristin Lord, Jon Temin

As August begins and many Washingtonians leave the city's notorious humidity, a remarkable group of people will be arriving. Next week, one thousand emerging African leaders will gather in our nation's capital as part of the Young African Leaders Initiative, an effort that began in 2010 and has aimed to strengthen bonds between the United States and Africa's next generation of leaders, and further enhance their leadership skills.

The gathering comes at a time when many Africans are asking questions about those charged with leading their countries.

Some of those questions concern the remarkable staying power of aging leaders. Ninety-three year-old Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, in office for thirty-seven years, often gets the most attention given his age, but he is only the third longest-serving head of state on the continent. Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and Angola's Jose Eduardo dos Santos have both been in office for almost thirty-eight years. In fact, the four longest serving leaders in the world are in Africa, as are seven of the top ten. This is all the more striking given that Africa has the youngest population in the world, with an average age of nineteen.

It may be no coincidence that the countries that these long-serving leaders rule — Zimbabwe, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon (led by Paul Biya, in office for thirty-five years) and Sudan (led by Omar al-Bashir, in power for twenty-eight years) — are some of the most troubled in Africa. Their leaders have done little to develop strong institutions of accountability or advance transparency, and have over many years in office used the state to serve their purposes and enrich their inner circles that support their hold on power.

These countries are robbed of the benefits of regular leadership rotation, which refreshes democratic institutions, creates opportunities for greater diversity in government and for new generations to rise, and holds leaders accountable since they know they will leave office when their term ends.

In several countries, long-serving leaders have recently changed the rules of the game concerning term



Africa's aging leaders are desperately clinging to power, and that stands in sharp contrast to the young profile of the continent

limits in order to extend their stay. Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, already in office for seventeen years, oversaw a referendum to change term limits that could allow him to stay in office until 2034. In neighboring Burundi, President Pierre Nkurunziza successfully evaded term limits built into the peace agreement that ended Burundi's civil war, which led directly to a new crisis and violence that has forced more than four hundred thousand people to flee the country.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, President Joseph Kabila is also working to evade term limits. Elections were scheduled for 2016, but Kabila's strategy of gerrymandering — essentially slowing the political process and putting many obstacles in the way of elections — has kept him in office despite widespread desire for change among Congolese. Congo has the largest land mass in sub-Saharan Africa and borders nine countries; as witnessed during Congo's devastating civil war that killed an estimated five million people in the 1990s and 2000s, political instability there can have wide-ranging consequences.

Despite these efforts, it is important to note that African citizens strongly support term limits. Surveys by the Afrobarometer across several dozen African countries show that about seventy-five percent of respondents support a two-term limit for their leaders.

These aging leaders' grip on power stands in sharp contrast to the young profile of the continent. Measured by the percentage of population under eighteen, twenty-eight of the thirty youngest countries in the world are in Africa. In many of those countries, a large portion of the population has known only one head of state. When leaders and those around them refuse to cede power, opportunities for young leaders to emerge and develop their skills are limited, leading some to seek opportunities abroad.

To be sure, there are countries and regions in Africa that have overcome strongman, personalist rule. Across West Africa, following the ouster of long-serving and erratic Gambian leader Yahya Jammeh, there now appears to be an institutional commitment to term limits, backed by populations who would reject any efforts to alter them.

Nor are these challenges unique to Africa. In Central Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere, countries are encumbered by the grip of long-serving leaders and their families. By comparison, democratic norms are more developed in much of Africa.

The young African leaders, formally known as the Mandela Washington Fellows, soon to arrive in Washington, DC are determined to see their countries succeed. They are twenty-five to thirty-five years of age and come from every country in sub-Saharan Africa. They are serving their countries, whether in national or local government, in the private sector or leading nonprofits. Eventually, their generation is going to take over from the aging leaders, and they will work to build the institutions and strengthen the democratic norms that are the foundation of free and prosperous societies. Such change is in the interest of the United States: America will benefit enormously from a more prosperous, stable and democratic Africa. Even more so, it is in the interest of Africans.

(Source: nationalinterest.org)

Empire of destruction: Precision warfare? Don't make me laugh

By Tom Engelhardt

You remember. It was supposed to be twenty-first-century war, American-style: precise beyond imagining; smart bombs; drones capable of taking out a carefully identified and tracked human being just about anywhere on Earth; special operations raids so pinpoint-accurate that they would represent a triumph of modern military science. Everything "networked." It was to be a glorious dream of limited destruction combined with unlimited power and success. In reality, it would prove to be a nightmare of the first order.

If you want a single word to summarize American war-making in this last decade and a half, I would suggest rubble. It's been a painfully apt term since September 11, 2001. In addition, to catch the essence of such war in this century, two new words might be useful: rubbleize and rubblelization. Let me explain what I mean.

In recent weeks, another major city in Iraq has officially been "liberated" (almost) from the militants of the Islamic State. However, the results of the U.S.-backed Iraqi military campaign to retake Mosul, that country's second largest city, don't fit any ordinary definition of triumph or victory. It began in October 2016 and, at nine months and counting, has been longer than the World War II battle of Stalingrad. Week after week, in street to street fighting, with U.S. airstrikes repeatedly called in on neighborhoods still filled with terrified Mosulites, unknown but potentially staggering numbers of civilians have died. More than a million people — yes, you read that figure correctly — were uprooted from their homes and major portions of the Western half of the city they fled, including its ancient historic sections, have been turned into rubble.

This should be the definition of victory as defeat, success as disaster. It's also a pattern. It's been the essential story of the American war on terror since, in the month after the 9/11 attacks, President George

chose to drive straight through "the gates of hell."

■ Rubblizing the greater Middle East

In the 15-plus years since 9/11, parts of an expanding swathe of the planet — from Pakistan's borderlands in South Asia to Libya in North Africa — were catastrophically unsettled. Tiny groups of Islamic terrorists multiplied exponentially into both local and transnational organizations, spreading across the region with the help of American "precision" warfare and the anger it stirred among helpless civilian populations. States began to totter or fail. Countries essentially collapsed, loosing a tide of refugees on the world, as year after year, the U.S. military, its Special Operations forces, and the CIA were increasingly deployed in one fashion or another in one country after another.

Though in case after case the results were visibly disastrous, like so many addicts, the three post-9/11 administrations in Washington seemed incapable of drawing the obvious conclusions and instead continued to do more of the same (with modest adjustments of one sort or another). The results, unsurprisingly enough, were similarly disappointing or disastrous.

Despite the doubts about such a form of global warfare that candidate Trump raised during the 2016 election campaign, the process has only escalated in the first months of his presidency. Washington, it seems, just can't help itself in its drive to pursue this version of war in all its grim imprecision to its increasingly imprecise but predictably destructive conclusions. Worse yet, if the leading military and political figures in Washington have their way, none of this may end in our lifetime. (In recent years, for example, the Pentagon and those who channel its thoughts have begun speaking of a "generational approach" or a "generational struggle" in Afghanistan.)

If anything, so many years after it was launched, the war on terror shows every sign of continuing to expand and rubble is



W. Bush loosed American air power on Afghanistan. That first air campaign began what has increasingly come to look like the full-scale rubblelization of significant parts of the Greater Middle East.

By not simply going after the crew who committed those attacks but deciding to take down the Taliban, occupy Afghanistan, and in 2003, invade Iraq, Bush's administration opened the proverbial can of worms in that vast region. An imperial urge to overthrow Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein, who had once been Washington's guy in the Middle East only to become its mortal enemy (and who had nothing whatsoever to do with 9/11), proved one of the fatal miscalculations of the imperial era.

So, too, did the deeply engrained fantasy of Bush administration officials that they controlled a high-tech, precision military that could project power in ways no other nation on the planet or in history ever had; a military that would be, in the president's words, "the greatest force for human liberation the world has ever known." With Iraq occupied and garrisoned (Korea-style) for generations to come, his top officials assumed that they would take down fundamentalist Iran (sound familiar?) and other hostile regimes in the region, creating a Pax Americana there. (Hence, the particular irony of the present Iranian ascendancy in Iraq.) In the pursuit of such fantasies of global power, the Bush administration, in effect, punched a devastating hole in the oil heartlands of the Middle East. In the pungent imagery of Abu Musa, head of the Arab League at the time, the U.S.

increasingly the name of the game. Here's a very partial tally sheet on the subject:

In addition to Mosul, a number of Iraq's other major cities and towns — including Ramadi and Fallujah — have also been reduced to rubble. Across the border in Syria, where a brutal civil war has been raging for six years, numerous cities and towns from Homs to parts of Aleppo have essentially been destroyed. Raqqa, the "capital" of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, is now under siege. (American Special Operations forces are already reportedly active inside its breached walls, working with allied Kurdish and Syrian rebel forces.) It, too, will be "liberated" sooner or later — that is to say, destroyed.

As in Mosul, Fallujah, and Ramadi, American planes have been striking ISIS positions in the urban heart of Raqqa and killing civilians, evidently in sizeable numbers, while rubblelizing parts of the city. And such activities have in recent years only been spreading. In distant Libya, for instance, the city of Sirte is in ruins after a similar struggle involving local forces, American air power, and ISIS militants. In Yemen, for the last two years the Saudis have been conducting a never-ending air campaign (with American support), significantly aimed at the civilian population; they have, that is, been rubblelizing that country, while paving the way for a devastating famine and a horrific cholera epidemic that can't be checked, given the condition of that impoverished, embattled land.

Only recently, this sort of destruction



If you want a single word to summarize American war-making in this last decade and a half, I would suggest rubble. It's been a painfully apt term since September 11, 2001.

has spread for the first time beyond the Greater Middle East and parts of Africa. In late May, on the island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines, local Muslim rebels identified with ISIS took Marawi City. Since they moved in, much of its population of 200,000 has been displaced and almost two months later they still hold parts of the city, while engaged in Mosul-style urban warfare with the Filipino military (backed by U.S. Special Operations advisers). In the process, the area has reportedly suffered Mosul-style rubblelization.

In most of these rubblelized cities and the regions around them, even when "victory" is declared, worse yet is in sight. In Iraq, for instance, with the "caliphate" of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi now being dismantled, ISIS remains a genuinely threatening guerrilla force, the Sunni and Shiite communities (including armed Shiite militias) show little sign of coming together, and in the north of the country the Kurds are threatening to declare an independent state. So fighting of various sorts is essentially guaranteed and the possibility of Iraq turning into a full-scale failed state or several devastated mini-states remains all too real, even as the Trump administration is reportedly pushing Congress for permission to construct and occupy new "temporary" military bases and other facilities in the country (and in neighboring Syria).

Worse yet, across the Greater Middle East, "reconstruction" is basically not even a concept. There's simply no money for it. Oil prices remain deeply depressed and, from Libya and Yemen to Iraq and Syria, countries are either too poor or too divided to begin the reconstruction of much of anything. Nor — and this is a given — will Donald Trump's America be launching the war-on-terror equivalent of a Marshall Plan for the region. And even if it did, the record of the post-9/11 years already shows that the highly militarized American version of "reconstruction" or "nation building" via crony warrior corporations in both Iraq and Afghanistan has been one of the great scams of our time. (More American taxpayer dollars have been poured into reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan alone than went into the whole of the Marshall Plan and it's painfully obvious how effective that proved to be.)

Of course, as in Syria's civil war, Washington is hardly responsible for all the destruction in the region. ISIS itself has been a remarkably destructive and brutal killing machine with its own impressive record of urban rubblelization. And yet most of the destruction in the region was triggered, at least, by the militarized dreams and plans of the Bush administration, by its response to 9/11 (which ended up being something like Osama bin Laden's dream scenario). Don't forget that ISIS's predecessor, al-Qa-

eda in Iraq, was a creature of the American invasion and occupation of that country and that ISIS itself was essentially formed in an American military prison camp in that country where its future caliph was confined.

And in case you think any lessons have been learned from all of this, think again. In the first months of the Trump administration, the U.S. has essentially decided on a new mini-surge of troops and air power in Afghanistan; deployed for the first time the largest non-nuclear weapon in its arsenal there; promised the Saudis more support in their war in Yemen; has increased its air strikes and special operations activities in Somalia; is preparing for a new U.S. military presence in Libya; increased U.S. forces and eased the rules for air strikes in civilian areas of Iraq and elsewhere; and sent U.S. special operators and other personnel in rising numbers into both Iraq and Syria.

No matter the president, the ante only seems to go up when it comes to the "war on terror," a war of imprecision that has helped uproot record numbers of people on this planet, with the usual predictable results: the further spread of terror groups, the further destabilization of state structures, rising numbers of displaced and dead civilians, and the rubblelization of expanding parts of the planet.

While no one would deny the destructive potential of great imperial powers historically, the American empire of destruction may be unique. At the height of its military strength in these years, it has been utterly incapable of translating that power advantage into anything but rubblelization.

**** Living in the rubble, a short history of the twenty-first century

Let me speak personally here, since I live in the remarkably protected and peaceful heart of that empire of destruction and in the very city where it all began. What eternally puzzles me is the inability of those who run that imperial machinery to absorb what's actually happened since 9/11 and draw any reasonable conclusions from it. After all, so much of what I've been describing seems, at this point, dismally predictable.

If anything, the "generational" nature of the war on terror and the way it became a permanent war of terror should by now seem too obvious for discussion. And yet, whatever he said on the campaign trail, President Trump promptly appointed to key positions the very generals who have long been immersed in fighting America's wars across the Greater Middle East and are clearly ready to do more of the same. Why in the world anyone, even those generals, should imagine that such an approach could result in anything more "successful" is beyond me.

(End of Part One)



Climate change and the catastrophe of Trumpism

By Sam Ben-Meir

In its attack on the very foundations of science, Trumpism constitutes an epistemic disaster: we are facing a crisis in terms of knowledge and objective inquiry. Epistemology (or the theory of knowledge) is concerned with, among other things, what right we have to the beliefs we hold — in other words, it is a normative enterprise: it asks not merely the descriptive-psychological question of how people happen to come to acquire their beliefs, but rather how they should do so. When the disinterested pursuit of knowledge is in effect denied and dismissed by our nation's most powerful office, then it seems accurate to say that we are indeed facing a crisis of knowledge and science: an attack upon the very foundation of civil discourse.

On January 20th — the very moment Trump took office — all White House websites were scrubbed of information regarding climate change. The only mention was the following:

"President Trump is committed to eliminating harmful and unnecessary policies such as the Climate Action Plan."

In March, Scott Pruitt, Trump's appointed director of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), argued on CNBC that

"human activity [is not the] primary contributor to the global warming that we see."

In recent months, this illusion has led to further censorship of official websites, in which historical and factual information related to climate change has been removed. These changes are designed to deliberately politicize the most pressing crisis facing the U.S. and the world; by divesting the EPA of its regulatory functions these changes serve only to promote corporate interests.

The decision to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement was short-sighted and reckless; driven not by an honest assessment of the consequences of climate change, but instead by both a blind desire to undo Obama's legacy wherever possible, as well as a hunger for short-term profits at the expense of geopolitical, social, and economic structures. The reality of anthropogenic climate change is no longer an object of serious scientific contention. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2013 Summary for Policymakers states,

"Human influence in the climate system is clear..." as evidenced in the "...warming of the atmosphere and ocean, in changes in the global water cycle, in reductions in snow and ice, in global mean sea level rise, and in changes in some climate extremes."

The refusal to acknowledge human-caused climate change is a denial in the face of overwhelming evidence.

The refusal to acknowledge human-caused climate change is a denial in the face of overwhelming evidence.

Trump's readiness to allow himself to hold beliefs that are motivated solely by self-interest and his complete disregard for the weight of evidence reflects not only an epistemic failure, but also a moral one. The philosopher William Clifford argued that to believe anything, anywhere, at any time on insufficient evidence is a moral wrong. With its basic assumption that knowledge is reducible to perception, Trumpism has created conditions in which our elected administration feels entitled to edit away inconvenient facts. In its defunding of climate change research (on May 5th, Congress ratified a federal budget that reduces EPA-funding for Earth science university research grants) and its flagrant reduction of climate change data and references from White House and EPA websites, the administration is acting in ways that willfully ignore a reality which is already upon us.

The scientific has predicted that we may be entering into the sixth mass extinction in the history of Earth — an event that will trigger a loss of biodiversity of unspeakable proportions. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment,

"By the end of the century, climate change and its impacts may be the dominant direct driver of biodiversity loss and changes in ecosystem services globally."

As biodiversity decreases there will undoubtedly be alarming consequences. This includes disruptions in the food chains — for example, changes in the insect species will decrease plant pollination. Further, the diminished plant diversity will impact our ability to produce essential medications to care for our aging population. Finally, naturally occurring biodiversity protects our planet from natural disasters, without which, our forests and coastlines more vulnerable than ever.

As Theodore Roosevelt observed, "the loss is like the loss of a gallery of the masterpieces of the artists of old time."

The diversity and richness of life forms have value in themselves, as organs created by Nature to perceive Nature. With the extinction of a species the world itself has diminished in richness — for not only is it no longer perceived or approached in the way specific to the form of life, but the very interiority of Nature, we might say, has been reduced.

The administration's response to what is currently happening is a moral outrage — and it was made possible by a readiness to forsake our epistemic duty to follow where the evidence leads. We are in the midst of a moral and epistemic crisis: this administration has to be held fully accountable for its foolish decision to ignore the reality and mock the scientific consensus.

Trump disgraces this nation everyday with his rejection of basic decency, his gross and palpable lying, his use of cruelty and humiliation in place of rational argumentation. In attacking the media and the freedom of the press, he disgraces his office: using it only to aggrandize himself and punish those with whom his personal interests conflict. But history may yet determine that his greatest disgrace was to willfully and gratuitously ignore the reality of anthropogenic climate change when the time to act was at its most critical.

(Source: Global Research)

Don't forget that ISIS's predecessor, al-Qaeda in Iraq, was a creature of the American invasion and occupation of that country and that ISIS itself was essentially formed in an American military prison camp in that country where its future caliph was confined.

How NATO can take on the threats of the future

By Elisabeth Braw

Last month Sweden and Finland — the two neighbors and long-time proponents of neutrality — joined a military formation. On June 30, their defense ministers and UK defense secretary Michael Fallon signed the accession of Sweden and Finland to the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), a British-led outfit that also includes Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithu-

ania, the Netherlands and Norway. The JEF, as it's known, is one of several military mini-alliances now operating in Europe. And that's good news for NATO.

The JEF is a high-readiness force tasked with quickly responding to emergencies around the world. It's also a very recent multinational formation. It was launched only two years ago and JEF's members are still adding to its capabilities. Also, it is scheduled to become fully operational next

year, which means that it could deploy ten thousand troops to military or humanitarian crises.

Britain uses its expeditionary troops for another joint force, the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, which it operates with France. The CJEF, part of the so-called Lancaster House military cooperation treaty signed by the two countries seven years ago, likewise deploys troops to crises; a recent exercise involved more than five thousand troops.

Europe's military mini-formations

In fact, these days Europe has a host of military mini-formations. The EU operates battle groups with the same task as the JEF and CJEF forces, though those EU forces are smaller. On the day before they signed the JEF agreement, Sweden and Finland's defense ministers signed a military cooperation treaty with Germany. Germany and France, in turn, operate a joint brigade, **→13**

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Coconut oil, saturated fat, and your health

Putting this popular ingredient in perspective

By Joel Kahn

Considering the recent barrage of headlines regarding adding coconut oil to your diet for health (some pro, some con), you might imagine that the average consumption of coconut oil in the United States was on par with that of milk or cheese. In reality, the numbers seem to indicate otherwise.

Coconut consumption per capita in the United States is about 1.5 pounds a year (that includes oil and all other products).

By contrast, cheese consumption amongst Americans is about 35 pounds per year—more than 20 times higher. Even more impressive is the statistic that, in 2014 in the United States, the average consumption of animal flesh (red meat, poultry, shellfish, and fish) was 181 pounds per citizen, or 100 times more than coconut. And to top it all off, we ate 239 pounds of dairy (excluding cheese) per year per capita, or 150 times the humble coconut.

Why is coconut oil in the news?

That is a good question. The hype mainly stems from a document released by the American Heart Association's Presidential Advisory entitled "Dietary Fats and Cardiovascular Disease."

A panel of a dozen well-known and respected researchers from Harvard, Tufts, Northwestern, and other universities was asked to review older and recent research on the relationship between foods higher in saturated fats, like meat, butter, cheese, and dairy, and heart disease risk.

Given the news coverage, you might have thought that all the American Heart Association addressed was the topic of coconut oil. Hardly a whimper has been heard in the press about the detailed analysis concluding that reducing foods rich in animal saturated fats and replacing them with plant-based substitutes, particularly as it relates to choosing a vegetable oil over butter or lard, was the most important recommendation.

Media seemed to zero in on a single paragraph that said, "because coconut oil increases LDL cholesterol, a cause of CVD, and has no known offsetting favorable effects, we advise against the use of coconut oil."

That was it—just 25 words and four scientific references out of thousands of words, 25 pages, and nearly 200 references included in the document.

Cuckoo for coconut oil

In my opinion, the AHA advisors were responsible in highlighting the potential health risks of adding coconut oil into the diet. The ingredient has been dubiously advocated by many fitness and nutrition advisors and garnered a place in many people's diets that it doesn't really deserve. However, you probably do not eat all that much coconut oil to begin with.



The long-term reduction in heart attack and heart death risk that comes with swapping butter and high-fat milk for alternatives lower or free of animal saturated fat, like almond milk and vegetable oil spreads, favors your heart health, too.

Highlighting this as the takeaway of this advisory shifts attention away from what you should really focus on to improve the odds that you will remain free of heart disease. Here are some comments and conclusions from the AHA paper that you likely haven't heard in your evening news report—information that is far more important than the headlines about coconut oil.

Cheese isn't special: The Presidential Advisory evaluated the role of cheese, a food high in animal saturated fat.

It has been suggested that, because cheese is fermented before eating, it may not affect heart disease risk as much as other, non-fermented dairy products. The researchers' conclusion? There is no data to support this.

It would be prudent to cut down or cut out full-fat dairy as a strategy to reduce your dietary intake of animal saturated fat. There are many tasty cheese-like products, some quite elegant and mimicking Brie, Camembert, and other favorites, made from nuts and seeds available in grocery stores and online.

Watch Your Intake of Full-fat Milk and Butter: Though you probably couldn't

tell from the headlines, the authors had opinions that favored reducing or replacing these items to lower your intake of animal saturated fat.

The most powerful statement they included focused on an effort in the 1970s in Finland that set out to deal with the highest rate of heart attacks in the Western world:

"A successful nationwide health project to lower the very high rate of CHD (coronary heart disease) mortality, started in 1972, had as a major goal the reduction in the high intake of saturated fat. The project reduced intake of high-fat milk and butter, which lowered serum cholesterol by 13 percent in men and 18 percent in women. By 1992, CHD death rates decreased by 55 percent in men and 68 percent in women."

This is an important message for your health. The long-term reduction in heart attack and heart death risk that comes with swapping butter and high-fat milk for alternatives lower or free of animal saturated fat, like almond milk and vegetable oil spreads, favors your heart health, too.

Don't forget about meat

Meat consumption was not specifically

discussed in detail by the AHA Advisory. As you may be aware, animal meats, both red and white, whether processed and unprocessed, have high amounts of saturated fats. Indeed, four of the top 10 sources of saturated fats in the diet are meat, particularly bacon and chicken. If you want to transition your diet to a more heart healthy one, reducing or eliminating meats is advisable.

We know the key elements of a healthy human diet, and they have been outlined by the Harvard School of Public Health, the True Health Initiative, and others. It's important to pay attention to reliable headlines, but be sure that you put them in context and keep focused on what's most important when it comes to preserving your health.

Try to eat less meat, butter, and cheese, and find replacements like beans, vegetable oil spreads free of trans fats, and nut-based cheeses. Add in more fruits and vegetables to every meal and as snacks. And if you want to use coconut oil in your smoothie and you are free of heart disease and diabetes mellitus, use a pinch (not a pound).

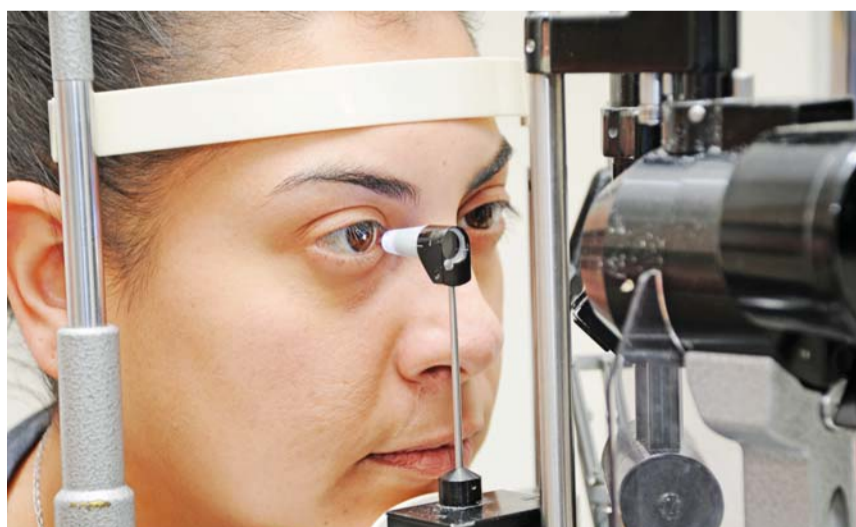
(Source: verywell.com)

5 ways to protect your eyes from AMD

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a condition in which the macula, the part of the eye that's responsible for your sharpest and most detailed vision, begins to thin and break down, causing vision loss. If left untreated, it can lead to blindness.

There is no surefire way to prevent AMD. However, there are things you can do to delay its onset or reduce its severity. Here are 5 of our favorites:

- Smoking can speed up AMD damage. If you smoke, quit.
- Sunlight is thought to possibly promote AMD. Protect your eyes from the sun by wearing sunglasses and broad-brimmed hats.
- Research also suggests that certain nutrients help prevent macular degeneration. Eat a diet rich in fresh fruits and dark-green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, collard greens, and kale. The latter are especially rich in lutein and zeaxanthin, which are the key for eye health.
- If you have intermediate or advanced dry AMD, or any stage of the "wet" form of AMD, ask your doctor about supplements. For example, people at high risk of developing the advanced stages of the "wet" form of AMD may lower their risk by taking



high-dose combinations of antioxidant vitamins and minerals.

- It's unclear whether omega-3 supplements are beneficial for AMD. But eating fish and other foods high in these nutrients may still be worthwhile

for preserving optimal vision and overall good health.

Do I need to worry about floaters?

"Floaters" is a catchall term for what look like dots, threads, or cobwebs

drifting across your line of vision.

Floaters are tiny clusters of cells or flecks of protein that form in the vitreous, the fluid that fills the eyeball. What you're actually seeing is the shadow these bits cast on the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye that allows us to see. Some people also see flashes of light. These occur when the vitreous bumps, rubs, or tugs against the retina. Most floaters and flashes are harmless and occur as a result of normal aging and shrinking of the vitreous.

Sometimes, though, the shrinking vitreous tugs on the retina and pulls away from it a little bit. This is called vitreous detachment. It triggers new floaters and flashes. Vitreous detachment usually doesn't threaten vision. In about 15% of cases, vitreous detachment tears the retina. That tear can lead to a detached retina, a much more serious condition that can lead to vision loss.

If you notice new floaters or flashes, call your doctor and arrange to see an eye specialist (ophthalmologist) as soon as possible. Prompt treatment can help prevent retinal detachment — and protect your sight.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

How to overcome procrastination so you can enjoy your life

By Rudolf Zimmerer

You sit behind your desk, overwhelmed by the list of things you know you have to do today.

Your conscience is nagging you, asking "Why was I so lazy yesterday? Why didn't I get anything done? Now, I have to pay for it... what can I tell my boss, when the job's not done?"

It can be overwhelming.

You procrastinate because you don't enjoy your life and have lost your balance.

If you enjoyed your life and the tasks you set yourself, you wouldn't procrastinate.

But that's easier said than done.

A major cause of procrastination is that your rebellious Inner Child sabotages your working hours because it wants playtime and fun and expression.

We all have an Inner Child and a Superego inside of us. Both have different desires, and you should try to balance their wishes. Otherwise, you get frustrated, stranded, overworked, and unhappy.

When you procrastinate, your Superego wants to fulfill certain tasks, and the Inner Child wants playtime. Your Inner Child loves to have love and rock'n'roll instead of facing tasks you know you have to complete.

The Superego yearns to fit into society. It wants prestige and wealth. However, if you constantly ignore the desires of your Inner Child for those of your Superego, it will procrastinate and sabotage your efforts.

Stress works.

Imagine you are under stress, you can't work and the deadline draws closer. At the last minute, you somehow find the will to finish that task. Why? Your Inner Child is terrified, and at the end, it agrees.

In the meantime, you have wasted your precious time, instead of making the most of it. You have mixed up your leisure time and your working hours.

It has been said that one of the worst sins is to waste time, because no one can buy time back!

It's a vicious circle. — Instead of forgiving yourself and enjoying your life, you punish yourself and make everything worse.

If you had allowed your Inner Child to get enough playtime - for instance playing with the kids or being creative - you would enjoy your work.

If you suppress your Inner Child, you can never enjoy your life. You need to make the choice to embrace your Inner Child.

Forgive yourself

You should forgive yourself for having a little 'you' time. Schedule a time for guilt-free joy and fun, so that you are motivated to work.

As a student I was under tremendous pressure to pass my examinations. One day a friend asked me, "How can you study so hard and yet understand so little?"

I answered "because I am stupid." He agreed and told me I was putting myself under too much pressure. "You need to have some fun time" he told me.

I took his advice. Even though I had to do my thesis, I spent 3 days windsurfing and swimming. Afterwards I easily worked for 16 hours straight to finish my thesis because I was relaxed and motivated.

If you are working under pressure, you are losing 80% of your creativity. Use your Inner Child to become creative.

When I write my blog, my Inner Child is happy because it loves to write or to be creative. So schedule and frame your job so that your Inner Child will enjoy the play and the work...

How to deal with your Inner Child?

Every time you think "you have to" or "you must do" you put your Inner Child under pressure and it will rebel, like every infant.

Instead of using negative commands to coerce, use positive ones to lead. This is Behavioral Psychology 101.

Start with joy and then work! Go to bed early and get up early, so that you have enough time to enjoy the morning.

When you get up in the morning, start with self-massage, body exercise, Chi- Gong Yoga, or Meditation. Or start with body-exercise, enjoy your breakfast, and if possible, cycle to your work.

When you come back from work, have your fun and pleasure time already planned. Even if you are frustrated with your job, you will be looking forward to enjoying your leisure time.

And that is crucial.

Enjoy your life!!

If you can schedule your working hours, limit yours to 45 minutes at a time. Afterwards take some time out for 10 minutes, work again or enjoy your leisure time. Brendon Burchard for example works 45 minutes and then does 10 minutes Chi-Gong.

After a while it will feel unnatural to work for longer than 45 minutes at one go, and your problems with procrastination will be over.

Say yes, to your incredible Inner Child, give your Inner Child the pleasure that it needs and work motivated!

Ask yourself what you love to do now and do it... Afterwards, work for a 3/4 hours no more. Then stop, relax and pause for a while and then start working again. What you love to do?

After your job enjoy your life.

Life is too short to waste your time...

(Source: goodlifezen.com)

Certain nutrients help prevent macular degeneration. Eat a diet rich in fresh fruits and dark-green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, collard greens, and kale.

10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

Here are high rated IT titles in the world that reviewed by savvy tech users:

1 WhatsApp had 1 billion active users per month last year. Now it has 1 billion active users per day. The monthly active users have grown from 1 billion to 1.3 billion. The more interesting metric is the messages sent daily - that's a whopping 55 billion. Add to that the 4.5 billion photos and 1 billion videos shared daily and you've got a very active social network.

2 Amazon already has lockers in various public locations that you can use to receive packages. The e-commerce titan has launched a new service that offers to install "Hubs" in condos, apartment buildings and complexes for use exclusively by people who live there.

3 3-HMD now owns 500 Nokia design patents, including one for the Lumia Camera UI. This top of the line offering may have something rather unexpected under its sleeve: the famous Lumia Camera UI, long hailed by many as one of the most intuitive in the business.

4 Google hires Essential's head of User Experience. Liron Damir was once the lead designer for Pebble and WebOS. His most recent position was at Essential as head of UX (User experience) which focused on the way customers interacted with the products. Damir's departure follows that of another executive on the Essential team, which, honestly, doesn't look very good for the startup smartphone company.

5 Researchers make biomedical adhesive inspired by slug slime. It's super sticky, but also really tough and flexible. A defensive mucus created by Arion subfuscus slugs has a makeup that's ideal for medical adhesives. It's really sticky, but also very tough and flexible.

6 Last month, a Senate committee created a proposal to allow autonomous vehicles onto the roads under specific safety and "tech neutral" requirements. Now that the bill has hit House of Representatives, the bipartisan Energy and Commerce Committee voted to send it along to the full chamber. SELF DRIVE, is aimed at allowing companies like Uber and Google to test up to 100,000 autonomous vehicles across the country.

7 Earlier this week, Adobe announced it would cease support and development of Flash at the end of 2020, a decision that had many people saying, "Finally." The "Flash is dead" rhetoric has been around for years, and people like Facebook's chief security officer, Alex Stamos, have called for Adobe to set an end-of-life date for some time.

8 LG Electronics published the financial results for the second quarter of this year. The revenue went up 4% year over year to \$12.89 billion while the operating income was 13.6% higher, \$0.59 billion. Most of that was made by the Home Appliance division - it brought in \$0.41 billion of operating income on a revenue of \$4.65 billion. LG Mobile posted an operating loss of \$0.12 billion on a revenue of \$2.39 billion, about the same numbers as a year ago. Lower than expected sales of LG flagships coupled with rising component costs were the major hurdle.

9 Huawei published its results for the first half of 2017, and the numbers certainly look promising - 73 million shipped phones for six months and 36% increase in revenue YoY. A breakdown of smartphone shipments reveals 8.5 million Huawei Mate 9 and Huawei Mate 9 Pro units were moved. At second come the P10 and the P10 Plus with 6 million shipments. The one-month old Honor 9 already reached 1 million sales.

10 YouTube's head of music, Lyor Cohen, has confirmed that Google Music and YouTube Red need to be merged in order to educate consumers and bring in new subscribers. This should come in some sort of unification and/or rebranding of the subscription service.

Foxconn plans to open a factory in the US

Taiwan-based manufacturer Foxconn, most popular for manufacturing the Apple iPhone plans to build a 20-million sq.ft facility in Wisconsin for LCD panel development. The investment will cost around \$10 billion and will open around 3,000 jobs.



LCD panels are currently integrated into all iPhones and iPads, but Apple stated on multiple occasions that it would like to switch to OLED. It even purchased machinery for in-house OLED development for the 2018 iPhone.

The location of the factory was announced by the US president Donald Trump, while Foxconn CEO Terry Gou did not confirm just yet. He only stated he is glad that Foxconn would receive \$3 billion in tax breaks and subsidies.

If such factory is confirmed, it might take Foxconn up to 4 years to complete it. The whole process would employ more than 10,000 people and create 3,000 permanent jobs. Foxconn has a bad history of promises since in 2013 it said it would invest \$30 million and hire 500 workers, but that never happened.

(Source: nytimes)

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos - briefly - becomes world's richest man

The founder of Amazon, Jeff Bezos briefly overtook Microsoft's Bill Gates to become the world's richest person.

Bezos leapfrogged Gates, who has been the richest man on the planet since 2013, after a rise in the share price of Amazon ahead of its latest results due Thursday night.

According to a real-time billionaires index compiled by Forbes, the rise pushed the value of Bezos's fortune to \$91bn (£69bn) - compared with Gates' wealth of \$90bn. Their riches are calculated on the share prices of their respective companies and at the current values Bezos's stake is twice as big as carmaker Ford.

But the Amazon share price fell back leaving Gates on top, but with less than \$1bn separating them.

Bezos - born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1964 - keeps a relatively low profile, but has used some of the wealth he has amassed to buy the Washington Post and invest in space travel through Blue Origin, a company he founded in 2000.

He began Amazon in 1994 when he sold books from his garage in Seattle before expanding into a huge range of other products and capturing the global rush to online shopping.

Amazon now accounts for 43% of everything sold online in the US and 64 million people have signed up for its Prime service - which gives access to free deliveries and video streaming. Amazon



shares have soared this year - making the company worth more than \$500bn.

At the start of 2017, Bezos was ranked fourth-richest in the world, behind Gates, the investor Warren Buffett and Amancio Ortega, who founded Inditex, the company behind retailer Zara.

The share price rally comes despite accusations by Donald Trump, during the US election campaign, that Amazon was "getting away with murder, tax-wise". He said Bezos was using the Washington Post for "political influence".

In January, Bezos pledged the full legal resources of his company to fight the trav-

el ban instituted by the new US president against seven Muslim-majority nations.

Amazon floated on the stock market in 1997. Every year Bezos reprints the letter he sent to shareholders that year, insisting it is only Day 1 for the company and pledging to focus on the long-term and be the market leader.

He has not joined the club of billionaires who pledge to hand over the majority of fortunes to charity - started by Gates and his wife, along with Buffett - but recently tweeted to ask for philanthropic ideas to help in the short term, which he said was in contrast to his long-

term approach to running the business.

"I want much of my philanthropic activity to be helping people in the here and now - short term - at the intersection of urgent need and lasting impact."

Forbes started tracking billionaires in 1987 and Bezos is the seventh person to hold the title of the world's richest person. In a report on his rise to the top of the rankings, Forbes said Bezos would not be at the top if Gates had not given so much of his wealth away and has calculated that Gates has been the richest person in the world for more than half the 30 years it had been watching the wealth of billionaires.

The closing share price of Amazon and Microsoft on Thursday will determine whether Bezos cements his position at the top of the league. Microsoft's shares were down on Thursday.

Technology stocks have been outpacing the rest of the US stock market, but wobbled last month amid concerns that the sector might run of steam. Amazon and others then started to rally again. It remains to be seen whether Bezos is able to permanently claim the top slot.

Amazon has now expanded beyond retailing. It now sells cloud computing services to thousands of businesses ranging from Netflix to the UK's ministry of justice. It also makes TV shows and the Echo smart speaker, which allows users to speak to Alexa, an electronic personal assistant.

(Source: Guardian)

Huawei Mate 10 will seriously challenge Apple's iPhone 8



Huawei is currently the world's number 3 smartphone manufacturer, and the Chinese company doesn't show any signs of slowing down.

Huawei's CEO Richard Yu told Bloomberg in an interview that his company is readying an answer to Apple's iPhone 8, which is expected to be unveiled later this fall.

The answer is called Huawei Mate 10, a new flagship that will be revealed around the same timeframe as the Apple iPhone 8.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Apple gets rid of iPod nano and shuffle



Apple has dropped the number of iPods it sells to just one, the Apple iPod touch. Today, the company removed the iPod nano and iPod shuffle from its website.

This has been confirmed by a statement from Apple, and the company has already made the appropriate changes on its website.

For the Apple iPod touch, this is the first update since 2015. The device will now be offered with 32GB of native storage for \$199, and with 128GB of storage for \$299.

(Source: Apple)

'Modern Warfare Remastered' hits Xbox and PC



It's no secret that including the remastered version of the first Call of Duty: Modern Warfare helped sell copies of the latest in the series, Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare. Unfortunately, you could only get the revival in an \$80 bundle with the new game -- until Activision bowed to demand and planned a standalone version of the remastered 2007 classic, which came out exclusively for PS4 last month. After a grace period, the game is now out on Steam, and Xbox One for \$40.

(Source: windowscentral)

'Criminal mastermind' of \$4bn bitcoin laundering scheme arrested

The Russian "internationally sought 'mastermind' of a crime organization" accused of laundering more than \$4bn in bitcoin, including funds obtained from the hack of failed bitcoin exchange Mt Gox, has been arrested in Greece.

A US jury indicted Alexander Vinnik on Wednesday after his arrest in a small beachside village in northern Greece on Tuesday, following an investigation led by the US justice department along with several other federal agencies and task forces.

Vinnik was described by the justice department as the operator of BTC-e, an exchange used to trade the digital currency bitcoin since 2011, which was allegedly used to launder more than \$4bn for people involved in crimes ranging from computer hacking to drug trafficking.

US authorities also linked him to the failure of Mt

Gox, the Japan-based bitcoin exchange that collapsed in 2014 after being hacked. Vinnik "obtained" funds from the hack of Mt Gox and laundered them through BTC-e and Tradehill, another San Francisco-based exchange he owned, they said in the statement.

"Just as new computer technologies continue to change the way we engage each other and experience the world, so too will criminals subvert these new technologies to serve their own nefarious purposes," said Brian Stretch, US attorney for the Northern District of California.

Vinnik's arrest is the latest in a series of US operations against Russian cybercriminals in Europe, including the taking down of two of the biggest dark web marketplaces for drugs, guns and other illicit items, AlphaBay and Hansa, last week.

The prosecutions also coincide with intensified scrutiny of Russian hackers after US intelligence officials determined that Russia interfered in the 2016 US presidential election using cyber-warfare methods to help Donald Trump, something Moscow denies.

During his time in the digital currency market, US authorities allege Vinnik facilitated crimes including hacking, fraud, identity theft, tax refund fraud, public corruption and drug trafficking. Greek police described Vinnik as a "an internationally sought 'mastermind' of a crime organization".

BTC-e, which has been out of service for more than a day, attributed this to "unplanned maintenance". In a tweet on Wednesday after the arrest of Vinnik, BTC-e said it would restore service in the next five to 10 days.

(Source: Guardian)

Apple granted approval to test its 5G



The FCC has approved an application for Apple to begin testing its 5G technology, which means the company is joining a number of others already working towards bringing 5G to the masses. Sprint is looking to launch its 5G service in 2019, while T-Mobile is shooting for 2020. AT&T and Verizon are making

moves towards 5G networks as well.

Apple's application doesn't provide any details on how its 5G service would work in practice, but it has been granted access to test its technology in two locations near its California offices until August, 2018.

(Source: DSLreports)

Scientists can turn crystals into reusable electrical conductors



For some time, scientists have been experimenting with crystals to see if they can become a new kind of memory storage. Now, scientists at Washington State University have figured how to make a transparent crystal conduct electricity. What's more, it can be reconfigured and reused multiple times.

The effects -- an 1,000x increase in the crystal's electric conductivity -- persist for up to one year. One of the scientists then used a laser to etch a line into the crystal, which carried a current when electrical contacts were placed at both ends.

(Source: Nature)

Astrophysicists map out the light energy contained within the Milky Way

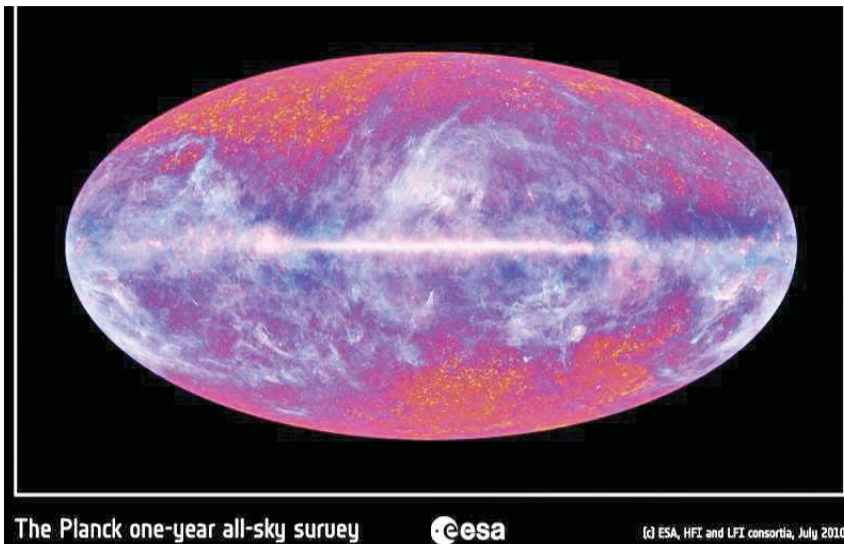
For the first time, a team of scientists have calculated the distribution of all light energy contained within the Milky Way, which will provide new insight into the make-up of our galaxy and how stars in spiral galaxies such as ours form. The study is published in the journal *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*.

This research, conducted by astrophysicists at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), in collaboration with colleagues from the Max Planck Institute for Nuclear Physics in Heidelberg, Germany and from the Astronomical Institute of the Romanian Academy, also shows how the stellar photons, or stellar light, within the Milky Way control the production of the highest energy photons in the Universe, the gamma-rays.

This was made possible using a novel method involving computer calculations that track the destiny of all photons in the galaxy, including the photons that are emitted by interstellar dust, as heat radiation.

■ Distribution of all light

Previous attempts to derive the distribution of all light in the Milky Way based on star counts have failed to account for the all-sky images of the Milky Way, including recent images provided by the European Space Agency's Planck Space



The Planck one-year all-sky survey ESA, HFI and LFI consortia, July 2010

Observatory, which map out heat radiation or infrared light.

Lead author Prof Cristina Popescu from the University of Central Lancashire, said: "We have not only determined the

distribution of light energy in the Milky Way, but also made predictions for the stellar and interstellar dust content of the Milky Way."

By tracking all stellar photons and mak-

An understanding of these processes is a crucial step towards gaining a complete picture of our Galaxy and its history.

ing predictions for how the Milky Way should appear in ultraviolet, visual and heat radiation, scientists have been able to calculate a complete picture of how stellar light is distributed throughout our Galaxy.

An understanding of these processes is a crucial step towards gaining a complete picture of our Galaxy and its history.

■ Nuclear physics

The modelling of the distribution of light in the Milky Way follows on from previous research that Prof Popescu and Dr. Richard Tuffs from the Max Planck Institute for Nuclear Physics conducted on modelling the stellar light from other galaxies, where the observer has an outside view.

Commenting on the research, Dr. Tuffs, one of the co-authors of the paper, said: "It has to be noted that looking at galaxies from outside is a much easier task than looking from inside, as in the case of our Galaxy."

Scientists have also been able to show how the stellar light within our Galaxy affects the production of gamma-ray photons through interactions with cosmic rays. Cosmic rays are high-energy electrons and protons that control star and planet formation and the processes governing galactic evolution.

(Source: *phys.org*)

Slimy slug mucus inspires glue which can mend internal injuries without stitches

Slimy slug mucus has inspired a new glue which can stick to slippery surfaces in the body and could end the need for stitches.

For decades, scientists have attempted to invent an adhesive which can repair tears in bodily tissues, which are often covered in blood.

Super-glue has been used for decades to close wounds, but it has never been able to help with internal injuries because it is too toxic to cells and will not stick to tissue.

■ Internal organs

Now researchers at Imperial College London and scientists in the U.S. have created a super-strong glue which is as tough as cartilage, but which can cling internal organs.

The design is based on slug mucus from the Dusky Arion species, which oozes a special kind of slime which prevents predators prying it from a surface.

A new, flexible adhesive material inspired by the glue secreted by slugs adheres to biological tissues (even when wet) without causing toxicity, and can be formed into either sheets (teal blue) or custom shapes (dark blue).

The slug slime is so effective because it contains positively charged proteins, which are attracted to the

ground, or wall.

To create a similar mucus, the scientists made a water-based gel with positively charged molecules protruding from the surface, which create a static attraction with the negatively charged cells in the body.

"Nature has frequently already found elegant solutions to common problems," said Donald Ingber, Professor of Vascular Biology at Harvard Medical School.

"It's a matter of knowing where to look and recognizing a good idea when you see one.

"We are excited to see how this technology, inspired by a humble slug, might develop into a new technology for surgical repair and wound healing."

■ Pig skin

The researchers tested their glue on dry and wet pig skin, cartilage, arteries, and tissue from the heart and liver, and found that it bound to all of them.

The adhesive also maintained its bonding when implanted into rats for two weeks, or when used to seal a hole in a pig heart that was mechanically inflated and deflated and then subjected to tens of thousands of cycles of stretching.

It also caused no tissue damage when applied to a liver hemorrhage in mice, which would usually be closed



by stitches.

Researchers believe it could be turned into a sticky patch, like a sticking plaster, that can be cut to size and applied to tissue surfaces or as an injectable solution for deeper injuries.

"This family of tough adhesives has wide-ranging applications," said Dr. Adam Celiz, of the Department of Bioengineering at Imperial.

(Source: *The Telegraph*)

Color-changing electronic skin developed by scientists in China

While science has been able to replicate the ability of animals such as chameleons, octopus and squids to change color with artificial skin, the color changes are often only visible to the naked eye when the material is put under huge mechanical strain.

Skin, electronic skin color changing, electronic skin, chameleons, robotics, science and technology, tech news Scientists have developed a user-interactive color changing electronic skin inspired by chameleons that could be used in robotics, prosthetics and wearables.

While science has been able to replicate the ability of animals such as chameleons, octopus and squids to change color with artificial skin, the color changes are often

only visible to the naked eye when the material is put under huge mechanical strain.

■ Type of electronic skin

Now, researchers from Tsinghua University in China have developed a new type of user-interactive electronic skin, with a color change perceptible to the human eye, and achieved it with a much-reduced level of strain.

The team employed flexible electronics made from graphene, in the form of a highly-sensitive resistive strain sensor, combined with a stretchable organic electrochromic device.

Researchers explored the substrate (underlying) effect on the electro-mechanical behavior of graphene.

To obtain good performance with a simple process and reduced cost, they designed a structure to use graphene as both the highly sensitive strain-sensing element and the insensitive stretchable electrode of the electric current density (ECD) layer.

"We found subtle strain – between zero and 10 per cent – was enough to cause an obvious color change, and the RGB (red green blue) value of the color quantified the magnitude of the applied strain," said Tingting Yang from Tsinghua University.

■ High transparency

"Graphene, with its high transparency, rapid carrier transport, flexibility and large specific surface area, shows application potential for flexible electronics, including

stretchable electrodes, super capacitor, sensors, and optical devices," said Hongwei Zhu, professor at Tsinghua University.

However, our results also show that the mechanical property of the substrate was strongly relevant to the performance of the strain sensing materials, Zhu said.

"It's important to note that the capability we found for interactive color changes with such a small strain range has been rarely reported before.

This user-interactive e-skin should be promising for applications in wearable devices, robots and prosthetics in the future," Yang added. The study was published in the journal *2D Materials*.

(Source: *Indian Express*)

Research at Kennedy Space Center to produce sonic booms

A NASA aircraft darting over the edge of the Space Coast at supersonic speeds in August is expected to create window-rattling sonic booms for aeronautical research, according to the agency. Teams from NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center in California and Langley Research Center in Virginia are expected to converge on Kennedy Space Center to better understand how low-altitude atmospheric turbulence affects sonic booms.

Beginning August 21, a NASA-operated F/A-18 Hornet will take off from KSC's Shuttle Landing Facility and vault to an altitude of 32,000 feet just off the coast of Cape Canaveral before racing to Mach 1, the speed of sound, to pro-

duce sonic booms. A TG-14 motorized glider equipped with dozens of microphones will deploy to a lower altitude, cut its engines to reduce ambient noise, and record the sonic booms for review by researchers.

"Our goal is to get data on 33 sonic booms," said Matt Kamlet, a public affairs officer with the Armstrong Flight Research Center, also noting that testing should end on August 31 depending on weather conditions. That likely means two to three flights per day.

While sonic booms generate immense amounts of energy, residents in the north part of Brevard County need not worry - the shockwaves associated with break-

ing the sound barrier aren't dangerous.

■ Space shuttle

"We have carefully planned our flights so that there is little chance that people in larger communities such as Titusville to the west, or Cocoa Beach to the south, will be disturbed," said Ed Haering, SonicBAT's principal investigator, in a news release. "Residents might hear a distant sound similar to a rumble of thunder. If the actual winds at the time of our tests are much different from predicted, they might hear a boom sound like those heard when the space shuttle landed."

(Source: *Charlotte Observer*)

Three IKCO Cars to Hit the Market This Year

In the general annual gathering of IKCO shareholders, the performance and strategic plans of the company in the fields of continued profitability, introduction of new vehicles, market leadership, export development and platform design was announced.

In this gathering Hashem Yekehzare Iran Khodro Industrial Group CEO reported on the company's performance in terms of growth in production, profitability, quality boost, new vehicles introduction, structural reform, export development and realization of goals and policies released in the Iranian fiscal year ending on March 20, 2017.

He also referred to the improvement of international cooperation, development of products and markets, and financial-economic development as one of the main pillars of IKCO's movement, which has accelerated as the business environment improved in the post-

JCPOA era.

"IKCO managed to produce 651,000 sets of passenger cars and pick-ups last year (March 20, 2016 to March 20, 2017) and maintained its share of more than 50 percent in passenger cars' market for the third consecutive year," claimed Yekehzare.

In the meantime he noted that IKCO car production and quality boost simultaneously and emphasized, "Last year IKCO Rana, Suzuki Grand Vitara, Peugeot 206, IKCO Dena, IKCO Soren and Renault Tondar 90 of IKCO were assessed with higher quality specifications and this year Tondar 90+ and Dena+ were badged with four and three quality stars at their first assessment."

During this year's annual gathering of IKCO shareholders, the CEO referred to the production of new cars in order to meet customers' needs and declared, "Turbocharged IKCO Dena+, Dena+ equipped with

automatic transmission and IKCO Soren with diesel engine will hit the market this year."

"Creating and expanding international partnerships, developing platforms and powertrains, diversifying products portfolio and enhancing the quality of products has been considered in regard with product development and market share," Yekehzare said.

Emphasizing other operations taken place in his company, he mentioned, "IKCO has set its international cooperation target with establishing IKAP as a JV with Peugeot, the MOU and 10-sided international contract for design and development of new product platform and new powertrain design as well as a variety of collaboration models."

He also pointed to IKCO's future plans adding that his company, based on the 2025 outlook, has targeted production of 1,100,000 sets of cars by 2021.

The radical Rolls-Royce Phantom of the future could look like this

The all-new Rolls-Royce Phantom will be revealed this month, but what will it look like in 2050? Since launching in 1925, the prestigious Phantom has been the flagship luxury sedan in the Rolls-Royce range. For the first time in 13 years, an all-new Phantom is being revealed at a special event in Mayfair, London, later this month, where it will be reunited with its ancestors including John Lennon's eye-catching Phantom V. Compared to the last model, the new eighth-generation Phantom's design will be evolutionary rather than revolutionary, sporting a revised grille and new lightweight aluminum shell.



With its timeless design, we wouldn't be surprised to see the Phantom still being sold in 2050. But how will the design evolve? That's a question render artist Matthew Parsons has tried to answer, envisioning the Phantom of the future with a more radical design.

While each generation of the Phantom has adopted conservative looks to retain its brand identity, Parsons' design is inspired by the revolutionary Vision Next 100 Concept commemorating BMW Group's 100th anniversary. Parsons has done a commendable job at creating a futuristic design that still looks like it belongs in the Phantom family, blending the distinctive front-end and grille with slim headlights and a dual-tone paintjob.

Being based on the Vision Next 100 Concept, it's probably safe to assume Parsons' design has a zero-emission electric powertrain instead of a combustion engine and autonomous driving capabilities. As for the soon-to-be-revealed eighth-gen Phantom, we're expecting the new flagship to retain the previous model's 6.7-liter V12. It should also be more fuel efficient and more agile when thrown around corners thanks to BMW's underpinning aluminum space frame.

(Source: *carbuzz.com*)

Biochar could clear the air in more ways than one

Biochar from recycled waste may both enhance crop growth and save health costs by helping clear the air of pollutants, according to Rice University researchers.

Rice researchers in Earth science, economics and environmental engineering have determined that widespread use of biochar in agriculture could reduce health care costs, especially for those who live in urban areas close to farmland.

Biochar is ground charcoal produced from waste wood, manure or leaves. Added to soil, the porous carbon has been shown to boost crop yields, lessen the need for fertilizer and reduce pollutants by storing nitrogen that would otherwise be released to the atmosphere.

The study led by Ghasideh Pourhashem, a postdoctoral fellow at Rice's Baker Institute for Public Policy, appears in the American Chemical Society journal *Environmental Science and Technology*.

Pourhashem worked with environmental engineering graduate student Quazi Rasool and postdoc Rui Zhang, Rice Earth scientist Caroline Masiello, energy economist Ken Medlock and environmental scientist Daniel Cohan to show that urban dwellers in the American Midwest and Southwest would gain the greatest benefits in air quality and health from greater use of biochar.

They said the U.S. counties that would stand to save the most in health care costs from reduced smog are Will, La Salle and Livingston counties in Illinois; San Joaquin, San Diego, Fresno and Riverside counties in California; Weld County in Colorado; Maricopa County in Arizona; and Fort Bend County in Texas.

(Source: *EurekAlert*)

In China, scientists want to turn plastic into fuel

From computers to coffee cups and bottles of water, plastic is an integral part of modern life. Despite its ubiquity, the issue of plastic waste is a big, pressing one.

Recent research has highlighted just how big the problem is. The study – by scientists from the University of Georgia, the University of California, Santa Barbara and the Sea Education Association – found that as of 2015, humans had produced an estimated 8.3 billion metric tons of plastic, with 6.3 billion tons of that seen as waste.

At the Shanghai Institute of Organic Chemistry (SIOC) in China, scientists are looking to turn plastic into fuel.

"If we have the plastic waste in the environment or in the ocean or bury it underground, it's going to stay there for hundreds or thousands of years," SIOC's Zheng Huang told CNBC's Sustainable Energy.

"So we needed to find a solution to... plastic waste, and we think converting them into fuel is an excellent way to reuse it," he added.

The work Huang and his team are doing focuses on polyethylene, used in everything from bags to toys and food packaging.

"What we are doing differently is to use... so called 'cross alkane metathesis' strategies," Huang said.

(Source: *CNBC*)

Ground broken for first women-only beach in Qeshm Island

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Construction of the first women-only beach in the Persian Gulf island of Qeshm, southern province of Hormozgan, started on Thursday. The project which is stretching over 2.5 hectares of southern coasts will be developed in three separate phases, IRNA reported.



Minister of Labor and Social Welfare Ali Rabiei is breaking ground for the first women-only beach in Qeshm island.

Making an investment of 100 billion rials (nearly \$2.5 million) the private sector is financing the project.

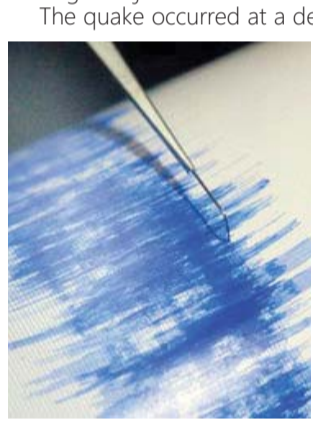
The first phase, including basic facilities namely restrooms, bathrooms, locker rooms, safety deposit boxes, in addition to restaurants, spa treatment, pergolas, coffee shops, shopping areas, kids play areas, green spaces etc. will be completed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2018).

Over the second phase of the project swimming pools, gym, accommodations, beauty salons, traditional restaurants, and artificial night lighting at the beach will be set up as well.

Environment friendly marine hotels and sea water parks, by causing minimal damages to the ecosystem, will be constructed over the last phase of the Qeshm island first women-only beach project.

Magnitude 4.7 quake leaves 16 injured

SOCIETY TEHRAN — An earthquake measuring 4.7 on the Richter scale struck Nahavand, the central-western province of Hamedan, on Friday morning, leaving 16 injured.



The quake occurred at a depth of 2 kilometers at around 5:34 a.m. local time, Mehr news agency reported. The quake was strong enough to shake other cities adjacent to Nahavand such as Malayer.

The earthquake was followed by three aftershocks measuring 1.7 on the Richter scale within two hours.

Fortunately, the earthquake didn't claim any lives but left 16 injured. According to Habib Ma'soumi, the head of accidents and medical emergencies department of

Hamedan, 7 of the injured are already discharged from the hospital and only 9 are hospitalized.

Majlis mulling to ease passport rules for women

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The Iranian parliament (Majlis) is considering a bill that would facilitate the procedure of passport issuance for female athletes, scientists, and traders, IRNA reported on Friday.

Under the current law, all Iranians under 18 years of age -- both male and female -- must receive paternal permission before receiving travel documents.

Women over the age of 18 need the written consent of their father or guardian to obtain a passport. Married women must receive their husband's approval to receive the documents.

It is a legal requirement stipulated under Article 18 of the Iran's passport law.

"Following some problems created for female athletes for taking part in international competitions, an amendment to the Article 18 proposed to the Majlis, which would facilitate the exit of



women from the country," Iranian female lawmaker Parvaneh Salahshouri

previously said.

She said that leaving the country for

medical treatment is also included in the bill, however it is proposed just in urgent situation.

"According to the bill, women can exit from the country under the permission of the prosecutor general's office," she added.

The bill covers international events like sports championships, Olympiads, academic and cultural festivals and congresses as well as the hajj pilgrimage.

In May 2017, Iranian authorities intervened to allow two-time Paralympic gold medalist Zahra Nemati to compete abroad despite her estranged husband's attempts to force her to stay home.

Before that, Niloufar Ardalan, the captain of the Iranian women's national futsal team, was issued a special permit by the judiciary to compete in the 2015 AFC Women's Futsal Championship despite her husband's opposition.

World Hepatitis Day: Eliminate hepatitis

New WHO data from 28 countries - representing approximately 70% of the global hepatitis burden - indicate that efforts to eliminate hepatitis are gaining momentum. Published to coincide with World Hepatitis Day, the data reveal that nearly all 28 countries have established high-level national hepatitis elimination committees (with plans and targets in place) and more than half have allocated dedicated funding for hepatitis responses.

On World Hepatitis Day, WHO is calling on countries to continue to translate their commitments into increased services to eliminate hepatitis. This week, WHO has also added a new generic treatment to its list of WHO-prequalified hepatitis C medicines to increase access to therapy, and is promoting prevention through injection safety: a key factor in reducing hepatitis B and C transmission.

From commitment to action

"It is encouraging to see countries turning commitment into action to tackle hepatitis," said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "Identifying interventions that have a high impact is a key step towards eliminating this devastating disease. Many countries have succeeded in scaling-up the hepatitis B vaccination. Now we need to push harder to increase access to diagnosis and treatment."

World Hepatitis Day 2017, July 28, is being commemorated under the theme "Eliminate Hepatitis" to mobilize intensified action towards the health targets in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In 2016, the World Health Assembly endorsed WHO's first global health sectors strategy on viral hepatitis to help countries scale up their responses.

The new WHO data show that more than 86% of countries reviewed have set national hepatitis elimination targets and more than 70% have begun to develop

national hepatitis plans to enable access to effective prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care services. Furthermore, nearly half of the countries surveyed are aiming for elimination through providing universal access to hepatitis treatment. But WHO is concerned that progress needs to speed up.

"The national response towards hepatitis elimination is gaining momentum. However, at best one in ten people who are living with hepatitis know they are infected and can access treatment. This is unacceptable," said Dr. Gottfried Hirnschall, WHO's Director of the HIV Department and Global Hepatitis Program.

"For hepatitis elimination to become a reality, countries need to accelerate their efforts and increase investments in life-saving care. There is simply no reason why many millions of people still have not been tested for hepatitis and cannot access the treatment for which they are in dire need."

Viral hepatitis affected 325 million people worldwide in 2015, with 257 million people living with hepatitis B and 71 million people living with hepatitis C - the two main killers of the five types of hepatitis. Viral hepatitis caused 1.34 million deaths in 2015 - a figure close to the number of TB deaths and exceeding deaths linked to HIV.

Improving access to hepatitis C cure

Viral hepatitis affected 325 million people worldwide in 2015, with 257 million people living with hepatitis B and 71 million people living with hepatitis C - the two main killers of the five types of hepatitis. Viral hepatitis caused 1.34 million deaths in 2015 - a figure close to the number of TB deaths and exceeding deaths linked to HIV.

Hepatitis C can be completely cured with direct acting antivirals (DAAs) within 3 months. However, as of 2015, only 7% of the 71 million people with chronic hepatitis C had access to treatment.

WHO is working to ensure that DAAs are affordable and accessible to those who need them. Prices have dropped dramatically in some countries (primarily in some high-burden, low-and lower middle income countries), facilitated by the introduction of generic versions of these medicines. The list of DAAs available to countries for treating hepatitis C is growing.

WHO has just prequalified the first generic version of one of these drugs: sofosbuvir. The average price of the required three-month treatment course of this generic is between US\$260 and US\$280, a small fraction of the original cost of the medicine when it first went on the market in 2013. WHO prequalification guarantees a product's quality, safety and efficacy and means it can now be procured by the United Nations and financing agencies such as UNICEF, which now includes medicines for people living with HIV who also have hepatitis C in the portfolio of conditions it covers.

Hepatitis B treatment

With high morbidity and mortality globally, there is great interest also in the development of new therapies for

chronic hepatitis B virus infection. The most effective current hepatitis B treatment, tenofovir, (which is not curative and which in most cases needs to be taken for life), is available for as low as \$48 per year in many low and middle income countries. There is also an urgent need to scale up access to hepatitis B testing.

Improving injection safety and infection prevention to reduce new cases of hepatitis B and C

Use of contaminated injection equipment in health-care settings accounts for a large number of new HCV and HBV infections worldwide, making injection safety an important strategy. Others include preventing transmission through invasive procedures, such as surgery and dental care; increasing hepatitis B vaccination rates and scaling up harm reduction programs for people who inject drugs.

Today WHO is launching a range of new educational and communication tools to support a campaign entitled "Get the Point-Make smart injection choices" to improve injection safety in order to prevent hepatitis and other blood borne infections in health-care settings.

World Hepatitis Summit

World Hepatitis Summit 2017, November 1-3 in São Paulo, Brazil, promises to be the largest global event to advance the viral hepatitis agenda, bringing together key players to accelerate the global response. Organized jointly by WHO, the World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA) and the Government of Brazil, the theme of the Summit is "Implementing the Global health sector strategy on viral hepatitis: towards the elimination of hepatitis as a public health threat".

(Source: WHO)

LEARN ENGLISH

Daily Life - Talking About Relatives

A: What are you doing this weekend?

B: My **brother** in law is having a small get together at his house and he invited me.

A: Is it a family thing or just friends?

B: A bit of both. Some **cousins**, **aunts** and **uncles** will be there, but also some friends from the neighborhood.

A: Is your great uncle Rick going to be there? He is really funny.

B: Yeah he is going to be there with his **step-son** and his **ex-wife**.

A: You mean your sister?

B: No, Rick is actually my great uncle, so he is my grandmother's brother.

A: You lost me.

B: I'll explain later, let's go.

Key Vocabulary

brother: a male sibling

uncle: a brother of one's father or mother.

Cousin: the son or daughter of an uncle or aunt.

aunt: the sister of one's father or mother.

Step-son: a son of one's husband or wife by a previous marriage.

ex-wife: a woman who was formerly a particular man's wife

Supplementary Vocabulary

niece: N a daughter of a person's brother or sister.

family reunion: a gathering of relatives, friends, or associates at regular intervals or after separation

biological: being of the same genes and blood as another family member

adopted: to take and rear (the child of other parents) as one's own child.

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Have an idea?
Be in touch!
lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

*مراکز ارائه خدمات به بیماران ای بی در ۱۱ منطقه کشور راه اندازی شده است

جمشید کرمانچی، مشاور وزیر بهداشت اظهار داشت: در ۱۱ نقطه از کشور از جمله اصفهان، شیراز، تبریز، مشهد، کرمان، کرمانشاه، اهواز، گیلان و سه مرکز در استان تهران، مراکزی را برای ارائه خدمات به بیماران ای بی راه اندازی کرده ایم. در کشور حدود ۸۰۰ فرد مبتلا به بیماری پروانه ای (ای بی) وجود دارد که تاکنون ۵۵۰ بیمار شناسایی و در سامانه وزارت بهداشت، ثبت شده اند. رسول دیناروند رئیس سازمان غذا و دارو گفت: از یک سال پیش این سازمان تأمین پانسمان های تخصصی و ویژه این بیماران را انجام می دهد. وی افزود: سالانه حدود ۵۰ میلیارد ریال برای تأمین پانسمان تخصصی این بیماران هزینه می شود. دیناروند یادآور شد: بیماران ای بی وضعیت پیچیده و گرفتاری های زیادی دارند و بیماری آنها دروی خاصی ندارد و به مراقبت های بیشتری مانند جراحی های متعدد نیاز دارد.

ENGLISH PROVERB

(The) way to a man's heart is through his stomach

■ **Explanation**: Feed a man well and he will love you
■ **For example**: If you want Keith to notice you, invite him over and cook him a good meal. The way to a man's heart is through his stomach.

PHRASAL VERB

Work through

■ **Meaning**: deal with, resolve a problem, often emotional
■ **For example**: It took him a long time to work through his anger after he lost his job.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Walk on eggshells

■ **Explanation**: If you walk on eggshells with someone, you are careful not to hurt or offend them
■ **For example**: Carla is so sensitive you have to walk on eggshells with her all the time.

Pakistan Supreme Court disqualifies PM Nawaz Sharif

1→ "The minimum we expect from elected leaders is to answer important questions in the public domain, and that is very much the business of ordinary Pakistanis. He failed to answer those questions."

Sharif's ouster, on the grounds that he lied about his assets during a corruption probe, means that his ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, which holds a comfortable majority in parliament, will have to nominate a new leader.

According to a statement from the prime minister's office, Sharif stood down from his post in accordance with the Supreme Court ruling.

"All legal and constitutional options will be exercised regarding our serious differences with this verdict, the statement read."

The 67-year-old becomes the latest Pakistani prime minister not to have completed a five-year term in office, many having been overthrown in coups by the country's powerful military, which has ruled the country for roughly half of its 69-year-history.

Sharif and three of his children have been referred to a National Accountability court, which has been ordered to register corruption cases against them within six weeks, the judges said.

The court also referred Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, who has served as Sharif's accountant in the past, to the corruption court, along with other associates of Sharif.

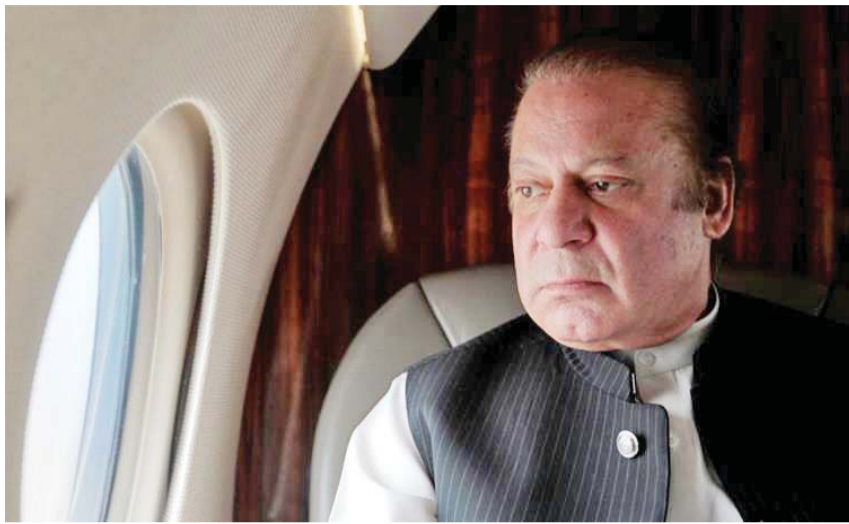
True accountability

Mariyam Aurangzeb, Sharif's information minister, said the government was "saddened" but "not surprised" by Friday's ruling.

PML-N would consult with legal experts before deciding on a course of action, she told reporters, adding that the verdict did not offer any proof of government corruption.

"I want to speak directly to Pakistan's public ... not a single paisa [the smallest unit of Pakistani currency] of government corruption has been established even by this verdict," she said.

Meanwhile, the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has announced



plans to celebrate the verdict with a rally on Sunday.

Imran Khan, the PTI leader who championed the case against Sharif, described Friday's ruling as a triumph for democracy.

"What we have seen today, if anything could strengthen Pakistan's democracy, then this is it. In a democracy, a leadership must be accountable," the cricket-turned-politician said. "Our democratic evolution has moved forward."

Speaking ahead of the verdict, Siraj-ul-Haq, leader of the opposition Jamaat-e-Islami party and one of the plaintiffs in the case, said he hoped the decision would help strengthen the rule of law.

"True accountability is necessary for true democracy," he told reporters outside the courtroom. "The law seems to not have been applied to the rich, but only to the poor."

The allegations against Sharif centered around the ownership of four apartments in London's posh Park Lane neighborhood.

In 2016, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists leaked 11.5 million documents from Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca, dubbed the "Panama Papers".

Several documents included in the leak showed three of Sharif's children -

Hussain, Hasan and Maryam - owned at least three off-shore companies registered in the British Virgin Islands.

The documents showed that these companies had engaged in deals worth \$25m.

Crucially, one of the documents also revealed that the companies had been involved in a \$13.2m mortgage involving the London properties as collateral, the first time the Sharif family's ownership of the apartments was proven on paper.

In November, after months of political turmoil, the Supreme Court launched hearings to establish whether the Sharif family had committed wrongdoing in obtaining the properties, or if the prime minister was liable for not declaring them earlier on tax and parliamentary wealth declarations.

Sharif denied the allegations against him, saying the assets were legally held by his children and were not in his name, and therefore he was not liable to declare them or be taxed on them.

The court demanded that the Sharif family establish a clear money trail showing how they came to own the properties.

According to the Sharifs, the money was obtained from the sale of a steel mill in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and was further invested with Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber al Thani, a Qatari royal and for-

mer prime minister of the peninsula.

Not satisfied with the explanation, the court in April constituted a high-level team to investigate the Sharifs.

The investigators found that Sharif had for years been the chairman of the board of Capital FZE, a company based in the United Arab Emirates, without declaring his position.

The court's decision to remove Sharif was based on him not revealing a stake in the company in parliamentary wealth disclosures.

No democratically elected prime minister in Pakistan's history has completed a full five-year term.

Sharif's first two stints in power in the 1990s were both cut short; he was ousted in a military coup by General Pervez Musharraf in 1999.

Other prime ministers have been ousted in two previous coups in 1958 and 1977, by the courts or by motions of no-confidence within the parliament.

Panama Papers

The Panama Papers are 11.5 million leaked documents that detail financial and attorney-client information for more than 214,488 offshore entities. The documents, some of which dated back to the 1970s, belonged to the Panamanian law firm and corporate service provider Mossack Fonseca, were leaked in 2015 by an anonymous source.

The documents contain personal financial information about wealthy individuals and public officials that had previously been kept private. While offshore business entities are legal, reporters found that some of the Mossack Fonseca shell corporations were used for illegal purposes, including fraud, tax evasion, and evading international sanctions.

The documents were dubbed the Panama Papers because of the country of origin; however, the Panamanian government expressed its strong objection to the name, as did other entities in Panama and elsewhere. Some media outlets covering the story have used the name "Mossack Fonseca papers".

(Source: agencies)

Truth the first casualty in U.S. politics

1→ Nevertheless, Trump and his cohorts' disdain for the truth do not prevent falsehood of their statements repeatedly being exposed.

As a matter of fact, it was Trump's White House not Iran, that has already violated not only the spirit but the letter of the JCPOA by openly and explicitly discouraging other countries from conducting normal business with Iran.

In an interview with CNN's Fareed Zakaria in New York on July 15 Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said "Trump used his presence in Hamburg during the G20 meeting in order to dissuade leaders of other countries from getting engaged in business with Iran."

Analysts believe that although Trump has so far not taken direct action to dismantle the nuclear agreement as one of his presidential campaign promises, he is slowly trying to pursue that objective by denying Iran the economic benefits of the accord through slapping new sanctions.

On July 17, the New York Times reported that Trump 'reluctantly' certified that Iran has complied with the 2015 agreement. A week later, in a speech to thousands of raucous supporters in Ohio, he warned Tehran to adhere to the terms of the nuclear or else face "big, big problems."

Trump has told the Wall Street Journal that he would

be surprised if Iran is in compliance with the nuclear deal when recertification comes up again in three months.

According to Foreign Policy Magazine, Trump even "instructed a group of trusted White House staffers to make the potential case for withholding certification of Iran at the next 90-day review of the nuclear deal. Based on the Foreign Policy report, the goal was to give Trump what he felt the State Department had failed to do: the option to declare that Tehran was not in compliance with the contentious agreement."

The truth that Trump denies is that the accord is working and according to the International Atomic Energy Agency—as the only accepted body with the mission to monitor the nuclear pact— Iran is complying with its obligations under the agreement. Zarif told Fareed Zakaria that the "IAEA has verified--- I believe--- 7 times now since the implementation day (of JCPOA) that Iran has implemented the deal faithfully, fully and completely."

Notwithstanding that how vigorously Iran observes the agreement, Trump seems impervious to fact and logic and is clearly looking for excuses to destroy the pact.

The new era of American politics

Iranian foreign minister has already complained

about millions upon millions of dollars of money that is being spent to promote "misinformation" and "disinformation" and create "a version of truth that is acceptable to certain groups of people."

Also speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in New York, Zarif said: "I believe there is a need under these circumstances, when people are bombarded with this type of less than truth, that—more than truth in cases—like our (Iran) total control over Iraq—to hear the different side of the story."

In that case, it seems today the truth is the first victim of politics in the U.S.

As Professor Hannan (2016) points out: "With the rise of Donald Trump, we have entered the twilight zone of American politics, a brave new world in which the norms of politics, journalism, and public discourse seem to have broken down."

He adds, "If, as Clausewitz (famous Prussian general and military theorist) said, war is the continuation of politics by other means, perhaps the new era of American politics can be described as the continuation of war by other means—a war in which like all wars, truth is the first casualty."

How NATO can take on the threats of the future

8→ while EU member states operate the twenty-five-year-old Eurocorps. Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania, in turn, have a joint brigade with the somewhat clunky name LITPOLUKRBRIG. Taking armed forces cooperation to a new level, Germany is integrating units from three other countries — Netherlands, Romania and the Czech Republic — into the Bundeswehr. According to Dick Zandee, a senior research fellow at Clingendael (the Netherlands Institute of International Relations) and a former head of the Planning and Policy Unit at the European Defense Agency, such smaller military groupings makes perfect sense. "Clusters optimize the military cooperation between countries' armed forces," he said. "In terms of optimization, clusters are the only thing that works. The more member states you have, the more complicated it becomes."

But most of the countries involved in these European mini-formations are also members of NATO. That raises the question: with NATO available to defend Europe, why does the continent need more military formations? Specifically, does Europe need military formations whose capabilities are dwarfed by those of NATO? The United States armed forces alone feature some 1.3 million men and women; at the recent Saber Strike Seventeen

exercise some eleven thousand troops trained in the Baltic states and Poland.

Indeed, in case of a real emergency NATO members would rely on that alliance, not on the JEF or another mini-formation. And while the JEF has supported Ebola efforts, the EU's battle groups have never been deployed despite having been fully operational for ten years. Indeed, chances are they will never be deployed because the EU's members would have to agree to deploy them — and most crises are either too small or too large to be effectively addressed by 1,500–2,500 soldiers. And nobody would expect the JEF or the EU battle groups to perform the same massive effort as NATO — that's not their mission.

Permanent forces

Even so, the mini-formations are extremely useful. That's because they have two things that NATO lacks: permanent forces and a small number of members, whose armed forces are very similar in training and equipment. Additionally, the regular exercises conducted by mini-formations have a benefit in themselves: they help European armed forces integrate. The EU's battle groups may only consist of some two thousand soldiers, but constant exercises with troops from

other countries they learn to operate effectively together. What's more, by joining forces in smaller settings than NATO countries speed up interoperability.

Interoperability is defined by Merriam-Webster as the "ability of a system (such as a weapons system) to work with or use the parts or equipment of another system". While interoperability has long been a NATO objective, it's easier said than achieved: each country buys its own equipment, and unlike mobile phones most weapons are not designed to work seamlessly with weapons made by another manufacturer.

And because most large countries have large domestic defense industries, unlike mobile phone customers they don't congregate towards just one or two global manufacturers. The same goes for military culture: as in most areas, countries like to do things their own way. But twenty-eight countries doing European military operations their own way won't enhance security. Smaller alliances between similar countries can accelerate interoperability, too, as they're more likely to agree on the acquisition of similar or identical equipment, and are more likely to share it with their allies. The "second agenda for the battle groups, in addition to deploying them to crises, has always

been to use them as interoperability accelerators," Zandee pointed out.

Added Justyna Gotkowska, a Northern Europe defense specialist at the Center for Eastern Studies in Warsaw: "For many countries in Europe, military cooperation in mini-formations in Europe is a way to increase interoperability with important regional allies."

In the case of the V4 EU battle group, between Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary; in the case of the JEF between UK and the Baltic and Nordic countries. Should a deployment materialize, the troops will function as well with troops with another country as with their compatriots. The mini-formations have already yielded results. The V4 EU battle group members will join NATO's VJTF spearhead force in 2020, led by Poland — a step aided by their joint experience in the battle group.

With interoperability one of NATO's main challenges, the mini-formations are poised to provide a service to European security beyond any deployments. Through their constant exercises, they're already teaching European armed forces to act as one, albeit in small settings. The much-derided EU battle groups may not be so pointless after all.

(Source: nationalinterest.com)

Yemeni missile hits Saudi airbase in Ta'if

Yemeni forces have launched a new missile into Saudi Arabia, successfully targeting an airbase in the southwestern city of Ta'if.

The "Borkan (Volcano) 1" missile fired by Yemeni army soldiers landed in King Fahad Air Base and set parts of it on fire, the Arabic-language al-Masirah television network reported on Thursday night.

The report came after Saudi regime sources claimed that the country's military forces had successfully intercepted an incoming ballistic missile from Yemen.

Ta'if is located more than 700 kilometers (434 miles) southeast of the capital Riyadh. No further details were available at the time of this writing.

The solid propellant and Scud-type Borkan-1 missile reportedly has a range of more than 800 kilometers (497 miles).

Earlier on Thursday, Yemeni army soldiers, backed by fighters from allied Popular Committees, fired a Qaher 1 missile at positions held by Saudi mercenaries in Mawza district of Ta'izz, in the southwestern parts of the country.

The Yemeni forces have recently stepped up their retaliatory assaults against the Riyadh regime's deadly war on the impoverished country, which was launched in March 2015.

For more than two years, the House of Saud regime have been desperately seeking to reinstall Riyadh-backed Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

The Saudi regime aggression has failed to achieve its goals and killed more than 12,000 Yemenis, most of them civilians.

In response to the brutal aggression, Yemen has developed a robust collection of ballistic missiles capable of hitting targets deep inside Saudi Arabia.

On Wednesday, CNN cited two unknown United States officials in as saying that a Yemeni missile had traveled around 930 kilometers before landing near the western coast of Saudi Arabia.

In late June, Yemeni forces conducted another missile attack, this time hitting a military base in Saudi Arabia's southern Najran region, killing six soldiers.

(Source: Press TV)

Uzbekistan jails ex-president's daughter Gulnara Karimova

Gulnara Karimova, the elder daughter of late Uzbek ex-president Islam Karimov, is in custody following a 2015 conviction for extortion and embezzlement and is being investigated for more crimes, Uzbek Prosecutor General's office said on Friday.

The announcement is the first official word on the whereabouts of Karimova, 45, who disappeared from public view in 2014 after apparently falling out with her father, a strongman who had run the Central Asian nation for 27 years.

State prosecutors said in a statement they were seeking to freeze about \$1.5 billion in assets held by Karimova, including in Switzerland, Sweden, Britain, France, Latvia, Ireland, Malta, Germany, Spain, Russia, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Karimova could not be contacted for comment. The prosecutor's office did not say who was representing her.

The prosecutor's office said Karimova had been sentenced in 2015 to five years' probation -- a measure which may equal house arrest in Uzbek law -- for acquiring through extortion or embezzlement stakes in a number of companies, and for tax evasion. The statement was the first word on that conviction.

She is also being investigated on charges of fraud, evading customs and foreign exchange regulations, and money laundering, and is held in custody pending a trial.

According to prosecutors, the assets they are seeking to have frozen include cash and properties in Switzerland and London, villas at Chateau de Groussay and Saint Tropez in France, and an airplane in Malta.

Karimova, the elder of Islam Karimov's two daughters, was once seen as a powerful businesswoman and politician and a potential successor to her father.

(Source: Reuters)

Kuwait closes Shia TV as crackdown widens

Kuwait has shut down a Shia satellite television channel, accusing one of its owners of having links to Iran and Lebanon's resistance movement Hezbollah.

The official Kuwait News Agency reported on Thursday that the private Shia Al Kout TV's broadcast licenses had been revoked.

It named the owner as Bassel Dashti, saying he was a former member of the so-called "Abdali cell," which Kuwait claims was in contact with Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and Hezbollah.

The agency said Dashti was sentenced to five years earlier this month on charges of "contributing to bringing weapons and receiving illegal training."

Kuwait City announced in 2015 that it had disbanded "Abdali cell", and charged its "26 members" with possessing weapons, smuggling explosives, and planning "hostile actions" inside Kuwait.

They received sentences ranging from a few years in prison to, in one case, the death penalty, though the latter sentence was later reduced to life imprisonment.

The defendants were later acquitted on appeals and set free. Kuwait's Supreme Court, however, overturned their acquittal and sentenced them to between five and 15 years in prison.

(Source: Press TV)

Injured Djokovic will come back mentally stronger, says Cash

Twelve-times grand slam champion Novak Djokovic's enforced injury break gives him enough time to rediscover his intense playing style and will also make him mentally tougher on his return, former Wimbledon champion Pat Cash has said.

The 30-year-old Serb said he will miss the rest of the tennis season, including next month's U.S. Open, to recover from a right elbow injury.

"It will take time for him to get his intensity back," Cash, the 1987 Wimbledon singles champion, told the BBC.

"Djokovic's style is very similar to almost everyone else on the circuit, but he was just that bit fitter, that bit more flexible, that bit more mentally tough.

"It is probably just what the doctor ordered, to take time off. After so many unbelievable years, 2017 has been poor for him."

Djokovic has struggled over the last 12 months on the court, losing all the grand slam titles he held simultaneously after winning the 2016 French Open. He also lost his world number one ranking to Andy Murray at the end of last year.

Cash believes Djokovic should not be expected to return from his injury layoff as spectacularly as Roger Federer, who came back from a long-term knee issue earlier this year to lift Australian Open and Wimbledon titles.

"It won't be like Roger Federer, who was winning Grand Slams straight out of the blocks after he came back, but some time next year he will be playing well again," Cash added.

"He will be very sensible and make sure he is ready when he does come back."

(Source: Reuters)

James Rodriguez separates from wife Daniela Ospina

Bayern Munich midfielder James Rodriguez has split from his wife after six years of marriage.

It has been confirmed Rodriguez, on loan from Real Madrid, has parted with Daniela Ospina, sister of Arsenal goalkeeper David.

A statement from Ospina's manager confirmed the pair, who have a daughter together, had made the decision amicably.

The message, shared on social media, said: "Daniela Ospina and James Rodriguez, parents to Salome Rodriguez Ospina, are making official their separation after six and half years of marriage.

"It is done in the best possible terms and it is a mutual decision. They'll maintain a relationship of love and of respect, always with Salome's well being at heart."

The couple, both Colombian, had married when they were teenagers, with Rodriguez aged 19 and Ospina just 18.

The separation comes just after Rodriguez moved to Munich on a two-year loan, having struggled for game time at Real.

(Source: Sun)

Philippe Coutinho's agent has agreed move to Barcelona

PHILIPPE COUTINHO'S agent has agreed a deal for his man to move to Barcelona, according to Guillem Balague.

The Spanish football expert claims there is an agreement in place for Coutinho to swap Liverpool for the Nou Camp - although nothing has been confirmed between the two clubs.

The Brazilian, 25, is Barca's top target to replace Neymar, who is closing in on a switch to Paris-Saint Germain.

But the switch isn't straight forward and Balague has been left unimpressed by Barcelona's transfer deals.

He's accused Barcelona of being desperate in the transfer market - after they contacted Monaco over signing Kylian Mbappe.

Express Sport understand that Real Madrid are poised to sign the Frenchman this summer instead.

Balague tweeted: "On Neymar: deal with PSG only slowed down due to its complexities. FCB think he made his mind up to leave. So, what of Coutinho/Mbappe?"

"FCB contacted Mbappe and has an agreement with Coutinho's agent. But Liverpool determined not to sell. FCB need Neymar's money. Everything FCB are doing now smells of desperation. They have been reactive (not proactive) for too long. Even Mbappe contact arrives late

"The offer FCB took to Liverpool for Coutinho (€80m) is something they cannot pay if an unexpected twist Neymar decides to stay improvising."

(Source: Express)

Pique calls for technology to reduce pressure on referees

Barcelona defender Gerard Pique has called for football to adopt new technology to reduce the pressure placed on referees.

Pique has regularly hit out at refereeing decisions, suggesting on his Twitter account in February that rivals Real Madrid receive favourable treatment from officials.

Barca had earlier been denied what appeared a clear late winner in a 1-1 draw against Real Betis when a scramble in the box saw the ball cross the line without being awarded as a goal.

And Pique believes it is time for LaLiga to use new technology to help match officials to reach the correct decisions.

"I would like to change the refereeing system," Pique said to Japanese magazine Soccer Kings. "The pressure that is put on an official in a match is too large.

"In order to eliminate injustices and to ensure there would be less controversy, I would introduce technology that would make refereeing better.

"I am very unhappy with the way some matches were refereed [last season], but I forgot about it some time ago. The new season is close to starting and I have to completely change my mentality and not think about certain negative things."

Pique, who has confirmed he intends to retire from international duty with Spain after the 2018 World Cup in Russia, also reiterated his desire to become Barcelona's president after he hangs up his boots.

(Source: Four Four Two)

Neymar fights with Barca team-mate Semedo in shocking training ground spat

Neymar has stormed out of Barcelona training as his exit from the Spanish giants appears to move closer.

In an exclusive video obtained by Sportsmail, the Brazilian international walks off the pitch after a fight with new Barca signing, Nelson Semedo.

Neymar has been linked with a world-record move to Paris Saint Germain, and his walkout now looks to make that move even more likely.

In the video, things initially appear to be going as usual, with the Brazilian tucking away a goal during a small sided game.

However, Neymar and right back Semedo then tangle in a challenge for the ball (left), with the striker squaring up to the new arrival from Benfica (right).

Javier Mascherano quickly intervenes and Semedo runs back to the game, but Neymar is clearly still unhappy, calling and gesturing after the defender, and having to be restrained by Sergio Busquets.

The furious striker then tears off his training bib and throws it to the ground (center) as manager Ernesto Valverde stands helpless close by, stalking off with only a rueful pat on the back from Mascherano.

Neymar then angrily fires a ball off the crossbar of a nearby training goal, and then boots another one away as he exits the field.

Accompanied by a member of the Barcelona staff, he leaves as training resumes without him, with the player going out into the car park and leaving the training area entirely.

The session took place in Miami, with Barca in the USA as part of their prestigious pre-season tour of friendlies.

Neymar has been in excellent form on the tour, scoring three in two games, but lost his cool half an hour into the training session at Barry University.

The walk-out comes before Barcelona play their final friendly of the tour, against deadly La Liga rivals Real Madrid on Sunday morning.

The footage has emerged as it is also revealed Neymar's



plans to duck out of Barcelona's flight back to Spain have been thrown into chaos amid reports his commercial commitments in China on Monday have been cancelled.

Barcelona players are due to touchdown back in Spain on Sunday afternoon after the Saturday night Clásico friendly, but Neymar had planned to jet straight to Asia for a commercial commitment with Replay that would keep him away from the Camp Nou while Barca and PSG thrash out the details of his switch to Ligue 1.

Now reports suggest the event on Monday has been cancelled with the organizers understood to be citing the player's involvement in the transfer.

What is not clear is if Barcelona - who have grown in-

creasingly tired of Neymar's behavior on the club's US tour - have applied pressure on him to cancel the trip so that his record breaking move can be tied up.

As the saga of the summer crawl to its conclusion, the sticking point is now PSG's preference for not paying Neymar's £195m clause even if it means they end up playing more for the player.

The Qatar-financed club want to avoid paying the buy-out clause because it means paying the transfer fee in its entirety in one lump sum - they would have to pay the £195m to Neymar for him to then deposit the sum with the league to free him from his contract.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Pep Guardiola wants long-term future as Manchester City manager



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola hopes to stay as long as possible at the Premier League club and build a squad that can deliver long-term success, the Spaniard has said.

City have spent over 200 million pounds (\$261.48 million) on transfers, according to British media, after Guardiola failed to win a trophy for the first time in his managerial career last season.

"I will try to remain as long as possible to help, to help City keep moving forward and stay high," Guardiola, who begins the second of his three-year contract this season, told reporters.

"I think the club has to work and listen to the manager in the right moment, but also take their own decisions in the future. Nobody knows what will happen. For all the managers in the world it depends on the results."

Guardiola has made an effort to significantly lower the average age of

his City squad, overseeing departures of Pablo Zabaleta, Gael Clichy, Bacary Sagna and Aleksandar Kolarov since the end of last campaign.

He also recruited several youngsters into the squad, including goalkeeper Ederson, midfielder Bernardo Silva and full back Benjamin Mendy.

"The new players have come in and we know the kind of energy they have to give us a really good chance to fight for the titles," Guardiola added. "All the players' averages are so, so young, so for the next five, six or seven years they will be here."

Guardiola also confirmed Mendy will remain on the sidelines for up to three weeks with a thigh strain, which could force the French full back out of City's Premier League season opener at Brighton and Hove Albion on Aug. 12.

"Unfortunately he is a little bit injured and is not ready for the next two or three weeks," said Guardiola.

(Source: Eurosport)

Bale agent brands Manchester United links 'ridiculous, stupid'



Speculation linking Gareth Bale with a move away from Real Madrid is "ridiculous" and "stupid," according to the Wales forward's agent.

Real manager Zinedine Zidane has said he cannot guarantee Bale, Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema will stay at the Bernabeu this summer.

That has prompted reports Manchester United could rekindle their long-standing interest in the 28-year-old.

"It's a ridiculous, stupid story," agent Jonathan Barnett told BBC Sport.

Bale was hampered by injury last season and lost his place to Isco, but previously flourished under Zidane and was rewarded with a place on the 30-man shortlist for the 2016 Ballon d'Or.

However, with Real linked with a 180m euros (£160m) move for 18-year-old Monaco forward Kylian Mbappe, there have been reports that they will look to move on one of Bale, Ronaldo or Benzema.

Asked about the trio on Thursday, Zidane said: "I want everyone who is here

now to stay but anything can happen right up until 31 August."

United first tried to sign Bale before he joined Tottenham from Southampton in 2007 and reignited their interest before his move to Spain four years ago.

Instead, though, the Welshman joined Real from Tottenham for a then world record fee of £85m.

He extended his contract in October 2016, committing him to the Bernabeu club until 2022 and on improved terms reportedly worth £600,000 per week, £350,000 after tax.

Despite helping Real win three Champions League titles in four years - scoring in the 2014 final win over rivals Atletico Madrid - Bale's time in Spain has been mixed.

During his second season, he struggled with calf injuries, was jeered by some Real supporters and faced criticism from sections of the Spanish media as Carlo Ancelotti's side failed to win a trophy.

(Source: BBC)

Porsche joins manufacturer rush to Formula E

Porsche announced on Friday it was leaving the top category of Le Mans sports car racing at the end of the season to join German automotive rivals in the Formula E electric championship in 2019.

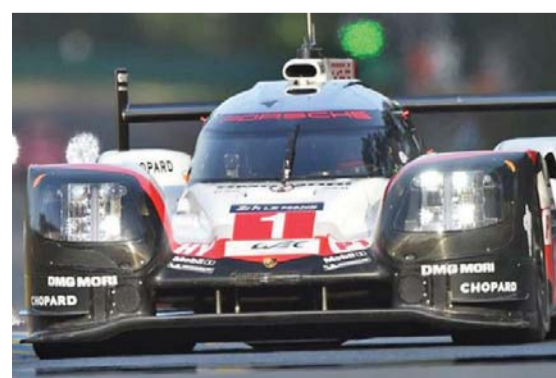
"Entering Formula E and achieving success in this category are the logical outcomes of our Mission E," Development Chief Michael Steiner said in a statement.

Porsche, whose factory team have been Le Mans champions for the last three years and won the World Endurance Championship (WEC) in 2015 and 2016, has already taken the first steps towards developing its own Formula E racing car this year, the group said.

The announcement had been widely expected in the motorsport world and came after Mercedes confirmed on Monday its move into Formula E and exit from the German Touring Car (DTM) championship.

Audi, like Porsche also part of the Volkswagen Group, announced last October that it was quitting Le Mans and the WEC to shift resources to Formula E.

Other manufacturers already involved in the electric series, whose third season ends this weekend in Canada, include German rivals BMW as well as Renault, Jaguar, Cit-



roen and India's Mahindra.

The arrival of Mercedes and Porsche in the series for season six, which starts in 2019 and ends in 2020, will take to 12 the number of Formula E teams.

Porsche's exit from the main LMP1 Le Mans category will be a big blow for the WEC, which risks being left with Toyota as the only major car manufacturer competing at that level - hardly viable for a championship.

There was no immediate comment from series organizers but Jean Todt, the head of the International Automobile Federation (FIA) expressed mixed feelings.

"I'm very happy that Porsche is coming to Formula E, but I regret their decision to leave the World Endurance Championship," the Frenchman said in a statement.

Both the WEC and Le Mans have multiple tiers of entries and Porsche will continue to compete in the GT class with its 911 RSR model.

The French race is the crown jewel in the FIA-sanctioned WEC but stands apart as a highlight of the motorsport calendar, with some 260,000 spectators attending this year's annual sportscar festival.

Porsche said it will keep the LMP1 team fully intact, including the factory drivers.

Formula E chief executive Alejandro Agag hailed the continued growth of his series.

"If somebody told me when we started this project five years ago, that we'd be announcing a partnership with a brand like Porsche, I wouldn't have believed it," said the Spaniard.

(Source: Reuters)

Karim Ansarifard linked with Nottingham Forest

S P O R T S Media reports suggest that English Championship side Nottingham Forest have shown interest in signing Iranian international striker Karim Ansarifard.

According to "Live Sport" athletic newspaper, Ansarifard will leave Olympiacos in the summer of 2017, most likely on loan.

The 27-year-old Iranian joined the Reds from Panionios back in January and made some solid performances with their shirt at the domestic competitions and Europa League during the second part of 2016-17 season, but Albanian manager of Olympiacos, Besnik Hasi, seems to prefer African strikers Emmanuel Chinenye Emenike and El Fardou Ben Nabouhane.

Ansarifard is looking for starting lineup in order to get more first team action in Team Melli in the 2018 World Cup.

Ansarifard started his playing career at Iran's Saipa in 2007 and joined Persepolis after five years.

He left Persepolis for Tractor Sazi in the following year and signed a two-year deal with Segunda División's CA Osasuna in 2014.

The Iranian striker joined Greek top-flight team Panionios in 2015 and scored 14 goals in 44 matches.

On 13 January 2017, Ansarifard signed a 3.5-year contract with Greek giants Olympiacos for a transfer fee of €400,000.



Iran moves one spot down at FIVB World Ranking



S P O R T S Iran national volleyball team moved one place down at the FIVB Men's Senior World Ranking.

The Iranian team are eighth in the ranking with 157 points as Brazil remain as the top-ranked team in the world with a total of 315 points.

The Brazilian team lost to France 3-2 (21-25, 25-15, 25-23, 19-25, 15-13) at FIVB World League final in Curitiba in early July.

France, who won the FIVB World League title for a second time in three years, are ninth in the ranking with 150 points.

Iran finished 11th in the FIVB Volleyball World League 2017 under guidance of Igor Kolakovic.

Here are the Top 10 teams:

1. Brazil, 315, 2. USA, 270, 3. Poland, 262, 4. Italy, 240, 4. Russia 240, 6. Canada, 172, 7. Argentina, 168, 8. Iran, 157, 9. France, 150, 10. Germany, 90

Official: Iraqi midfielder Bashar Rasan joins Persepolis



S P O R T S Iran's Persepolis completed the signing of Iraqi international midfielder Bashar Rasan on Thursday.

The 20-year-old player joined Persepolis from Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya of Iraq on a two-year contract for an undisclosed fee. Rasan has made 10 appearance for Iraqi national football team.

The winger has become the youngest player of Iraq football team in the history.

Rasan attended the match between Persepolis and Foolad at the Azadi Stadium, where the Reds defeated their rivals 2-0 in the first week of the 2017-18 Iran Professional League (IPL) season.

IPL title-holder Persepolis prepare for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League quarter-final.

The Iranian giant will face Al-Ahli on August 22 in the first leg and will play the Saudi Arabian team on September 12 in the second leg.

Giti Pasand seal spot in third futsal club final with narrow win

Ho Chi Minh City: Sanaye Giti Pasand clinched their spot in the final of the AFC Futsal Club Championship Vietnam 2017 after beating Qatar's Al Rayyan 4-2 in the semi-finals on Friday.

With Thailand's Bluewave Chonburi awaiting the winners, both sides came into the match eager to create history - Al Rayyan hoping for their first-ever appearance in the final, an achievement matched just once in Qatar's history, and Giti Pasand looking to become the first side from the Islamic Republic of Iran to reach their third final.

It took Giti Pasand just three minutes to demonstrate their class, the Iranians taking the lead when Ahmad Esmailpour timed his leap to perfection to connect with Ali Asghar's inch-perfect cross with a fine header.

After a spell of incessant pressure, the incisive Iranians then doubled their lead through Abolghasem Orouji who did well to waltz past Mohammad Taheri before dispatching a left-footed low drive, two minutes later.

It was all one-way traffic in favour of the Iranians; Asghar coming close as he twisted and turned before seeing his shot saved by Abdolrahman Mohsin after Orouji timed his pass to perfection.

Having secured a two-goal cushion, the Iranians resorted to the counter attack approach, a tactic which



proved costly as it paved the way for Al Rayyan to push further forward. The Qataris duly came close to narrowing the gap when Deigo Costa fed the ball onto the path of Lucas Oliveira only to be denied by the strong left hand of custodian Sepehr Mohammadi.

The well crafted attack was a sign of things to come as Al Rayyan pulled one back in the 15 minutes, with Diego and Lucas Oliveira combining well to set up an unmarked Flavio Barreto Arantes on Giti Pasand's far post for simple tap-in.

The Qataris were then thrown a lifeline when Vitor Hugo Da Silva was sent off for an infringement.

Al Rayyan took full advantage of the numerical advantage to snatch the equaliser courtesy of Flavio again, the Brazilian-born forward powering home in the 18th minute.

Al Rayyan's celebrations were short-lived though, as Giti Pasand replied almost immediately, Esmailpour unleashing a thunderous long-range effort to restore his side's lead heading into the break.

The restart saw the game increase in tempo with both sides eager establish an early advantage. Mohammadi was arguably the busier of the two keepers, showcasing his agility to deny early attempts from Diego and Lucas.

Giti Pasand then came agonisingly close to extending their lead at the midway mark after a swift interchange between Esmailpour and Asfghar set the latter through on goal but his clever clip went gazing over the crossbar.

With time running out, the Qataris took the gamble of deploying the power play with five minutes remaining, Mohammadi again emerging the saviour, denying Lucas in the closing minutes. With virtually the last kick of the match, Giti Pasand were then awarded an unobstructed free-kick after Al Rayyan committed six accumulative fouls, Ali Asghar duly stepping up to seal the Iranians' passage into the final.

(Source: AFC)

NFL player, seeking Ph.D. in math, retires from football at 26

A Baltimore Ravens offensive lineman pursuing a doctorate in mathematics announced his retirement from football on Thursday, and team officials reportedly said a new study linking NFL players to brain disease was a factor in his decision.

John Urschel, 26, a Ph.D. candidate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who has been dubbed the "smartest player in the National Football League," called Ravens Coach John Harbaugh and said he was retiring, Harbaugh told a news conference.

"That was something that's been on his mind for quite a while, throughout the off-season," Harbaugh said, adding that Urschel's decision had surprised him.

Urschel, who spent all of his three professional seasons with the Ravens, said in a statement on Twitter that he was excited to be a working full time on his doc-

torate. He also said he and his fiancée are expecting their first child in December.

"It wasn't an easy decision but I believe it was the right one for me. There's no big story here and I'd appreciate the right to privacy," Urschel said.

His statement did not mention concerns about injury or a study released this week on chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, a debilitating brain disease linked to head injuries, but the Baltimore Sun cited team sources indicating his decision was related to the study.

The report in the Journal of the American Medical Association said the brains of 99 percent of former NFL players studied showed signs of CTE, which can lead to aggression and dementia.

Urschel, a 6-foot, 3-inch (1.9 m), 300-pound (136 kg) player who joined the Ravens from Penn State University, is

studying applied mathematics at MIT. He was the co-author of a research paper titled "Spectral Bisection of Graphs and Connectedness" that was published in 2014, the same year he began his professional football career.

An avid chess player who reads math books to relax, Urschel was featured in a television commercial in which he explains the technology behind noise-cancelling headphones to JJ. Watt, a star player for the Houston Texans, who uses the technology to tune out the lecture.

In a 2015 article he wrote in The Players' Tribune, Urschel said he loved playing football and accepted the risk of brain injury.

"Objectively, I shouldn't. I have a bright career ahead of me in mathematics," he wrote, adding that he was not seeking to get rich playing football.



"The things I love the most in this world (reading math, doing research, playing chess) are very, very inexpensive," he wrote.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran karate come 3rd at 2017 World Games

Iran's karate finished in third place at the 2017 World Games. The Iranian karate fighters won five medals in the competition held in Wroclaw, Poland.

Iran finally secured a gold when Zabiollah Poorshab defeated Japan's Ryutarō Araga in the final of the men's 84kg event.

The bronze medal went to Turkey's Ugur Aktas who beat Kamil Warda from Poland.

Hamideh Abbasali from Iran claimed a silver medal after losing to Japan's Ayumi Uekusa at the women's over-68 kilograms title at the GEM Sports Complex.

Anne Laure Florentin of France seized the bronze as she overcame Isabela Rodrigues of Brazil.

In the over-84kg, Iran's Sajad Ganjzadeh lost to Hideyoshi Kagawa from Japan in the gold medal contest.

Poland's Michal Babos sealed a bronze for the host nation after he beat Achraf Ouchen of Morocco.

Aliasghar Asiabari of Iran lost to Stanislav Horuna of Ukraine in the final of the men's 75kg event.

Amir Mehdi Zadeh had already won a silver medal in the men's 60kg after losing to Firdosi Farzaliyev from the Azerbaijan Republic.

Japan won the competition with four gold medals, two silvers and one bronze.

France came second, winning two gold and two bronze medals.

(Source: Tasnim)



Iran B beaten by China at Asian Volleyball Championship

Iran U-23 volleyball team were defeated against China at the 2017 Asian Men's Volleyball Championship on Thursday.

The Iranian team, who had defeated Iraq, Pakistan and Chinese Taipei in the preliminary round, lost to China 3-0 (27-25, 25-19, 25-20) in Pool F.

Iran will meet Australia on Saturday.

Former successive two-time champion Iran, fielded a U-23 squad in its final preparation for the next month's FIVB Volleyball Men's U23 World Championship in Cairo, Egypt.

The 2017 Asian Men's Volleyball Championship is the 19th edition of the Asian Men's Volleyball Championship, the biennial international men's volleyball championship of Asia organized by the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC).

The event is being held in Surabaya, Indonesia from 24 July to 1 August 2017. It is the second time that Indonesia hosts the tournament after the 2007 Asian Championship.

(Source: Tasnim)

Sanchez's return to action for Arsenal could be delayed by illness

Alexis Sanchez's start to the season could be derailed after the Arsenal forward posted a picture on social media claiming he was ill.

Sanchez took to Instagram on Friday morning to post a picture of himself sitting wrapped in a scarf and looking miserable, with the caption "sick."

PA Sport reports that Sanchez is suffering from flu and that Arsenal are not sure as of yet if the illness will impact on his return to the club following the summer break.

The Chile international has yet to begin pre-season training with his teammates following his exertions at the Confederations Cup in Russia, where he helped the Copa America champions reach the final.

Sanchez's future remains up in the air as he enters the final season of his current contract, with talks on a new deal seemingly at an impasse.

(Source: ESPN)

Buffon concerned by spiralling transfer fees

Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon says football is heading in a dangerous direction if Neymar's proposed €220 million transfer to Paris Saint-Germain goes through.

Barcelona forward Neymar looks set to double the world-record transfer fee this summer, with a source close to PSG telling ESPN FC last week that he has told the French club he wants to move to the Parc des Princes and has agreed to terms on a contract.

Buffon, who has seen his understudy in the Italy squad, 18-year-old Gianluigi Donnarumma, sign a new deal with AC Milan which sees him earn a third more than him, says something must be done to halt the spiralling fees.

He told La Gazzetta dello Sport that financial fair play must be adapted to prevent the whole market from collapsing.

"Yes, [I'm in favour of] regulations for valuations to be set by some parameters," he said. "It all seems fake. Why is Neymar worth €220m and not €600m? When I was little, my granddad always used to say: inflate, inflate and the balloon will burst."

(Source: Soccernet)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

Managing Director: Ali Asgari
Editor-in-Chief: Hassan Lasjerdi

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
Printed at: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



Thespians from Iran to perform at France Shakespeare Festival

A R T TEHRAN — A troupe from Iran will perform "King Lear according to Edmund" at the 18th edition of the Shakespeare Festival in Tournon-sur-Rhône in southern France.



Meysam Razfar and Shohreh Reayati act in a scene from "King Lear according to Edmund".

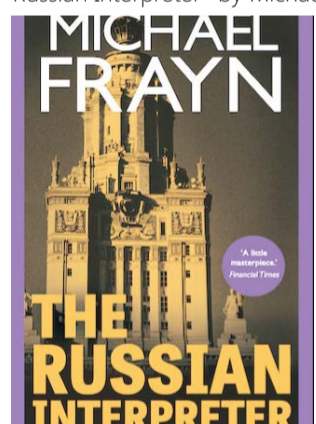
Shohreh Reayati and Meysam Razfar are the members of the troupe, which will be directed by Asghar Nuri, the organizers have announced.

Hassan Judaki is the producer of the play that is scheduled to be staged on August 31.

Troupes from Nepal, Colombia, Algeria and Italy will also participate in the event, which will be held from July 29 to August 4.

Michael Frayn's "The Russian Interpreter" translated into Persian

CULTURE TEHRAN — Kayhan Bahmani has recently completed a Persian translation of "The Russian Interpreter" by Michael Frayn.



Featuring an unusual blend of humor and suspense, Michael Frayn's "The Russian Interpreter" was inspired in part by the author's own experiences in Communist Russia and won the Hawthornden Prize as the best work of imaginative fiction published that year.

"The Russian Interpreter" is a story about Raya, a mercurial Moscow blonde who speaks no English, and Gordon Proctor-Gould, a visiting British businessman

who speaks no Russian.

The book is due to come out by Chatrang Publications in the near future.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Illumination design

Ali Saei-Yeganeh is showcasing his latest illumination designs in an exhibit titled "Permanent Patterns" at Atashzad Gallery.

The exhibition will run until August 6 at the gallery located at 3 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St., near Vanak Sq.

Multimedia

Laleh Gallery is currently hosting an exhibition of works by Rana Azarmanesh, Abbas Khanqoli, Mahsa Zaim, Mehrzad Sabzevari and dozens of other young artists.

The exhibition titled "Colorful Contemplation" runs until August 8 at the gallery located on Fatemi St., near Laleh Park.

Photo

An exhibition of photos by a group of photographers, including Nasim Goli, Ata Mohammadi, Mona Bozorgi, Ruzbeh Hosseinabadi and Mehrdad Omrani is currently underway at Mehrva Gallery.

The exhibition named "I, the Photographer" will continue until August 7 at the gallery located at 38 South Aban St. off Karim Khan Ave.

Painting

Paintings by Sanaz Khodadadi, Reza Emadi, Farzaneh Aqai, Sara Rahimi and a large number of other artists are on display in an exhibition at Farda Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Reflection" will run until August 3 at the gallery that can be found at 2 Araabi Alley, Hosseini St., off Karim Khan Ave.

Two movies from Iran picked for Venice festival Orizzonti

A R T TEHRAN — Two d e s k movies by Iranian filmmakers will compete in the Orizzonti (Horizons) section at the 74th Venice International Film Festival, the organizers announced last week.

"Disappearance" by Ali Asgari and "No Date, No Signature" by Vahid Jalilvand will be screened in this category dedicated to films that represent the latest aesthetic and expressive trends in international cinema.

The story of "Disappearance" produced at the Doha Film Institute is set on a cold winter night in Tehran where a couple of young lovers run into a serious problem. They have just a few hours to come up with a solution.

"No Date, No Signature" is about Dr. Nariman, a forensic pathologist who has a car accident with a motorcyclist and injures his 8-year-old son. He offers to take the child to a clinic nearby, but the father refuses his help and money. The next morning, in the hospital where he works, Dr. Nariman finds out that the little boy has been brought for an autopsy after a suspicious death.

Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, the Iranian director of numerous acclaimed films, is a member of the panel for the Orizzonti section.

The Italian director Gianni Amelio will preside over the jury, which also includes American director Ami Canaan Mann and Irish-Scottish director and



"No Date, No Signature" (Bedoune Tarikh, Bedoune Emza)

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.

Twenty 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.

Winners of Iran's first festival of photos on mines honored

A R T TEHRAN — d e s k Winners of the first festival of photos on mines and the mining industry were honored during a ceremony on Wednesday.

The festival has been organized by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

The first award was presented to photographer Azin Haqiqi, Mohammad Azadi Ahmabadadi received the second award and the third was given to Hamid Sadeqi.

In addition, Bahar Shaqayeq received the jury special award for her portrayal of the Azad-Shahr coal mine explosion in the northeastern Iranian province of Golestan which left 35 people dead in May 2017.

Speaking at the ceremony, IMIDRO director Mehdi Karbasian said that a committee will be established within the organization to connect art and mining for further positive promotion.

Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Ali Moradkhani, also attending the program, said that the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance is willing to cooperate in organizing such events.

He also hoped the next edition



Photographer Azin Haqiqi (C) accepts his award from IMIDRO director Mehdi Karbasian in Tehran on July 26, 2017. (ILNA/Mostafa Safari)

of the festival would be held internationally.

Photos on the subjects such as "fillings and lava", "man and mine", "mine and environment" and "mine and women" were among the participating works at the festival, which ran from July 23 to 26.

Film critic Akbar Alami presided over the jury of the festival, which was composed of Seifollah Samadian, Masud Zenderuh Kermani, Mehdi Alipur, Saed Nikzad and Reza Moattarian.

Urban film festival announces international jury

A R T TEHRAN — Cineastes d e s k from Italy, France, Malaysia and Iran will judge films competing in the international section of the 6th International Urban Film Festival, the organizers have announced.

One of the members is U-Wei Bin Haji Saari, the director of "The Arsonist", the first Malaysian film screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1995.

The other member is Italian Stefania Girolami Goodwin, an assistant director and actress known for "Empire Records", "Super Mario Bros" and "A Pure Formality".

Samy Nacéri, the French actor known for his collaboration in the French action-comedy series "Taxi" by Gerard Krawczyk, Gerard Pires, is also included.

Majid Majidi, the Iranian director of acclaimed movie "Muhammad (S), the Messenger of God", and Merila Zarei, the star of Asghar Farhadi's Oscar-winning drama "A Separation", are the two Iranian members of the panel.

A rich lineup of nine features and 13 short films will be competing in the international section of the festival taking place at Tehran's Mellat Cinema Complex from July 31 to August 5.

Among the feature films are "Chronicle of a Passion" by Fabrizio Cattani from Italy, "News from Planet



This combination photo shows (L-R) U-Wei Bin Haji Saari, Stefania Girolami Goodwin, Majid Majidi, Samy Nacéri and Merila Zarei.

Mars" by Dominik Moll from France, "Power to Change" by Carl A Fechner from Germany and "Three Days till the Spring" by Alexander Kasatkin from Russia.

"Mousse" by John Hellberg from Sweden, "Transit" by Oliver Kracht from Germany, "Vida" by Daniel Yeppez from Colombia, "The Silence" by Farnush Samadi and Ali Asgari from France and Italy, and "Happy without Money" by Mahyar Hamidian from Germany are among the shorts selected for the event.

In addition, "Awakening City" by Fernando Ramos from Brazil, "Parks" by Natsuki Seta from Japan and a film by a Russian director are scheduled to be reviewed in a special section.

Fitzgerald's "Last Tycoon" born again for television

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — F. Scott Fitzgerald never finished his last novel "The Last Tycoon" but that made filming the book for a new television series even more interesting for actors Kelsey Grammer and Lily Collins.

Fitzgerald died in 1940 at the age of 44 before finishing the story about the studio system in the Golden Age of Hollywood. He left notes on where the characters were heading and the completed novel was released posthumously in 1941 by his friend, Edmund Wilson.

"What's fun, I guess, about an unfinished novel is you can get to do what you want to with it. He's laid out a really wonderful blueprint and you get to finish it," said Grammer, who plays Pat Brady, a character based on movie studio boss Louis B. Mayer.

"The Last Tycoon", which was previously adapted for television in 1957 and film in 1976, will air in nine parts on Amazon starting on Friday, July 28.



Actor Matthew Bomer from the TV series "The Last Tycoon" attends the 57th Monte-Carlo Television Festival in Monaco, June 18, 2017 (Reuters/Eric Gaillard)

Collins, who plays Brady's daughter Cecelia, said she enjoyed having the freedom to "take it and run with it and bring about the historical facts of the period but also to bring in our imagination."

Cecelia is trying to break into production in Hollywood, which is still a challenge for women nearly 80 years after Fitzgerald's death.

"Some things have changed but many, many things have not. A lot of the things that we are dealing with on the show are sadly really relevant and fresh today," said Matt Bomer, who plays Monroe Stahr, a character based on studio chief Irving Thalberg.

Grammer, best known for TV comedies "Cheers" and "Frasier", said the studio battles depicted in Fitzgerald's book also felt close to home.

"I don't think it's very different. I think everybody is a lot more polite now, but I think secretly down, down, deep inside they fight like it's turf war, like it is a war they need to win," he said.

Hitler exhibition in Berlin bunker asks: How could it happen?

BERLIN (Reuters) — More than 70 years after Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his Berlin bunker in the final days of World War Two, an exhibition in the capital examines how he became a Nazi and what turned ordinary Germans into murderers during the Third Reich.

For decades it was taboo in Germany to focus on Hitler, although that has begun to change with films such as the 2004 "Downfall", chronicling the dictator's last days, and an exhibition about him in 2010.

The exhibition "Hitler - how could it happen" is set in a bunker in Berlin that was used by civilians during World War Two

bombing raids - close to the bunker where Hitler lived while Berlin was being bombed and which is not accessible to the public.

It examines Hitler's life from his childhood in Austria and time as a painter to his experience as a soldier during World War One and his subsequent rise to power. Other exhibits focus on concentration camps, pogroms and the Holocaust that killed 6 million Jews.

It ends with a controversial reconstruction of the bunker room where Hitler killed himself on April 30, 1945 - replete with grandfather clock, floral sofa and an oxygen tank. The

exhibit is behind glass and is monitored by camera, with visitors forbidden to take photographs.

Exhibition curator Wieland Giebel, 67, said he had been accused of "Hitler Disney" for putting the room on show. But he defended the decision, saying the exhibition focused on the crimes carried out by Hitler's regime, adding: "This room is where the crimes ended, where everything ended, so that's why we're showing it."

He said he had been asking how World War Two and the Holocaust came about ever since playing in the rubble of

post-war Germany as a child, and said the exhibition attempted to answer that question.

"After World War One a lot of Germans felt humiliated due to the Versailles Treaty," Giebel said, referring to the accord signed in 1919 that forced defeated Germany to make massive reparation payments.

"At the same time there was anti-Semitism in Europe and not just in Germany ... and Hitler built on this anti-Semitism and what people called the 'shameful peace of Versailles' and used those two issues to mobilize people," he added.