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Rouhani selects three female vice presidents

POLITICS TEHRAN — In separate decrees issued on Wednesday President Hassan Rouhani appointed three women as his deputies.

He appointed Masoumeh Ebtekar, Laya Joneidi and Shahindokht Molaverdi respectively as vice president for women and family affairs, vice president for legal affairs, and presidential aide for civil rights.

The appointments were announced one day after Rouhani released the list of his ministers to the parliament for approval.

Ebtekar was the chief of the Department of Environment in Rouhani's first administration. She held the same post under the Mohammad Khatami

presidency from 1997 to 2005. The post Ebtekar is taking was held by Molaverdi from 2013 to 2017. Molaverdi herself is replacing Elham Aminzadeh who acted as presidential aide for civil rights for a year.

And Joneidi, a Tehran University professor, is a getting a government post for the first time. She replaces Majid Ansari.

Re-elected Rouhani did not include any women in his proposed list of 17 ministers.

The president won a landslide re-election on May 19, after campaigning largely on social reform. His campaign also touted the merits of the nuclear deal with the U.S., the European Union and other partners. **→2**

Ex-U.S. officials warn Trump against existing nuclear deal

POLITICS TEHRAN — A group of former senior U.S. officials and prominent national security leaders issued a statement on Tuesday warning that withdrawing from the July 2015 nuclear agreement would have "grave" consequences for the United States.

Withdrawing from the nuclear agreement "would have grave long term political and security consequences for the United States", read part of the statement published by The National Interest magazine.

"No American national security objective would be served by withdraw-

ing from it as long as Iran is meeting the agreement's requirements," the statement said.

"A U.S. decision to renew sanctions in the absence of evidence of Iranian noncompliance would damage American leadership, raise the likelihood of legal disputes with European companies, banks and governments, and potentially directly challenge the power of the U.S. Treasury and the U.S. dollar as global reserve currency," it added.

"Backing away from the JCPOA would also damage U.S. credibility as a partner in future diplomatic negotiations including with North Korea." **→2**

ARTICLE
 By Mehdi Sepahvand
 Tehran Times journalist

Kissinger, newest-comer in the 'Persian Empire' folly

Former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger warned in an article for CapX last week that Iran should not be allowed to fill the power vacuum that will be created when ISIS is wiped out.

"In these circumstances, the traditional adage that the enemy of your enemy can be regarded as your friend no longer applies. In the contemporary Middle East, the enemy of your enemy may also be your enemy. The Middle East affects the world by the volatility of its ideologies as much as by its specific actions," he wrote, addressing the Trump administration.

"The outside world's war with ISIS can serve as an illustration. Most non-ISIS powers — including Shiite Iran and the leading Sunni states — agree on the need to destroy it. But which entity is supposed to inherit its territory?" Kissinger wrote, suggesting that the resulting situation "could mark the emergence of an Iranian radical empire."

These comments from Kissinger are not his only in this regard. He told the *Algemeiner* in November 2016 that the biggest challenge facing the Middle East is the "potential domination of the region by an Iran that is both imperial and jihadist."

But Kissinger is not unprecedented here. Ralph Peters, a retired United States Army lieutenant colonel and a regular Fox News commentator, wrote similarly in an article titled "The Iranian dream of a reborn Persian Empire" in *The New York Post* in February 2015.

"Iran is piling one brick on the other... today's Iranians, with their Persian heritage, are on the march as surely as were the armies of Xerxes 2,500 years ago. Desperate for a legacy, our president obsesses about a deal (no matter how wretched) on Iran's nuclear program, while ignoring Iran's aggression across the Middle East. In his recent State of the Union message, the president even defended Iran against Congress and further sanctions," Peters wrote. **→2**

Iran condemns attack on Afghan Shia village

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi strongly condemned on Wednesday attack on a Shia village in northern Afghanistan.

He urged the Afghan people to raise awareness and maintain unity and solidarity in order to counter divisive and sectarian terrorist acts.

He also offered the Afghan people, government and families of the victims condolences over the "brutal" and "inhumane" crime.

An attack on the Mirza Olang Village in

the northern Sar-e Pol Province overnight Sunday left 60 people killed.

Fierce fighting began in the area on Thursday when militants, reportedly including foreign nationals, seized a checkpoint manned by local police. Two days later, they entered the village and killed civilians in "a

An attack on the Mirza Olang Village in the northern Sar-e Pol Province overnight Sunday left 60 people killed.

brutal, inhumane way," according to a provincial spokesman Zabihullah Amani, Press TV reported.

Taliban claimed responsibility for seizing the area.

According to reports, the militants set fire to several mosques, torched at least 30 houses, beheaded a number of villagers and shot dozens of others dead.

Sar-e-Pol Governor Mohammad Zaher Wahdat told Afghanistan Tolo News TV that some 300 families have left their homes and been displaced from Mirza Olang Village in the past five days.

6.5% of global GDP goes to subsidizing fossil fuels: study

Fossil fuels have two major problems that paint a dim picture for their future energy dominance. These problems are inter-related but still should be discussed separately. First, they cause climate change. We know that, we've known it for decades, and we know that continued use of fossil fuels will cause enormous worldwide economic and social consequences.

Second, fossil fuels are expensive. Much of their costs are hidden, however, as subsidies. If people knew how large their subsidies were, there would be a backlash against them from so-called financial conservatives.

A study was just published in the journal *World Development* that quantifies the

amount of subsidies directed toward fossil fuels globally, and the results are shocking. The authors work at the IMF and are well-skilled to quantify the subsidies discussed in the paper.

Pre-tax (the narrow view of subsidies) subsidies amount to 0.7% of global GDP in 2011 and 2013. But the more appropriate definition of subsidies is much larger (8 times larger than the pre-tax subsidies). We are talking enormous values of 5.8% of global GDP in 2011, rising to 6.5% in 2013.

Let's give the final numbers and then back up to dig into the details. The subsidies were \$4.9 trillion in 2013 and they rose to \$5.3 tn just two years later. According to the authors,

these subsidies are important because first, they promote fossil fuel use which damages the environment. Second, these are fiscally costly. Third, the subsidies discourage investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy that compete with the subsidized fossil fuels. Finally, subsidies are very inefficient means to support low-income households.

With these truths made plain, why haven't subsidies been eliminated? The answer to that is a bit complicated. Part of the answer to this question is that people do not fully appreciate the costs of fossil fuels to the rest of us. Often we think of them as all gain with no pain.

(Source: *The Guardian*)



Dates harvest season in hot summer

A farmer is picking dates from a palm tree plantation on the outskirts of Shadegan, southwestern Iran, August 6, 2017. This year the harvest season has commenced earlier than usual due to hot summer.

According to Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, and Mines, the country exported around 210,000 tons of dates valued at \$208 million in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 2016-March 2017).

U.S. accountable for fatal raid on Popular Mobilization Units forces: senior commander

A commander of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU/Hashd al-Sha'abi) has held the United States-led coalition accountable for a recent deadly attack on its forces near the Syrian border, saying the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists could not have been behind the assault as they are not in possession of smart weapons.

On August 7, the PMU's Sayyad al-Shuhada Brigades said its military base in the al-Tanf region had come under a smart bomb and artillery attack by the U.S.-led coalition, which purports to be fighting ISIL in Iraq and Syria.

More than 30 Iraqi volunteer forces, known as Hashd al-Sha'abi, were killed in the assault.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Army Colonel Ryan Dillon, the spokesman for the U.S.-led forces, rejected the reports as "inaccurate" and denied having conducted air attacks in that area at the time.

However, Karim al-Nouri, a PMU spokesman, told Lebanon's al-Mayadeen television channel that the attack could not have been conducted by ISIL terrorists since they are not in possession of any smart bombs as the ones that hit the Iraqi base.

He described the attack as intentional, saying it was impossible for the U.S. military to have mistakenly targeted the Iraqi troops.

The U.S. had, prior to the incident, threatened PMU forces in the area and warned them against approaching the Iraq-Syria border, the commander said.

Speaking to Iran's Tasnim News Agency on Tuesday, Abu Ala al-Wel-la'ei, who commands the Brigades, said the attack had been followed by a ISIL strike against the Hashd al-Sha'abi forces in the area.

The nature of the assault, he said, indicates a team-up between the U.S.-led coalition and ISIL. **→13**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Zarif: No intention to aggravate tension with Saudis

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister **d e s k** Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that Iran has no intention to aggravate the already strained relation with Saudi Arabia.

In an interview with ILNA, Zarif added, "Mending fences with Saudi Arabia would require bilateral respect and recognition of common interests, as well as the cessation of policies that lead to regional war and extremism."

These remarks come shortly after the recent exchange of handshakes between Zarif and his Saudi counterpart Adel al-Jubeir on the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's meeting in Turkey.



British figure: Rouhani swearing-in marks Iran stability

POLITICS TEHRAN — President Hassan **d e s k** Rouhani's swearing-in ceremony for his second term in office marked Iran's stability and resilience, a British figure said on Wednesday.

"The ceremony was extremely dignified and the speech by President Rouhani was excellent," Lord Norman Lamont, head of Iran-UK Chamber of Commerce, told the Islamic Republic News Agency.

He added, "In my view Dr. Rouhani was quite right to voice his complaints over the problems on the JCPOA (the official name for the nuclear deal) and banking restrictions."



Total deal trouble-free, Iran's Judiciary confirms

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Judiciary verified **d e s k** on Wednesday that a major gas contract the Oil Ministry signed with France's Total in July does not contain any problem.

Speaking to reporters in Tehran, Judiciary deputy chief and spokesman Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei said a judicial committee tasked with vetting the Oil Ministry's contracts and business negotiations has examined the contract with Total and has confirmed that there is no problem with the deal, Tasnim news agency reported.



Iran may lease planes to take Hajj pilgrims home

POLITICS TEHRAN — An Iranian lawmaker **d e s k** raised the possibility that the country might have to lease passenger planes from foreign airlines if Saudi Arabia would not cooperate in carrying the Iranian Hajj pilgrims back home.

Blaming Saudi Arabia for reneging on its promise to carry half of the Iranian passengers to Mecca and Madina, Hassan Hosseini Shahroudi said Iran's flag carrier Iran Air will lease planes from Qatar and Malaysia if the kingdom fails again to carry the Iranian passengers in their return to home, Nasim reported.



Turkey starts constructing wall along Iran border

POLITICS TEHRAN — Turkey has started **d e s k** building a wall along its border with Iran in parallel with the Turkish barrier along the Syrian frontier, a Turkish media report says.

The Dogan news agency said on Tuesday that the governor of Agri province, Suleyman Elban, had visited the construction process of the security wall.

It added that Ankara is constructing the 2-meter wide, 3-meter high wall with portable blocks.

Turkey claims that the construction work is aimed at improving security by halting the infiltration of Kurdistan Workers' Party militants and illegal smugglers.



Iran rejects 'bizarre' Saudi claims of support for Taliban

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's embassy in Kabul **d e s k** has dismissed as "bizarre" claims by a Saudi diplomat about the Islamic Republic's alleged links to Taliban militants and armed groups inside Afghanistan.

In a Tuesday statement, the embassy said it regarded as "baseless and groundless" the unprofessional and divisive remarks by the Saudi chargé d'affaires in Kabul Mishari al-Harbi and flatly rejected them, Press TV reported.

The Saudi diplomat had recently accused Iran of supporting Taliban militants in Afghanistan.

Iran's Parliament committee okays anti-U.S. bill

By Mohammad Homaeifar

TEHRAN — The Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has finalized a bill aimed at confronting the U.S. support for terrorism and adventurism in the Middle East.

The final session of discussing the bill to counter Washington's hostile measures was held in the committee on Tuesday.

After being ratified by members of the committee it was submitted to the Parliament presiding board, Deputy Chairman of the Committee Kamal Dehghani Firoozabadi was quoted by IRNA as saying.

The bill was issued after three weeks of deliberations and will be presented at the open session, and then it will be referred to the Guardian Council for final



ratification. The bill was approved in the extraordinary session of the parliamentary committee recently which was attended

by Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Abbas Araqchi and the Deputy Foreign Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Hassan Qashqavi.

"This move means that Majlis acts in unison in face of America's Senate approval," said Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the committee's chairman.

The bill is considered by the Parliament to retaliate a U.S. Congress bill which includes anti-Iran non-nuclear sanctions, billed as Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act.

Washington said the sanctions are targeting Iran's ballistic missile program, as well as what it calls "Iran's (alleged) support of terrorism" and "human rights abuses".

Tehran has denounced the U.S. officials' allegations on the ties between the ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.

Iran has emerged as major player in resolving Syrian crisis, diplomat says

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran has **d e s k** become a significant player in resolving the Syrian conflict thanks to Dr. Zarif's renewed efforts, Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Jaber Ansari says.

In an interview with the Shargh newspaper published on Wednesday, Jaber Ansari lauded Foreign Minister Zarif's role in boosting Iran's strategic weight in the region, saying the Astana talks are one of the outcomes of Tehran's dynamic foreign policy.

Russia, Iran and Turkey brokered a Syrian peace initiative in the Kazakh capital of Astana in the beginning of 2017. Ever since, the Astana talks have brought representatives from the Syrian government and opposition groups to the negotiating table in order to find a solution to the Syrian conflict.

So far, the opposing sides have convened at the Kazakh capital five times

with the sixth round due to take place at the end of August.

"Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, we've been saying that we do not oppose the legitimate demands of the Syrian people... What is opposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran is the foreign intervention which imposes others' will on the Syrian government and people," Iran's point man for Middle East stated.

He also voiced Iran's opposition to using terrorism as a tool in order to achieve certain political aims.

"Since the beginning, we have not opposed demands for change and reform and regarded such demands as indisputable rights of those portions of the Syrian people who wished for change and reform."

The official said the Syrian crisis is a result of certain foreign countries' retaliation against the Syrian government for wishing

to remain independent.

He also highlighted the need to differentiate between terrorist groups and the opposition groups, saying Iran has been paying more attention to this issue in recent years.

The senior diplomat noted that contacting some opposition groups and figures has been on the agenda of Iran, adding, "Under the framework of Astana [talks], such efforts have become more noticeable."

"When Iran sits at the negotiating table beside Russia, Turkey, and the Syrian government and opposition, it means that [Iran] has implicitly recognized the existence of the Syrian opposition," he remarked.

He added that it goes the other way around too, as the Syrian opposition has acknowledged the need for the other side's effective role in order to resolve the

conflict.

"If we want to move toward resolving the Syrian crisis and ending the militaristic situation as well as the civil war in Syria, there's no way except for reaching a comprehensive, multilateral policy."

On May 4, Russia, Iran and Turkey signed a document during the fourth round of the Syrian talks in Astana to establish four "de-escalation zones" in Syria.

On Tuesday, representatives of the three countries gathered in Tehran to kick off a new round of meetings devoted to strengthening de-escalation zones.

The de-escalation zones, envisioned as places where displaced Syrian civilians could voluntarily return and settle, include the northern province of Idlib, the central province of Homs, the East Ghouta region outside Damascus, and southern Syria along the Jordanian border.

Rouhani selects three female vice presidents

1 → The exclusion of women from the proposed list was widely expected as before the ministerial list was released, female figures criticized the president for not keeping his campaign promise to appoint female ministers.

This is while Rouhani's predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad appointed the Islamic Republic's only female minister, Marzieh Vahid-Dastjerdi, as health minister in 2009.

Rouhani did say nothing of Zahra Ahmadipour, who was director of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization (CHTHO). Whether she will retain the post or not in the next administration will be announced in the coming days. If she keeps the job the number of women hold top posts in the government will reach four.

Ahmadipour became CHTHO chief in November 2016 after Masoud Soltanifar, who held the job, was named sports and youth minister.



(From left) Massoumeh Ebtekar, Shahindokht Molaverdi and Layla Joneidi

Kissinger, newest-comer in the 'Persian Empire' folly

1 → What Kissinger and Peters' remarks boil down to is no deal with Iran except in the form of blows and strikes. Such catastrophizing of situations goes straight against the wisdom of Europe and other world powers who have preferred a détente with Tehran, even deeming it as an oasis where to originate peace in a Middle East taken by war and extremism.

These gentlemen seem to be worried more about the American empire's interests just over Iran's walls, from Iraq to Afghanistan.

In an article on Al-Jazeera in May 2015, Hamid Dabashi, the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, said, "There

is no longer any Persian, Arab, Ottoman, Indian, Chinese, British, Spanish, or Mongol empire, and may the angels of mercy and justice be praised for that. The only empire that exists, and it does not feel particularly well or imperial these days, is the American empire. It is a kind of postmodern empire, as it were, ruling, or wishing to rule, via drones, proxies, mercenary armies, and lucrative arms sales to rich, corrupt, and bewildered potentates."

Iran is no doubt also a pain in the neck of the House of Saud, Washington's closest buddy in the region, with whom they share the nice memory of some sword dance.

If the United States' amorphous empire

recycles the remnants of Saddam Hussein's Baath party to form a state that is Islamic only in name to implement its military operations in the Middle East, what justification is there to prevent Iran not to try to diffuse their plans and hush their buzz right down its nose? Maybe the real question is why should Tehran even mind being called expansionist and empire-seeking while everything around it is being razed to the ground and burned to ash?

Even on grounds that Kissinger has meant for the U.S. government to fill in the ISIS gap with a real government with peaceful aspirations, it would be hard to imagine Washington making a radical shift in

its approach to the current Syrian problem.

I have discussed in my article on "Iran turning Soviet-American wreckage into good, serving Afghans" how Tehran has managed in past years to reap something profitable out of foreign powers' wrecks in its neighborhood. However, Iran has never been claiming an inch of territory beyond its borders to be called an empire. What remains is Iran boosting its regional sway via diplomatic, economic, or other commonly-applied means. It is not easy to find out this is the common practice of many healthy countries and they are not being called expansionist or imperially-motivated for merely seeking what is best for them.

Ex-U.S. officials warn Trump against existing nuclear deal

1 → Reports indicate that President Donald Trump may refuse to certify Iran's compliance with the JCPOA in October, which could lead to restoring sanctions against Iran that were suspended in 2015 in accordance with the agreement. Doing so would bring the United States—rather than Iran—into noncompliance with the agreement.

Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia - finalized the text of the nuclear agreement on July 14, 2015. The deal went into effect in January 2016.

The UN Security Council turned the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), into international law by endorsing a resolution on July 20, 2015.

Under the agreement Iran is tasked to limit its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of financial and economic sanctions.

The U.S. administration said in April it was launching an inter-agency review of whether the lifting of sanctions against Iran was in Washington's national security interests.

Under U.S. law, the State Department must notify Congress every 90 days of Iran's compliance with the JCPOA.

The statement further urged the establishment of a regular channel of

communication at a senior level with Iran that would enable the U.S. to express its concerns directly to Iran's leaders about Iranian actions, provide a channel to resolve conflicts before they escalate, and explore opportunities for working in parallel with Iran on problems that impact U.S. security interests such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

Back in January, dozens of American top scientists, wrote to Trump to urge him not to dismantle the Iran deal, hailing it as a "strategic asset."

"We urge you to preserve this critical U.S. strategic asset," read the letter, signed by 37 signatories including Nobel laureates, veteran makers of nuclear arms, former White House science advisers and the chief executive of the world's largest general society of scientists.

Last month, the president — after a long, drawn-out battle with his top national security officials — reluctantly agreed to certify the deal for the next three months. But according to a recent report in Foreign Policy, the president has assembled a special team of White House aides whose sole task is to figure out a way to claim that Iran is violating the deal. That way he can say it was Iran's fault the deal fell apart, not his.

During his presidential campaign, Trump called the accord "the worst deal ever negotiated." In a speech to the American

Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel lobbying group, he declared that his "No. 1 priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal" and argued that Tehran had outmaneuvered Washington in winning concessions and could still develop nuclear arms when the pact's restrictions expire in 15 years.

He has kept the hard line over the past months.

Trump's claims lack supporting evidence. Experts, including the International Atomic Energy (IAEA) — the nuclear watchdog agency in charge of verifying Iran's compliance with its obligations under the deal — says that Iran is in compliance.

The IAEA, which is tasked to monitor Iran's compliance with the JCPOA, has confirmed six times so far that Iran has honored its commitments.

Iran has warned it would not keep mum of any substantial noncompliance by Washington, saying the Trump administration has already violated the multilateral accord.

In an interview with CNN's Fareed Zakaria in July, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that "the United States has failed to implement its part of the bargain," citing the fact that Trump had "used his presence in Hamburg during the G20 meeting in order to dissuade leaders from other countries to engage in business with Iran."

Paragraph 26 of the nuclear deal

demands the U.S. to make best efforts in good faith to sustain it and to prevent interference with the realization of the full benefit by Iran of the sanctions lifting.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, who has hailed the deal as his signature foreign policy achievement, has been vocally critical of Trump's rhetoric.

At his swearing-in ceremony on August 5, Rouhani said: "Those who want to tear up the nuclear deal should know that they will be ripping up their own political life."

The agreement remains, theoretically, even if the U.S. pulls out, with the five other signatories, Russia, China, Germany, France and Britain, all saying that they would continue with it. But companies and financial institutions are acutely wary of falling foul of U.S. sanctions and incurring immense financial penalties.

"I don't see how the agreement can really survive if the U.S. really does say it is no longer part of it" was the view of Professor Mohammad Marandi, a Tehran University academic influential in Iranian government circles. "The odds will be stacked against it". While Robert Emerson, a security analyst, said: "This is not something which is going to go away from Washington politics; the issue of the nuclear deal and Iran sanctions will be revisited many times in the future by the hardliners led by the U.S. president".

Death toll from raid on Shia Afghan village 'hits 60'

Reports say the death toll from a Taliban attack on a remote Shia village in northern Afghanistan has risen to 60.

The civilians, including women and children, were massacred during an attack on the Mirza Olang Village in the northern Sar-e Pol Province overnight Sunday. A number of Afghan security forces were also among the dead.

Fierce fighting began in the area on Thursday when militants, reportedly including foreign nationals, seized a checkpoint manned by local police. Two days later, they entered the village and killed civilians in "a brutal, inhumane way," according to a provincial spokesman Zabihullah Amani.

The militants set fire to several mosques, torched at least 30 houses, beheaded a number of villagers and shot dozens of others dead, other officials said.

Amani said the assailants launched the attack under the command of a local Taliban commander who had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit.

A Taliban spokesman, Qari Yusouf Ahmadi, claimed responsibility for seizing the area, but denied killing civilians in Mirza Olang, cooperating with ISIL, or using foreign assailants.

Some hostages released

Meanwhile, the Taliban have reportedly released a number of the civilians who had been held hostage in the area following mediation by local elders and



provincial officials, Amani said.

He said 235 hostages were released on Tuesday and were "safely evacuated to [other areas in] Sar-e Pol, but there are still an unknown number of people being kept hostage there."

'Shocked beyond speech'

Elsewhere, Sar-e-Pol Governor Mo-

hammad Zaher Wahdat told Afghanistan Tolo News TV that the released civilians "are so shocked they can't even speak to tell us about any more, other hostages."

He said some 300 families have left their homes and been displaced from Mirza Olang Village in the past five days.

"We came here after leaving everything at home and now we don't know what to do and what to eat or drink," said an Afghan who has been displaced along with his family.

The displaced are also concerned about their relatives left behind in the village. (Source: Tolo News)

Four Palestinians wounded in Israel air attacks on Gaza

At least four Palestinians have been wounded, one of them seriously, after Israel carried out air attacks on Hamas locations in Gaza.

The attacks on Tuesday targeted three locations in Gaza, officials told Al Jazeera.

The Israeli military said it carried out the air attacks in response to a rocket fired towards Israel.

Hamas spokesman, Hazem Qasem, rejected Israel's claims.

"The airstrikes targeted Hamas positions in the center of the Gaza Strip," Qasem told Al Jazeera.

"The occupation claims that a group from Gaza launched rockets at them, but there is no side in Gaza that has claimed responsibility."

"We are maintaining the period of calm and did not launch any rockets. It is not beneficial for the occupation to violate this period of calm."

The emergency director at the al-Shifa hospital in Gaza, Ayman al Sahbani, told Al Jazeera that three of the injured were discharged after undergoing treatment.

"The fourth person, a 26-year-old, is in serious condition. He has a fractured skull and is unconscious in the ICU," Sahbani said.

Israel has launched several wars on the Palestinian coastal sliver, the last of which began in early July 2014. The military aggression, which ended on August 26, 2014, killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians. Over 11,100 others were also wounded in the war.

The Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli siege since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in living standards as well as unprecedented unemployment and poverty.

Stripping Palestinians of residency is a war crime: HRW

Meantime, Human Rights Watch has warned that stripping some 15,000 Palestinians of their right to live in al-Quds (Jerusalem) since 1967 could amount to a "war crime."

"Israel claims to treat [occupied] Jerusalem as a unified city, but the reality is effectively one set of rules for Jews and



another for Palestinians," said the international right groups' Middle East director, Sarah Leah Whitson, in a report published on Tuesday.

From June 5 to 10, 1967, the Six-Day War was fought between the Israeli regime on one side and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria on the other. At the end of that war, Israel occupied the West Bank, East al-Quds (Jerusalem), the Gaza Strip, and parts of the Golan Heights. Israel later withdrew from Gaza but laid a siege on it. The war and Israel's ensuing land seizure displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Syrians.

Since then, 14,595 Palestinians have had their residence status revoked, a move which effectively stops them from remaining in the city of their birth, said Whitson.

"Residency revocations often effectively force Palestinians from [occupied] east Jerusalem, who are protected by virtue of Israel's occupation under the Fourth Geneva Convention, to leave the territory they live in," she added.

Israel is required to withdraw from all the territories seized in the war under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, adopted months after the Six-Day War, in November 1967; but the Tel Aviv regime has been in non-compliance of that piece of international law ever since.

"Deportation or forced transfers of any part of the population of an occupied territory could amount to war crimes," she noted.

The report came just a few days after an Israeli court decided to revoke the citizenship of a young Arab-Israeli man over his purported involvement in an attack against Israeli troops in the northern occupied territories two years ago.

An Israeli court has decided to revoke the citizenship of an Arab-Israeli man over terror charges.

HRW's director for the occupied Palestinian territories, Omar Shakir, said that revoking Zayoud's nationality "would render him stateless, in violation of Israel's obligations under international human rights law."

About 1.4 million Arab Israelis, making up some 18 percent of Israel's population, live within the occupied territories. They are the descendants of Palestinians who remained on their land even after the creation of the Zionist regime in 1948.

Israel demolishes two houses in occupied East al-Quds

Elsewhere, Israeli forces have demolished two homes in different Palestinian neighborhoods in occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem), residents have told Al Jazeera.

The Israeli army arrived at Thaer Siyam's newly-built house in Beit Hanina at

5am and razed it to the ground with a bulldozer.

Ismaeel Siyam, Thaer's father, told Al Jazeera that he had built the house from wood so that the "Israeli occupation would not demolish it".

A garden built around the house was also uprooted, he added.

"This is the fourth house in my family to be demolished," Siyam said. "My own house was destroyed last October. Houses belonging to my daughter and my other son have also been demolished in the recent past."

Siyam said that neither he nor Thaer received a demolition order from the Israeli-controlled Jerusalem municipality.

Palestinian residents in East al-Quds (Jerusalem) complain of a severe lack of municipal and civil services infrastructure, including shortages of classrooms, water and power. Getting the approval of new building permits are very costly and are subject to a lengthy bureaucratic process.

According to the Israeli rights group, B'tselem, 39 Palestinian homes have been demolished by Israel in East al-Quds (Jerusalem) since the beginning of the year, displacing at least 140 Palestinians.

Last year, a record 85 homes were demolished since documentation began in 2004. At least 331 people were left homeless as a result.

In contrast, Israel has approved the building of 1,500 settlement units this year in occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The demolitions happened on the same day that Human Rights Watch released a report about Palestinians living in Jerusalem being stripped of their residency status due to the "two-tiered system" that favors Jews over Palestinians.

The report said that since 1967, 14,595 Palestinians from occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem) have had their residence status revoked, causing displacement within the occupied territories and forced deportations when displacement takes place outside the country. (Source: agencies)

Dalai Lama: Talks, only way for India-China to end standoff

India and China will have to resolve their prolonged military standoff in a remote Himalayan region through talks, the Dalai Lama said on Wednesday, ruling out the chance of war because it would be destructive to both parties.

Indian and Chinese troops have been embroiled in a seven-week confrontation on the Doklam plateau, claimed by both China and India's tiny ally, Bhutan.

The Dalai Lama, who lives in exile in India after fleeing a failed uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet, said there would be no victors in a war and talks were the only option.

"This century should be a century of dialogue," the Nobel peace laureate said in the Indian capital. "One-side victory, one-side defeat is old thinking. Destruction of your neighbor is destruction of yourself. The only way is through talks."

Indian troops went into Doklam in mid-June to stop a Chinese construction crew from extending a road India's

military says will bring China's army too close for comfort in the northeast.

Beijing has demanded India leave the area, and low-key talks between the neighbors have produced no breakthrough, raising fears the two could stumble into a conflict.

India and China have a 3,500-km (2,175-mile) -long mountain border over which they fought a 1962 war that ended in India's defeat. They have since failed to settle the border, leading to frequent claims of intrusions into each other's territories.

The chance of a conflict was low, however, despite exchanges of harsh words, the Dalai Lama said.

"Two big nations don't have the ability to eliminate the other or defeat the other. So you have to live side by side."

Tension between India and China has been rising over several issues. India is concerned over Beijing's military collaboration with arch rival Pakistan as well as its expanding

involvement in infrastructure development across South Asia.

China has railed against the Indian government's public embrace of the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader, whom it regards as a "dangerous splittist."

The Dalai Lama said there was a chance dialogue could resume with Chinese President Xi Jinping's representatives after a Communist Party congress set for Oct-Nov that is expected to confirm Xi for a second term as party general secretary and could reshuffle other top posts.

"Some of my friends say, after the 19th party meeting, some old politburo member may change because of age. So my friends say, after the 19th party meeting, there could be some possibility, some change."

There have been no formal talks between Beijing and the Dalai Lama's representatives since 2010. (Source: Reuters)

North Korea threatens missile attack on U.S. territory Guam

North Korea said on Wednesday it is "carefully examining" a plan to attack the United States Pacific territory of Guam with missiles, just hours after the U.S. President Donald Trump told North Korea that any threat to the United States would meet "fire and fury".

A spokesman for the Korean People's Army, in a statement carried by North Korea's state-run KCNA news agency, said the attack plan will be "put into practice in a multi-current and consecutive way any moment" once Leader Kim Jong-un makes a decision.

In another statement, quoting a different military spokesman, North Korea also said it could carry out a pre-emptive operation if the U.S. showed signs of provocation.

Trump threatened North Korea "with fire and fury like the world has never seen" on Tuesday after reports suggested the communist country has mastered one of the final hurdles to the ability to attack the U.S. with a nuclear missile.

The nuclear advances were detailed in an official Japanese assessment and a Washington Post story that cited U.S. intelligence officials and a confidential Defense Intelligence Agency report. The U.S. now puts the North Korean arsenal at up to 60 nuclear weapons, more than double most assessments by independent experts, according to the Post's reporting.

"North Korea had best not make any more threats to the United States," said a stern-looking Trump, seated with his arms crossed and with his wife beside him, at his golf course in Bedminster, New Jersey. "They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen."

The remarks appeared scripted, with Trump glancing at a paper in front of him. They evoked President Harry Truman's announcement of the U.S. atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945, in which he warned of "a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth".

Guam hosts strategic U.S. military installations - including both a naval and an air force base - and is more than 3,400km from North Korea. Its population is around 160,000 - but only about 6,000 U.S. troops are currently stationed there.

Escalating tensions

The Trump administration considers North Korea to be America's greatest national security threat and tensions have steadily escalated this year.

Pyongyang had threatened the U.S. in response to the United Nations Security Council's adoption this weekend of new, tougher sanctions spearheaded by Washington. The sanctions followed groundbreaking long-range missile tests last month that showed North Korea could potentially reach the continental U.S. with its missiles. The newly revealed U.S. intelligence assessment indicates those missiles can carry nuclear warheads.

Denouncing the UN sanctions through state media, North Korea warned: "We will make the U.S. pay by a thousand-fold for all the heinous crimes it commits against the state and people of this country."

For North Korea, having a nuclear-tipped missile that could hit the U.S. would be the ultimate guarantee against invasion by its superpower adversary.

In an annual report, Japan's defense ministry on Tuesday concluded that "it is possible that North Korea has achieved the miniaturization of nuclear weapons and has developed nuclear warheads." Japan, a key U.S. ally, is a potential, front-line target of North Korean aggression.

The Post story, citing unnamed U.S. intelligence officials, went further. It said the Defense Intelligence Agency analysis, completed last month, assessed North Korea has produced nuclear weapons for ballistic missile delivery, including by intercontinental missiles.

Last month's tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles highlighted the growing threat. While those missiles landed at sea near Japan, both were fired at highly lofted angles. Analysts said the weapons could reach Alaska, Los Angeles or Chicago if fired at a normal, flattened trajectory.

Not all technical hurdles have been overcome with the missiles, however. North Korea is still believed to lack expertise to allow a missile to re-enter the Earth's atmosphere without burning up. Another work-in-progress: the ability to attack targets with accuracy. (Source: agencies)

French police seek vehicle after soldiers hit in Paris

At least six French soldiers have been injured after they were hit by a vehicle in the northwestern Parisian suburb of Levallois-Perret, according to the city's police authority.

Levallois-Perret Mayor Patrick Balkany said at least two of the six were seriously injured in Wednesday's incident.

Speaking to broadcaster BFM TV, Balkany said that what he called a "disgusting" act of aggression was "without any doubt" premeditated.

A police operation was underway following the attack. Al Jazeera's Natacha Butler, reporting from Paris, said security was high in the capital which has seen similar incidents in the past.

"The group that was attacked is from the same special squadron of soldiers that have been spread across France after the series of attacks that we've seen in country. They are there to patrol," she said.

The incident comes four days after a teenager with psychiatric problems tried to attack security forces guarding the Eiffel Tower.

France remains on maximum alert after a string of attacks that have killed more than 230 people over the past two years.

In February, a man armed with a machete attacked four soldiers on patrol at Paris' Louvre Museum, while in April another fighter shot and killed a policeman on the Champs Elysees.

In June, a 40-year-old Algeria doctorate student, who had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) group, attacked a policeman with a hammer outside Notre Dame Cathedral. (Source: agencies)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Stock market index rises 265 points in a day

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Stock index climbed 265 points to 81,579 in Iran's stock exchange market on Wednesday, Tasnim news agency reported.

The report said 847 million shares worth 2.27 trillion rials (about \$59.89 million) were traded in 50,000 deals in the stock market.

Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), rose 1.3 points to stand at 924 on Wednesday, as 518 million securities worth 1.01 trillion rials (about \$26.64 million) were traded in 31,000 deals.



Iran capable of exporting \$25b technical, engineering services per year

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran has the potential to export \$25 billion worth of technical and engineering services per annum, IRNA reported quoting a director with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) as saying on Wednesday.

Mahmoud Eskandari, the general director of TPO for development of knowledge-based services and products exports, also said that promotion of exports is one of the main plans of the government and in this due TPO has changed its organizational structure to recognize and remove the barriers that exporters are facing.



Iran's exports to S. Africa jump 90%

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's exports to South Africa jumped 90 percent during the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 21, 2017), IRNA quoted an official with the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran as saying.

"Iran's exports to the African country stood at \$42 million in the said period, an increase of \$20 million from its preceding year," Farzad Piltan said.

Dates, acetaminophen, bitumen, pistachio, asphalt, and liquid butane were among the main goods exported to South Africa, he added.

China consumer inflation falls short of expectations

China's consumer price index rose 1.4 percent in July from a year ago, missing estimates, the National Bureau of Statistics said Wednesday.

Meanwhile, China's producer price index rose 5.5 percent in July from a year ago.

Analysts polled by Reuters expected consumer inflation to stay steady from June at 1.5 percent on-year while producer prices were also forecast to remain flat from the 5.5 percent on-year rise in June.

Capital Economics China Economist Julian Evans-Pritchard said the inflation data point to cooling price pressures.

Producer price inflation held steady for the third straight month and was positive on a month-on-month basis for the first time since March, but «this appears to be almost entirely due to the recent rally in domestic steel prices, which is unlikely to be sustained in our view,» he added. (source: cnbc)

Gold imports by India more than doubled in July

Gold imports by India are said to have risen in July on arrival of some delayed shipments booked ahead of the implementation of a new national goods and services tax on the first of last month, according to a person familiar with the information.

Inbound purchases rose to 53.4 metric tons last month from 22 tons a year earlier, said the person, who didn't wish to be identified because the data isn't public. Sequentially, imports of the metal fell from 72 tons in June. Total imports during January to July jumped more than 2 1/2 times to 625.5 tons, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Finance Ministry spokesman D.S. Malik declined to comment on the data.

While traders and dealers stocked up on gold inventories ahead of the levy of the national goods and services tax on fears of a higher duty, demand is expected to slow in the second half of 2017 as buyers take time to transition to the new regime, the World Gold Council said last week. Consumption is estimated to remain below a five-average of 850 tons and be in the range of 650 tons to 750 tons this year, it said.

"Such an increase in imports is not sustainable because the demand from the consumer side in the market is very slow and interest from the investment side has also dried up on low returns," said Bachhraj Bamalwa, a director with the All India Gems & Jewellery Trade Federation, referring to the July jump.

Shipments from South Korea climbed in the month as importers took advantage of the lower goods and services tax rate and a free-trade agreement between the two nations, the person said. Imports from most other countries are taxed at 10 percent versus zero for those from South Korea.

While this is the first time there has been a surge in imports from South Korea, importers have previously made use of free-trade treaties with countries such as Thailand and Indonesia in order to escape paying the import duty, said Bamalwa. This makes a strong case for the import tax to be lowered across the board, he said. (Source: Bloomberg)

India going to send 100,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan via Iran

"Government of India is going to send 100,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan, and we are trying to send that via Chabahar," Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said at an event days after his visit to Iran.

Expressing confidence that Chabahar Port in Iran will be ready for operations by 2018, Gadkari said India is considering sending wheat to Afghanistan via the strategically located port.

He said the civil construction of the port project, being developed by India, is complete, and the government is in a position to place orders worth 4 billion rupees for mechanized equipment and cranes.

"I feel we will commence the operations by 2018," he said.

During his visit, Gadkari said, he met Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, and construction of a railway line linking the port with Russia was discussed. "Now, we are building a railway line in Iran. From Chabahar, we can go to Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Russia," he said.

An official statement had said on Tuesday that India and Iran had expressed commitment for early completion of Chabahar Port.

(Source: moneycontrol.com)



A view of the port city of Chabahar

Swiss franc surges as Korea tensions rise

LONDON (Reuters) — The Swiss franc jumped on Wednesday and higher yielding currencies such as the Australian dollar tumbled as the latest bout of geopolitical tensions emerging from the Korean Peninsula prompted investors to cut positions.

"Heightened geopolitical risks overnight have seen the markets flip from risk-on to risk-off and we have to wait and see how long this move runs before adding some positions," said Viraj Patel, an FX strategist at ING in London.

The Swiss franc, a barometer of risk sentiment, surged 0.6 percent to 0.9688 francs against the U.S. dollar, reversing a two-week losing streak.

The franc's surge which was the biggest in two weeks is likely to flush out some leveraged bets as some hedge funds had used the lower yielding franc as a borrowing currency to invest in other such as euro assets in the last three weeks.



North Korea said on Wednesday it is "carefully examining" plans for a missile strike on the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam, just hours after U.S. President Donald Trump told the North that any threat it presented to the

United States would be met with "fire and fury"

Risk off sentiment was broadly pervasive through the currency markets especially with European stocks set to follow Asia's lead lower with major index futures indicating a 0.5 to 0.8 percent decline.

The dollar weakened against the yen, which is often sought in times of geopolitical tension. The U.S. currency was down 0.3 percent at 109.94 yen, following a retreat to 109.740, its weakest since June 15.

"Dollar/yen has already gone below 110.00 yen, and at this stage we are likely to see the pair begin to bottom out as the market finds time to assess the situation," said Kiyosuke Suzuki, director of forex at Societe Generale in Tokyo.

The Australian dollar, which rose to a 19-month high near 90.00 yen late in July, was down 0.6 percent at 86.77 yen after slipping to a one-month low of 86.23 yen.

Qatar Airways will get delivery of Airbus A350-1000s this year



Qatar Airways' chief executive said on Wednesday Airbus has said it would deliver its twin-engine passenger jet, the A350-1000, this year to the Middle East carrier.

Qatar Airways, the launch customer of the A350-1000, has previously canceled four of the smaller version

A350-900 aircraft, citing delays in deliveries.

"Airbus has assured us we would receive our airplanes, though late, but we will receive it before the end of the year," Qatar Airways Chief Executive Akbar al-Baker told reporters in Doha.

(Source: The New York Times)

Italy industrial output jumps, pointing to faster recovery

Italian industrial output accelerated in June, pointing to a possible stronger-than-expected economic recovery.

Production increased 1.1 percent from May, when it rose 0.7 percent, statistics agency Istat said Wednesday in Rome. The median estimate in a Bloomberg survey of 19 analysts called for a 0.2 percent rise. On an annual, workday adjusted basis, industrial output was up 5.3 percent in June.

The production pickup may bolster forecasts, including one by the country's central bank, of a gross-domestic-product rise in the second quarter around 0.4 percent, or the same pace as the previous period. Istat will release the preliminary GDP report for the

three months through June on Aug. 16. The industrial production increase in June was led by transportation and energy, Istat said in the report.

Widespread optimism that the euro region's third-biggest economy is on the mend this year followed a number of recent, better-than-expected reports ranging from retail sales to the labor market where the unemployment rate fell in June, dropping to a level that matches the lowest since 2012.

"Growth is reinforcing itself with positive signals across sectors," Istat said in a separate report last week. The statistics agency's leading indicator "keeps a positive direction," it said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Bank of England warns Brexit will put strain on regulatory resources

The Bank of England has warned that the task of regulating the City after Brexit will put a strain on its ability to police the financial sector.

Deputy governor Sam Woods also said the Bank's regulatory arm, the Prudential Regulation Authority, faced "a material risk to its objectives" — which include promoting financial stability — as it deals with the UK's exit from the EU.

Woods warned of a "material extra burden" on the PRA if it had to regulate more financial firms as they made plans to cope with Brexit. "It is incumbent on us to manage this burden but we may have to make some difficult prioritisation decisions in order to accommodate it," said Woods, chief executive of the PRA.

In a letter to Nicky Morgan, the Conservative MP and new head of the Treasury select committee, Woods also described handling the fallout from Brexit as a top priority for the PRA.

Backing calls from the chancellor, Philip Hammond, for a transitional exit deal, Woods added: "Some form of implementation period is desirable in order to give UK and EU firms more time to make the necessary changes to adjust to the UK's new relationship with the EU in an orderly way."

He also outlined the risks contained in the Bank's half-yearly assessment of financial stability, in which it warned that business conducted in the City could fragment across other financial centres, pushing up the costs to the EU



and the UK.

It also warned of the risk to the UK economy from potential disruption to trade and the need for banks to be braced for higher bad debt charges if loans turned sour owing to Brexit-related economic turbulence.

Morgan wrote to Woods last month to ask for details of the City's readiness for a hard Brexit.

In his reply, Woods said the PRA was scrutinising the plans of 401 City firms to ensure each one was ready for Brexit and also to establish whether there were "broader financial stability risks, which could arise from the collective execution of the contingency plans".

Woods did not provide details of

the individual plans the Bank had demanded by 14 July. However, firms have begun to reveal how they intend to cope with the UK's exit from the EU. For instance, RBS is preparing to expand in Amsterdam; Barclays and Bank of America are moving staff to Dublin; while Morgan Stanley has picked Frankfurt.

The PRA said it was necessary to ask firms how they would cope with a hard Brexit — or no exit agreement with the EU — to reduce the risk of "unexpected breaks" in provision of financial services such as loans to firms and consumers.

Woods told Morgan the Bank would "continue to develop and refine its assessment of the potential stability risks

associated with the withdrawal" from the EU.

He also said the information received from firms showed some faced significant issues in amending contracts to cope with Brexit. Firms restructuring after Brexit could be more difficult to regulate, he added, because they would have operations in the UK and the EU.

As she published his letter, Morgan said: "The UK leaving the European Union is a complex task. The potential extra burden on the PRA's resources, and the risk that may pose to its objectives, is an issue I'm sure the committee will want to monitor."

The Bank may end up regulating more firms if there is no deal on passporting, the system through which some insurance companies and banks based in the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are able to operate in the UK without Bank of England authorisation.

In the banking sector, for instance, about 70 firms operate this way, so they may need to gain authorisation from the PRA if they want to keep doing business in the UK.

The PRA is funded by the firms it regulates and has asked for £5.4m more to meet its annual requirement, which stands at £267m for the current financial year. It has warned it may need to ask for more if the biggest risks around Brexit crystallise.

(Source: The Guardian)

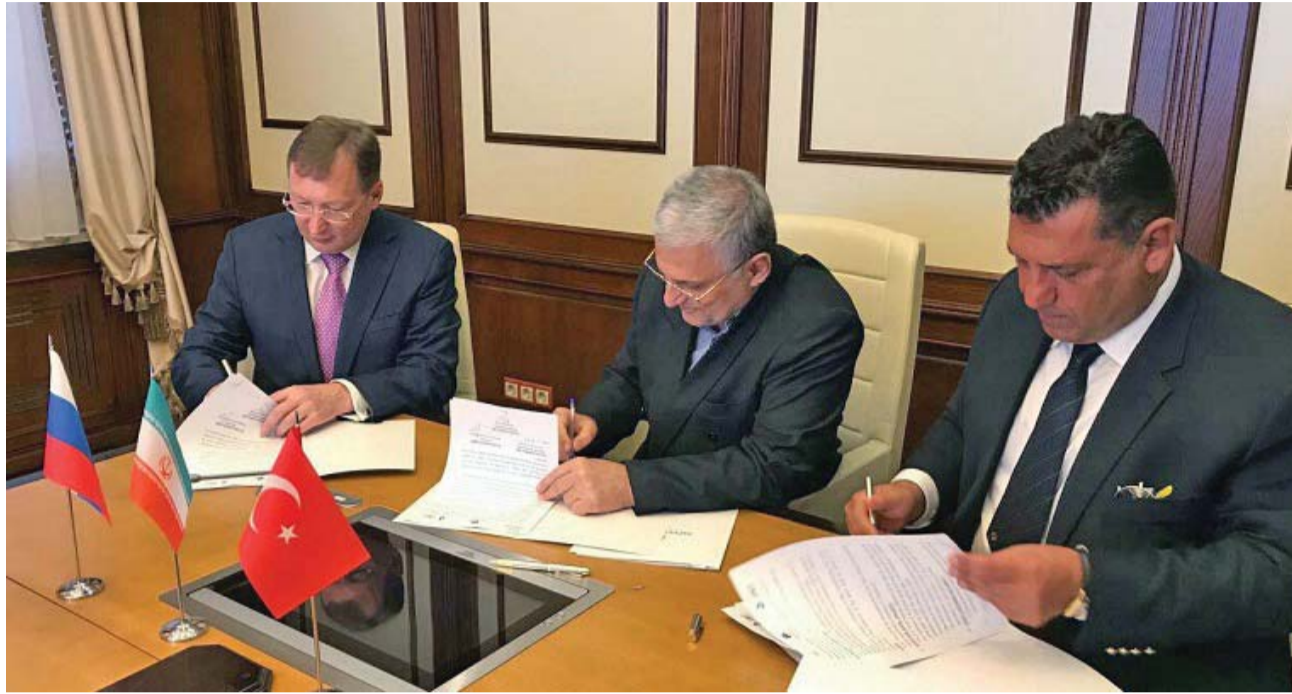
Iran, Turkey, Russia sign deal on oil, gas fields development

MOSCOW (Sputnik) — Iran's Ghadir investment company, Russia's Zarubezhneft oil and gas intermediary and Turkey's Unit International have signed an agreement on joint investments in oil and gas fields' development projects, following a meeting in Moscow, according to Iran's Shana News Agency.

It is expected that the parties will set up joint ventures to finance projects both in Iran and outside the country.

Each company will allocate equal investment shares in the jointly financed projects, with Iran's Ghadir Exploration and Production Company in charge of leading the consortium. Zarubezhneft, Ghadir and Unit International also agreed on joining technical and economic efforts, the news outlet reported.

In July 2016, Zarubezhneft signed an agreement with the National Iranian Oil Company, according to which the Russian intermediary has to inspect West Paydar and Aban oil fields in western Iran and report on the possible ways to increase the recovery rate of the facilities.



Directors from Iran's Ghadir Company, Russia's Zarubezhneft Company and Turkey's Unit International Company signing a joint investment agreement in Moscow

Kazakhstan reassures U.S. oil producers over new sanctions

U.S. oil producers have been given assurances that their projects in Kazakhstan will not be affected by the new round of sanctions against Moscow, easing fears in the energy industry that the broad restrictions will not hit investments with indirect links to Russia.

President Donald Trump last week reluctantly signed into law fresh sanctions against Russia in retaliation for Moscow's alleged interference in the U.S. election despite concerns from energy companies that the broad scope of the curbs — which include a ban on financing Russian energy export pipelines — could cause unintended damage to some investments.

Chevron and Exxon Mobil hold stakes in Kazakhstan's Tengiz oilfield, in which the two companies agreed a \$37 billion investment last year. Oil from the field is exported through Russia to the Black Sea via a pipeline owned by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC).

"The pipeline, which links our oil to

the seas, in particular to Novorossiysk, is not covered by the sanctions," said Kazakhstan's minister of national economy, Timur Suleimenov.

"American companies, such as Chevron, who are also shareholders of the CPC, have themselves obtained from their parliament such [information] that transit pipelines be excluded from sanctions," he added.

"Therefore, in this case, the delivery of our oil to foreign markets will not be affected." Chevron, which owns 50 percent of the Tengiz project, declined to comment on Mr. Suleimenov's remarks but said: "At this time, we do not believe the new Russia sanctions legislation has a material impact on existing Chevron operations in Eurasia or its partnerships. We continue to monitor developments regarding the legislation. Chevron abides by a stringent code of business ethics, under which we comply with all current applicable laws and regulations." (Source: Financial Times)

LPG once again being stored in tankers off Singapore

SINGAPORE (Reuters) — Tankers carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) are floating off Singapore for the first time this year as traders wait for opportunities to offload the fuel at more lucrative prices, three industry sources said.

At least one Very Large Gas Carrier (VLGC), the Pacific Binzhou, is anchored in Singapore carrying LPG, shipping data on Thomson Reuters Eikon showed. The ship docked more than five days ago.

One other VLGC had recently left for China after anchoring off Singapore for some time, sources said, but this could not be independently verified.

"The situation is not as severe as last year. Traders are likely aiming to get better prices by floating for a short period of time," one of the sources familiar with the matter said.

LPG supply is not as excessive as last year, trade sources said, due to de-

mand from India and China this year.

In August last year, more than 10 ships were holding LPG - whose uses include heating, cooking and petrochemicals production - off Singapore for months before they could find buyers in winter.

There is less incentives to store LPG this year as the contango is not more than \$2 versus last year when it was more than \$15, another trade source said.

Contango occurs when front-month prices are lower than those in the following months due to weak market fundamentals including oversupply.

"Natural gas production is in max mode now because of demand for power to power things such as air conditioning during summer," a third source said.

"More natural gas means more LPG in June to August," the same source said, adding that any floating of excess LPG supply would be short term.

Oil extends losses as higher U.S. output outlook counters curbs

Oil extended declines for a third day amid speculation that a predicted gain in U.S. output will offset OPEC-led efforts to trim a global glut.

Futures lost 0.4 percent in New York after falling 0.8 percent in the previous two sessions, even as industry data showed U.S. crude stockpiles slumped last week. The Energy Information Administration marginally boosted its estimates for American production in 2017 and 2018, changing its forecast this year to average 9.35 million barrels a day, up from 9.33 million.

While oil is down for a third day, prices are less than \$1 lower from Friday's close as investors weigh rising global supply against output reductions from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies. OPEC said Iraq, the United Arab Emirates and Kazakhstan, which have lagged in their pledged curbs, affirmed their commitment to cuts at a meeting in Abu Dhabi.

"U.S. shale continues to grow," Dominic Schnider, the head of commodities



and Asia-Pacific foreign exchange at UBS Group AG's wealth-management

unit in Hong Kong, said in a Bloomberg television interview. "Although we're

positive on oil, there is at some stage a cap to the oil price because supply will react."

West Texas Intermediate for September delivery was at \$48.98 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, down 19 cents, at 7:46 a.m. in London. Total volume traded was about 27 percent below the 100-day average. Prices lost 22 cents to \$49.17 on Tuesday.

Brent for October settlement dropped 25 cents to \$51.89 a barrel on the London-based ICE Futures Europe exchange. Prices Tuesday slid 23 cents, or 0.4 percent, to \$52.14 a barrel. The global benchmark crude traded at a premium of \$2.74 to October WTI.

U.S. crude output will average 9.91 million barrels a day next year, according to the EIA's monthly Short-Term Energy Outlook released Tuesday. That's up from a July estimate of 9.9 million barrels a day for 2018 and compares with an average 9.19 million year-to-date.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Coal to dominate U.S. electricity market over next two years

U.S. coal production will see a sustained boost over the next two years due to increased use at power plants and a rise in exports, according to the federal government's latest energy projections.

"U.S. coal production is getting a boost in 2017 from higher coal exports and more coal-fired electricity generation," said Howard Gruenspecht, the Energy Information Administration acting administrator, as he released the agency's latest short-term energy outlook for the month of August on Tuesday.

"Coal-fired power plants are expected to be the leading source of U.S. electricity for the next two years, as the cost of coal is expected to rise by less than the cost of natural gas and renewable generation continues to grow," he added.

The latest outlook showed coal's power plant output will rise from comprising 30 percent of the nation's electricity output last year to nearly 32 percent in the second half of 2017.

That could put coal ahead of natural gas power plants that have dominated the market over coal in the last few years.

The only problem is that electricity demand is expected to drop going for the third year in a row, according to the report. But for now, it looks like natural gas power plants will take the biggest hit from waning demand, mainly because natural gas prices are rising and milder temperatures will reduce the need for electric cooling in the fall compared to a year ago.

"U.S. electricity generation is expected to decline in 2017 for the third year in row, as forecast milder tem-

peratures in the third quarter compared to the same period a year earlier reduces electric cooling demand," said Gruenspecht.

Nevertheless, Gruenspecht is confident that coal production will continue to remain high even with electricity demand dropping. Strong demand for U.S. coal exports overseas has a lot to do with that. Coal exports rose 60 percent in the first five months of 2017.

The rate of exports is supposed to "slow in the coming months," the agency said. But it will still be 17 percent higher than it was in 2016.

"The increase in coal exports contributes to an expected 58 [million short tons (MMst)] (8%) increase in coal production in 2017," according to the EIA short-term outlook. "In 2018, coal production is forecast to increase

by 10 MMst," or 1 percent.

Natural gas will also benefit from increased demand for exports over the next two years, the report showed.

"U.S. natural gas production growth is expected to accelerate over the next two years with growth rates over 2% in 2017 and over 5.5% in 2018," said Gruenspecht. "Forecast record natural gas production in 2018 coincides with an expected rise in electricity generation from natural-gas fired power plants and a 23% increase in U.S. natural gas exports."

Meanwhile, renewable energy is also expected to see significant gains. "U.S. wind power, which provided 6% of total U.S. electricity in 2016, is expected to have a 9% generating capacity increase this year and another 16% in 2018," said Gruenspecht.

(Source: washingtonexaminer.com)

Innovate, cut costs: how a Russian oil firm navigates global supply curbs

ALMYETEVSK, Russia (Reuters) — A global deal cutting crude output has forced mid-sized Russian oil company Tatneft to curb flows at some fields, leaving it with lower revenues but little relief from maintenance and running costs. Its response: innovation.

Yelkhovneft, a Tatneft unit in the semi-autonomous republic of Tatarstan some 1,200 km (750 miles) southeast of Moscow, has cut oil output by 6.6 percent since May, following an extension of the supply-reducing deal led by Russia and Saudi Arabia.

"Faced with lower profits due to the cut in production, we have put greater emphasis on bringing down operating costs," Azat Khabibrakhmanov, head of the Tatneft unit, which produced 3.3 million tonnes of oil last year, told Reuters.

The unit has oil pumps in two colors: green brings lighter crude to the surface while yellow draws heavier oil. Under the global deal, aimed at boosting the price of oil, Yelkhovneft's output of both types is down.

Standing near one of the pumps, surrounded by yellow rapeseed flowers, Khabibrakhmanov said his unit was scaling back production mainly at wells with low flow rates, particularly those with a high water content.

"This has given us a certain stimulus to find new solutions for cutting production costs, bringing in new energy-efficiency technologies," he said.

Yelkhovneft, which accounts for around 12 percent of Tatneft's oil production, is not altering key processes such as drilling or enhanced oil recovery - indeed, the company wants to be able to ramp up output quickly once the supply deal expires.

Instead, Yelkhovneft is scaling back measures aimed at limiting water flow and various other types of work, including in the rock formation at the bottom of a well.

"This way, we will be able to restore oil production to its previous levels quite quickly, I think in a month or two," Khabibrakhmanov said.



Yelkhovneft has also started drilling more smaller-scale wells, allowing it to halve drilling-related spending. It has begun to use lighter or fewer metal parts in equipment, cutting costs further, Khabibrakhmanov said.

Yelkhovneft has more than 5,800 wells drilled in Tatarstan's Almyetevsk area, in a swathe of land three times the size of Hong Kong. Of those, 2,300 produce oil. This number was cut from 2,500 after Russia backed the extension of the OPEC/non-OPEC deal until March next year.

■ Cutting costs

Tatneft, which itself produces almost 600,000 barrels of oil per day, is substituting revenues it would have otherwise received without the cuts by trying to limit costs.

"This (cost-cutting) project ... is actively developing and will allow the company to reach its strategic goal of increasing production while cutting costs," Khabibrakhmanov said.

Khabibrakhmanov did not say how much Tatneft had saved. In total, Tatneft will cut its oil output by around 350,000 tonnes (2.6 million barrels) this year under the global deal.

Tatneft was spending an average of 235 rubles (\$4) to extract a barrel of oil in the first quarter of this year, down almost 15 percent quarter-on-quarter thanks to cost savings, the company's latest report showed.

Tatneft, which did not provide a comparison with global oil producers, has yet to present second-quarter results.

Rosneft, Russia's biggest oil producer, has long said the cost of extracting oil in Russia is among the lowest in the world thanks to a favorable rouble exchange rate.

Before the global oil pact took effect in January, officials had said Moscow would find it hard to cut production without risking damage to some of its wells, due to harsh, icy weather.

But the decision was made and output is being curbed in different ways: some are curbing flows at the newest fields, such as Rosneft; others, including Gazprom Neft and Tatneft, are focusing on aging deposits.

Apart from adapting to output curbs, the Russian oil industry was forced to seek new ways to extract crude after the imposition of sanctions in 2014 that limited the use of Western equipment in offshore Arctic, shale and deepwater projects.

Although Tatneft was not affected by the sanctions, it started to substitute foreign equipment essential for its high-viscosity oil projects - which it sees as a source of future growth - with domestic equipment.

Tatneft mainly operates mature fields in its native Volga-Urals region of Tatarstan, where the Romashkinskoye oilfield, launched more than 70 years ago, still accounts for more than half of the company's production.

Of 29 million tonnes of oil planned to be extracted this year, some 1.5 million - double last year's amount - should be high viscosity, which requires heating to extract crude.

"At the beginning (of the high-viscosity oil project), we used mostly foreign equipment, starting to implement substitution step-by-step. Now, over 95 percent of the equipment is domestically produced," Robert Akhmadullin, first deputy head of Tatneft's high-viscosity oil department, told Reuters.

Tatneft plans to invest around 20 billion rubles into developing high-viscosity deposits in 2017-2018 compared to an overall investment program of 100 billion rubles for this year.

High-viscosity oil resources in Tatarstan are estimated to be over 1.4 billion tonnes, Tatneft says, hoping the company will be able to substitute aging deposits for this type of crude as time passes.

Why didn't France want Brigitte to be their First Lady?

Modern first ladies already have up to five personal assistants, a team of security agents, and numerous perks, from the use of state jets to on-call hairdressers and florists. This adds up to a budget easily passing the €1m mark.

Check out the careers of first ladies of France and you can see why no self-respecting woman would want to go anywhere near the role. State-sponsored doormat might be a better description: humiliations range from presidents routinely cheating on their premières dames, to denying them the right to speak for themselves at all.

Now Emmanuel Macron, the fresh-faced reformer who seems determined to become known as a truly radical French head of state, wants to revise all that. His wife, Brigitte Macron, refuses to take the female lead in yet another excruciating soap opera. She potentially has a strong and powerful voice, and so Macron favors formalizing the office into First Lady of France.

Feminist inclinations are seemingly strong in Macron. He pushed for a 50/50 male-female split when choosing his new government and when selecting parliamentary candidates for his party, La République en Marche! Macron is as aware as everyone else that there has never been a male presidential consort in the history of France, and sees the need to elevate the position from mere "partner of" to something far more relevant to an egalitarian society.

Opponents are less idealistic, however. Displaying predictable spite, and not a little misogyny, plenty have argued that first ladies need to know their place. An online petition against the creation of the job gathered around 250,000 this week – and the French government has now responded by stating that she will not be granted an official First Lady title or budget, at least for now.

■ Lobbyists' arguments

What is clear is that the lobbyists' arguments mainly concern semantics. Modern first ladies already have up to five personal assistants, a team of security agents, and numerous perks, from the use of state jets to on-call hairdressers and florists. This adds up to a budget easily passing the €1m mark.

Switching the title from first lady to First Lady would not significantly increase this total, and certainly wouldn't entail much judicial effort either. The new post will be unpaid, and will not require any constitutional change – just the drawing up of a "transparency charter", according to Macron aides. Rather than a "political" role, they say, it will be a "public" one.

This has not stopped critics citing "Penelopegate", the scandal which saw British-born Penelope Fillon accused of earning a fortune in taxpayers' cash over three decades while apparently posing as the parliamentary assistant of her husband, would-be conservative president François Fillon. As the accusations against her intensified, Penelope Fillon did not utter a single word in public. If the allegations had remained hidden, she would undoubtedly have emerged as a first lady in the traditional mold: cynically compliant and for the most part hushed up (or "discreet", to use the euphemism favored by François Fillon).

They deny any wrongdoing, but the Fillons are now indicted criminal suspects facing court action and, if found guilty, prison. President Macron is actually trying to clean up French politics. He has just introduced strict legislation to ban MPs and Senators from employing family members. There is no doubt that the Paris political class has been on the gray train for far too long, and he wants to halt it.

Note how Brigitte Macron's detractors focus not on her character or intellect, but on her appearance, suggesting that the way she dresses is too young for a 64-year-old. They mock the age gap between her and the 39-year-old President. They laugh at her for daring to organize fleeting meetings with pop stars Bono and Rihanna in Paris. In short, they want to reduce her to another upstart who should be locked away in a quiet salon while her man sorts out domestic and world affairs.

Little is made of it in France, but that is exactly what happened to the last two women who might reasonably have been called première dame. Valérie Trierweiler suffered in silence before being kicked out of the Elysée Palace when President François Hollande was exposed two-timing her with an actress. It was only much later that she spilled all the embarrassing details of her ordeal in a bestselling kiss-and-tell. In turn, Julie Gayet – the thespian Hollande left Trierweiler for – continues to adopt a Penelope-style omerta about her own covert experiences in the Elysée and other official homes.

Such incidents highlight the absolute force of being the first lady. By making the occupation official, it will at least lose the sense of pitiful anonymity and powerlessness with which it has become associated.

The status of First Lady of the United States did nothing for Michelle Obama's career as a lawyer, and she often looked awkward taking part in cheesy televised stunts. The function in America is still largely tokenistic – one characterized by emotional displays of empathy and charity fundraising. Although it is not regulated by statute or codified in any way, Michelle Obama nonetheless had the Flotus title and earned respect because of it.

It is only through establishing a "Flof", and indeed properly defining what premières dames do in France, that they might be guaranteed similar respect, and try to reform what is currently a woeful chore. If there was an ideal candidate to bring about some kind of change, then it was Brigitte Macron. France should reconsider.

(Source: Independent)



Trump's 'fire and fury' threat is a rhetorical grenade

Trump's unsettling threat Tuesday aimed at North Korea was reckless and unnecessary. In its bombast, it resembled nothing so much as Kim Jong Un's regular denunciations of the United States, frantic and hyperbolic. Why would the president of the world's most powerful nation want to descend to that level?

At an event at his New Jersey golf club, Trump declared, "North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. They will be met with fire and fury and frankly power, the likes of which this world has never seen before." To raise the specter of nuclear war — and to do so to ward off mere threats, at that — is to draw a red line in the most foolish and destabilizing manner.

Since nuclear bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki seven decades ago, they have not been used in combat. Still, the danger that they will be used again has never disappeared; the years since the end of World War II have been filled with false alarms and close calls, which could easily recur. The United States and Russia keep thousands of nuclear missiles on launch-ready alert, meaning they are ready to launch within minutes of a president giving the order. Adversaries know this. Trump's threat of "fire and fury" may sound like hype to American ears, but the words could be heard quite differently by others, such as Kim, the leader of a nuclear North Korea. Trump's language could easily be misunderstood — he didn't say precisely what would lead to "fire and fury" except for North Korea's "threats" — and the upshot could be miscalculation or, heaven forbid, the kind of accidental entry into conflict that has haunted the globe since the dawn of the atomic age.

The U.S. nuclear arsenal is kept in harness for one purpose only:



"We should not be engaging in the same kind of blustery and provocative statements as North Korea about nuclear war," said Ben Cardin (Md.), ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

deterrence. The definition of deterrence is a credible threat of retaliation that would prevent an adversary from attacking. Credibility, the essence of deterrence, means the other side has to believe the threat is real. It flows from maintaining a modern and capable force, not from boasts or threats. "We should not be engaging in the same kind of blustery and provocative statements as North Korea about nuclear war," said

Ben Cardin (Md.), ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "No one should think that a conflict with North Korea will be a quick little glorious war, or be tempted by false hopes that North Korea's nuclear program can be destroyed with a single antiseptic surgical strike."

North Korea's steadily advancing nuclear weapons and missile programs are serious; The Post reported Tuesday

that intelligence officials believe the Pyongyang regime has successfully miniaturized a nuclear warhead to fit on a missile, the next step in a weapons system that could hit the United States. Dealing with that will require patient pressure and skilled diplomacy, perhaps for years. Instead, Trump has strutted into the arena with a jarring rhetorical grenade.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike could be Japan's first female PM

By Anthony Fensom

Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike's emergence as Japan's most popular politician has sparked speculation that she is destined for higher office. However, the odds are stacked against her becoming the nation's first female prime minister, despite the recent stumbles of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Koike's rise follows her election in July 2016 as Tokyo's first female governor, in which she stunned the establishment by trouncing the candidate of Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Running on an anticorruption, pro-environment platform, Koike won nearly 45 percent of the vote in Japan's capital city compared to the 27 percent support obtained by the LDP's Hiroya Masuda and the 21 percent won by leftist opposition-backed Shuntaro Torigoe.

Ironically, Koike originally entered the race as an LDP candidate, having been a member of the party since 2002 and serving in cabinet posts, including as environment minister and defense minister. However, she ran as an independent in the Tokyo poll after the party's Tokyo chapter backed Masuda instead.

Having tackled issues such as overspending for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and a scandal over the proposed relocation of the Tsukiji fish market, Koike cemented her grip on power after a sweeping victory in the July 2 Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election.

Koike's Tomin First no Kai (Tokyo Citizens First) party, which was established last year, dethroned the LDP by becoming the largest party in the 127-seat assembly. Tomin First won forty-nine seats compared to the twenty-three seats won by the LDP its worst-ever result, with twenty-three seats also won by Koike's ally, Buddhist-backed Komeito.

"Rather than a victory for Tokyo Citizens First, this is a defeat for the LDP," said former defense minister Shigeru Ishiba, seen as a rival to Abe inside the ruling party.

■ Japan's political history

Japan's political history indicates that the Tokyo election is often a precursor for changes at the national level. In 2009, the LDP's historic fall from power was preceded by a crushing defeat in the Tokyo poll barely two months earlier.

Having led Japan since December 2012, becoming the nation's third-longest serving prime minister in the postwar era, Abe's grip on power suddenly appears fragile. Recent public approval ratings for Abe's Cabinet have slipped nearly 30 percent with his disapproval rating reaching nearly 49 percent, amid influence-peddling scandals that have delivered Abe's worst ratings since his re-election in 2012.

Abe's support has also been dented by the railroading of an antiterrorism bill through the Diet, while Defense Minister Tomomi Inada, once seen as a potential female leader, was forced to resign over a cover-up concerning the activities of Japan's Self-Defense Forces in South Sudan.

However, Koike's support also slipped in the lead-up to the Tokyo poll, dropping from 74 percent in April to 59 percent in June. But after telling the city of 11 million people that "we can't revolutionize Tokyo unless we rejuvenate this very, very old metropolitan assembly," national politics still has considerable barriers to a female-led rejuvenation.



Despite recent moves by the Abe administration to advance female empowerment in the labor force and elsewhere, known as "Womenomics," Japanese politics remains a male bastion.

Women account for less than 10 percent of the 475 members of the lower house, placing Japan 157th out of two hundred countries ranked by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, below even Saudi Arabia and South Sudan. The number of Japanese female lawmakers in the lower house has barely changed since 1946, the first time Japanese women could run for office.

Similarly, only 3.5 percent of senior government posts are held by women, despite moves by Abe to ensure women hold at least a third of senior positions in government and business by 2020.

Opposition lawmaker Kiyomi Tsujimoto has described facing internet bashing "in a very bad way — that never happens to a male politician," she told CNN.

■ Female cabinet members

Abe's Cabinet sworn in last August contained only three female members, comprising Inada, Internal Affairs Minister Sanae Takaichi and Olympics Minister Tamayo Marukawa. With Inada now departed, only two female Cabinet members remain, with neither currently seen as future potential leaders.

Instead, leadership speculation has centered on Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, Ishiba and Finance Minister Aso, himself a former prime minister.

Meanwhile, opposition Democratic Party leader Renho Murata, who was once touted as a potential future prime minister, resigned her leadership July 27 following lackluster polling in the Tokyo and other elections. Born to a Taiwanese father and Japanese mother, Renho also attracted criticism over her dual nationality, despite stating she had renounced her Taiwanese citizenship.

Other female contenders for national leadership have also emerged in the past, only to see their aspirations quickly dissipate.

Japan's political history indicates that the Tokyo election is often a precursor for changes at the national level. These have included the nation's first female Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka, the daughter of former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, who rose to prominence under Koizumi's leadership but was fired from Cabinet in 2002 and later expelled from the LDP.

Despite regaining high office in 2012 as education minister under Democratic leader, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, Tanaka lost her seat in the December 2012 election that saw Abe's return to power.

More recently, the LDP's Yuko Obuchi was described in glowing terms as the "next prime minister but one"

after her appointment as economy minister by Abe in September 2014.

"With a telegenic presence, powerful ruling party mentors and a talent for avoiding making political enemies, new trade and industry minister Yuko Obuchi may have what it takes to become the country's first female prime minister," Reuters reported in October 2014.

However, barely a month after her elevation to the powerful ministry, Obuchi quit following a political donations scandal, further reducing the pool of qualified female successors to Abe.

Can Koike break the mold? The charismatic leader has described Japan as having an "iron plate" rather than a "glass ceiling" confronting female advancement.

Amy Catalinac, assistant professor at New York University, suggests Koike could yet challenge for the top job, should she maintain her popularity.

"Over the past year, she has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to maintain a high approval rating as governor while forging a relationship with Komeito and recruiting, nurturing and convincing voters to support talented candidates. She has kept herself in the headlines with her platform of challenging entrenched interests and has carved out policies that could hold appeal beyond Tokyo," Catalinac said in the East Asia Forum.

"If Koike can make Tokyo's 2020 hosting of the Olympics a success and parlay that into even higher visibility, she may well find herself the most attractive candidate for prime minister, whether for the LDP or another centrist party."

■ Abe's political fortunes

Nevertheless, Abe still has time to revive his political fortunes, with the next LDP leadership election slated for September 2018, followed by general elections. The center-right party's impressive record in winning the most votes in nineteen of the last twenty lower-house elections suggests Koike's young party faces a formidable foe.

However, Koike follows in the footsteps of South Korea's election of its first female president in 2013, a move seen as breaking tradition in a similarly patriarchal society.

"I am in awe to see that when individual votes become one, it can turn into a huge wave," Koike told reporters after her recent election victory.

The LDP's history of reinventing itself suggests the party might still seek to reach out again to Koike, despite comments by the party's Tokyo head that it had "no intention" of taking her back. Like Abe, Koike has supported moves to revise the war-renouncing Article 9 of the constitution and is considered a hawk on foreign-policy issues such as the U.S.-led war on terror, making her a natural ally of Washington.

For now though, the sixty-five-year-old Kobe native has stressed her focus on "making Tokyo great again," rather than pursuing the national stage. Koike also faces considerable challenges in ensuring her popularity does not diminish, amid the city's budget challenges in hosting the Olympics and the on-again, off-again Tsukiji relocation.

However, with new female leaders such as Koike on the rise globally, Abe's 2014 pledge of making Japan "a society in which women shine" could yet prove more prescient than he intended.

(Source: nationalinterest.com)

Neocons have been destroying sovereign nations for 20 years; Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria

By Neil Clark

A resource-rich, socialist-led, multi-ethnic secular state, with an economic system characterized by a high level of public/social ownership and generous provision of welfare, education and social services.

An independent foreign policy with friendship and good commercial ties with Russia, support for Palestine and African and Arab unity – and historical backing for anti-imperialist movements.

Social progress in a number of areas, including women's emancipation.

The above accurately describes the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Syrian Arab Republic. Three countries in three different continents, which had so much in common.

All three had governments, which described themselves as socialist. All three pursued a foreign policy independent of Washington and NATO. And all three were targeted for regime change/destruction by the U.S. and its allies using remarkably similar methods.

The first step of the imperial predators was the imposition of draconian economic sanctions used to cripple their economies, weaken their governments (always referred to as 'a/the regime') and create political unrest. From 1992-95, and again in 1998, Yugoslavia was hit by the harshest sanctions ever imposed on a European state. The sanctions even involved an EU ban on the state-owned passenger airliner JAT.

Libya was under U.S. sanctions from the 1980s until 2004, and then again in 2011, the year the country with the highest Human Development Index in Africa was bombed back to the Stone Age.

Syria has been sanctioned by the U.S. since 2004 with a significant increase in the severity of the measures in 2011 when the regime change option moved into top gear.

The second step was the backing of armed militias/terrorist proxies to destabilize the countries and help overthrow these "regimes". The strategy was relatively simple. Terrorist attacks and the killing of state officials and soldiers would provoke a military response from 'the regime, whose leader would then be condemned for 'killing his own people' (or in the case of Milosevic, other ethnic groups), and used to ramp up the case for a 'humanitarian intervention' by the U.S. and its allies.

In Yugoslavia, the U.S.-proxy force was the Kosovan Liberation Army, who was given training and logistical support by the West.

In Libya, groups linked to al-Qaeda, like the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, were provided assistance, with NATO effectively acting as al-Qaeda's air force.

In Syria, there was massive support for anti-government terrorist fighters, euphemistically labeled 'moderate rebels.' It didn't matter to the 'regime changers' that weapons supplied to 'moderate rebels' ended up in the hands of groups like ISIS. On the contrary, a declassified secret U.S. intelligence report from 2012 showed that the Western powers welcomed the possible establishment of a Salafist principality in eastern Syria, seeing it as a means of isolating 'the Syrian regime'.

The third step carried out at the

same time as one and two involved the relentless demonization of the leadership of the target states. This involved the leaders being regularly compared to Hitler, and accused of carrying out or planning genocide and multiple war crimes.

Milosevic – President of Yugoslavia – was labeled a 'dictator' even though he was the democratically-elected leader of a country in which over 20 political parties freely operated.

Libya's Muammar Gaddafi was portrayed as an unstable foaming at the mouth lunatic, about to launch a massacre in Benghazi, even though he had governed his country since the end of the Swinging Sixties.

Syria's Assad did take over in an authoritarian one-party system, but was given zero credit for introducing a new constitution, which ended the Ba'ath Party's monopoly of political power. Instead all the deaths in the Syrian conflict were blamed on him, even those of the thousands of Syrian soldiers killed by Western/PGCC-armed and funded 'rebels'.

The fourth step in the imperial strategy was the deployment of gatekeepers – or 'Imperial Truth Enforcers' – to smear or defame anyone who dared to come to the defense of the target states, or who said that they should be left alone.

The pro-war, finance-capital-friendly, faux-left was at the forefront of the media campaigns against the countries concerned. This was to give the regime change/destruction project a 'progressive' veneer, and to persuade or intimidate



The aggressions against Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, and the threatening of Iran, North Korea, Russia and Venezuela are all parts of the same war.

date genuine 'old school' leftists not to challenge the dominant narrative.

To place them beyond the pale, Yugoslavia, Libya and Syria were all labeled 'fascist,' even though their leadership was socialist and their economies were run on socialistic lines. Meanwhile, genuine fascists, like anti-government factions in Ukraine (2013-14), received enthusiastic support from NATO.

The fifth step was direct U.S./NATO-led military intervention against 'the regime' triggered by alleged atrocities/planned atrocities of the target state. At this stage, the U.S. works particularly



Yugoslavia, Libya and Syria pursued a foreign policy independent of Washington and NATO and were targeted for regime change/destruction by the U.S. and its allies using remarkably similar methods.

hard to sabotage any peaceful solution to the conflicts they and their regional allies have ignited. At the Rambouillet conference in March 1999, for example, the Yugoslav authorities, who had agreed to an international peace-keeping force in Kosovo, were presented with an ultimatum that they could not possibly accept. Lord Gilbert, a UK defense minister at the time, later admitted

"the terms put to Milosevic (which included NATO forces having freedom of movement throughout his country)

broken up or transformed into a failed state with strategically important areas/resources under U.S./Western control. Yugoslavia was dismantled and its socially-owned economy privatized. Montenegro, the great prize on the Adriatic, recently joined NATO.

Libya, hailed in the Daily Telegraph as a top cruise ship destination in 2010, is now a lawless playground for terrorists and a place where cruise ships dare not dock. This country, which provided free education and health care for all its citizens under Gaddafi, has recently seen the return of slave markets.

Syria, though thankfully not at Stage Seven, has still been knocked back almost forty years. The UNDP reported:

"Despite having achieved or being well under way to achieving major Millennium Development Goals targets (poverty reduction, primary education, and gender parity in secondary education, decrease in infant mortality rates and increasing access to improved sanitation) as of 2011, it is estimated that after the first four years of crisis Syria has dropped from 113th to 174th out of 187 countries ranked in the Human Development Index."

Of course, it's not just three countries that have been wrecked by the Empire of Chaos. There are similarities too with what's happened to Afghanistan and Iraq. In the late 1970s, the U.S. started to back rebels to destabilize and topple the left-wing, pro-Moscow government in Kabul.

Afghanistan has been in turmoil ever since, with the U.S. and its allies launching an invasion of the country in 2001 to topple a Taliban 'regime' which grew out of the 'rebel' movement which the U.S. had backed.

Iraq was hit with devastating, genocidal sanctions, which were maintained under U.S./UK pressure even after it had disarmed. Then it was invaded on the deceitful pretext that its leader, Saddam Hussein, still possessed WMDs.

The truth of what has been happening is too shocking and too terrible ever to be admitted in the Western mainstream media. Namely, that since the demise of the Soviet Union, the U.S. and its allies have been picking off independent, resource-rich, strategically important countries one by one.

The point is not that these countries were perfect and that there wasn't political repression taking place in some of them at various times, but that they were earmarked for destruction solely for standing in the way of the imperialists. The propagandists for the U.S.-led wars of recent years want us to regard the conflicts as 'stand alones' and to regard the 'problem' as being the 'mad dog' leadership of the countries that were attacked.

But in fact, the aggressions against Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, and the threatening of Iran, North Korea, Russia and Venezuela are all parts of the same war. Anyone who hasn't been locked in a wardrobe these past twenty years, or whose salary is not paid directly, or indirectly, by the Empire of Chaos, can surely see now where the 'problem' really lies.

The 'New Hitlers' – Milosevic, Hussein and Gaddafi – who we were told were the 'biggest threats' to world peace, are dead and buried. But guess what? The killing goes on.

(Source: global research)



The propagandists for the U.S.-led wars of recent years want us to regard the conflicts as 'stand alones' and to regard the 'problem' as being the 'mad dog' leadership of the countries that were attacked.

Polls: U.S. is 'the greatest threat to peace in the world today'

By Eric Zuesse

It has happened again: yet another international poll finds that the U.S. is viewed by peoples around the world to be the biggest threat to world peace.

But, to start, let's summarize the first-ever poll that had been done on this, back in 2013, which was the only prior poll on this entire issue, and it was the best-performed such poll: "An end-of-the-year WIN/Gallup International survey found that people in 65 countries believe the United States is the greatest threat to world peace", as the N.Y. Post reported on 5 January 2014.

On 30 December 2013, the BBC had reported of that poll: "This year, first [meaning here, for] the first time, Win/Gallup agreed to include three questions submitted by listeners to [BBC's] Radio 4's Today programme." And, one of those three listener-asked questions was phrased there by the BBC, as having been "Which country is the biggest threat to peace?" The way that WIN/Gallup International itself had actually asked this open-ended question, to 67,806 respondents from 65 countries, was: "Which country do you think is the greatest threat to peace in the world today?" #1, 24% of respondents, worldwide, volunteered that the U.S. was "the greatest threat." #2 (the second-most-frequently volunteered 'greatest threat') was Pakistan, volunteered by 8%. #3 was China, with 6%. #4-7 were a four-way tie, at 5% each, for: Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, and North Korea. #8-10 were a three-way tie, at 4% each, for: India, Iraq, and Japan. #11 was Syria, with 3%. #12 was Russia, with 2%. #13-20 were a seven-way tie, at 1% each, for: Australia, Germany, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Korea, and UK.

The way that W/G itself had phrased this matter, in their highly uninformative press release for their year-end survey (which included but barely mentioned this finding, in it — as though this particular finding in their annual year-end poll, hardly even deserved to be mentioned), was: "The U.S. was the overwhelming choice (24% of respondents) for the country that represents the greatest threat to peace in the world today. This was followed by Pakistan (8%), China (6%), North Korea, Israel and Iran (5%). Respondents in Russia (54%), China (49%) and Bosnia (49%) were the most fearful of the U.S. as a threat." That's all there was of it — W/G never devoted a press-release to the stunning subject of this particular finding, and they even buried this finding when mentioning it in their year-end press-release.

I had hoped that they would repeat this excellent global survey question every year (so that a trendline could be shown, in the global answers over time), but the question was unfortunately never repeated.

However, now, on August 1st of 2017, Pew Research Center has issued results of their polling of 30 nations in which they had surveyed, first in 2013, and then again in 2017, posing a less-clear but similar question (vague perhaps because they were fearing a similar type of finding — embarrassing to their own country, the U.S.), in which respondents had been asked "Do you think that the United States' power and influence is a major threat, a minor threat, or not a threat to (survey country)?" and which also asked this same question but regarding "China," and then again but regarding "Russia," as a possible threat instead of "United States." (This wasn't an open-ended question; only those three nations were named as possible responses.)

On page 3 of their 32-page pdf is shown that the "major threat" category was selected by 35% of respondents worldwide for "U.S. power and influence," 31% worldwide selected that for "Russia's power and influence," and also 31% worldwide said it for "China's power and influence." However, on pages 23 and 24 of the pdf is shown the 30 countries that had been surveyed in this poll, in both 2013 and 2017, and most of these 30 nations were U.S. allies; only Venezuela clearly was not. None of the 30 countries was an ally of either Russia or China (the other two countries offered as possibly being "a major threat"). And, yet, nonetheless, more respondents among the 30 sampled countries saw the U.S. as "a major threat," than saw either Russia or China that way.

Furthermore, the trend, in those 30 countries, throughout that four-year period, was generally in the direction of an increase in fear of the U.S. — increase in fear of the country that had been overwhelmingly cited in 2013 by people in 65 countries in WIN/Gallup's poll, as constituting, in 2013, "the greatest threat to peace in the world today."

Consequently, though WIN/Gallup never repeated its question, the evidence in this newly released poll, from Pew, clearly suggests that the percentage of people in the 65 nations that WIN/Gallup had polled in 2013 who saw the U.S. as being "the greatest threat to peace in the world today" would be even higher today than it was in 2013, when 24% of respondents worldwide volunteered the U.S. as being the world's most frightening country.

Perhaps people around the world are noticing that, at least since 2001, the U.S. is wrecking one country after another: Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and Ukraine. Which is next? Maybe Iran? Maybe Russia? Maybe Venezuela? Who knows?

Regarding the 2013 WIN/Gallup End-of-Year international survey, you can see the nation-by-nation results here. For example, their sampling that year of 4,556 Americans found that residents of the U.S. answered to "Q8. Which country do you think is the greatest threat to peace in the world today?": #1 Iran 20%, #2 Afghanistan 14%, #3 N. Korea 13%, #4 United States 13%, #5 Iraq 6%, #7 Syria 5%, #8 China 5%, #9 Russia 3%, #10 Pakistan 1%. A remarkably high 13% of Americans gave the correct answer. And, late in that year, U.S. President Obama pulled the trigger on his long-planned bloody overthrow and replacement of Ukraine's government, which was portrayed throughout the Western press as being a 'democratic revolution', though it actually ended democracy in Ukraine.

And the U.S. has just increased its 'defense' spending, which already is three times China's, and nine times higher than Russia's. Do the owners of America's military-industrial complex own the U.S. government, and own the U.S. 'news' media, to permit this rabid military to control the government's budget, in a 'democracy'? Is that how it happens?

(Source: global research)

Outsourcing the air war in Afghanistan

By Gary Anderson

Erik Prince, the owner of the former Blackwater Security Company, has proposed that the U.S. military outsource the air war in Afghanistan to him. Gen. John Nicholson, who currently commands the NATO effort in the war, has apparently refused to give the Prince proposal an airing. The president reportedly is not happy with the progress of the war and wants to fire Gen. Nicholson, who would be the second American commander to be sacked in the war's nearly 16 years. If I were Gen. Nicholson, I'd give Mr. Prince a fair hearing.

The Afghans are not doing well in the war largely because their air force cannot support the army adequately of the ground. After nearly two decades of American "advice and assistance," the Afghan Air Force is a mess. Instead of fixing the problem, the Americans have shored the Afghans up with close air support and other patchwork fixes that have failed. If the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result, the high command in Kabul is certifiable.

Instead of dismissing Mr. Prince outright, Gen. Nicholson should have requested a proposal that would require

Mr. Prince to come up with a plan that would make the Afghan Air Force self-sufficient in a certain time frame if he desires to see a profit from his efforts. That would not just mean providing the Afghan troops with close air support. It would require Mr. Prince and his company to train the mechanics and air crews of the Afghan Air Force to maintain the transport aircraft and helicopters needed to provide resupply and medical evacuation to Afghan soldiers scattered over some of the world's most inhospitable terrain.

■ A hard problem

Mr. Prince's profit-oriented approach is an outside-the-box, commercial solution to a hard problem that has eluded the U.S. military. It won't win the war by itself, but it could provide a key solution to the supply-and-support problem that has dogged Afghan forces since president Obama prematurely tried to hand the war over to them on an arbitrary timeline.

Our generals have lacked the imagination to tell the administration that something new and different from sending in more uniformed advisers should be tried. We are in an Afghan war that is not going to be won by merely defeating the enemy on the battlefield. The Taliban can draw from a



nearly limitless supply of tribal youth bent on revenge for the deaths of relatives and friends.

■ The Afghan stalemate

The Afghan stalemate will only be broken when the various factions that make up the Taliban realize two things. First, that they are not strong enough to capture the major population centers of Afghanistan as they did in the late

'90s; and second, that they are losing ground to a far more dangerous enemy in the form of ISIS than they face in the Afghan government.

Until the Afghan security forces stop losing ground, the Taliban will continue to hope the government will crack. If its forces can adequately hold and retake ground, the possibility exists that the government and the local insurgents can make common cause to fight the real foreign-inspired threat that ISIS represents. The Taliban don't want to attack the American homeland or Europe, but ISIS does.

Afghanistan should not be an American "forever war." Whatever its faults, the government of Afghanistan must eventually become responsible for its internal security.

The United States will need to supplement its defense costs, but the Afghans eventually need to do their own fighting with their own people.

Our eventual military mission in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and elsewhere should be limited to counterterrorism against al Qaeda, ISIS and other violent extremist groups that are plotting against the American homeland. If Mr. Prince can come up with a plan to help us do that and make a buck at the same time, good for him.

(Source: The Washington Times)

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10 strategies to boost your cognitive health and fight brain aging

By Joel Fuhrman

1. Maintain favorable blood pressure and cholesterol levels

Many older people are surprised to learn that there are common risk factors between heart disease and Alzheimer's disease. But if you think about how the vascular system supplies blood to the brain, it makes sense that impairment of blood flow could lead to brain tissue damage. The small arteries of the brain are sensitive to elevations in blood pressure and long-term hypertension can injure them. Several studies support the connection between blood pressure and brain health. Higher blood pressure correlates with poorer cognitive performance and damage to brain tissue.

According to long-term studies, the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia is more than doubled if systolic blood pressure is in or above the range of 140-160 mmHg. Cholesterol plays a role in the formation of amyloid beta plaques, damage characteristic of Alzheimer's disease, and elevated cholesterol levels are thought to increase the production of amyloid beta plaques.

2. Check your vitamin D level

Low levels of vitamin D are linked to cognitive impairment. Vitamin D is involved in memory formation. Several studies associated vitamin D deficiency with increased risk of cognitive impairment or dementia in older adults. In addition, the vitamin is involved in regulating glucose and calcium transport to and within the brain, and may also protect cognition by reducing inflammation and increasing availability of certain neurotransmitters. Get your vitamin D level checked with a blood test. The optimal level is between 30 and 45 ng/ml.

3. Take the brain-supporting supplements omega-3 DHA and vitamin B12

Maintaining sufficient levels of the omega-3 fatty acid DHA in the brain is an important measure for preventing neurodegenerative diseases later in life. Studies have shown that higher intake and higher circulating omega-3 DHA is associated with larger brain volume and a decreased risk of Alzheimer's disease.

The risk of vitamin B12 deficiency increases with age—about 20 percent of adults over age 60 are either insufficient or deficient. B12 deficiency causes problems in the brain, including confusion, depression, and poor memory. A deficiency in this important vitamin has been associated with



Research indicates that nut consumption—walnuts in particular—may benefit brain function.

Alzheimer's disease. Since your body's ability to absorb vitamin B12 decreases with age, and the vitamin is not present in plant foods, it is wise to supplement. Plus, the RDI is insufficient for flexitarians, vegans and the elderly.

4. Limit your consumption of red meat and other animal products

Copper and iron are essential minerals present in large amounts in red meat; these minerals accumulate in the body over time and in excess they can harm the brain. Instead, they can be obtained in non-dangerous amounts through healthier options such as sesame and pumpkin seeds, edamame, and other beans. Both excess copper and excess iron contribute to oxidative stress in the brain and are involved in amyloid beta plaque formation in the brain.

5. Focus on whole plant foods

A good rule to follow is to have 90 percent or more of your diet be whole plant foods—meaning vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and seeds. A diet higher in these foods and low in meat and dairy is associated with a 36 percent decrease in risk of Alzheimer's.

Make sure your diet is rich in natural, healthy plant foods, and add more raw vegetables to your diet by eating a large salad as your entrée at least once a day. Add beans, tomatoes, raw onions, and a nut or seed-based salad dressing.

6. Eat berries frequently

Phytochemicals found in vegetables

and fruit may help to alleviate oxidative stress and inflammation in the brain, leading to a reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease. Berries in particular have been singled out for their protective effects on the brain. Several different berries have been found to slow or reverse age-related declines in brain function in animals. Also, blueberries (and also pomegranate) have shown promising results in human studies, suggesting these phytochemical-rich foods may help to improve memory in older adults.

7. Make nuts and seeds your major fat source

Research indicates that nut consumption—walnuts in particular—may benefit brain function. Walnuts are rich in the essential omega-3 fatty acid ALA (precursor to DHA and EPA), and observational studies have linked higher walnut consumption to better working memory. Higher total nut consumption is associated with better cognitive function overall.

8. Avoid salt in your diet

High salt intake stiffens arteries and increases blood pressure, damaging the delicate blood vessels in the brain, impairing blood flow in brain tissue and increasing your chances of cognitive impairment. Season your foods with herbs and spices or try perking up foods with a splash of citrus or flavored vinegar or use a no-salt seasoning blend.

9. Stay away from added sugars in your diet

Excess sugar can impair your cognitive skills and also contributes to high blood pressure. High amounts of sugar cause dangerous elevations in blood glucose which can lead to blood vessel damage, and there is evidence that this damage contributes to a progressive decline in brain function. Even a single instance of hyperglycemia could be harmful, as slowed cognitive function and deficits in memory and attention have been reported. In addition, frequent exposure to high glucose levels likely diminishes mental capacity, as higher HbA1c levels have been associated with a greater degree of brain shrinkage. Instead satisfy a sweet tooth with fresh fruit which will give you the added benefits of the fruit's fiber and antioxidants.

10. Stay active

A balanced life helps improve overall well-being. Regular exercise has favorable effects on the brain at all stages of life. One likely reason is that during physical activity there is enhanced blood flow to the brain, and exercising regularly helps to keep blood vessels healthy. Exercise also helps brain tissue produce more mitochondria, responsible for cellular energy production. In adults over age 60, physical fitness is associated with better memory, cognitive function and reaction time. High levels of physical activity are associated with a significant reduction in Alzheimer's disease risk.

(Source: verywell.com)

Chlorine washed chicken: Food safety experts explain why US poultry is banned in EU

By Simon Dawson

With Brexit on the horizon, the UK is now looking for ways to open up trade with countries outside the EU. A trade deal with the US is one of the most significant options politicians are exploring and an agreement that would increase imports and exports of food and drink could be an important component of this. This has raised the possibility of the UK accepting US food standards, and a prominent example of this is the use of chlorine to wash chicken carcasses. This is currently banned in the EU.

Why are chickens washed with chlorine in the US?

It all comes down to money and efficiency of space. The majority of farmers do care about rearing their birds, but as profit margins can be very tight, animal welfare is sidelined to keep costs down. In the EU, cost is also important, but the law means it can't come at the expense of the birds' basic welfare. There is a legal minimum amount of space, lighting and ventilation for EU poultry-rearing houses.

The more space the birds have to move around in, the fewer can be housed in a single area, which in turn has an effect on production costs. As there are no laws governing this in the US, the birds can be crammed in tightly so they have limited movement, with little light or ventilation. This reduces production costs but increases the risks of disease and contamination in a flock.

Washing the chickens in a strong chlorine solution (20-50 parts per million of chlorine) provides a brash, cost-effective method of killing any microorganisms on the surface of the bird, particularly bacteria such as species of Salmonella and Campylobacter. This helps prevent the meat being contaminated with microbes during slaughter and evisceration.

Why is the process banned in the EU?

US chicken has been banned in the EU since 1997 because of this chlorine-washing process. But this isn't because the treatment itself has been deemed dangerous. A report by the EU Scientific Committee on Veterinary Measures, for example, highlighted that the chemical cleaning treatment can be effective at removing food-borne pathogens depending on how



Chlorine washing is very good at removing odors and surface slime, meaning the meat can be passed off as fresh for much longer than it should be.

it is used. The real fear is that heavily soiled birds may not be sufficiently disinfected, and that relying on chlorine washing could lead to poorer hygiene standards overall.

EU officials believe the food industry should be continually improving hygiene standards in all steps of processing – the “farm to fork” principle, and so have banned chickens washed in chlorine as a deterrent to poor practices. But in the US there are no poultry welfare standards so the process is common. There have also been reports, including undercover video evidence by the Humane Society of the United States, of both inhumane and unsanitary practices being carried out within poultry houses due to a lack of animal welfare regulation.

What are the potential health risks of chlorine washing?

Although there are some benefits to this chlorine washing, there are concerns about it. Some US abattoirs and processing plants rely heavily on chlorination

because their other hygiene standards are so poor that they would be illegal in Europe. The process is also very good at removing odors and surface slime, meaning the meat can be passed off as fresh for much longer than it should be.

Chlorine isn't toxic at the levels used in the washing process and doesn't itself cause cancer. But studies have shown that the treatment can cause carcinogens such as semicarbazide and trihalomethanes to form in the poultry meat if the concentration of chlorine is high enough. The US Food Safety and Inspection Service does set limits to prevent this but there is always a risk they could be violated.

Is there much evidence to support the EU ban?

The EU ban is more precautionary than evidence-based. When the ban was introduced, officials were keen that food manufacturers should focus on overall hygiene rather than relying on a single chemical decontamination step to eliminate microorganisms. It was also believed that the chemical decontamination step could encourage antibiotic resistance.

As a result, the EU introduced regulations laying down specific hygiene rules on the hygiene of foodstuffs. This prohibits the use of anything other than water to decontaminate meat and effectively bans US imports of poultry treated with antimicrobial rinses. However, the European Food Safety Authority has found no conclusive evidence that antimicrobial chemicals used in food processing contribute to antibiotic resistance.

If the UK started importing chlorinated chickens, wouldn't consumers simply be able to choose whether or not to buy them?

Under current EU rules, the chlorine wash is classed as a processing aid rather than an ingredient and so wouldn't have to be declared on the packaging. This means UK consumers would be unlikely to know whether imported US chicken had been through the chlorination process unless it was voluntarily declared. Of course, once the UK leaves the EU, it would be free to change the rules. But that doesn't mean it necessarily would.

(Source: independent.co.uk)

Tips for preventing knee pain

A well-conditioned, flexible body is less likely to develop overuse problems in the knees.

“Warming up the muscles helps prevent injury,” says Bush-Joseph. “If you like to run but you don't have the time to warm-up and stretch out, you should start your run with 10 to 15 minutes of walking or slow jogging before getting up to peak velocity.”

Here's how to do these exercises and stretches:

- **Step-ups:** Stand in front of a small step stool or stairs and lift your body onto the step using one leg. Then step backward down the step with the same leg. Do 10 to 15 step-ups per leg.
- **Hamstring curls:** Lie on your stomach with your legs straight and your head resting on your arms or the ground. Bend one leg with the heel toward your buttocks. Repeat 10 to 15 times and then switch legs.



- **Straight-leg lifts:** Lie on the floor on your back, with one leg bent at a 90-degree angle and your foot flat on the ground. Lift the other leg off the ground. Repeat 10 to 15 times and then switch legs.

- **Butterfly stretch:** Sit up straight with the soles of your feet pressed together. Holding your feet, slowly lean your upper body forward (keeping your back straight). Hold the stretch for 30 seconds to one minute.

- **Standing hip flexor:** Get into a stride position (body and feet facing forward with one foot stepped further in front). Stand up straight with your abdominal muscles tightened. Keeping your back straight, slowly lunge forward with the front leg. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds to one minute and then switch legs.

1. Losing weight can improve knee pain.

“Your weight plays a major role in knee pain,” says Bush-Joseph. “If you walked around all day with a backpack that had a 10-pound weight in it, you would feel how achy your back, hips and knees are at the end of the day. That shows you the impact extra weight can have on your joints.”

With each step people take, two to four times their body weight is transmitted through the knee joint, according to Bush-Joseph. Thus, the more you weigh, the harder the impact is on your knee joint.

However, people who are overweight and have arthritic knee pain can lessen the impact — and ultimately, relieve knee pain — by losing weight. In fact, people with arthritic knees lose about 20 percent of their pain with every 10 pounds of weight loss.

“If you are 20 pounds overweight and you have arthritic knee pain, almost half of your pain will go away by losing 20 pounds,” says Bush-Joseph. Of course, losing 20 pounds isn't easy. But, if people are able to lose even 10 pounds and add in some stretching and flexibility training, they'll experience significantly less pain, according to Bush-Joseph.

2. Wearing the proper shoes is important for healthy knees.

Supportive and comfortable shoes help take pressure off the knee joint by promoting proper leg alignment and balance. So it's no surprise that wearing high heels is a common cause of knee pain.

“When high heels lift your heel up, your weight bearing line tips forward so your quadriceps have to work harder to hold your knee straight, which then leads to knee pain,” says Bush-Joseph. “Whereas, if your heel is closer to the floor in low pumps or flats, your thigh muscles don't have to work as hard to maintain stability, which is easier on the knees.”

While strength training and stretching can help build up the muscles around the knees to minimize knee damage from heels, it's best to save the stilettos for special occasions.

Proper shoes are particularly important during exercise. “If you are taking up running as a newbie or starting a new form of aerobic exercise, getting professionally fitted from someone at a running or sporting goods store can help with knee problems and will certainly lower your incidence of having overuse problems due to footwear,” says Bush-Joseph.

3. Stand up straight to feel better.

“When you slouch you are leaning forward and walking bent over at the waist — and that posture will lead to knee pain,” says Bush-Joseph. “You want your head centered over your shoulders and your shoulders centered over your abdomen and pelvis. The more your body is off-center, the more you have to compensate for that with muscle activity. Those muscles eventually fatigue, causing strain on your joints.”

Having strong core muscles in your abdomen and lower back helps promote good posture and, ultimately, lessens the pressure on your knees. Exercises such as planks, back extensions, yoga and Pilates can help strengthen the core.

Here's how to do these exercises:

- **Planks:** Lie face down with your toes pointed to the floor. Put your forearms on the floor with your elbows at 90-degree angles. Tighten your abdominal and gluteal muscles and lift your body off the floor. Keep your back straight and hold for 15 to 45 seconds.

- **Back extensions:** Lie face down with elbows bent and hands on the floor. Keeping your hips on the floor, lift your head and shoulders up with your arms. Hold for 5 to 10 seconds and repeat five to 10 times.

(Source: rush.edu)

Tehran, Astana seeking an upswing in tourism ties

TOURISM TEHRAN — Iranian and Kazakh officials have called for stronger tourism ties especially in marine and medical spheres.

During a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization Director Zahra Ahmadipour and Kazakhstan's Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyev explored avenues for broadening bilateral ties. They also discussed setting up Iranian handicrafts shops in the neighboring country, CHTO reported on Wednesday.



CHTHO Director Zahra Ahmadipour presents a gift to Kazakhstan's Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyev during a meeting in Tehran on August 8, 2017.

"There lies various areas of cooperation due to cultural affinities and commonalities between the two nations," Ahmadipour said.

Pointing to the lack of direct flights between Tehran and Astana, she supposed that Caspian Sea potentials can be used as a common ground for creating and developing marine tourism between Iran and Kazakhstan.

"Kazakhstan enjoys beautiful and vast nature and Iran has high capacities in natural, historical, cultural as well as its health tourism arenas, which should be taken into account," the official added.

Referring to the high quality and reasonable prices for medical and therapeutic facilities in Iran, she said that health tourism can be considered as one of the major areas of collaboration between the two countries.

Elsewhere in her remarks, Ahmadipour touched upon handicrafts as another source for assistance while she urged the need for deepening interaction between craftspeople, exchanging experience and organizing artistic workshops. She also proposed establishing Iranian handicrafts stores in Kazakhstan.

For his part, Mukhamediyev hailed such expansion of ties, saying that Kazakh authorities have "a lot of plans" for developing tourism ties with Iran.

Mukhamediyev also talked on a visa simplification plan that would enable a travel boom between the two neighbor states, saying: "Today, Kazakhstan has extensive plans to attract foreign tourists and for this purpose a township is under construction in the field of health tourism."

"We welcome the proposal of establishing Iranian handicraft stores. To start this phase of cooperation, it is possible to set up ones in Astana and Almaty," the minister added.

Health tourism could fetch Iran \$7b a year

TOURISM TEHRAN — The Iranian minister of cooperatives, labor and social welfare has said that the country has a potential to earn \$7 billion in revenues through attracting one million health tourists on a yearly basis.

Relative wallet-friendly services can be considered as the main advantage of medical tourism in Iran, Ali Rabiei said in an address to an international conference held in Hama Hotel in Tehran on Tuesday evening, to which business representatives from over 30 countries attended.

Rabiei also pointed to lack of integrated management and proper advertisement as factors that has hampered medical and health tourism sectors in the country despite high quality of services and low prices, IRIB reported.

Health-tourism companies from more than 30 countries including the Netherlands, Germany, France, China, Canada, Brazil, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania and Uzbekistan are supposed to collaborate with Iran in this regard.

Earlier this month, Iran signed agreements with 13 neighboring countries with the aim of developing and reorganizing its medical tourism sector. Patients from Iraq, Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Persian Gulf littoral states constitute the largest number of travelers who visit Iran annually for medical services.



Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Ali Rabiei in an undated photo

Moreover, the state-run Tourism Holding Company, affiliated with the Social Security Organization, is to unveil a comprehensive plan, which will be implemented with the participation of 22 hospitals and over 200 physicians, specialists, and surgeons.

The Ministry of Health registered some 105,000 inbound patients over the past Iranian calendar year (March 2016-March 2017), ISNA quoted a tourism official as saying back in July.

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

Spain's Balearic Islands to fine illegal tourist rentals

BARCELONA (Reuters) — Spain's Balearic Islands will from Tuesday penalize landlords for illegally renting apartments to tourists with fines of up to 40,000 euros (\$47,228) amid a backlash against the effects of mass tourism across the country.

The move is an escalation in efforts to crack down on home-sharing sites such as Airbnb by city councils or local authorities in Spain, as concern mounts over the side-effects of their increasing popularity.

Airbnb, much like ride-hailing firm Uber, is facing a crackdown from legislators worldwide triggered in part by lobbying from the hotel industry which sees the rental service as unfair competition.

In the Balearic Islands, which drew more

foreign visitors than any other region in Spain this June, rental costs have jumped and there are fears of a housing shortage for residents.

Rental prices in Palma de Mallorca, the Mediterranean archipelago's biggest city, have risen 40 percent in the last five years, according to property platform Mitula.

The island of Ibiza has the biggest density of Airbnb rentals, with a tourist apartment for every 30 residents, data from analytics firm Airdna showed.

Renting apartments without a licence was banned in the region in 2012 under a previous administration but enforcement was largely nonexistent, according to the Balearic government.

"We want balanced and sustainable

tourism so that it can keep being our lead economic activity for many years to come," the region's tourism chief Biel Barcelo told Reuters.

The new legislation establishes fines of between 20,000 and 40,000 euros for those offering short rentals without a license to tourists.

Local residents will be able to report suspected illegal flats through a website, and online platforms such as Airbnb and Homeaway could also face fines of up to 400,000 euros if they are found to advertise rentals without a license number.

The Balearics' four islands will each have a year to decide if and where they will allow licensed tourist rentals to continue.

Airbnb said the new rules were complex and confusing as they did not distinguish between local families sharing their homes and professional operators running a business. It said it was ready to collaborate with the local authorities on establishing clearer regulation.

"By working together, we can help build sustainable tourism models that spread benefits to many - not keep them in the hands of a few," the firm said in an emailed statement.

Barcelona, in the northeastern Spanish region of Catalonia and another tourism magnet, has also introduced controls on tourist apartments and sought to fine Airbnb and Homeaway for advertising ones that are unlicensed.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic center of Riga

The historic center of Riga, the capital and the largest city of Latvia, is a living illustration of European history.

Through centuries, Riga has been the center of many historic events and a meeting point for European nations, and it has managed to preserve evidence of European influence on its historical development, borders between the West and the East, and intersection of trading and cultural routes.

Riga has always been a modern city keeping up with the current trends in architecture and urban planning, and at the same time, preserving the city's integrity in the course of development.

A World Heritage site, the historic centre of Riga is comprised of three different urban landscapes – the relatively well-preserved medieval core, the 19th century semi-circle of boulevards with a green belt on both sides of the City Canal, and the former suburban quarters surrounding the boulevards with dense built-up areas with a rectangular network of streets and wooden architecture of the 18th and 19th centuries.



A view of the historic center of Riga, Latvia

Riga, which was founded as a port town in 1201, was one of the key centers of the Hanseatic League in Eastern Europe from the 13th to the 15th century. The urban fabric of its medieval core reflects the prosperity of those times, though most of the earliest buildings were rebuilt for actual needs or lost by fire or war.

In the 17th century, Riga became the largest provincial town of Sweden. In the 19th century, it experienced rapid industrial development. It is in this period that the suburbs surrounding the medieval town were laid out, first, with imposing wooden buildings in neoclassical style, and later, when permanent stone buildings were allowed instead, in the Art Nouveau style.

In the early 1900s Riga became the European city with the highest concentration of Art Nouveau architecture with around 50 Art Nouveau buildings of high architectural value in the medieval part and more than 300 in the rest of the historic center. (Source: UNESCO)

How to dine well — and properly — in another country

By Shivani Vora

When you're traveling internationally, eating at local restaurants is an opportunity to learn about that country's culture and customs, says Gert Kopera, the executive vice president of global restaurants for Hakkasan Group, a collection of 41 restaurants worldwide.

But, Mr. Kopera said, dining out can also make travelers uncomfortable. "Dining etiquette and traditions vary by country, and if you don't know the customs in the destination you're visiting," he said, "it's easy to feel like a fish out of water."

Mr. Kopera has eaten thousands of meals in more than 70 countries, and here, he shares his advice on how to dine out successfully anywhere in the world.

■ Eat at the right hour

Learn when locals eat, Mr. Kopera said, so that you're not going to closed or empty restaurants. In the United States, dinner is usually eaten from 6 to 7 p.m. and is the biggest meal of the day, but not so in other countries: In England, for example, high tea, served around 4 p.m., is a meal itself while supper is lighter and served at 8 p.m. or later.

In Spain and South America, the average dinner starts at 10 p.m., and in India, anywhere from 9 to 11 p.m. is the norm. "You'll experience the authentic local culture if



your dining times are in rhythm with the locals," he said.

■ Use the correct utensils, or no utensils

Using utensils improperly can be a sign of disrespect in another country, Mr. Kopera said. He suggested that travelers observe locals while they eat and follow their practices. In China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, chop-

sticks are the most common utensil, but sticking them upright in rice is considered offensive. In India and areas of the Middle East and Africa, eating with hands is normal, but be careful about using the left hand — it can be considered unclean.

■ Take your time

In many countries — including Brazil, France and Italy — meals span several hours and are a time to connect with family and friends. Mr. Kopera suggested that travelers do the same. "Savor the food and conversation," he said. And, once you are ready to leave, ask for your check because in many international destinations, servers present it to diners only upon request.

■ Research payment and tipping practices

Find out the proper tipping etiquette and way to pay in whatever country you are visiting. Tipping is not expected in many countries, and in some countries like Japan, it can be insulting. Also, in some countries, such as France, splitting the bill is considered to be unsophisticated. And know ahead of time if the restaurant you're going to accepts credit cards.

In parts of Africa and Asia, the only way to pay at many restaurants is to use the local currency, and being cashless can make for an uncomfortable ending to your meal.

(Source: The New York Times)

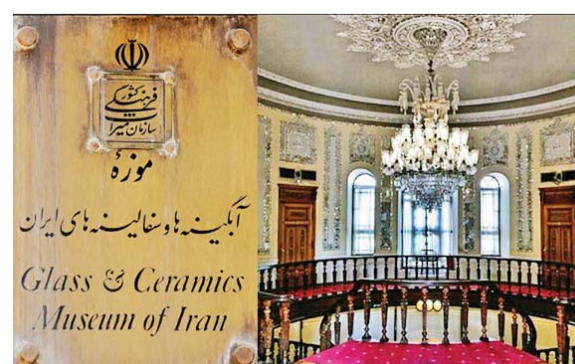
A peek into Glass & Ceramic Museum of Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN A photo collection depicts interior and exterior views of the Glass and Ceramic Museum of Iran in downtown Tehran as well as some objects it puts on display for art lovers.

Also known as Abgineh Museum, it offers visitors a wide range of glasswork, brickwork, plasterwork, mirrorwork as well as inlaid artworks that date from the 2nd millennium BC to the modern day, all housed within an elegant Qajar-era edifice.

The two-story octagonal structure itself retains a lot of charm as seamlessly blends genuine Iranian architecture with the 19th-century European motifs.

It was originally constructed upon the orders of the 20th-century politician Ahmad Qavam better known as Qavam-ol-Saltaneh for his personal lodging. It is situated a short walk northward of the National Museum of Iran on Si-e Tir St.



The Boring Company is building their ultra-high speed hyperloop

The Hyperloop's story is going full circle, returning to the man who first encouraged the idea: Elon Musk. Four years after releasing the white paper that started the modern Hyperloop frenzy, the entrepreneur and innovator has confirmed that his Boring Company is working on their own version of the high-speed transport system.

This is a bit of a surprise as for four years, the CEO had been encouraging others to pursue the technology through various initiatives. These included a competition run by SpaceX, which previously noted on their website that they won't be developing a Hyperloop themselves — a message that disappeared this year.

The news isn't entirely unexpected, though, as clues that Musk was working on a Hyperloop have been surfacing recently. The first was the Boring Company's website, which stated that the electric skates that would run through their tunnels could easily be transformed to support a Hyperloop by adding a vacuum shell. Then Musk announced via Twitter in July that he'd received "verbal permission" for a DC to New York Hyperloop.

Now, both Bloomberg and WIRED say they've received confirmation from sources close to Musk that he plans to



pursue a Boring Company Hyperloop.

Fast-to-dig tunnels

At the "Boring Company, we plan to build low cost, fast-to-dig tunnels that will house new high-speed transportation systems," a Boring Company spokesperson told WIRED. "Most will be standard pressurized tunnels with electric skates going 125+ mph. For long distance routes in straight lines, such as NY to DC, it will make sense to use pressurized pods

in a depressurized tunnel to allow speeds up to approximately 600+ mph (aka Hyperloop)."

Thanks to Musk, who first spoke about the Hyperloop back in 2012, a number of companies both in the U.S. and abroad have spent the past several years working to build Hyperloop systems. Notable among these is Hyperloop One, which is already testing their system in Nevada and has plans

to build an entire Hyperloop network in Dubai. Others are planning to bring these futuristic transportation pods to Europe and Asia.

Considerable attention

All these efforts have received considerable attention and financial support thanks in part to Musk's encouragement. Now, some are anxious that the Boring Company CEO might snuff out the competition.

"You would at least have wanted Musk to say, 'OK guys, how can we do this together?' or 'How can I help?', rather than saying 'Hey, I'm just gonna do it, thank you for making this known worldwide even more than it was before and showing the progress and making sure that people believe in it,'" Dirk Ahlborn, Hyperloop Transportation Technologies' CEO, told WIRED.

Perhaps Musk found that other Hyperloop plans weren't moving fast enough. "He said at the time [he released his white paper] that he would only seek to commercialize Hyperloop if after a few years other companies were not moving quickly enough," a Boring Company spokesperson said in a statement, according to WIRED.

(Source: Futurism)

Researchers discover potentially harmful nanoparticles produced through burning coal

Environmental scientists led by the Virginia Tech College of Science have discovered that the burning of coal produces incredibly small particles of a highly unusual form of titanium oxide.

When inhaled, these nanoparticles can enter the lungs and potentially the bloodstream.

The particulates -- known as titanium suboxide nanoparticles -- are unintentionally produced as coal is burned, creating these tiniest of particles, as small as 100 millionths of a meter, said the Virginia Tech-led team. When the particles are introduced into the air -- unless captured by high-tech particle traps -- they can float away from power plant stacks and travel on air currents locally, regionally, and even globally.

As an example of this, these nanoparticles were found on city streets, sidewalks, and in standing water in Shanghai, China.

The findings are published in the latest issue of Nature Communications under team leader Michael F. Hochella Jr., University Distinguished Professor of Geosciences with the College of Science, and Yi Yang, a professor at East China Normal University in Shanghai. Other study participants include Duke University, the University of Kentucky, and Laurentian University in Canada.

No easy or practical way

The "problem with these nanoparticles is that there is no easy or practical way to prevent their formation during coal burning," Hochella said, adding that in nations with strong environmental regulations, such as the United States, most of the nanoparticles would be caught by particle traps. Not so in Africa, China, or India, where regulations are lax or nonexistent, with coal ash and smoke entering the open air.

"Due to advanced technology used at U.S.-based coal burning power plants, mandated by the Clean Air Act and the Environmental Protection Agency, most of these nanoparticles and other tiny particles are removed before the final emission of the plant's exhaust gases," Hochella said. "But in countries where the particles from the coal burning are not nearly so efficiently removed, or removed at all, these titanium suboxide nanoparticles and many other particle types are emitted into the atmosphere, in part resulting in hazy skies that plague many countries, especially in China and India."

Hochella and his team found these previously unknown nanoparticles not only in coal ash from around the world and in the gaseous waste emissions of coal



plants, but on city streets, in soils and storm water ponds, and at wastewater treatment plants.

"I could not believe what I have found at the beginning, because they had been reported so extremely rarely in the natural environment," said Yang, who once worked as a visiting professor in Virginia Tech's Department of Geosciences with Hochella. "It took me several months to confirm their occurrence in coal ash samples."

(Source: eurekalert.org)

How the biggest dinosaur to walk the Earth came to be so huge

The biggest dinosaur to ever live was discovered in Argentina in 2013. Now, scientists have officially named the 70-ton, 120-foot-long species Patagotitan mayorum, and have discovered it belonged to a group of extra-large titanosaurs that lived around 100 million years ago.

P. mayorum was discovered by a shepherd on the La Flecha Farm in the Chubut Province in the Argentinian desert. He had noticed the tip of a huge fossil bone

sticking out of a rock. As excavation work began, experts soon realized they had found a huge new species of dinosaur. The femur, measuring 7.8 feet in length, was the biggest ever found.

Eventually, over 200 bones were uncovered, allowing scientists to reconstruct this giant to get an accurate representation of what it would be like. Their analysis revealed it to be the biggest vertebrate to ever walk the Earth — measuring 121

feet in length and 46 feet in height.

The new dinosaur

Four years on, paleontologists have now published a description of P. mayorum in the Royal Society's Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences. Tipping the scales at an estimated 69 tons, with a maximum weight of 77 tons, the new dinosaur was found to be about 10 percent bigger than Argentinosaurus, the previous record-holder.

The team's analysis also showed that P. mayorum belonged to a specific group of titanosaurs that had grown to be exceptionally large. This group, which includes Patagotitan and Argentinosaurus, was found to be endemic to Patagonia during the middle of the Early Cretaceous period. With titanosaurs having a huge variation in body size, the discovery helps fill in evolutionary gaps relating to the lineage.

(Source: The Newsweek)

Health Envoy to Be Launched in Embassies: Majlis Social Commission Deputy

Health envoy will be set up in the embassies.

Chairman of Majlis Social Commission Abdol-Reza Azizi announced the above statement and said: "Launching health centers at embassies is necessary in order to attract health tourist in cooperation with the concerned companies."

It should be noted that the inaugural ceremony of Medical Tourism Plan, affiliated to the Social Security Organization (SSO), was held in Tehran's HOMA Hotel on Aug. 8 in the presence of Minister of Labor, Coop-



eratives and Social Welfare Ali Rabi'ei representatives of 37 countries in the world and activists in the field of health tourism.

There are many potentials and capacities in Iran to attract patients from different countries, he maintained.

In the end, Chairman of Majlis Social Commission Abdol-Reza Azizi once again pointed to the significance of setting up health tourism in Iran, because, it will be in favor of both Iranian and foreign tourists.

BMI's Financial Turnover in Post-Sanctions Era at €20b

Indexes of international operations of Bank Melli Iran in post-sanctions era is on the verge of growth with the considerable rate in post-sanctions era, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Given the above issue, internation-

al currency activities of the bank faced many restrictions during sanctions period, he said, adding: "But today, situation is completely different."

It should be noted that Bank Melli Iran has established direct and indirect relationship with 32 and 150 foreign

brokers respectively, he said, adding: "Talks are underway with a number of 180 foreign brokers."

General speaking, it can be said that Bank Melli Iran has exchanged more than 145,000 SWIFT messages in post-sanctions era, so that total financial

turnover of the bank in this period exceeds €20 billion.

It should be noted that Bank Melli Iran (BMI) is after conclusion of financing contracts for the projects that are going to be finalized in the country.

Bank Shahr Still Backs Development of Urban Projects in Country Wholeheartedly

With the all-around support of Bank Shahr, construction operation of Tehran Metro (Subway) Line No. 8, reaching to Imam Khomeini Intl. Airport (IKA), was completed and will be used available to the dear fellow countrymen and international trips, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

This significant subway line was inaugurated in a glorious ceremony in the presence of Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, mayor of Tehran Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf and Chief Executive of Tehran Urban and Suburban Railway Company.

Ali Larijani Majlis Speaker was the first speaker who pointed to the measures taken in the field of development of the capital Tehran and said: "Giant steps were taken for the development of urban projects in the country which are appreciable."

He expressed his special thanks to the unflinching activities of those people who cooperated and collaborated in order to launch this important project.

Chief Executive of Bank Shahr Hossein Mohammad Pourzarandi was the next speaker in this ceremony who said: "Bank Shahr is the helping arm of urban management in the country."

Many important urban projects such as rail transport in metropolises and mega cities, were not implemented due to the lack of financial resources, he said, adding: "In the last few years, we have been trying to support the municipalities as a helping arm of the urban management."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he reiterated: "qualitative

increase of life of citizens and fellow countrymen is the main objectives of this bank. Undoubtedly, supports from the development of railways and public transportation will be continued in the country."

Backing and supporting metro (subway) lines in Tehran and other metropolises should be put atop agenda, he said, adding: "As the main sponsor for the development of rail lines and public transportation, Bank Shahr will play an active role in financing this sector."

In the end, Chief Executive of Bank Shahr Hossein Mohammad Pourzarandi reiterated: "Fortunately, construction operation of Tehran Metro (Subway) Line No. 8 was put into operation in cooperation with the functionaries of this bank."

Scientists build a battery you can power with your spit

You're stranded in the middle of nowhere, phone battery dead. Lacking all access to electricity or even solar power, you turn to your last resource — your own spit. That's the dream of researchers at Binghamton University in upstate New York, who have developed a battery that can be powered by saliva.

The development is the next step in microbial fuel cells (MFCs), which drive electrical currents through bacteria. Binghamton Electrical and Computer Science Assistant Professor Seokheun Choi has been focused on creating small power sources for healthcare devices in rural regions which might not have the constant supply of electricity that urban areas do.

"On-demand micro-power generation is required especially for point-of-care diagnostic applications in developing countries," says Choi in a press statement. "Typically, those applications require only several tens of microwatt-level power for several minutes, but commercial batteries or other energy harvesting technologies are too expensive and over-qualified. Also, they pose environmental pollution issues."

The new bacteria-powered batteries are paper-based. They build MFCs with inactive, freeze-dried cells that have the ability to send electricity outside of their cell walls, which are referred to as exoelectrogenic. These exoelectrogenic cells are made wet through saliva, which wakes up their ability to generate power within minutes.

The next step for Choi's spit-powered battery, developed with research assistant Maedeh Mohammadifar, is to improve its power density, getting more wattage per square inch. That'll be an important step towards real-world applications.

"Now, our power density is about a few microwatts per centimeter square. Although 16 microbial fuel cells connected in a series on a single sheet of paper generated desired values of electrical current and voltage to power a light-emitting diode (LED), further power improvement is required for other electronic applications demanding hundreds of milliwatts of energy," says Choi.

(Source: Popular Mechanics)

Dutch students grow their own biodegradable car

What's made of sugar, can carry four people and travel at 50 miles (80 km) per hour? A biodegradable car, whose inventors say could be the next step in environmentally friendly motoring.



The lightweight electric car, created by students in the Netherlands, is made of a resin derived from sugar beets and covered with sheets of Dutch-grown flax.

"Only the wheels and suspension systems are not yet of bio-based materials," said Yanic van Riel, one of the developers from the TU/Ecomotive team at the Eindhoven University of Technology.

The structure of the car they have called Lina has a similar strength-weight ratio to that of fiberglass and weighs only 310 kg (about 684 pounds).

But the prototype has not yet passed crash tests, because the material "will not bend like metal, but break", said the team's leader Noud van de Gevel.

Demands to reduce air pollution and tackle climate change have pushed auto companies towards alternative designs, but most are still require a great deal of energy to make.

"Energy that is saved while driving the car is now spent during the production phase," van de Gevel said.

The TU/Ecomotive team plans to test drive Lina later this year, once given the green light by the Netherlands Vehicle Authority.

(Source: Reuters)

Prairie-chicken nests appear unaffected by wind energy facility

Wind energy development in the Great Plains is increasing, spurring concern about its potential effects on grassland birds, the most rapidly declining avian group in North America. However, a new study from The Condor: Ornithological Applications suggests that for one grassland bird species of concern -- the Greater Prairie-Chicken -- wind energy infrastructure has little to no effect on nesting. Instead, roads and livestock grazing remain the most significant threats to its successful reproduction.

Prairie-chickens are thought to avoid tall structures such as wind turbines because they provide a perch from which raptors can hunt. To learn more, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Jocelyn Olney Harrison and her colleagues gathered data on the effects of an existing small wind energy facility (36 turbines) in Nebraska. They captured 78 female prairie-chickens at breeding sites, or leks, ranging from less than a kilometer from the wind energy facility to more than twenty kilometers away, and fitted the birds with transmitters to track them to their nests.

Monitoring their nesting success and collecting data on the habitat characteristics of each nest site, they found little evidence that the wind energy facility affected nest site selection or a nest's chances of survival.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Palm oil blobs cover Hong Kong beaches after sea crash

Cleanup efforts are underway in Hong Kong after white blobs of congealed palm oil washed up on the city's shores following a collision between two ships.

Authorities have closed more than a dozen beaches, including two on Tuesday, since the spill was reported over the weekend, though the government says the substance isn't dangerous.



Marine officials say the ships collided in the Pearl River Delta estuary southwest of Hong Kong on Thursday, but Hong Kong authorities were not notified by their counterparts in mainland China until two days later.

The congealed palm oil resembles clumps of snow or pieces of Styrofoam and has a consistency similar to Play-Doh. It has been spotted blanketing Hong Kong beaches and floating in the water.

Cleanup crews had collected more than 50 metric tons of the stuff by Monday, and filled 110 garbage bags with it on just one beach on Lamma Island, the government said. It has deployed helicopters and nine ships to help find and collect the waste while workers at public beaches are using absorbent blankets and strips to contain the mess.

Palm oil is commonly used in food packaging and cosmetics. Environment Undersecretary Tse Chin-wan told reporters that it is nontoxic and that there has been no sign of widespread impact on marine life. Tse said that no more than 1,000 metric tons leaked from the stricken ship.

Environmentalists worry about the harm the substance could pose to Hong Kong's already polluted waters, and to fish and other animals that eat large amounts of it.

Hong Kong is made up of a peninsula attached to mainland China's southern coast as well as about 260 islands, many of them small and uninhabited.

(Source: Associated Press)

LEARN ENGLISH Daily Life - New Guy in Town

A: Oh, I don't know if you heard, but someone moved into that old house down the road.

B: Yeah, I know. I met the owner of the house yesterday as he was moving in. His name is Armand.

A: Really? What's he like? You have to fill me in.

B: Actually, he's a bit strange. I don't know... I've got a bad feeling about him.

A: Really? Why?

B: Well, yesterday I brought over a housewarming gift, but Armand started acting really weird, and then he practically kicked me out! I tried to, sort of, peek into his house, but everything was so dark inside that I couldn't really get a good look.

A: Well, you'll never guess what I saw this morning. A delivery truck pulled into his driveway, and it dropped off a long, rectangular box. It almost looked like a coffin!

B: You see! Why would he...

C: Hello ladies...

B: Ah, Armand! You scared the heck out of me! This is my friend Doris.

C: A pleasure to meet you...If you are not doing anything tonight, I would like to have you both for dinner. I mean... I would like to have you both over for dinner.

Key Vocabulary

I don't know if you heard: phrase used to introduce a piece of information

fill me in: tell me about it

a bad feeling: a sense or feeling that something bad is going to happen

weird: strange, unusual

kick out: make or force someone leave when they don't want to

you'll never guess: phrase used to introduce a piece of news

scare the heck out of me: cause someone to feel a lot of fear

Supplementary Vocabulary

bizarre: strange or unusual

creepy: strange or scary, causing people to feel nervous and afraid

vampire: a dead person who drinks the blood of living people

guess what: phrase used to introduce an interesting or surprising piece of information

(Source: irlanguage.ir)

Official reveals main reasons for Iran water crisis

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — The **d e s k** current water crisis in Iran is resulted from some specific reasons which are rooted in population growth and mismanagement, said the deputy energy minister for water resources planning.

The irregular population growth in Iran is one of the main reasons for substandard water consumption in the country, Hedayat Fahmi noted.

He named lack of efficient irrigation methods in agriculture and consumption patterns in industry as other reasons which contributed to the water crisis.

One cannot disregard climate change and economic approach toward water management as well, he said.

The money people pay for water consumption is far less than the expenses government pays for providing water, he explained.

He also pointed to deficiencies in water management and utilization system as main reasons for water



shortage in the country.

Drying lakes and rivers, declining groundwater resources, land subsidence, water contamination and rationing, agricultural losses, salt and sand storms, and ecosystem damages are reaching

alarming levels in Iran.

Recently, head of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Majlis (Iranian parliament) has warned of the severe outcomes of water shortage in the country which is

believed to pose a threat to the national security.

Some 63 percent of the country's population inhabit the central plateau which is a big but arid and semi-arid area.

He said this uneven distribution of the population is a product of the flawed policies of the past 60 years and now "we are obliged to transfer water to these densely populated districts."

As forecasted by Iran Meteorological Organization the temperature is expected to rise 0.5 to 1.5 centigrade in the [Iranian Calendar] months of Tir, Mordad and Shahrivar falling on (June 22 to September 22) which would certainly result in high water consumption.

With the beginning of the summer and concurrent with national water saving week in Iran (June 22-28) the consumers are presented with water management and efficiency techniques for 10 percent reduction in drinking water consumption.

August 9: International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

There are an estimated 370 million indigenous people in the world, living across 90 countries. They make up less than 5 per cent of the world's population, but account for 15 percent of the poorest. They speak an overwhelming majority of the world's estimated 7,000 languages and represent 5,000 different cultures.

Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples.

Indigenous peoples have sought recognition of their

identities, way of life and their right to traditional lands, territories and natural resources for years, yet throughout history their rights have always been violated. Indigenous peoples today, are arguably among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people in the world. The international community now recognizes that special measures are required to protect their rights and maintain their distinct cultures and way of life.

2017 Theme: 10th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Ten years ago, on 13 September 2007, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a major milestone with respect to the cooperation and solidarity between indigenous peoples and Member States.

The Declaration is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of indigenous peoples. It embodies global consensus on the rights of indigenous peoples and establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for their survival, dignity and well-being. It elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms, as they apply to the specific situation of indigenous peoples.

Over the last decade, the implementation of the Declaration has achieved some major successes in at the national, regional and international levels. Despite the achievements, there continues to be a gap between the formal recognition of indigenous peoples and the implementation of policies on the ground.

(Source: un.org)

How to look and feel healthier in one week

Didn't hit your fitness and diet goals in time for summer? Don't fret.

There are still plenty of things you can start doing now to look and feel healthier.

Do: drink lots of water

Water is essential — it regulates the shape of every cell inside our bodies. If we don't get enough, in fact, these cells begin to shrivel up. The CDC recommends choosing water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages to "help with weight management." Swapping a cold glass of H₂O for a single 20-ounce soda will save you about 240 calories.

Don't: go on a juice cleanse

If you're considering a "detox" or "juice cleanse," you might want to reconsider. Drinking just water, juice, or any other liquefied concoction for more than a few days can set you up for unhealthy eating behaviors, and can often lead to spikes and drops in blood sugar levels, which can spawn cravings and mood swings.

Do: cut back on sodium

Not drowning your sushi in soy sauce can be a good start. Most of us, according to the CDC — eat too much sodium, and that's not including any salt added at the table. Too much salt in your diet can cause puffiness and bloating, so cutting back can help you avoid that.

Don't: start banning foods

There's a difference between cutting back on things you eat in excess and banning certain food groups entirely. Diets that rely on avoiding ingredients (like sugar or gluten) can lead to replacing those things with other



ingredients that play the same role in the body (like honey or corn-based foods).

Do: fill up with fiber

Writer Michael Pollan said it best: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

Fresh, high-fiber vegetables like broccoli, bell peppers, and brussels sprouts — which the CDC calls "powerhouse foods" — are a great source of key vitamins and nutrients, including fiber, which helps keep you feeling

full and satisfied until your next meal.

Don't: rely on powders and pills

The problem with diet powders and pills, Bellatti says, is that they often take something that was once a whole food, like a fruit or a vegetable, then process it to separate out one ingredient. That's alright for things like cocoa powder, which does have nutrients, but it shouldn't make up the bulk of your dietary intake.

Do: be mindful of portion sizes

The baseline portion sizes of our snacks and meals have ballooned over the last 40 years — even the plates and cups we serve them on have gotten noticeably bigger.

Don't: focus exclusively on calories

Focusing too much on calories can be dangerous, too, since the measurement falsely makes it seem like a calorie of one food is exactly the same as that of another.

Plus, keep in mind that for sustained weight loss, you're only supposed to lose about 1-3 pounds each week.

Do: think positive

Thinking positively about eating and feeling better can help motivate some people to stick to a new lifestyle.

Don't: expect miracles

Let's be real: Eating right for a week isn't going to counteract decades of subsisting on fries and Frappuccinos. But it is enough to reduce some of the more irritating aspects of those symptoms, like the bloating linked with a high-salt diet, and the fatigue associated with blood sugar crashes.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iran's 50th nature school inaugurated

The 50th nature school across Iran was inaugurated at Tehran's Pardisan Park on Tuesday.

"The increase of urbanization and industrialization leads to several mental and physical injuries and diseases including depression and unhappiness in people especially children," the chief of the Department of Environment Masoumeh Ebtekar said during the inauguration ceremony.

She referred to the creation of nature schools as a way to promote the feeling of happiness among people living in urban areas.

Mahmoud Darvish, an official at the Department of Environment, said for his part that children aging 3 to 12 can enroll in the schools.

The creation and expansion of nature schools is in line with the 20-year national development plan (ending in 2025) with the goal of creating about 1.5 million job opportunities in the country, he added.

افتتاح پنجاهمین مدرسه طبیعت

به گزارش ایستنا، معصومه ابتکار - معاون رئیس جمهور و رئیس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست- در مراسم افتتاح مدرسه طبیعت پردیسان در پارک پردیسان ضمن تاکید بر ضرورت رشد مدارس طبیعت در کشور، گفت: شتاب شهرنشینی و صنعتی شدن زندگی منجر به ایجاد معضلات مختلف جسمی و روحی به ویژه در کودکان شده است. محمد درویش - مدیر کل دفتر مشارکتهای سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست- در مراسم افتتاح این مدرسه طبیعت با ابراز خرسندی از آغاز به کار پنجاهمین مدرسه طبیعت در کشور گفت: بدون شک مدارس طبیعت با پشتوانه و حمایت رئیس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست ایجاد شد و توسعه پیدا کرد و قطعاً این موج و گام مهم و بزرگ در آینده نیز تداوم خواهد داشت. مدیر کل دفتر مشارکتهای سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست با بیان اینکه مدارس طبیعت رده سنی ۳ تا ۱۲ سال را پوشش می دهد، خاطر نشان کرد: تاسیس و توسعه مدارس طبیعت در راستای سند چشم انداز ۲۰ ساله کشور است و می تواند منجر به ایجاد یک میلیون و نیم شغل در کشور شود.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Walls have ears

Explanation: Be careful. People could be listening.
For example: Why don't we go and talk about this somewhere quieter? Walls have ears, you know.

PHRASAL VERB

Work over

Meaning: assault, beat up
Example: They worked him over and robbed him

ENGLISH IDIOM

Walk of life

Explanation: a person's profession or position in society is known as their walk of life
For example: There were people from all walks of life among the protesters

Yemen's governing body urges active EU role in conflict resolution efforts

Yemen's Supreme Political Council, which runs state affairs, has voiced its readiness to support any measure aimed at resolving the deadly conflict in the impoverished state, calling on the European Union (EU) to play an active role in the process.

Saleh Ali al-Sammad, the Council's head, made the remarks in a meeting on Tuesday with Antonia Calvo Puerta, the head of the EU delegation to Yemen, the official Saba' Net news agency reported.

Sammad expressed hope that the EU would draw the world's attention to the sufferings of the Yemeni people, citing the bloc's influence on the United Nations' Security Council member states.

The UN should play a positive and constructive role to settle the Yemen crisis regardless of any pressure to do otherwise, he added.

The Yemeni official also urged the EU to make efforts to alleviate the plight of the Yemenis, especially those residing in the country's southern provinces, where the terrorist groups of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) and al-Qaeda are active.

Sana'a has also called on the International Committee of the Red Cross to monitor the conditions of the Saudi prisons, where Yemenis are being held, Sammad pointed out.

Puerta, for her part, stressed that the EU pursues a political solution to the Yemen crisis rather than a military one, underlining the need to resume talks between the countries' opposite sides.

She further expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

The EU official also hailed Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement and the General People's Congress party for backing the dialogue process.

■ Al-Qaeda-linked terrorists kill 8 Saudi-backed militants in southern Yemen

Meantime, at least eight Saudi regime-backed militants, loyal to Yemen's former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, have been killed and nearly 30 others sustained injuries after a group of terrorists attempted to storm their military camp in southern Yemen.



The incident occurred in Juhayn district of the town of Loder in Abyan province on Tuesday, when assailants, suspected to be members of the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) Takfiri terrorist outfit, attempted to drive an explosives-laden vehicle, supported by gunfire of a group of terrorists, into a newly established position by Hadi's militiamen in the town.

Hadi's forces managed to bar the vehicle and the gunmen who accompanied it from entering the base but the huge explosion and the exchange of fire between the two sides not only killed eight militiamen but also slew at least six Takfiri terrorists, including the driver of the vehicle.

AQAP as well as the ISIL terrorist group have exploited more than two years of Saudi regime's war against the Yemeni nation, trying to deepen their influence in the impoverished country by launching bombings and shooting attacks.

Hadi, who initially fled the country to Riyadh, managed to capture Aden in July 2015 with the military help of the regime in Riyadh after it fell in the hands of Ansarullah in September 2014.

Since then, Hadi, along with his supporters and militiamen, have turned the port city into their base, calling it the country's temporary capital, and have gone hand-in-hand with the Saudi regime war machine against the nation,

trying to take control of more regions in the country.

Over the past two years, Ansarullah have been running state affairs and defending Yemeni people against the House of Saud regime campaign.

■ Lack of funding may force Yemen to shut down national blood bank

Elsewhere, Yemen's national blood bank may be forced to close due to a lack of funds as the impoverished country continues to suffer from a deadly military aggression by the House of Saud regime.

Yemen's National Blood Transfusion Center director, Dr. Adnan al-Hakimi, said on Tuesday that the crisis emerged after an international medical charity decided to end two years of its support.

"The center suffers from a complete shortage of supplies, including medical solutions, blood bags and medical needs," Hakimi said, adding, "We have issued an appeal to all civil society groups, businessmen and anyone interested in charity work to save the lives of those who are ill, injured or wounded so the center would not stop."

The remarks come as the Doctors Without Borders organization, also known by its French acronym MSF, informed the bank it was suspending its aid after more than two years of work.

MSF had been doing extensive work in Yemen since the Saudi military invasion

began in 2015, operating hospitals and clinics and providing medical supplies to various facilities.

In a report in January, the international charity said it had been providing regular blood testing kits to the blood bank since September 2015.

Munir al-Zubaidi, a spokesman for the bank, said that patients suffering various diseases, including thalassemia, cancer and kidney failures, as well as victims of the conflict stand to suffer if the bank closed down. "If the center stops, a catastrophe will hit the whole country."

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) said it was trying to help by sending further supplies.

Tarik Jasarevic, a WHO spokesman, has confirmed that the bank was at risk of closing.

"WHO is looking into ways to support the National Blood Transfusion Center," the UN health agency's spokesman said, adding, "Supplies were ordered but have not reached Yemen as of now."

Yemen has been torn by the ongoing House of Saud regime's military aggression that has destroyed much of the country's infrastructure, including its health system.

The developments also come as the country of 27 million has also been struggling to cope with cholera. The epidemic has already affected some 600,000 people and killed nearly 2,000.

Saudi regime has been incessantly pounding Yemen since March 2015 in an attempt to reinstate former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh, and to undermine the Ansarullah movement. The Riyadh regime has, however, failed to reach its goals despite suffering great expenses.

The protracted war, which has been accompanied by a naval and aerial blockade, has already killed over 12,000 Yemenis, with the United States and Britain providing the bulk of weapons used by Saudi forces and giving coordinates for the airstrikes.

The Saudi-led offensive has also taken a heavy toll on Yemen's infrastructure and led to a humanitarian crisis.

(Source: Press TV)

Brazil's Temer demands removal of top prosecutor

Lawyers defending Brazilian President Michel Temer against corruption allegations asked the Supreme Court on Tuesday to remove the prosecutor general from the investigation, arguing he is no longer fit to lead it.

In a filing to the top court, Temer's lawyers said Brazil's top federal prosecutor Rodrigo Janot, who has charged the president with taking bribes and has said more charges are imminent, was acting "beyond his constitutional limits".

"We are not, it has become clear, confronting mere institutional action," Temer's lawyers wrote in the document seen by Reuters news agency. "Everything indicates that the motivation is personal."

Janot's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The request will be decided by Supreme Court Justice Luiz Edson Fachin, the judge in charge of a massive investigation into political kickbacks. Legal experts said it was unlikely he would agree to remove Janot in the middle of the biggest corruption investigation in Brazilian history.

Temer, the first sitting Brazilian president to face formal corruption charges, got some relief last week when the lower house of congress voted to block a bribery charge filed by Janot.

But Temer's opponents hope a second or even third charge from Janot could be based on more solid evidence of Temer's links to political bribes. That could push legislators to vote against protecting Temer from a trial as they worry about voters turning on them in next year's elections.

Under Brazil's constitution, any criminal charges levelled against a president must be approved by two-thirds of the lower house, and only then can the Supreme Court decide whether to put a leader on trial.

Temer was charged in June in connection with a graft scheme involving the world's largest meatpacker, JBS SA. Executives said in plea-bargain testimony the president took bribes for resolving tax disputes, freeing up loans from state-run banks and other matters.

Janot alleged that Temer arranged to eventually receive a total of 38 million reais (reals) (\$12.14m) from JBS in the coming nine months.

The prosecutor has said on several occasions that he is likely to soon file obstruction of justice and racketeering charges against Temer.

The case against the president is part of an unprecedented anti-corruption push that Brazil's federal police, prosecutors and some judges have pursued for over three years.



Investigators have uncovered stunning levels of graft engulfing Brazil's political and business elites. Much of it centers on companies paying billions of dollars in bribes to politicians and executives at state-run enterprises in return for lucrative contracts.

Temer and one-third of his cabinet, as well as four former presidents and dozens of politicians, are under investigation or already charged.

More than 100 people have been convicted, including former President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva, who is free pending appeal.

(Source: agencies)

UN: Venezuela uses 'excessive force to crush dissent'

The United Nations has criticized Venezuela's "widespread and systematic use of excessive force and arbitrary detentions" against protesters, amid worsening tensions and fresh moves against the opposition.

The UN's human rights office based in Switzerland on Tuesday highlighted witness accounts of police and soldiers using "disproportionate force to instill fear, crush dissent, and to prevent demonstrators from assembling, rallying and reaching public institutions to present petitions".

The team's analysis found security forces were allegedly responsible for at least 46 deaths, and pro-government armed groups were allegedly responsible for 27 among 124 deaths being investigated in connection with demonstrations against President Nicolas Maduro's government.

The protests have stemmed from anger over the installation of an all-powerful Constituent Assembly that they see as a power grab by Maduro.

The dire economic situation also has stirred deep bitterness as people struggle with skyrocketing inflation and shortages of food and medicine.

On Tuesday, the Constituent Assem-



bly, which does not include opposition supporters due to their boycott, convened in the same building as the opposition-controlled National Assembly and decreed itself superior to all other government institutions.

The building was taken over late on Monday with the help of soldiers led by Delcy Rodriguez, the head of the pro-Maduro assembly and former foreign minister.

The opposition legislators sought to enter the building but they were not allowed, sharpening tensions between the rival bodies.

Also on Tuesday, the country's supreme court sentenced a prominent opposition mayor in the middle of the night to 15 months in prison and stripped him of his right to hold political office.

Ramon Muchacho, the mayor of the upscale Caracas municipality of Chacao, was one of a group of opposition mayors

who had been threatened with arrest for failing to prevent street protests in their jurisdictions.

Muchacho's whereabouts were not immediately known, but he denounced the ruling on Twitter, saying that "all of the weight of the revolutionary injustice has fallen on my shoulders" for doing his job to guarantee the constitutional right to protest.

The July 30 election of the Constituent Assembly was marred by street violence, in which 10 people died, and charges of fraud brought by Britain-based company that supplied the polling technology.

Four months of street protests, accompanied by violent clashes with security forces, have left nearly 130 people dead.

Major Latin American nations have rejected the legitimacy of the Constituent Assembly, and South American nations have indefinitely suspended Venezuela from the Mercosur trading bloc for breaking "democratic order".

Foreign ministers of 16 Latin American and Caribbean nations, as well as Canada, met in Peru on Tuesday to evaluate further measures.

(Source: agencies)

U.S. accountable for fatal raid on Popular Mobilization Units forces: senior commander

➔ He rejected claims that the U.S. attack could have been carried out by mistake, saying drones perform ceaseless surveillance operations over the area giving the U.S. forces perfect command over the situation.

Al-Wellalei called Operation Inherent Resolve, the code-name for the U.S.-led offensives, a sham, saying the mission was rather providing air cover for Takfiris on the Iraqi-Syrian border.

Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said on Tuesday that an initial investigation indicates ISIL had been behind the attack.

"It seems that ISIL carried out a breach using artillery and car bombs," Abadi said in a televised press conference in Baghdad.

"The international coalition has no authority to carry out bombardment without the knowledge of Iraq," the premier said.

Hashd al-Sha'abi is a group of Shia and Sunni volunteer fighters that was formed after the emergence of ISIL in Iraq in 2014. Back then, it helped strengthen the government forces, which had suffered heavy setbacks in the face of sweeping ISIL advances.

Hashd al-Sha'abi also played a significant part in the months-long operations that culminated in the liberation of Mosul, the terror group's last urban stronghold in Iraq, earlier this year.

Last November, the Iraqi parliament recognized Hashd al-Sha'abi as an official force with similar rights as those of the regular army.

(Source: Press TV)

Four Egyptian police killed in attack on patrol car

Four Egyptian policemen have been killed in a shooting attack on a patrol car in the Sinai Peninsula.

State newspaper Al-Ahram reported that gunmen opened fire on the vehicle in the city of el-Arish, the capital of North Sinai Province, on Wednesday.

In July, Egypt was hit by one of the worst attacks on its security forces in years. Nearly two dozen soldiers were killed and 26 more wounded in two bombings claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group, which targeted security checkpoints south of the city of Rafah in northern Sinai on the seventh day of that month.

The Sinai Peninsula has been under a state of emergency since October 2014, after a deadly terrorist attack killed 33 Egyptian soldiers.

Over the past years, militants have been carrying out anti-government activities and fatal attacks, taking advantage of the turmoil caused in Egypt after the democratically-elected president, Mohamed Morsi, was ousted in a coup in July 2013.

The Velayat Sinai militant group, which is an affiliate of ISIL, has claimed responsibility for most of the assaults mainly targeting the army and police.

The Wednesday attack comes a day after two policemen were killed and one injured when a group of wanted criminals opened fire on security forces in a village north of the Egyptian capital, Cairo.

(Source: Press TV)

South Africa's opposition calls for dissolution of parliament

The opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) on Wednesday called for South Africa's parliament to be dissolved and a national election to be held, one day after its no-confidence motion in President Jacob Zuma was defeated.

Alliance leader Mmusi Maimane said the party would bring the motion to dissolve parliament to the assembly on Thursday and request that it be debated as soon as possible. Zuma, who has been dogged by accusations of corruption and mismanaging the economy, survived an attempt in parliament to force him from office on Tuesday. But he was left politically wounded after some members of his ruling African National Congress (ANC) party voted with the opposition.

Maimane told a news conference in Cape Town that the result showed the ANC was divided and the country needed "a new beginning".

"The ANC may have won in the no-confidence motion in parliament yesterday, but it has lost the confidence of the country," Maimane said.

"We believe the voters should now have the chance to express their opinion about the conduct of the ANC in defending Jacob Zuma. In short, we believe that parliament should be dissolved now so that the country can hold an early election."

Zuma's term as South Africa's president is due to run until 2019, when an election is scheduled.

It was not clear whether the motion would be allowed and parliamentary officials could not be reached for comment.

Wednesday is a public holiday in South Africa and government offices and financial markets were closed.

Zuma, who has held power since 2009, has now survived nine no-confidence votes despite a record in office marred by allegations of sleaze and influence-peddling. He hailed his win as a victory for the ANC.

(Source: Reuters)

Maradona says he is a 'soldier' for Venezuela's Maduro

With Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro facing criticism from around Latin America and the world amid a deepening political crisis, Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona said he was willing to fight for the embattled leftist regime.

«We are chavistas until death,» Maradona wrote on his official Facebook page on Monday night, using a term to refer to supporters of late former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.



«When Maduro orders, I am dressed as a soldier for a free Venezuela, to fight against the imperialism and those who want to take our flags, which is the most sacred thing we have.

«Long live the revolution!!!» he wrote in a post in English, Spanish and Italian.

The defiant declaration brought a quick response from Maradona's former team mate on the national side, Mario Kempes.

Kempes, who was top goalscorer when Argentina won the 1978 World Cup, called Maradona out on twitter.

«DiegoMaradona how can you support the death of 124 young people who defended liberty and democracy in their country,» Kempes, a commentator with ESPN, wrote.

The spat came just days after regional trade bloc Mercosur suspended Venezuela indefinitely, accusing Maduro of human rights violations and urging him to dismantle a newly created pro-government constituent assembly.

Maduro has lost allies around the region as several governments, including Argentina and Brazil, shifted to the right in recent years.

Maradona is well-known for supporting leftist politicians in Latin America and was a friend of late Cuban leader Fidel Castro, whose face is tattooed on his leg.

(Source: Reuters)

Mourinho hails Lukaku & Matic despite open goal miss, defensive blunders

Romelu Lukaku earned praise for his competitive Manchester United debut from Jose Mourinho, despite missing an open goal in Tuesday's 2-1 defeat to Real Madrid.

Zinedine Zidane's men claimed UEFA Super Cup glory in Skopje thanks to goals from Casemiro and Isco, with Lukaku netting just after the hour to reduce the deficit.

However, the £75million striker had blazed an earlier chance over the bar from inside the six-yard box, after Keylor Navas had saved from Paul Pogba.

Despite that miss potentially denying United a chance at taking the Champions League winners the distance, Mourinho was happy with his new number nine.

«He tried, and of course he missed his chance with an open goal but he scored his goal,» Mourinho told a news conference.

«He had a good fight against two good central defenders and I'm happy with his period and I'm happy with the way he fits into - I'm not tired to repeat - an amazing group.»

Alongside Lukaku, Victor Lindelof and Nemanja Matic made competitive debuts for United.

Matic afforded Dani Carvajal space to assist Casemiro's opener before the Serbian was beaten by a one-two between Isco and Gareth Bale for the Spaniard's clincher.

But Mourinho was nevertheless impressed with his former Chelsea charge: «I think he played really well, I think in the moment they were moving the ball well of course was difficult for us in the midfield.»

(Source: Goal)

Coutinho would have to force Barcelona move - Gerrard

Steven Gerrard has told BT Sport that Philippe Coutinho will have to create «war» if he is to leave Liverpool for Barcelona.

Barcelona believe they have reached a deal with Liverpool to buy Coutinho for an initial €90 million (£81.6m), while sources close to the player have told ESPN Brazil that the Brazil international has informed his club that he wants the move. However, sources had told ESPN FC earlier in the day that Liverpool remained determined to hold on to him, and club legend Gerrard — now working as academy coach at Anfield — said it would be up to the player to force a move.

«The good thing from the Liverpool fans' point of view is the manager is desperate to keep hold of him and is trying everything to keep hold of him,» he said in his role as a BT Sport pundit after the UEFA Super Cup.

«The owners want him to stay. This is not a situation where Liverpool need money or to cash in. We're not a selling club so they're gonna do everything in their power for him to stay.

«But at the end of the day it comes down to Philippe Coutinho and his decision and what he's prepared to do, what type of war he's prepared to create to get out, because Liverpool won't make it easy for him.»

Gerrard saw former Liverpool teammates Javier Mascherano and Luis Suarez move to Barcelona against the club's wishes during his time as a player and accepts it is an attractive move for Coutinho.

«It's very, very difficult,» he said. «Especially South American players who always go on record and say it's a dream of theirs to play for Barcelona.

Asked if he thought Coutinho would be playing for Liverpool or Barcelona after Aug. 31, Gerrard replied: «I pray it's Liverpool.»

(Source: ESPN)

4 things we learned from Manchester United's Super Cup defeat to Real Madrid

Manchester United were outclassed in the 2017 Uefa Super Final in Skopje. Real Madrid are not only the best not only the best team in Spain or Europe, but the entire world at the moment. Jose Mourinho sounded relieved after the game stating «We don't have Real Madrid in the Premier League.»

Of course, United are back in the Champions League and could draw Madrid, but Mourinho's comments would suggest that he is prioritising a Premier League title race after strengthening his squad this summer.

Real Madrid have not lost an international final since 2000, winning the last 10 in a row, including four Champions League finals, three Super Cups and two World Club Cups. That's an elite football club at its absolute peak, and while Zinedine Zidane may not get the same credit Pep Guardiola received whilst at Barcelona, the Frenchman is doing as good of a job, if not better.

1. Real Madrid played the perfect game

Los Blancos were dominant but United had some good spells. Zidane said after the game that the key was to control two or three aspects of the game like the second ball in or playing high balls, which the La Liga champions did very well.

They didn't allow United play and were much more clinical in possession of the ball. Madrid took their time and converted chances on goal at the right moment, whereas United were wasteful whenever big chances arose.

New signing Romelu Lukaku missed a sitter in front of goal before pulling one back in the second half to make it 2-1. Then, Marcus Rashford wasted a one-on-one with Keylor Navas which would have seen both sides level with just minutes to go.

That said, Gareth Bale should have had his name on the scoresheet but instead of placing his effort past an outstanding David de Gea, the Wales international drove his shot off the woodwork.



2. Isco... What a player

Formerly of Malaga, Isco was the man of the match. The Spain international found space on the pitch that did not appear to exist while pulling the strings which allowed Madrid cause problems in the final third.

The 25-year-old, once scouted by United, looked a much better fit than Bale if Mourinho was interested in strengthening further with the help of a Real Madrid player or two, but this is a player really growing into himself and it's not likely that Zidane will let him leave anytime soon.

From start to finish, the short and nimble midfielder was a torment. He single-handedly forced United to defend in numbers to retain possession.

3. Marouane Fellaini - Not pretty but influential

Fellaini was the man who helped change the complexion of the game and brought others into play, even contributing to Lukaku's goal by scrapping for a loose ball inside the Madrid box. The Belgian doesn't give up and Mourinho knows exactly what he's going to get when bringing him on.

Aged 29, Fellaini is never going to have the abilities showcased by Bryan Robson, Roy Keane or Paul Scholes at Old Trafford down the years, but he's not a player opposing teams like to face.

He took a painful blow after the goal and it took some time to patch up, which contributed to the seven minutes of stoppage time. Once he was on his feet again, Fellaini was back causing problems for Madrid — from his famous chest traps to confronting Zidane's players.

4. Anthony Martial may need to look elsewhere for regular football

«£50 million down the drain, as Tony Martial scores again...»

United fans may need to hold back on singing that chant for a while if Mourinho continues to overlook one of his most talented players.

Martial, who had an impressive pre-season tour during which he already caused Madrid problems, didn't even get a run out in the Super Cup final.

It became evident last season when Mourinho when publish praising Rashford that Martial had slipped down the pecking order at United just 12 months are bursting on the scene under former manager Louis van Gaal.

(Source: Independent)

Tiger Woods set for arraignment on DUI charge in Florida

Golfer Tiger Woods, arrested in May on a charge of driving under the influence after police found him asleep at the wheel of his Mercedes-Benz stopped on a Florida road, is due to be arraigned in the case on Wednesday.

Woods, 41, is unlikely to appear in court in Palm Beach Gardens after his lawyer waived the former world No. 1 golfer's appearance at pre-trial hearings.

Police found Woods on the side of a Palm Beach-area road at about 3 a.m. on May 29. He had «extremely slow and slurred speech» after being awakened by a Jupiter police officer but was cooperative and told officers he takes several prescriptions, including Xanax, according to a police report.

Woods, who had been heading away from his home on the exclusive Jupiter Island, could not remember where he was going and told police he was returning from Los Angeles.

A blood test showed he had the painkiller Vicodin and the antidepressant Xanax in his system, but no alcohol. He was charged with driving under the influence and improperly stopping his vehicle.

In a statement after his arrest, Woods apologized to fans and blamed the incident on prescription medication he was taking to manage pain from a recent back surgery.

In mid-June, Woods said he was receiving «professional help» to manage



his use of pain medications and a sleep disorder. The following month he announced he had completed an out-of-state program.

If convicted on the misdemeanor DUI charge, Woods could face up to six months in prison. He could also plead guilty to a lesser charge of reckless driving and enroll in a 12-month program that would let him avoid a DUI conviction.

Woods' lawyer, Douglas Duncan, did not respond to requests for comment ahead of Wednesday's hearing.

Woods has won 14 major golf championships, second only to Jack Nicklaus, but has hardly played during the past two years after undergoing multiple back surgeries.

(Source: Reuters)

Neymar's debut for Paris Saint-Germain could be delayed again

The wait to see the world's most expensive footballer playing in his new club colors could continue for longer than expected.

Neymar's debut for French club Paris Saint-Germain could face further delay as French football authorities are still awaiting clearance for him to play for the Parisian club following his world record \$263 million move from Barcelona last week.

France's Ligue 1 organizers, the LFP, told CNN Sport that the Spanish football federation has until Thursday night to send the necessary documents or the Brazilian — who already missed a league game on Saturday — will not feature in PSG's Ligue 1 match against Guingamp on Sunday.

An International Transfer Certificate (ITC) is required for all international transfers, says football's governing body FIFA. But the French league has yet to receive this from its Spanish counterparts and so cannot register the Brazilian.

A spokesperson for the LFP said: «The Spanish federation of football has until Thursday night to send the international contract of transfer to the French federation of football, who send it back to the French professional football league, and then Neymar can play with PSG this weekend.»

Spanish league officials initially tried to block the deal after PSG triggered the release clause for the 25-year-old's contract, claiming the French club was breaking the Financial Fair Play rules set by UEFA, European football's governing body.



But there could be further stumbling blocks ahead in a transfer which has been far from straightforward.

If the LFP does not receive the certificate by August 18, FIFA would have to intervene.

Even if the certificate is received, Neymar and Barcelona need to confirm their contract has expired. A failure for all parties to reach a mutual agreement would see FIFA rejecting the ITC.

In a statement, a FIFA spokesperson said: «Once [the ITC] has been completed the former association of the player asks the player and his former club to confirm if his contract has expired, if it was ended early or on mutual agreement or whether there is a contractual dispute.»

(Source: CNN)

Botswana's Makwala barred from entering stadium

Botswana's Isaac Makwala was refused entry to the London Stadium on Tuesday after earlier being withdrawn from the night's 400 meters final at the World Championships after falling victim to an outbreak of sickness that has hit scores of competitors.

The 30-year-old, who was considered one of the main challengers to gold medalist Wayde van Niekerk and is a national icon, had also been ordered to withdraw from Monday's opening round of the 200m.

Makwala said he felt well and wanted to race but when he attempted to go through the athletes' entrance, an official and security personnel barred his way.

«I arrived at the stadium today ready to run but I found a trap set there ... and was denied entrance (Government order by the way not IAAF),» he said later in a message to his fans on Facebook.

«We fought all day for the truth to come out ... I still maintain I am not sick and have never been tested by any doctor ... I shall rise again. It is well.»

The IAAF issued two statements on Tuesday, the first saying Makwala had been withdrawn due to a «medical condition» on the instruction of the IAAF Medical Delegate.

The head of Botswana's athletics federation, Falcon Sedimo, told the BBC that there had been no communication from the IAAF and that Makwala had not



undergone any medical tests.

«It's just generalised assumptions because of the outbreak of sickness and he has just one of those symptoms,» he said.

«There has been ... no formal communication from the IAAF at all. We found out from the media that he could not take part and he is heartbroken.»

In the second statement, the IAAF said Makwala had been diagnosed with an «infectious disease» following an examination by a doctor in the warm-up medical center on Monday and said the Botswana team had been informed.

«The team doctor, team leader and team physio had been informed following the medical examination that the

athlete should be quarantined for 48 hours and would therefore be missing the 400m final on Tuesday,» it said.

«The IAAF is very sorry that the hard work and talent of Isaac Makwala won't be on display tonight but we have to think of the welfare of all athletes.»

South African Van Niekerk retained his world title in dominant fashion, storming to victory in 43.98 seconds.

Makwala had told the BBC earlier on Tuesday that he had felt fit to race both in the 200m heats on Monday and the 400m final.

«I was not that sick,» he said. «I just vomited. Like any other athlete, I vomit ... I could have run because I did my warm-up well and I did everything well. I was ready to run.»

He added that he was «heartbroken» on Monday when he was pulled from the 200 and had been left in the dark about the reasons for his withdrawal.

«I was ready for this, I worked hard for this,» he added «So I feel like sabotaging or something ... I don't know because I don't have the full information about this.»

He did not specify in what way he felt he had been sabotaged and the IAAF did not respond specifically to Makwala's comments when contacted by Reuters.

The IAAF said it had been working with Public Health England to contain the outbreak of sickness and had issued guidelines to teams and their doctors.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran rout India in FIBA Asia Cup

S P O R T S Iran basketball team were too d e s k strong for Indian in the 2017 FIBA Asia Cup.

Mehran Hatami's men overpowered India 101-54 in Group A of the competition in Beirut's Nuhad Nawfal Stadium.

Hamed Haddadi had 20 points, 10 rebounds and 8 assists.

Amjot Singh Gill scored 10 points for India. Team Melli will face Syria and Jordan on Friday and Sunday respectively.

The top three teams from each group will advance to the second phase, where they will be divided into two groups of

six teams each (Groups E and F). The top four teams from each of these groups will advance to the quarterfinals.

The 2017 FIBA Asia Cup (formerly known as the FIBA Asia Championship) is the 29th continental basketball championship in Asia.

The tournament, organized by FIBA Asia, will take place at the Nuhad Nawfal Stadium.

The competition will determine the composition of the joint FIBA Asia and FIBA Oceania qualifiers for the 2019 FIBA World Cup.

The top five teams in the 2016 FIBA Asia Challenge will earn an extra berth in the 2017 FIBA Asia Cup for their respective sub-zones.

All 16 teams who qualify for the tournament also qualify for the first round of the 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup qualification for FIBA Asia and FIBA Oceania.



Iran fall short against Chinese Taipei at Asian Women's Volleyball Championship



S P O R T S Iran started the 19th d e s k edition of the Asian Senior Women's Volleyball Championship campaign with a loss against Chinese Taipei.

Akram Ghahremani's team lost to Chinese Taipei 3-1 (25-15, 25-27, 25-17, 25-20) in Group D.

Powerhouse Thailand defeated minnow Maldives 3-0 (25-5, 25-12, 25-9) in this group.

Next on Iran's plate is a battle against Thailand and Maldives happening Thursday and Friday.

The 2017 Asian Women's Volleyball

Championship is being held from 9 to 17 August 2017 in the Philippines. Matches will be held in two cities, namely Biñan and Manila.

A total of 14 teams have been divided into two groups of four teams and two groups of three.

POOL COMPOSITION

POOL A: Philippines, Kazakhstan, Hong Kong
POOL B: China, Japan, Australia
POOL C: Korea, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, New Zealand
POOL D: Thailand, Chinese Taipei, Iran, Maldives

Iran lose to USA at FINA Junior World Championships



S P O R T S Iran lost to USA d e s k 15-3 in the last day of group matches at the FINA Junior Men's World Championships at the Sports Centre Milan Gale Muskatirovic in Belgrade on Wednesday.

Aleksandar Ciric's boys started the campaign with a 19-2 loss against Russia in Group A and then suffered their second defeat against Greece 18-2.

Iran grabbed their first win against Puerto Rico, beating the

team 8-7.

Aleksandar Ciric's boys will face powerhouse Greece on Sunday.

The 19th edition of the Fina World Men's Junior Water Polo Championships is taking place in Belgrade, Serbia, from August 5-20, 2017, gathering 20 teams from the five continents, an increase of two teams since the previous edition two years ago in Almaty (KAZ), where 18 teams battled it out for the crown.

Antonio Conte says Nemanja Matic is "a great loss" to Chelsea

Matic has been central to Chelsea's last two Premier League title wins, but after being a key cog in last season's success at the heart of midfield, has been sold to Manchester United in a £40million switch.

The Serbian international made his competitive debut for the Red Devils in the European Super Cup on Tuesday night, having reunited with Jose Mourinho at Old Trafford.

Matic, 29, made 35 Premier League appearances last term for the Blues, but has been replaced at Stamford Bridge by Tiemoue Bakayoko, the France midfielder who cost the same price but crucially, 23 next week, is six years his junior.

Conte was keen to keep Matic as part of his side, but accepts that a decision was there to be made.

"Matic knows very well what I think about him," Conte told Sky Sports.

"The importance for me about this player, who is a really good player, a top player, very important for our team, but sometimes you must accept this crazy transfer market.

"And sometimes you must accept different decisions. But he is a great loss for us."

Chelsea skipper Gary Cahill has echoed his manager's sentiment.



"For me Matic is a fantastic player - a real, real top player," said the England international.

"I think I had the benefit of realizing how good he is when he's playing just in front of you - on and off the ball.

"He's going to be a huge loss, there's no doubt about that."

Conte also has admitted he thinks about Diego Costa but refused to say whether he could return to Chelsea. Costa was told by Conte he is not wanted back at Stamford Bridge this season and the Spaniard has not

returned to the club despite failing to find a new team.

The 28-year-old's preference is to rejoin Atletico Madrid but they are under a transfer ban which means players signed are ineligible to play until January.

Costa's problems have led to rumors he could make a shock return to Chelsea but when asked about the situation, Conte was reluctant to discuss the player.

Conte said at the launch of the Premier League: "I think a lot about Costa.

"I think I was very clear in the past and I think now it's not important to repeat."

Conte has also been vocal about the need to bring in new players before the end of the And the Italian said Chelsea would struggle to retain their title without fresh faces.

He said: "Yes very hard. For sure.

"This league is not easy. You have to fight against other teams.

"This league is different to other countries, [where] you'll find two teams to fight; here, you have six teams which are very strong. You must be prepared to fight very hard."

The Blues get their title defence underway at home to Burnley on Saturday.

(Source: Express)

Sanchez ruled out of Leicester clash

Arsene Wenger has ruled Alexis Sanchez out of Arsenal's Premier League opener with Leicester on Friday due to an abdominal strain.

The Arsenal boss said that the Chile international is likely to be "out for a while" and is also doubtful for the following week's game at Stoke.

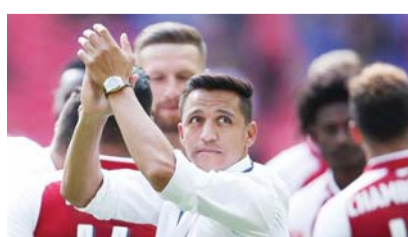
However, Wenger insisted that Sanchez remains "focused" on playing for Arsenal this season amid continued speculation about his future, with Paris Saint-Germain reportedly lining up an £80 million offer.

Wenger says Sanchez suffered the

strain in training on Sunday before the Community Shield against Chelsea and underwent a scan on Monday.

"He's out for a while. I don't know if it's two weeks, or one more week," Wenger told a news conference on Wednesday. "But he will not be available [against Leicester]. I think he will not play at Stoke."

Wenger also said there are "plenty of uncertainties" around players like Mesut Ozil, Aaron Ramsey and Per Mertesacker for the Leicester clash -- Ozil and Ramsey missed the Community Shield victory, while Mertesacker was taken off injured after sustaining a head injury.



The Arsenal boss has also not yet decided whether to throw Shkodran Mustafi into the starting line-up after he missed most of preseason because of the Confederations Cup, meaning his team to face Leicester will likely be similar to the one

that beat Chelsea on penalties on Sunday.

"I cannot go into the game with too many uncertainties. I can take a gamble on one, maybe maximum two," Wenger said. "I will focus more on the players who had the right number of competitive minutes in recent weeks."

Arsenal are set to enter the season with a weakened team for the second year in a row.

Ozil, Koscielny and Olivier Giroud all missed the start of the campaign last year after Euro 2016 as Arsenal took just one point from their opening two games.

(Source: Soccernet)

Iranian defender Majidi moves to Qatari professional club al-Shamal

Iranian defender Meysam Majidi has joined Qatari professional football club al-Shamal, which is currently playing in the Persian Gulf kingdom's first tier of football league competition - known as Qatar Stars League.

According to a report published by the Arabic-language al-Sharq daily newspaper, the 30-year-old Iranian footballer is going to travel to Doha within the next few days to finalize a deal. No information about the value and length of the contract was immediately available.

Majidi started his career with Fajr Shahid Sepasi Shiraz Football Club, commonly known as Fajr Sepasi Shiraz or Fajr Sepasi, which competes in the second highest division of professional football in Iran - known as the Azadegan League.

He later joined Aluminium Arak Football Club in 2007, and played for the team for two years.

The Iranian sportsman moved to Shensa, Aluminum Hormozgan, Esteghlal Khuzestan and Esteghlal football clubs afterwards.

Majidi had recently been playing for Saba Qom Football Club, which currently plays in the Azadegan League. He had scored two goals in ten appearances.

(Source: Press TV)

Klopp: Liverpool 'in good shape, excited' ahead of new season

Jürgen Klopp says Liverpool are focused on their opening Premier League fixture against Watford before thinking about the important Champions League qualifying game against Hoffenheim next Tuesday.

Despite some injury concerns Klopp gave an upbeat summary of preparations for the new campaign and said Liverpool are "in a good shape."

But he did not make any specific reference to Coutinho, who continues to be linked with Barcelona, and left a news conference before it was opened up for questions.

Liverpool completed their preseason matches by beating Athletic Bilbao 3-1 in Dublin on Saturday, with Coutinho one of a number of players missing due to illness and injury.

Klopp said on Wednesday: "When we finished last season in fourth position everybody was really happy about it -- it was really a good result for a big effort.

"We knew also there would be a qualification game, and now it is coming up. But the first challenge we have to face is playing Watford, even though everybody is thinking about the Champions League qualifiers.

"So Watford is the first target, and we have a few more days to prepare for this game.

"We are in a good shape. The players are in a good mood, the attitude in all the training sessions was really good -- yes, there have been one or two little injuries and one bigger [Adam Lallana's thigh problem], but that is how life is.

"We showed it in Dublin again that we are in a good shape. So everything is in a good way -- but of course now we have to deliver, and we know that, so we are ready for it.

"The freshness is coming back. We are really excited."

Liverpool begin their Premier League campaign by taking on Watford away on Saturday, then travel to Germany for Tuesday's Champions League qualifying playoff first leg against Hoffenheim.

At Wednesday's news conference to announce Western Union as their shirt sleeve sponsor for the next five years, Liverpool's commercial director Olly Dale was asked about the club possibly striking naming rights deals.

He said one for the training ground could happen "at some stage in the future maybe," while emphasising Liverpool are "not an organisation that is in the marketplace for a stadium naming rights deal."

Dale also said a naming rights deal for the Main Stand at Anfield was "not an immediate priority."

(Source: Soccernet)

Singapore, Hong Kong to play friendly

With a crucial round of AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 Qualifiers matches coming up, Singapore and Hong Kong will prepare for the September 5 ties with a friendly at the Lion City's Jalan Besar Stadium on August 31.

Singapore will play Turkmenistan in a 2019 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers Group E tie on September 5, also at the Jalan Besar Stadium.

Singapore Head Coach V. Sundram Moorthy said the friendly against Hong Kong will be valuable as it will help prepare the team for the Turkmenistan match.

"The qualifier against Turkmenistan will be an important one for the team as we work towards qualifying for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

"The friendly against Hong Kong will give us a good opportunity to prepare before facing Turkmenistan, and we want the fans to come down to Jalan Besar Stadium to cheer the team on for both games."

Singapore are fourth in Group E of the final round of the qualifying campaign with one point after two matches.

They opened their campaign with a 0-0 draw with Bahrain (pictured above) in Manama before losing 2-1 to Chinese Taipei at the Jalan Besar Stadium.

It will be a valuable warm-up for Hong Kong too as they face Malaysia in a 2019 Asian Cup Qualifiers Group B tie at the Hang Jebat Stadium in Melaka on Sept 5.

Hong Kong are third in the standings behind Lebanon and DPR Korea, with Malaysia fourth.

(Source: AFC)

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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
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Zip Code: 1599814713



“Vatzlav” on stage at Tehran theater

A R T TEHRAN — An Iranian troupe led by director Hajar Qahremani is performing Polish writer Slawomir Mrozek's play “Vatzlav” at Tehran's Baran Theater.

The 1968 comedy is about a slave named Vatzlav who is washed up on shore on an unnamed island following a shipwreck.

While he is seeking fortune, freedom and fame on the island, he meets some strange people.

Adel Behnampur, Hamidreza Moradi, Atusa Zarrinpur, Mehrdad Baqeri and Pegah Nurbakhsh are the main members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until September 1.

Culture ministers of Iran, Kazakhstan meet in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Reza Salehi and Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediuly met in Tehran on Tuesday.

During the meeting, plans to organize mutual art exhibitions, musical and theatrical performances and other cultural programs such as book fairs and literary meetings were discussed.

Due to the success that the Iranian cinema has achieved in the international arena, Mukhamediuly said that his country is eager to collaborate with Iranian in the film industries.

New “Doctor Who” star hopes fans don't fear a female time lord

LONDON (Reuters) — Jodie Whittaker, the first woman cast as the lead role of the BBC's iconic sci-fi program “Doctor Who”, expressed hopes on Monday that fans will embrace her role as a symbol of diversity rather than fear the shift from a man.

Whittaker, 35, breaks a tradition back to the start of the television series in 1963 that the Doctor is a man, traveling the universe as a “time lord” in a telephone box to protect the weak and combat evil aliens.

“I hope, you know, my gender isn't a fearful thing for the fans,” Whittaker told the BBC, in her first broadcast interview since her casting was announced last month.

“In this world particularly - there aren't rules and that's a great thing, you know, so hopefully, hopefully everyone is excited, as excited as I am,” she added.

Her casting was largely viewed positively by fans and commentators but some on social media argued that the role of the Doctor should not be played by a woman. Whittaker said that she had missed the reactions as she was not a social media user.

Ultimately, Whittaker hopes that her casting will help fans of the program to embrace diversity.

“Now we can say to young boys and young girls that the people that you potentially look up to or the characters that you love don't necessarily have to look the same as before - you know, we can celebrate the fact of differences.”

She told the BBC that she believed getting the role would be “a blessing and a curse”, and expressed the hope that media interest in her personal life would die down: “It's not very exciting”, she said.

“Doctor Who” is one of the BBC's most popular scripted programs, and has inspired a devoted fanbase in several countries, with clubs, conventions and fan publications. She will be the 13th Doctor.

Whittaker replaces actor Peter Capaldi, who has played the program's lead role since 2014. She has previously appeared in British crime drama “Broadchurch”, and British cult film “Attack the Block”, among other roles.

Her casting comes as the BBC deals with the public relations fallout from revelations that it pays its highest profile female on-air talent significantly less than men in comparable positions.

Former Iranian POW's memoirs published in Turkish

A R T TEHRAN — “A Foot Behind”, the memoirs of the former Iranian prisoner of war Seyyed Nasser Hosseinipur, has recently been published in Turkish.

The book has been translated into Turkish by Vildan Karabulut, the Istanbul-based publisher Tesnim has announced.

The Tesnim Publications has published the book in collaboration with Iran's Cultural Office in the city.

In “A Foot That Was Left Behind”, Hosseinipur describes the torture he suffered during his 880 days of captivity in Iraq during the 1980s.

He was captured by the Iraqi soldiers after he was injured in his leg during a military operation when he

was only 16. His leg was cut off after he was transferred into Iraq.

Hosseinipur dedicated the Persian version of the book, which was published by Sureh-Mehr in 2012, to Walid Farhan, an Iraqi sergeant of the Tikrit War Prisoners Camp 16, who tortured him during his captivity.

Hosseinipur wrote the book based on notes he had inscribed in the margins of newspapers and books the terrorist group MKO (Mojahedin Khalq Organization) distributed in the prisoners' camps in Iraq. He hid the notes in his canes to transfer them to Iran after his release.

An Arabic translation of the book was also published in 2014.

China to host Iranian film festival during Beijing Book Fair



Taraneh Aldidosti (L) and Shahab Hosseini in “The Salesman” that will be screened during a festival of Iranian films in the Chinese capital during the Beijing International Book Fair

A R T TEHRAN — A festival of Iranian films will be held in the Chinese capital during the Beijing International Book Fair, the Iran Cultural Fairs Institute announced on Wednesday.

A lineup of Iran's most acclaimed movies such as Asghar Farhad's Oscar-winning drama “The Salesman” will be screened during the festival.

The festival has been organized as part of Iran's programs as the guest of honor at the five-day book fair, which will open on

August 23.

Iran will attend the book fair with the motto “Iran, the Colorful Dream of Silk Road”.

A large number of Iranian publishers will display their latest offerings at the exposition, which one of the major Asian events in the publishing industry.

Iran has also arranged other programs, including live music concerts, literary meetings and naqqali, which is a style of storytelling dedicated to Shahnameh epic stories.

Country's ‘Rhinestone Cowboy’ Glen Campbell dies after Alzheimer's battle

NASHVILLE (Reuters) — Singer-guitarist Glen Campbell, the “Rhinestone Cowboy” who went on a farewell tour to play hits such as “Wichita Lineman” and “Gentle on My Mind” before Alzheimer's disease robbed him of talents, died on Tuesday at the age of 81.

Campbell died in Nashville at an Alzheimer's facility surrounded by his family, his publicist Sanford Brokaw said.

“It is with the heaviest of hearts that we announce the passing of our beloved husband, father, grandfather, and legendary singer and guitarist, Glen Travis Campbell, at the age of 81, following his long and courageous battle with Alzheimer's disease,” his family said in a statement posted on the singer's official website.

Campbell announced in June 2011 that he was suffering from Alzheimer's. The “Gentle on My Mind” singer then embarked on a nationwide farewell tour



American country music artist Glen Campbell performs during the Country Music Association (CMA) Music Festival in Nashville, Tennessee June 7, 2012. (Reuters/Harrison McClary/File Photo)

that ended in November 2012.

Campbell began his career as a well-regarded recording session guitarist in Los Angeles before becoming a fixture on the U.S. music charts, radio and television in the 1960s and '70s. He won six Grammy Awards and had nine No. 1 songs in a career of more than 50 years.

He released a final studio album in June 2017, called “Adios,” that was recorded after the tour wrapped up.

The tour was captured in a documentary aired in 2015 by CNN, “Glen Campbell: I'll Be Me,” that movingly captured him struggling with the disease. His song “I'm Not Going to Miss You” from the movie's soundtrack won a Grammy Award for best country song.

His death on Tuesday brought tributes from country music stars.

Veteran Broadway star Barbara Cook dies at age 89

MANHATTAN (Reuters) — Veteran Broadway actress Barbara Cook, known for her prolific career in musicals and cabaret and her soprano vocals, died on Tuesday from respiratory failure, her representative said. She was 89.

Cook died in her Manhattan home surrounded by her family and close friends, her publicist Amanda Kaus told Reuters. Kaus added that the actress had been ill for a while, but did not reveal the nature of the illness.

Cook, a native of Atlanta, broke out on Broadway in the 1950s with roles in “Oklahoma!”, “Carousel” and most notably “The Music Man,” for which she won a Tony award for best featured actress in a musical for her role as Marian Paroo.

In the 1970s, she became a concert singer, performing at New York's Carnegie Hall. Her 2001 cabaret act



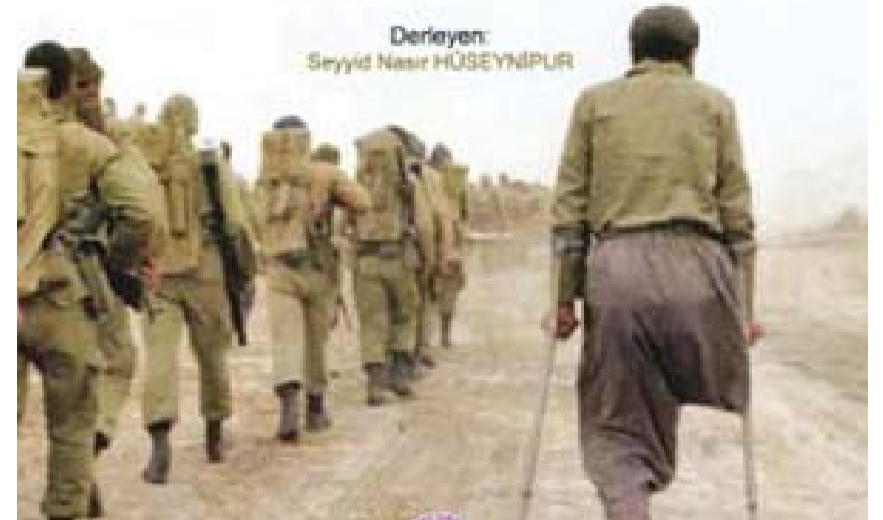
Actress Barbara Cook Arrives for the American Theater Wing's 64th annual Tony Awards ceremony in New York, June 13, 2010. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson/File Photo)

“Mostly Sondheim” earned her a Tony award nomination.

In May this year, Cook's son Adam LeGrant told The New York Times that the actress had retired from the stage after more than six decades in show-business.

BIRAKILAN AYAK

- Seyyid Nasir Hüseynipur'un Irak'ın gızi zindanlarında tutmuş olduğu günlüklerinden...-



The front cover of the Turkish translation of “A Foot That Was Left Behind”

Abbas Agahi translates more books by Simenon, Dard



This combination photo shows the front covers of “Maigret Is Having Fun” (L) and “The Gravediggers' Bread”.

A R T TEHRAN — The prominent Iranian translator of French literature Abbas Agahi has rendered more books by Georges Simenon and Frederic Dard into Persian.

Simenon's “Maigret Is Having Fun” and Dard's “The Gravediggers' Bread” have recently been published by Jahan-e Ketab in Tehran.

“Maigret Is Having Fun” is about Maigret, a French detective who decides to take a vacation but finding

a young woman's body changes his plans.

“The Gravediggers' Bread” tells the story of a poor young man who finds a purse full of money. Trying to find the owner of the money, he ends up a small town.

As a graduate of Paris-Sorbonne University Agahi previously translated several other Simenon's books such as “Pietr the Latvian”.

He is also the translator of several other books by Dard.

Calvin Harris tops Forbes list of highest-earning DJs for fifth year

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Scottish musician Calvin Harris ruled Forbes' annual list of electronic cash kings on Tuesday as he was named the highest-paid DJ for the fifth consecutive year, outpacing Dutch DJ Tiesto and newcomers The Chainsmokers.

Harris, 33, brought in \$48.5 million between June 2016 and June 2017, with earnings from residencies in Las Vegas and festival performances as well as from producing pop hits such as his latest summer track, “Feels” with Katy Perry and Pharrell Williams.

Tiesto, who topped the list in 2012, earned \$39 million and came in at No. 2, while The Chainsmokers earned \$38 million, bolstered by the chart-topping success of pop hits “Closer” with Halsey and “Something Just Like This” with Coldplay.

The list, which also includes veteran French DJ David Guetta and German producer Zedd, highlights a lack of di-



Musician Calvin Harris arrives at the 2015 Billboard Music Awards in Las Vegas, Nevada May 17, 2015. (Reuters/ L.E.Baskow/File Photo)

versity in the DJ field, whose 10 highest earners were male and mostly white, from the United States or Europe.

Forbes said it compiles its annual earnings list from data gathered from Nielsen and touring trackers such as Pollstar and Bandsintown, as well as industry insiders and artists.