

 Belgium new European buyer of Iran's petchem products **4**

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Hojaji is outgrowth of revolution

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It's Saudi turn to take steps, Iran says

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Monday that Iran has taken the necessary actions to mend ties with Saudi Arabia and now it is Riyadh's turn to take steps in this regard.

The relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia started deteriorating after 464 Iranian pilgrims were crushed to death in a stampede in Hajj ritual in September 2015.

Tehran and Riyadh have also been at odds over the Saudi war on Yemen, the Saudi suppression of pro-democracy movement in Bahrain, and also the kingdom's support for militants in Syria.

"We hope that Saudi officials would analyze regional situation in a more realistic way," Qassemi said during a press conference.

He said that Iran is ready to expand ties with its neighbors and establish security in the region.

"Regional security is an important issue for Iran. We do not want security just for ourselves but for the whole region and all the regional countries should pay attention to this matter," the spokesman noted.

Qassemi also said that Iran welcomes good relations between the countries in the region especially between Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

He added Iran seeks to expand relations with the countries in the region and help establish regional peace and stability. "All the regional countries should make efforts and interact with each other to establish security in the region." **→2**

Abdolrahim Mousavi appointed Army chief

POLITICS TEHRAN — In separate decrees on Monday, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appointed Major General Ataollah Salehi as deputy chief of the Iranian Armed Forces and Brigadier General Abdolrahim Mousavi as commander of the Army after promoting him to the rank of major general.

Ayatollah Khamenei also thanked Salehi and Mousavi for their loyal services to the Islamic Republic and wished them good luck in their new military posts.

Abdolrahim Mousavi, 57, served as

armed forces deputy chief of staff from 2016 to 2017. He was second-in-command of the Army from 2008 to 2016.

Ataollah Salehi, 67, served as the Army chief from 2005 until 2017. As head of Iran's regular military he was a member of the Supreme National Security Council.

Salehi was the third Army chief since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The new appointment came one day after the parliament gave the highest votes for Brigadier General Amir Hatami to confirm him as defense minister.

ARTICLE
By Hamid Bayati
Tehran Times journalist

Qatar crisis: Are the Saudis the real puppet-master?

On June 5, four Arab states severed ties with Qatar accusing it of supporting terrorism, an allegation denied by Doha.

The quartet comprising the House of Saud regime, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain severed diplomatic ties and cut all land, sea, and air routes with Qatar.

The administration of Saudi regime-backed and resigned Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, Libya, the Maldives, Djibouti, Senegal and the Comoros later joined the camp in ending diplomatic ties with Qatar, while Jordan downgraded its diplomatic ties.

They later issued a list of 13 sweeping demands for Doha to meet in order for the relations to be normalized. Based on the list, Doha was asked to end its support for Egypt's biggest banned opposition party the Muslim Brotherhood, shut down Al Jazeera news network, sever all ties with the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement, close down a Turkish military base on its soil, downgrade relations with Iran and "compensate" the sanctioning countries for unspecified harm.

Qatar dismissed the 13-point list.

Well so far everything seems as a political row led by the House of Saud regime. Let's not bother whether the quartet's action was right or wrong, or discuss each states record of human rights, sponsoring terrorism, preaching hatred, and any other issues regarding each of the quartet's states domestic or international issues. I have a bigger stake!

A lion's share of the global media that covered the still developing story focused on the Saudi regime-led sanctions, Saudi regime list of demands and Saudi regime-led siege on Qatar, suggesting it's the House of Saud regime that is the muscle and mastermind behind the move against Qatar which pulls the strings and all its allies follow suit. **→13**

Most don't understand the relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam: anthropologist

By Jalal Heirannia
TEHRAN — Head of the anthropology department at the State University of Minnesota is of the view that a majority of non-Muslims are not aware of the relationship between divine religions.

"Most non-Muslims (and many Muslims) don't understand the interrelationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam," Prof. William O. Beeman tells the Tehran Times

Following is the text of the interview:
■ On August 21, 1969, an attempt was made to put al-Aqsa Mosque on fire; the action led to naming August 21 as World Mosque Day. Why should we remember this day?

A: The member (altar) of the Al-Aqsa Mosque was set on fire by an Australian, Denis

Michael Rohan, a self-described Christian, who was influenced by extremist right-wing evangelical Christians. He wanted to set fire to the Mosque to allow the Jews to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple of Solomon, the foundations of which according to tradition were the underpinnings for the mosque.

Mr. Rohan was later declared to be insane. He was transported to Australia for psychiatric care and died in 1995.

The world-wide reaction, including from Jewish authorities, was one of horror. Despite the fact that there are extreme right-wing Jewish groups who have called for the destruction of the mosque, mainstream Jewish authorities produced an equivocal response, but in the end agreed that the Al-Aqsa mosque was sacred religious ground and must be protected.

■ What roles can mosques play for a better understanding of Islam by non-Muslims?

A: ?Most non-Muslims (and many Muslims) don't understand the interrelationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Islam reveres all of the religious history of the other two religions. **→13**

'The Al-Aqsa mosque represents not only the holy traditions of Islam, but also the unity of all the "Abrahamic" religions'

Environment matters: Couple tie the knot, pledge to plant thousand-plus trees

By Maryam Qarehgozlou
TEHRAN — In a symbolic gesture to safeguard the environment a young bride from the western province of Ilam made the groom to pledge to plant 1372 trees as her "mahr" - a mandatory payment paid or promised to pay by the groom under Islamic law.

A mahr (or mahriyeh) is typically specified in the marriage contract. While the mahr is often money, it can also be anything agreed upon by the bride such as jewelry, home goods, furniture, a dwelling or some land.

In case of the young Iranian bride, she opt for planting 1372 trees marking the year [in the Iranian calendar] she was born in an attempt to protect the environment and garner more attention to this matter.

Environmental issues have become a global concern for some years now. The growing population with unquenchable thirst for development have violated the limits to the life-sustaining resources earth can provide us. Industrialization, most significantly in

developing countries, are inflicting irreparable damages to the environment and natural resources.

From north to south, east to west cities in Iran are all facing environmental challenges to some extent resulted from shortsighted policies over the years. Desertification, water shortage, drying wetlands, persisting air pollution, sand and dust storms, etc. are all the outcomes of flawed policies adopted regardless of their environmental ramifications. **→13**



© Tehran Times/ Hossein Shams Nosrati

Harvesting paddy fields in Gilan

Farmers are harvesting paddy fields in the northern province of Gilan. The quality of the rice produced in Iran is unique in the world and people prefer to use the rice produce at home, though the price is very high in comparison to imported crops.

Over 200 terrorists killed in airstrike in Dayr al-Zawr: Russia

Russia's Defense Ministry says its aircraft have eliminated more than 200 ISIL (Daesh) terrorists on their way to the eastern Syrian city of Dayr al-Zawr.

The operation also destroyed around 20 SUVs laden with large-caliber weapons and mortars, as well as armored vehicles, including tanks, the Ministry said in a statement on Monday.

The city contains relatively large concentrations of the Takfiri group's terrorists and is subject to offensives by both the Syrian Army and its allies, and Russian warplanes.

The Ministry said the city was now witnessing "international terrorists... trying to regroup and equip their last base in Syria."

"The defeat of ISIS (Daesh) in the Dayr al-Zawr region will be a strategic defeat for the international terrorist group in the Syrian Arab Republic," the statement said.

Earlier in the month, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said if the group lost the city, it would potentially mean it had suffered an ultimate defeat.

"This is perhaps the main point at the Euphrates, which will in many ways indicate the end of the fight against ISIS," he said.

Dayr al-Zawr, however, still contains some 125,000 civilians, a fact that could slow down the military operations targeting the city.

Bouthaina Shaaban, the political and media adviser to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, said in an interview on Friday that the six-year-old foreign-backed militancy in her country was nearly over as foreign states had cut their backing for Takfiri terrorist groups.

On Sunday, Assad said the assistance provided by main allies, Russia, Iran, and Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement to the country's counter-terrorism operations, had enabled the Syrian Army to make battlefield gains and reduce the burden of war.

(Source: SANA)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Soleimani says Iran highly influential in regional stability

POLITICS TEHRAN — Senior Iranian military commander Major General Qassem Soleimani has said Iran is a central element of stability in the volatile Middle East.

Iran has contributed to peace and security in other nations in the region and helped them irrespective of religious affiliations, Tasnim quoted Soleimani as having said on Sunday.

Soleimani, the Quds Force chief, added that Iran is enjoying a "real and insusceptible" status of power in the region, saying such a level of power is unprecedented in Iran's history.



Navy commander leaves for Malaysia

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Navy commander d e s k on Monday afternoon left Tehran for Malaysia to attend International Maritime Security Symposium 2017 (IMSS).

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari is participating at the event by heading a naval delegation, including some of his deputies, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) member-states will take part in the three-day forum.



Army: Iran's defense industry symbol of self-sufficiency

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Army has praised d e s k progress in defense industry as a potent symbol of self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

In a statement issued on the occasion of National Day of Defense Industry on Monday, the Army said the country's advances in various military fields have turned the defense sector into a symbol of self-sufficiency and materialization of the purposes of the resistance economy.

It also emphasized that the Army is prepared to combat any potential or practical threat posed by the enemies.



Iran, Indonesia enjoy fruitful ties: envoy

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran and Indonesia have d e s k made great achievements in boosting ties in tourism, cultural, political and economic fields, the Indonesian envoy to Iran has said.

Octavian Alimudin made the remarks on Sunday in a ceremony held to mark Indonesia's 72nd Independence Anniversary which was held in Tehran Milad Tower, IRNA reported.

Pointing the favorable ties between Iran and Indonesia, he said both countries have held good bilateral political meetings.



Majlis vote affirms constructive global engagement: Zarif

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Minister of Foreign d e s k Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif on Monday thanked the Majlis for their vote of confidence to him, saying the vote reaffirmed that Iran's policy of "constructive engagement" with the outside world will persist.

"Honored to be confirmed by the representatives of our people: affirmation that Iran's constructive engagement with the world will continue," Zarif wrote in a tweet.

The lawmakers on Sunday voted to keep Zarif as foreign minister. He garnered 236 positive votes from the 290-seat parliament.



Iraq's Islamic Virtue Party chief meets Velayati

POLITICS TEHRAN — The leader of Iraq's Islamic d e s k Virtue Party on Monday met with Ali Akbar Velayati, the senior advisor to the Supreme Leader, Mehr reported.

During the meeting with Abdul Hussein al-Moussawi, Velayati commended the strong and friendly relations that exist between the two countries.

For his part, the Iraqi party chief, accompanying a delegation thanked Iran for its strong support to the Iraqi nation and government, particularly in the wake of the brutal terrorist wave. Al-Moussawi said the two nations are in the same front fighting terrorism.

Protection of nuclear deal will be a priority, Zarif says

POLITICS TEHRAN — Fresh from d e s k an endorsement by the Majlis Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that one of his foreign policy priorities will be to protect the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

In approving the proposed ministers on Sunday, Zarif succeeded to win 236 votes out of 288 ballots for the post of foreign minister for another four years.

"As we have said before, we should not let the U.S. violate the JCPOA at the expense of Iran," Zarif said in a televised interview.

He said that the nuclear deal was drafted based on "distrust" and mechanisms to prevent violation of it have been considered.

He added the U.S. can be successful in its wrong policies toward the JCPOA only if it portrays Iran as a side which breaches its commitments.

Iran can be successful by remaining committed to its obligation under the international treaty.

"We should prove to the international community that we are trustable and Iran abides by its commitments and it is the U.S. which violates its commitments," the chief diplomat noted.

"The new U.S. administration should become aware of the fact that wrong policies will not lead to 'right results'."

Zarif added the JCPOA is an international agreement and the U.S. cannot unilaterally pull out of it.

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 on January 16, 2016.

Increasing ties with neighbors is another priority

Elsewhere in his televised interview, Zarif said strengthening ties with neighbors is another foreign policy priority.

He also said Iran is located in a volatile region in which "wrong policies" and "foreign interferences" have led to spread



of extremism and terrorism.

Iran is the only country in the region which relies on its people to maintain its security and made progress, the foreign

minister remarked.

Elsewhere, he attached importance to foreign investment to help increase opportunities for employment.

Leader calls martyr Hojaji example of revolution's outgrowth

POLITICS TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic d e s k Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Monday that martyr Mohsen Hojaji is a clear example of the Islamic and revolutionary outgrowth.

Mohsen Hojaji, a member of the Iranian advisory support team in Syria, was captured by Daesh on August 7 near the Tanf border crossing in southeast Syria. The terrorists beheaded Hojaji two days later. The act prompted widespread condemnation of the terrorist group.

Following the incident, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a post on his Instagram said Hojaji and other martyrs have sacrificed their lives to defend innocent Muslims and fight the atrocities committed by



Takfiri terrorists and their supporters.

The Supreme Leader who was speaking with a group of cultural activists and officials from Yazd and Hamadan provinces, put an emphasis on the need to boost "revolutionary and jihadist spirit".

"You should focus all of your efforts to revolutionary and religious education of the youth, and you should know that morality can be long lasting if it is accompanied with boosting revolutionary and religious spirit and jihadist movement," the Leader told the cultural activists.

The Leader went on to say that the officials should not act in a way that the "revolutionary movement" be undermined and instead the anti-revolutionary movement becomes stronger.

IRGC: Hatami's leadership promises increasing deterrence power

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Islamic d e s k Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has offered congratulations to Brigadier General Amir Hatami as new defense minister, saying his leadership of the ministry heralds promoting "national defense power" and "deepening deterrence power".

In its Monday message, the IRGC underlined the need to promote the country's defensive capabilities, especially its missile power.

"Undoubtedly, your presence in this vital post, together with the endeavors of the previous ministers, promises the reinforcement of the Defense Ministry's approaches and plans to further develop

and upgrade the Islamic Republic's defense industry," the message read.

The message also emphasized the need to empower the resistance front (coalition of Iran-Syria-Hezbollah) to counter proxy wars and takfiri terrorism in the region.

It also said that the IRGC is ready to help the new defense chief in strengthening the country's defense industry.

Hatami started his tenure as the defense minister on Sunday, after receiving the strongest vote of confidence from the parliament, with 261 yeas, 10 nays and 13 abstentions.

Plans for more accurate and

destructive missiles appeared atop a priority list Hatami took to the parliament hearing on Thursday.

"The missile program is definitely one of the most important priorities of the Defense Ministry in the upcoming four years," Hatami told lawmakers.

"The enemy is stationed in the region, brings weapons to the region and tries to damage the country's defensive might, but we have set objectives in our plan to counter the move," he explained.

After the parliament gave him the green light, he said the Islamic Republic's missile program will go ahead relentlessly, vowing to continue the country's defense activities.

"[Iran's] missile program will proceed according to the approved plans," Hatami told reporters on Sunday following the first cabinet session of the newly-formed government.

Responding to a question about certain countries' pressure on Iran to stop its missile program, he said such activities "would not be affected by any type of pressure."

The defense minister vowed to strengthen the defense industry "with utmost power", stressing the Islamic Republic "will not allow any suspension in the work of the Defense Ministry even for one day."

It's Saudi turn to take steps, Iran says

U.S. efforts to undermine nuclear deal are fruitless

Qassemi also said that a planned meeting between officials from the U.S. and the International Atomic Energy Agency do not concern Iran.

However, he said, if the U.S. seeks to undermine the nuclear deal, all its efforts will prove "fruitless".

He was referring to U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley's visit to Vienna later this month to discuss Iran's nuclear activities with UN atomic watchdog officials.

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 on January 16, 2016.

According to the deal, Iran is obligated to limit its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

Since the deal went into force in January 2016 the IAEA has released six reports confirming Iran's commitment to its obligations.

Iran, Lebanon reaffirm support for Syria talks

Jaberi Ansari discusses ties with Lebanese President Michel Aoun

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian d e s k Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Jaberi Ansari met with senior Lebanese officials including President Michel Aoun in Beirut on Monday to discuss bilateral ties and regional issues, especially the Syrian crisis.

Jaberi Ansari and Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil reaffirmed their countries' support for the Astana talks to settle the Syrian conflict which has been raging on for more than six years.

In his meeting with President Aoun, the top Iranian diplomat further noted

that Lebanon has a special place in Iran's foreign policy especially during the second term of President Rouhani.

Jaberi Ansari who arrived in Beirut on Monday morning also hailed the distinguished role of the Lebanese nation, government, army, and resistance movement in opposing the Israeli aggression.

Jaberi Ansari, Iran's point man for Arab affair, also called for closer regional co-operation and economic diplomacy between Tehran and Beirut.

During the meeting, the Lebanese president extended his warm greetings to

President Rouhani and congratulated him on the start of his new term.

Aoun pointed to the extensive impact of regional crises, especially the Syrian conflict, on his country, calling for expansion of cooperation with Tehran to remedy the situation.

In separate meetings, Jaberi Ansari met with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to discuss regional issues and bilateral ties.

Jaberi Ansari thanked the Lebanese parliament speaker for attending the swearing-in ceremony of President Rouhani.

He also expressed gratitude for Lebanon's role in fighting the Zionist regime and its illegal occupation of Arab lands.

The Iranian diplomat also briefed Berri about the latest regional developments, including the newest issues surrounding the Astana peace talks on Syria.

Berri, for his turn, highlighted the need to expand cooperation between Iran and Lebanon.

He also pointed to the negative consequences of disintegration of regional countries, underlining the need to prevent such possibilities from occurring.

Ex-deputy CIA director: Trump process is 'very disconcerting' on Iran deal

Tensions between the United States and Iran have been red hot in recent weeks -- and they might be about to get even hotter.

Amid warning shots fired by U.S. ships against Iranian ones, as well as very close calls when Iranian drones have buzzed the U.S. military, President Trump will be called upon to certify that Iran is in compliance with the nuclear deal.

His administration has declared Iran in compliance, as required by law, twice during his tenure so far. But Trump has said he expects the U.S. to declare Iran non-compliant when the next review is due in September.

The president has put together a team of aides to pull together the intelligence so he can do just that, according to a report in Foreign Policy.

David Cohen, former deputy director of the CIA, said

it was "very disconcerting" that it appears Trump may have made a conclusion about Iran before finding the intelligence to back it up.

"It stands the intelligence process on its head," he told CNN's Fareed Zakaria. "Our intelligence analysts, who have access to all of our clandestine collection, access to what our allies around the world are collecting and access to IAEA reports and other open source information are in the best position to make that assessment of whether Iran is complying with the nuclear deal."

"If our intelligence is degraded because it is politicized in the way that it looks like the president wants to do here, that undermines the utility of that intelligence all across the board," said Cohen. "If it's politicized, that credibility and reliability is undermined."

Earlier this week, presumably responding to these news reports, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said his

nation's nuclear program could be re-started within hours if new U.S. sanctions are imposed.

Cohen said the international community likely would not unite with sanctions against Iran even if the United States finds Iran not in compliance.

"As a practical matter, you're not going to have the rest of the international community, you're not going to have our allies in Europe, you're certainly not going to have the Russians and the Chinese coming along with us to re-impose real pressure on the Iranians. So you'll have this fissure between the United States and essentially the rest of the world in trying to reinstate pressure on Iran."

"On the other side of the coin, the Iranians, with the U.S. having pulled out of the deal, will feel that they are absolved from adhering to their commitments under the nuclear deal. So maybe they will begin to spin more centrifuges," he said.

Iraq rejects concessions to Kurds over referendum

Iraq has roundly rejected a senior Kurdish official's suggestion to postpone a planned Sept. 25 referendum on independence in return for financial and political concessions from Baghdad, a London-based paper says.

The suggestion made on Sunday by Mala Bakhtiar, executive secretary of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Politburo, came as a Kurdish delegation wrapped up a week-long visit to Baghdad to sound out proposals from the two sides.

In an interview with Reuters, Bakhtiar said the delegates wanted to know "what thing would Baghdad be prepared to offer to the Kurdish region" in return for postponing the referendum, the news agency reported.

A terse statement issued by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Sunday rejected the remarks, stressing that the "unrealistic" proposals had never been raised in negotiations between the two sides, the pan-Arab Al Quds Al Arabi daily reported.

The Kurdish delegation, headed by Rozh Nuri Shaways (pictured below), reportedly held talks with Prime Minister Abadi, President Fuad Masum, and other Iraqi leaders as well as ambassadors of the United States, Iran and Turkey in Baghdad.

The visit came after U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson formally asked Masoud Barzani, president of the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), to postpone the referendum.

Bakhtiar said Baghdad should help the Kurds overcome a financial crisis and settle debts allegedly owed by their government and agree to settle the issue of disputed regions, such as the oil-rich area of Kirkuk in order to postpone the vote.



"We don't accept to postpone the referendum with nothing in return and without fixing another time to hold it," he said.

The statement by the Iraqi prime minister said Bakhtiar's remarks were his personal views and did not reflect the negotiations between the two sides.

"The Reuters correspondent, quoting the head of the political office of the Kurdish Patriotic Union, has published some claims which are false and unrealistic, and have never been raised in talks with the Kurdish delegation in Baghdad," it said.

"Moreover, Mala Bakhtiar was not a

member of the delegation and was not present during the talks," added the statement, a copy of which the London-based newspaper said it had received.

The Iraqi government has rejected the planned referendum as "unilateral" and unconstitutional. Turkey, Iran and Syria, which together with Iraq have sizable Kurdish communities, also oppose an independent Kurdistan.

Last week, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu warned that plans by the leadership in Iraq's Kurdish region to hold a referendum on independence could lead to civil war.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in June strongly criticized the referendum plan, calling it "an error" and "a threat" to Iraq's territorial integrity.

Iraqi Kurdish oil is exported through Turkey, including from the oil-rich area of Kirkuk where Arab and Turkmen communities also live.

Iraq's militia groups which were key to driving out ISIL (Daesh) from much of the country have threatened to expel the Peshmarga from Kirkuk and three other disputed areas - Sinjar, Makhmour and Khanaqin.

(Source: Press TV)

Trump eyeing stake in Afghanistan's \$3tn natural resources

As U.S. President Donald Trump prepares to announce his administration's strategy for the stalemate in Afghanistan later on Monday, the South Asian country's \$3 trillion wealth of natural resources has taken the center of attention.

While the U.S. Department of Defense's estimates have put Afghanistan's untapped wealth of gold, copper, uranium and other rare-earth minerals at well around \$1 trillion, Afghan officials' latest geological studies hint at figures three times larger.

The number can probably explain Washington's willingness to continue the war in Afghanistan, which has dragged on for 16 years and has cost the US economy more than \$714 billion dollars, according to the Pentagon's Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) July report.

The second longest war in the US history has also killed over 2,000 American soldiers and injured 20,000 more.

And now Trump is set to address a problem that vexed his two predecessors. His administration has been under overwhelming pressure to "turn the tide in Afghanistan," to borrow Senator John McCain's words.

Recuperating U.S. money

Although opinions vary on whether the US president would authorize an increase in US troop levels in Afghanistan, there is a common consensus that the Trump administration is exploring ways to recoup some of the money funneled into the war over the past years.

In fact, the businessman-turned-president has already discussed the possibility with his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani and reportedly views the potential there as a justification for prolonged US military presence.

According to administration sources,



the White House is already considering sending an envoy to Afghanistan to meet with mining officials, an opening salvo for harnessing the country's natural resources.

Afghanistan is also open to the idea, with Afghan government spokesperson Javid Faisal calling it a "win-win" situation.

Interestingly, Trump has been receiving informal advice on Afghanistan from his billionaire friend Andy Feinberg, who owns major US military contractor DynCorp.

The company has been operating in Afghanistan since 2003 and is believed to play a role in securing the country's mines, according to the New York Times.

U.S. already behind in the race

The US is not alone in seeking a piece of the cake in Afghanistan and has fallen behind countries like China, Germany and Russia who have already taken their first steps.

Last month, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier told Ghani that his country was interested in Afghanistan's large deposits of lithium, a key ingredient in rechargeable batteries used in smart phones and electric cars.

China is eyeing Afghanistan's copper resources and is sending in its Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC) to extract \$100 billion worth of the chemical.

During the Soviet-era, Russia tired to control Afghanistan's natural gas but abandoned the effort after the Taliban's rise to power.

(Source: agencies)

UAE supports counter-revolutions, paid for Egypt coup: Qatar ambassador

The Qatari Ambassador to Turkey has accused the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of sponsoring "counter-revolutions in the Arab world and revival of dictatorships", stating that Abu Dhabi has spent millions of dollars for the overthrow of Egypt's first democratically-elected president Mohamed Morsi.

"The UAE and a number of allies have paid around \$40 billion to consolidate the military coup in Egypt alone," Salem bin Mubarak al-Shafi said in reference to Morsi's ouster by former army chief and current President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in July 2013.

"We say that these countries have not learnt their lesson well. Blaming Qatar, using broad terms such as counter-terrorism and attacking moderates with an intention to win the heart of the West will not help them," he added.

Shafi further dismissed assertions that Doha is backing extremists in the Middle East.

"There are some Arab countries which are afraid of revolutions. Instead of reforming their regimes and fulfilling public aspirations, they heap the blame on Qatar," the Qatari ambassador commented.

Shafi stressed that Qatar is "doing all it can to serve security and stability in the region in a way that does not clash with aspirations of the people."

The Qatari ambassador also rejected Persian Gulf states' demands that Doha cut defense ties with Ankara, describing it as a "flagrant intervention in the internal affairs" of the gas-rich kingdom.

"This is against all international law and norms. The demands concerning closure of the Turkish base and severance of our military relations with Turkey translate as infringement of our sovereignty rights and violation of our inde-



pendence," Shafi pointed out.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain all cut off diplomatic ties with Qatar on June 5, after officially accusing it of "sponsoring terrorism."

The administration of Saudi-backed and resigned Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, Libya, the Maldives, Djibouti, Senegal and the Comoros later joined the camp in ending diplomatic ties. Jordan downgraded its diplomatic ties as well.

Qatar's Foreign Ministry later announced that the decisions to cut diplomatic ties were unjustified and based on false claims and assumptions.

On June 9, Qatar strongly dismissed allegations of supporting terrorism after the Saudi regime and its allies blacklisted dozens of individuals and entities purportedly associated with Doha.

"The recent joint statement issued by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE regarding a 'terror finance watch list' once again reinforces baseless allegations that hold no foundation in fact," the Qatari government said in a statement.

On June 23, Saudi Arabia and its allies released a 13-point list of demands, including the closure of Al Jazeera television news network and downgrade of relations with Iran, in return for the normalization of diplomatic relations with Doha.

(Source: Press TV)

Putin appoints Anatoly Antonov new ambassador to U.S.: Kremlin

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday appointed deputy foreign minister Anatoly Antonov as the country's new ambassador to the United States, replacing Sergei Kislyak.

"By presidential decree, Anatoly Ivanovich Antonov is appointed Russian Ambassador to the United States," the Kremlin said in a statement.



Relations between Moscow and Washington have fallen to a post-Cold War low, driven by accusations of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections.

Kislyak has been at the eye of the storm over his meetings with senior campaign aides to Donald Trump during the presidential race.

Antonov, 62, has served as a deputy foreign minister since December. Previously he served as a deputy defense minister.

He has a reputation as a hardliner and is seen as a tough negotiator, including over weapons control issues with the U.S.

(Source: AFP)

New bill calls on Mike Pence to ask for Donald Trump's resignation

Talk of unseating Donald Trump from the presidency erupted shortly after his shocking electoral victory: Democratic representatives called for his impeachment on the floor of Congress just four months into his tenure in the White House.

But the 25th Amendment provides another pathway for the president's removal—and lawmakers want to use it.

Democratic Representative Zoe Lofgren, from California, introduced legislation on Friday calling on Vice President Mike Pence and the White House Cabinet to ask for the president's resignation, questioning Trump's mental stability after a bizarre series of press conferences this week in which he repeatedly defended a group of violent white supremacists who wreaked havoc Saturday in Charlottesville, Virginia.

(Source: News Week)

"UK and U.S. play 'crucial role' in creating conditions for spread of cholera in Yemen"

Britain and the U.S. have played "a crucial role" in creating conditions conducive to the catastrophic spread of cholera in Yemen, according to authors of a letter published in The Lancet.

Combining the latest data from the World Health Organization and mapping that on to areas under government and rebel control, the three researchers found the cholera outbreak was disproportionately affecting areas controlled by Houthis.

The Houthis are the target on a two-year military campaign by a Saudi Arabia-led coalition that has received logistical and political support from the UK and the U.S. British companies have continued to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia despite growing concern about civilian casualties.



They added: "Saudi-led airstrikes have destroyed vital infrastructure, including hospitals and public water systems, hit civilian areas, and displaced people into crowded and insanitary conditions. A Saudi-enforced blockade of imports has caused shortages of, among other things, food, medical supplies, fuel and chlorine, and restricted humanitarian access."

Researchers Jonathan Kennedy said in an additional statement: "Saudi Arabia is an ally of the UK and USA. American and British companies supply Saudi Arabia with huge amounts of military equipment and their armed forces provide logistical support and intelligence. "This backing has made the Saudi-led airstrikes and blockade possible, and therefore the UK and USA have played a crucial role in creating conditions conducive to the spread of cholera."

In June, Unicef and the WHO released a statement saying that Yemen was "facing the worst cholera outbreak in the world". Earlier this week, the WHO said more than half a million people in Yemen had been infected with cholera since the epidemic broke out in April, as the country struggled to cope with 5,000 new cases a day.

It said at least 1,975 people have now died from the acute diarrheal infection caused by ingestion of contaminated food or water. Last month, the organization estimated that around half of cases and a quarter of the dead were children under the age of 15.

(Source: Independent)

U.S., South Korea drills begin amid tensions with North

U.S. and South Korean troops have begun annual military drills amid heated warnings by the North that the exercises will worsen tensions in the region.

The Ulchi Freedom Guardian drills, which began on Monday, are largely computer-simulated war games.

The exercise brings together as many as 50,000 South Korean soldiers and approximately 17,500 U.S. service members for a simulation of war on the Korean Peninsula.

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in said the drills are defensive in nature.

He said the exercises are held regularly because of repeated provocations by the North, including two intercontinental bal-

istic missile tests last month.

Pyeongyang called the 11-day operation a "reckless" invasion rehearsal that could trigger an "uncontrollable phase of a nuclear war".

China and Russia last week urged the U.S. to suspend the drills in exchange for North Korea suspending its missile and nuclear tests.

Earlier this month, U.S. President Donald Trump vowed to respond to North Korea's actions with "fire and fury".

North Korea, for its part, threatened to fire a salvo of missiles towards the US territory of Guam - a plan that its leader Kim Jong-Un delayed last week.

Kim warned the plan could still go

ahead depending on Washington's next move.

The number of U.S. soldiers in this year's drill was reduced by a third, while South Korean media reported that the U.S. was considering scrapping a plan to bring in two aircraft carriers to the peninsula.

But U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis said on Sunday that the smaller troop numbers were "by design to achieve the exercise objectives", denying suggestions Washington had cut them back to try to ease tensions with Pyongyang.

Al Jazeera's Step Vaessen, reporting from Seoul, said "the crucial aspect will be how North Korea responds".

In 2016, Pyongyang retaliated by firing

a submarine launch missile, which ended up in the sea of Japan.

"But this time around, given the recent tensions, many are saying the North will carefully calculate to these drills if the country is really serious about some room for negotiation," our correspondent said.

On the eve of the UFG drills, North Korea said the U.S. was "pouring gasoline on fire".

In commentary carried by the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper, the North said Washington was "mistaken" to think that a nuclear war would take place on "somebody else's doorstep far away from them across the Pacific".

(Source: Al Jazeera)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Belgium new European buyer of Iran's petchem products

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iran started exports of its *d e s k* petchem products to Belgium since the beginning of the present Iranian calendar year (started on March 21, 2017), NIPA news agency reported on Monday.

Quoting the Managing Director of Mahabad Petrochemical Complex (MAPC) Mohsen Majidi as saying, the report confirmed that as of the said time, MAPC has exported 90,000 tons of its products, worth \$85 million, to foreign countries.

The director named India, Turkey, China, and Belgium as the main customers of the petrochemical complex's products.



Asgari appointed acting head of Customs Administration

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Foroud Asgari, a former *d e s k* deputy in Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), was appointed as the acting head of IRICA, IRNA reported on Monday.

Masoud Karbasian, the newly approved Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, who was the previous head of IRICA, appointed Asgari, his deputy for technical affairs at the time, to the post.

Iran awaits more crude oil cargoes to officially resume Caspian oil swap deal soon

Iran is set to receive another nine crude oil cargoes as part of a Caspian oil swap deal which is due to officially resume soon, and could also start its planned oil-for-goods deal with Russia by early October, government officials said on Saturday.

Hamid Hosseini, director of the north region at Iranian Oil Pipeline and Telecommunication Company, said the official resumption will start once there is enough crude oil, the ministry's news agency Shana reported.

"So far, three tankers have entered the Neka port. Nine other tankers are on the way so that the stocks reach a level that can be pumped into the pipeline and swap operations can start officially," Hosseini was quoted as saying.

According to the semi-official Tasnim news agency, the UAE's Dragon Oil has lately shipped 6,000 mt of Turkmenistan oil to Neka with a Russian-flagged oil tanker.

Iran's swap involves receiving crude oil from its neighboring Caspian states at Neka port on the Caspian Sea to be processed at its northern Tabriz and Tehran refineries. In return, Iran delivers the same amount and quality of oil to the customers of the exporting countries from its southern oil terminal of Kharg in the Persian Gulf waters.

The arrangement ended in 2010 following a decision by former oil minister Masoud Mirkazemi, who argued that Iran was losing a few dollars on each barrel. Iran also complained that the poor quality of the oil received under the swap was damaging its northern refineries.

"Once there are enough oil consignments to start with, swap operations will be launched at a volume of 90,000 to 110,000 b/d," Hosseini said.

The received oil is carried through 270 km of pipelines to the refineries.

According to Shana, the current capacity for the oil swap, which could restart within days, stands at 500,000 b/d.

"Swap operations in this region has not been carried out around seven years. In order to prevent erosion and damage in the line, we were carrying out reverse crude oil transfer," he added.

Iran blends and stores the received oil in facilities at Neka port before sending it off to Tabriz and Tehran.

Iran has previously received three crude oil cargoes from Turkmenistan. It could also resume its swap arrangement with Kazakhstan and Russia -- the two countries that have been in talks with Iran to this end.

Oil-for-goods deal

Separately, Iran also expressed hope on Saturday that it will be able to begin crude oil sales to Russia under an oil-for-goods deal by early October, Shana reported.

"The contract for sales of 100,000 [b/d] of oil to Russia was finalized around two to three months ago. And we hope that purchase of oil by Russia from Iran starts as of late September or early October," Amir Hossein Zamaninia, deputy oil minister for international and commercial affairs, was quoted as saying.

"The value of 50% of the mentioned export consignments will be paid to Iran in cash and the rest will be used to finance imports of Russian goods," he added, with Iran to receive payment for the oil in euros.

The deputy oil minister underlined the significance of the deal and said it would "expand Iran-Russia cooperation in all sectors." (Source: Platts)

European markets regain ground after early dip

European markets have picked up after trending downwards early on Monday.

The moves follow on from US equities' lower close at the end of last week, as traders look for fresh signals from central bankers at their Jackson Hole gathering towards the end of this week.

With immediate geopolitical tensions between the US and North Korea easing somewhat, attention turns back to the longer-term prospects for Donald Trump's proposed tax and infrastructure measures, and their implications for equity values.

(Source: Financial Times)

Ministers outline top economic, energy policies

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian *d e s k* Parliament (Majlis) on Sunday approved 16 cabinet members nominated by recently re-elected President Hassan Rouhani, including minister for oil Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, transport and urban development Abbas Akhoundi, and finance and economic affairs Masoud Karbasian, whose top priorities for their ministries come as follows.

Foreign investment on Oil Ministry agenda

Attracting foreign investment into Iran's oil sector will still be a top priority, Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said on Sunday.

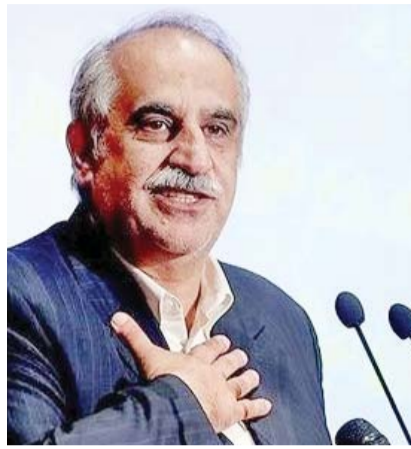
Zanganeh, who was once again retained at his position as Iran's oil minister, said following up the signed IPCs (Iran's new model of oil contracts) to attract foreign investment for developing the oil and gas fields Iran shares with its neighbors along with increasing the fields' recovery factor are among the Oil Ministry's top priorities.

"If we don't consider improving [our fields] recovery factor seriously, we will lose lots of resources and it will devastate our output," Zanganeh was quoted as saying by IRNA.

The minister noted that for the time being, the Oil Ministry will be focusing on the already signed deals to push them forward.

According to the official, the next goal is going to be increasing the country's gas exports which is mainly relied on increasing gas production.

"In this regard we will be focusing on completing the development of South Pars gas field phases, six of which are still un-



(L-R) Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Masoud Karbasian, Transport and Urban Development Minister Abbas Akhoundi, Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh

completed and should go operational by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 2019)," he said.

The minister pointed to the second leap in petrochemical industry and also to development of the country's refineries as other priorities of his affiliated ministry saying, "Petrochemical industry will experience a major development centering on private sector."

The reappointed minister also mentioned construction of an oil terminal in the Persian Gulf as one of the upcoming programs of the Oil Ministry which has also been confirmed by President Rouhani.

"Reducing gas flairs to the lowest possible level is also on our agenda in the upcoming four-year plan," Zanganeh added.

Transport is Sixth Development Plan's focal point

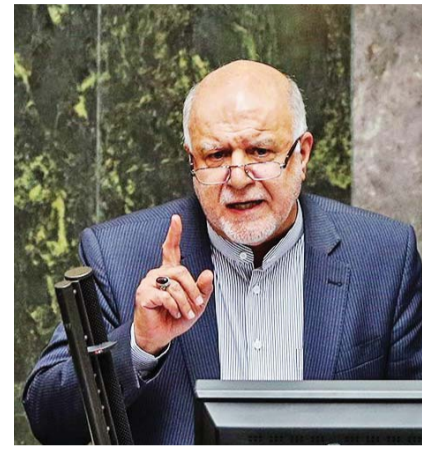
Addressing reporters on the sidelines



of the new cabinet's first meeting on Sunday, Transport and Urban Development Minister Abbas Akhoundi underscored the country's Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021) as the focal point of his ministry during the next four years.

"In the housing sector, four groups are the main targets of the Transport Ministry. The first is the 11 million people who live in rural areas. Next is the 8 million people who live in old buildings. Next is the youth who need houses to get married, and the last is the low-income earners of the society," he said.

Meanwhile, in the transport sector, as Akhoundi described, besides paying a specific attention to aviation and road sectors, shifting the dependency of the transportation system from automobiles to trains is of importance for the ministry.



Job creation top priority for Finance Ministry

Given that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has named the current Iranian calendar year as the year of "Economy of resistance, production, job creation" the issue of creating jobs is of high significance for the government, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Masoud Karbasian said after the cabinet's first meeting.

"Despite Finance Ministry's wide range of activities including implementation of Article 44 of the Iranian Constitution, taxing, privatization, capital market, cooperation with banking system, and attraction of foreign investments, its major goal is creating jobs in the country," he said, underlining that reaching the goal requires planning unified programs and collaboration with other ministries.

Volkswagen's emissions scandal and Brexit 'threatens' German economy

The emissions scandal ensnaring German carmakers is a risk to Europe's largest economy, Germany's finance ministry said on Monday, adding that it was impossible at the moment to quantify its impact.

In its monthly report, the ministry named the issue, which broke out almost two years ago after Volkswagen admitted to cheating US diesel emissions tests, as a threat to Germany along with the UK's decision to leave the European Union and protectionist trade policies by the US

government. The car industry is Germany's biggest exporter and provides about 800,000 jobs.

"Risks linked to how Brexit will shape out and future US trade policies remain," the ministry said. "In addition, the so-called diesel crisis should be classified as a new risk to the German economy even though its effects are not possible to quantify at the moment."

Strong household and state spending provided most of the impulse for the

German economy in the second quarter when growth was measured at 0.6 per cent. Weaker net foreign trade dampened growth, as exports grew strongly less than imports.

The ministry said it expected the industrial sector to continue its upswing also in the third quarter, pointing to robust orders and strong business sentiment indicators.

But the diesel crisis could cloud the German growth outlook, it said, adding: "Given the importance of the car industry

they (the effects of the diesel crisis) must be classified in the medium term as a risk to the overall economic development."

German politicians and car bosses agreed earlier in August to overhaul engine software on 5.3 million diesel cars to cut pollution and try to repair the industry's battered reputation.

EU antitrust regulators are also investigating allegations of a cartel among a group of German carmakers, a measure that could result in hefty fines for the companies. (Source: The Independent)

Japan manufacturers most optimistic in decade as economy grows

Confidence at Japanese manufacturers rose to its highest level in a decade in August led by materials producers, a Reuters poll showed, a further sign of broadening recovery in the economy.

The Reuters' monthly poll — which tracks the Bank of Japan's closely watched quarterly tankan — found the service-sector mood fell but still remained at a relatively high level, underscoring firmness in domestic demand which drove an expansion in the second quarter.

Business sentiment was likely to sag slightly over the next three months, indicating a potential pull-back from the hefty 4 percent annualised growth in the April-June quarter driven by private consumption and capital expenditure.

The sentiment index for manufacturers rose one point to 27 in August in the poll of 548 large- and mid-sized companies, conducted Aug. 1-16, in which 265 firms responded.

It was the best reading since August 2007, just before the last global financial crisis.



"The global economy, centering on the United States and China, is on a firm footing," a manager of a textile maker wrote in the survey.

Reflecting some wariness on the outlook, the manufacturers' index was seen slipping to 26 in November.

"While China's car market remains brisk, North American markets appear to have reached the peak.

As such, we cannot be overly optimistic," wrote a manager at a car manufacturer.

The Reuters Tankan service-sector index slipped to 29 in August from the previous month's two-year high of 33, dragged down by retailers, information and communications firms.

The index was expected to drop further to 25 in November.

Cool and rainy weather may dampen consumer spending in August, which would be worrying as private consumption constitutes about 60 percent of the economy and was a primary driver of the second-quarter's robust expansion.

The Reuters Tankan indexes are calculated by subtracting the percentage of pessimistic respondents from optimistic ones. A negative figure means pessimists outnumber optimists.

The BOJ's last tankan out July 3 showed big manufacturers' business confidence hit its highest level in more than three years in the June quarter. (Source: Reuters)

Egypt lures back investors with higher rates, quickening growth

In Egypt, it's not just ancient antiquities being rediscovered, as the country's asset markets have become increasingly valuable to investors.

Amid civil conflict, terrorist violence and regional troubles, Egypt is re-emerging as a destination of choice for global investors flocking to its energy, real estate and financial sectors. The Middle East's most populous country is plowing ahead with economic reforms, spurring more investment on the back of a \$1 billion International Monetary Fund loan disbursed in July.

The implementation of a new investment law is widely expected to improve the ease of doing business and sanctity of contracts. Meanwhile, more discipline on public spending imposed by the IMF should put government finances on a more sustainable footing. The fund is currently anticipating growth of about 4 percent.

Ultimately, "investors wish to see a strategy put in place to develop sustainable, job creating, manufacturing exports," Hasnain Malik, global head of equities research at Exotix Capital said in an interview.

"Free zones and more equal access to land," are key attributes of a recovery, with a boost to exports seen as "the holy grail" for job creation, Malik added.

In a vote of confidence, Egypt's central bank held its key interest rates unchanged at a meeting last week. Since floating its currency, the pound, last November, monetary authorities have hiked rates by 7 percent.

Higher rates lure investors, but also play a role in taming inflation rates — which have surged to multidecade highs as the government scaled back energy subsidies.

"Our outlook for the Egyptian market is positive. Egypt is well-positioned for economic growth, as the country's macro environment has improved," Asha Mehta, senior vice president and portfolio manager at Acadian Asset Management, told CNBC in an interview.

Tourism and financials shine, but watch the pound

Egypt's pound, however, remains a wild card. Analysts say a fixed exchange rate could work as long as it doesn't involve capital controls or inhibit growth by under-

mining exports.

"Many market observers [believe] the IMF would prefer that Egypt allow the currency to float more freely," said Win Thin, global head of emerging market currency at Brown Brothers Harriman.

Egypt's currency policy "requires a credible policy framework, reasonable macroeconomic growth and plentiful foreign exchange reserves," Exotix's Malik said.

Indeed, after Egypt devalued the pound in 2016, the currency dropped by 50 percent, but eventually it stabilized as rates were hiked and investors chased the higher returns.

Now, with money pouring back into Egyptian assets and the central bank hiking some 300 basis points since the float, markets are looking towards tighter monetary policy in Egypt.

According to Malik, foreign direct investment is flowing into oil and gas, power and real estate. Egypt's real estate is also providing a hedge for the high inflation environment. All of this should drive a better outlook for building materials, construction and property.

"The much more competitive exchange rate should also favor exporters. Tourism is picking up but from a very low base and with excess capacity, for now, in hotels," he added.

Yet risks remain, even with the Egyptian pound having now recovered from being the worst emerging market performer in 2016. "Despite the macro view, corporate quality is somewhat weak given the historical currency environment, both in terms of cash-flow generation and overall asset quality," said Mehta.

As the country prepares to see at least 3 initial public offerings by year's end, Mehta recommended investors engage in "opportunistic stock selection" that takes advantage of growth prospects.

"Given the country's positive positioning relative to global risk factors ... we are finding opportunities in the financial sector," he said. "We find opportunity in banks that have diversified sources of growth, a track record of cash-flow generation despite recent events, and with discounted valuations." (Source: cnbc)

Oil prices fall after rally encourages profit-taking

Oil prices fell on Monday as a rally at the end of last week prompted investors to close positions at a higher price, against a backdrop of signs the global market is starting to rebalance.

Benchmark Brent crude futures were down 29 cents at \$52.43 a barrel at 0856 GMT, after surging more than 3 percent in the previous session.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures traded at \$48.39 a barrel, down 12 cents. The contract had also risen 3 percent in the previous session.

"We are currently seeing some profit-taking after Friday's strong rally ahead of this week's inventory data," said Hans van Cleef, senior energy economist at ABN Amro.

"Fresh uncertainty about inventories and OPEC compliance (with agreed production cuts) could be enough reason to sell some of the long positions."

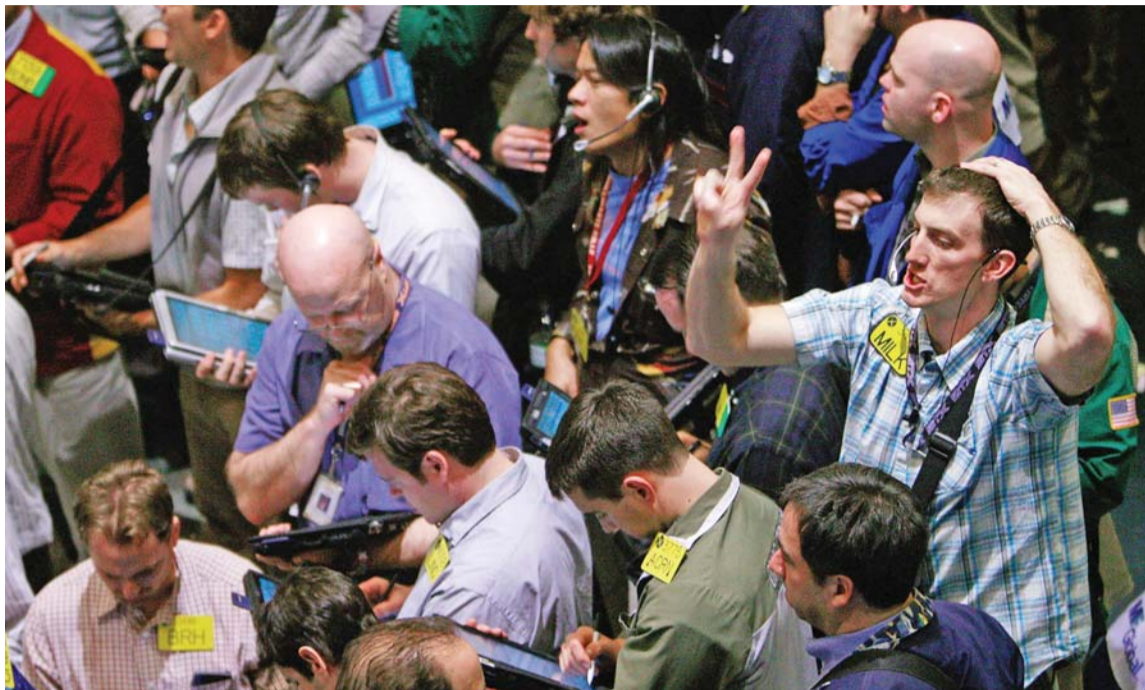
U.S. hedge funds and money managers have already started lowering their bets on rising prices.

Commodity Futures Trading Commission data showed on Friday that investors had cut bullish bets on U.S. crude for a second straight week.

The world remains awash with oil despite a deal struck by some of the world's biggest producers to rein in output. Rising U.S. production has been a major factor keeping supply and demand from balancing.

However, there are indicators that U.S. output may soon slow, as energy firms cut rigs drilling for new oil for a second week in three, energy services firm Baker Hughes reported on Friday. Drillers slashed five rigs in the week to Aug. 18, decreasing the count to 763.

"The rig count suffered its biggest fall since January, according to signs that the market is tightening," ANZ bank



said. Also, U.S. commercial crude inventories have fallen almost 13 percent from their March peaks, to 466.5 million barrels.

Analysts said falling crude inventories, despite rising output, indicated the market was tightening.

"The trajectory of crude inventories is clearly down and it will be surprising if the market will be able to ig-

nore continued drawdowns," said William O'Loughlin, investment analyst at Australia's Rivkin Securities.

Elsewhere, a shutdown of Libya's Sharara oilfield due to a pipeline blockage provided some upside.

Libya's National Oil Corp declared force majeure on loadings of Sharara crude from the Zawiya oil terminal on Sunday.

(Source: Bloomberg)

India Essar closes sale of refining arm to Rosneft led consortium



India's Essar Group on Monday announced closure of \$12.9 billion deal to sell its refining arm Essar Oil to a consortium led by Russian oil major Rosneft, boosting ties between the world's top oil producer and the fastest growing fuel consumer.

The purchase is the biggest foreign acquisition ever in India and Russia's largest outbound deal. It helps Russia deepen economic ties with India that stretch back to the Soviet era.

Rosneft will get a 49.13 percent stake in Essar Oil and the two investors, European trader Trafifigura and a Russian fund UCP, will hold a similar stake in equal parts, Essar group said in a statement. The rest will be held by retail investors.

The deal will give Rosneft and its partners control of 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) Vadinar refinery in western Gujarat and its 3,500 retail fuel stations in India, where fuel demand is expected to rise by 5-7 years in next few years.

The deal also reduces some of the pressure on Essar, which is controlled by the billionaire Ruia brothers. The group with presence in oil and gas, steel, ports and power, has been under pressure to reduce its debt burden.

Prashant Ruia, Director, Essar Capital attends a news conference at the company's headquarters in Mumbai, India August 21, 2017.

Essar Group's will cut its debt by about \$11 billion, Prashant Ruia, Director, Essar Capital told a news conference.

The Group's revenue without Essar Oil will be in excess of \$15 billion including operational facilities in sectors like minerals and metals, energy, infrastructure and services, Ruia said.

He said the group has completed a capex plan of 1.2 trillion rupees in the last six years. "We are now refocusing our energy across our new portfolio of business."

(Source: Reuters)

Total chases growth with \$5 billion purchase of Maersk oil



Total SA agreed to buy the oil and gas unit of A.P. Moller-Maersk A/S, the French company's biggest acquisition since 1999 and another sign of the accelerating pace of energy deals after a long downturn.

Total will pay Maersk with \$4.95 billion of its own shares and assume \$2.5 billion of the Copenhagen-based company's debt, according to a statement on Monday. The full transaction value of \$7.45 billion is above what some analysts were expecting and Maersk shares jumped as much as 5.7 percent following the announcement.

Total's Chief Executive Officer Patrick Pouyanné is following through on a hint last month that he was ready and willing to make acquisitions to grow production, taking advantage of a plunge in company valuations, the cost of drilling and other equipment during the three-year industry downturn. The Maersk assets will boost the French giant's business in the North Sea, adding

to deals earlier this year that expanded its presence in Uganda and Brazil.

The deal ranks among the largest that a super-major has done since oil prices crashed in 2014. Royal Dutch Shell Plc agreed to buy BG Group Plc for \$52 billion in 2015 and has been reaping the benefits since the transaction closed the following year. In January, Exxon Mobil Corp. agreed to pay \$5.6 billion in shares, plus a series of contingent cash payments totaling as much as \$1 billion, for drilling rights in the Permian shale region of Texas.

Energy deals have picked up pace more broadly in recent months as the industry puts the worst of the slump behind it, although major oil companies have tended to be sellers.

The combination with Maersk Oil gives Total about 1 billion barrels of oil equivalent of proven and probable reserves, about 80 percent of which are in the North Sea, according to the statement.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Forget oil prices, oil majors are a buy

Oil stocks have been performing dismally this year, and oil prices have failed to sustain a rally, so why are these stocks still attractive? Low valuations and high dividend yields, say analysts.

Super major oil companies are living a new reality that is based on new profits in a forever-low oil price environment—and globally, analysts say, the oil sector is a great investment.

Value has returned, because international oil giants have adapted.

The initial enthusiasm over OPEC's production cut deal died out rather unceremoniously, and oil prices only enjoyed a brief rally, hammered down continually by rising U.S. supply and slower-than-expected drawdowns on inventory.

Since the beginning of the year, the oil stocks have underperformed the broader market indices both in the U.S. and in Europe.

As of the early morning on August 18, the Stoxx Europe 600 Oil & Gas index—which includes Europe's majors Shell, BP, Total, Statoil, and Eni, among others—was down 11.94 percent year to date. At the same time, the Stoxx Europe 600 index was up 4.27 percent year to date.

It's all rather bleak. Until you look at dividend yields and valuations.

Take the oil sector in Europe, for example. It has the highest dividend yield, so there's value in investing, according to two analysts who spoke to CNBC's Squawk Box this week.

In the European market, the oil sector has a high dividend yield of about 6 percent—the highest there is—which adds up to real value, says Nick Nelson, head of global and European equity strategy at UBS.

According to Nelson, oil prices could move up toward US\$60 by the end of the year, due to underinvestment in projects in 2015 and 2016, which could lead to a crunch in supplies in 2019 and 2020.

The looming shortfall in supplies in just a few years is not a new prediction.

In March this year, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said that unless the industry approves fresh investments in new projects, global oil supply may be struggling to catch up with demand after 2020, which could result in a sharp jump in oil prices.

For the nearest term by the end of this year, another expert, Beat Wittmann, a partner at Porta Advisors, told CNBC that he saw the range for oil prices somewhere at between \$45 and \$60.

The upper end of that projection—oil prices at \$60—is below most of the current analyst forecasts, with expectations for the WTI price predominantly in the low \$50s,

or below.

Like Nelson, Wittmann also believes that there's "great value in super major oil companies."

Super majors have slashed costs and capex, and "they've digested and readjusted balance sheets and quite frankly that investment case does not so much depend on if the oil price is at \$50 or \$60," Wittmann argues.

The oil sector globally is an attractive play for investors right now, according to the expert.

Super majors have indeed realigned plans and investments to the new normal in oil—around \$50—half the oil price they were accustomed to in the 2014 pre-crash dizzy spending days.

BP is also setting its strategies for the lower-for-longer oil reality.

"BP is continuing to plan for a lower oil price world," chief executive Bob Dudley said earlier this month, adding that "I'm not expecting big shifts in prices anytime soon and a price of \$50 a barrel looks like the right number to plan on for the rest of the decade."

According to Goldman Sachs, Big Oil is now repositioning itself for better profitability and cash generation in the oil-at-US\$50 world than they were in the US\$100-oil price environment, due to simplification, standardization, and deflation.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Iraq plans major change to oil pricing for Asia

Iraq has informed its customers that it plans to switch its price benchmark for Basra crude in Asia to DME Oman futures from January, dropping the average of Platts' Oman-Dubai quotes, in a major shift in the way it prices its oil.

The proposal by state-oil marketer SOMO would mark a significant change by OPEC's second-largest producer away from fellow members Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iran, which have been using price assessments from global agency S&P Global Platts as their benchmark for decades.

It throws down the gauntlet on setting prices for more than 12 million barrels per day of Middle East crude in Asia, challenging the role of the world's top exporter Saudi Arabia.

"In an effort to realize the intrinsic value of our crude exports to Asia as to be in alignment with the recent market perception, we are contemplating a change of the current pricing formula for the Asian market," SOMO said in a letter dated Aug. 20 and sent to its customers, according to a copy seen by Reuters on Monday.

It asked customers for opinions on the plan by Aug. 31. SOMO and the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment.

Iraq has been reforming its oil sector - including launching crude sales through auctions on DME to achieve higher prices and setting up trading and shipping joint ventures to understand market dynamics - in what is seen as a drive to gain influence and bring in more revenue as the country seeks to rebuild its economy.

"DME has shown good practice and better transparency than Platts, they also have an auction system," one source familiar with the matter said.

The move also appears to reflect SOMO's aim to lead a change in crude pricing rather than following Saudi Arabia, OPEC's biggest producer whose crude official selling prices (OSPs) set the trend for other major Middle East producers.

(Source: Reuters)

Why Tesla is interested in offshore wind

Platt's recently reported that global offshore wind capacity could double to 34 GWs by 2020, growing at a compound rate of 19 percent per year. The rapid expansion would be driven chiefly by new capacity in the North Sea and China. In fact, offshore capacity in East Asia will outstrip that of Europe by 2022.

But what about the U.S.? Rapidly declining costs, improving reliability and the success of the first offshore installation in Rhode Island are encouraging companies to take further chances on offshore wind. New offshore projects are attracting the interest and attention of major energy companies, as wind power continues to increase its share of the total U.S. energy market.

Leases for offshore wind development are being snapped up by European energy companies, which have decades of experience installing offshore wind farms. Royal Dutch/Shell has been investing in electricity start-ups and other ventures to improve its competitiveness in non-fossil fuel fields. Norway's Statoil won a license to develop a farm off the coast of New York, and seeks to expand to California and Hawaii, reallocating resources from its oil and gas division. The New York lease went to Statoil after a \$42.47 million bid for around seventy-nine thousand acres.

Statoil is on the cutting-edge of wind technology and spearheads the Hywind project off the coast of Scotland, the world's first floating wind farm.

Denmark's DONG Energy has won a lease in Massachusetts, holds another lease in New Jersey and recently opted to spin off its oil and gas divisions so it could focus exclusively on renewables. The Danish company holds a dominant share (29 percent) of global installed offshore wind capacity.

DONG recently beat second quarter profit forecast, and is looking to expand into new opportunities in New York, Maryland and Virginia, according to the company's spokesperson.

An attempt at constructing wind farm off the coast of Massachusetts near Cape Cod failed in 2001 due to local resistance, environmental concerns and other issues. But a new effort is being made by DONG Energy, working with Rhode Island-based Deepwater Wind, to install 144 MW of capacity with a 40 MW/hour Tesla battery storage system, allowing the turbines to collect additional energy at night and securing more reliability from wind turbines that historically have found it difficult to match supply with demand.

The failure of the Cape Wind project was indicative of the sluggish progress of offshore wind power in the United States, which lags far behind Europe and Asia in installed capacity. But this new project once completed will provide enough power for around 80,000 homes. The Tesla battery will provide greater reliability, as wind turbines are generally incapable of providing power with the same steadiness as fossil fuel-firing power plants.

The costs associated with offshore wind, the longer set-up time and the cost of long transmission lines running back to shore, makes it an expensive proposition. Local political resistance to offshore wind remain strong.

Cape Wind failed in large part because local residents protested the installation of what they regarded as an eye sore: similar ventures in the Carolinas have run into similar problems. That might be changing, however, as a growing commercial and political coalition urges the governor of North Carolina to approve new action on offshore wind power.

The marriage of Tesla storage technology and DONG manufacturing could provide the answer to how offshore wind becomes competitive in the U.S. Tesla is focusing its renewable-power battery technology on both solar and wind power, with a storage facility operational in Kauai, Hawaii and a second set for construction in Australia.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, wind power added 8200 MW in 2016, accounting for 26 percent of new capacity. Total wind energy has doubled since 2011, from 120 million MW hours to 226 million MW hours.

A report on offshore found more than 20 projects in the pipeline, representing 24,000 MWs of potential installed capacity. The potential for projects utilizing Tesla's storage technology or floating platforms may indicate further growth in the future, once methods are refined.

If the projects from Statoil and DONG are successful, they could presage further expansion of offshore wind power in the United States, as more companies take advantage of falling costs and new tech.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Planning for Korean reunification

By Lee Jong-Wha

The long-simmering North Korean nuclear crisis has reached a near boiling point. Last month, the Hermit Kingdom launched two intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of hitting major U.S. cities. The United Nations Security Council responded with a unanimous vote to impose new economic sanctions on the country – the most stringent yet – which would cut at least one third of its annual export revenue. Since then, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and U.S. President Donald Trump have been hurling escalating threats at each other.

At this point, it is impossible to say what will happen on the Korean Peninsula. For now, all the international community can really do is continue to leverage a combination of economic sanctions, military pressures, and diplomacy to try to get the Kim regime to the negotiating table. But, at the same time, we should consider and prepare for all eventualities, from a military conflict to the peaceful reunification of North and South Korea.

The most catastrophic scenario would undoubtedly be a military conflict. And yet the likelihood of that outcome has now actually increased, owing to the Trump administration's recent announcement that it is reviewing its military options, including "preventive war."

The truth is that a preemptive strike is far from a practical solution. It is not at all clear that such an approach would lead to North Korean denuclearization or topple the Kim regime. What it could do is escalate into an armed confrontation between the U.S. and China, with nuclear war being the worst possible outcome.

South Koreans, well within the range of the North's weapons, would suffer dearly from the Kim regime's retaliation against a U.S. strike. To put it into perspective, the Korean War of 1950-1953 killed more than two million Koreans, as well as 36,000 Americans and 600,000 Chinese soldiers – and it didn't even involve nuclear weapons.

Practical approach

A safer and more practical approach would focus on tightening the economic and political screws on North Korea. To be sure, some argue that economic sanctions, however harsh, would be inadequate to compel North Korea's leaders to give up their nuclear weapons. After all, both Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Libya's Colonel Muammar Qaddafi halted their programs to acquire weapons of mass destruction, only to be driven out of power and then executed.

Given the risk implied by a military solution, more robust economic and political pressure remains the international community's best bet for defusing the North Korean nuclear threat, whether by compelling the Kim regime to abandon its program or by triggering that regime's collapse. The UN Security Council sanctions are a step in the right direction, but they are not enough, as they do not ban supplies of oil to the North, apparently due to Chinese and Russian opposition.

In fact, though China agreed to the sanctions, it remains reluctant to aggravate its already tense relationship with its North Korean client. This must change. Stronger and more focused U.S.-China cooperation is essential if sanctions are to have a chance of working. Avoiding such cooperation will only make a devastating outcome – be it a military conflict or an unruly collapse of the Kim regime – more likely.

China could still be persuaded to take a more active role in constraining the Kim regime. Indeed, its uncooperativeness could damage its relationships with the U.S., Europe, Japan, and South Korea – all of which are ultimately more valuable partners than the unruly, impoverished North Korea.

But for China to do more, it needs assurances that it will not immediately lose its strategic buffer on the Korean Peninsula. Hence the need for an agreement now on how to handle the potential collapse of the Kim regime and the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Like the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Kim regime's collapse could come about quite suddenly. So China needs to know now that a reunified Korea would not be its enemy, and that the U.S. would withdraw its troops that are currently stationed in South Korea.

China's strategic interests

Of course, the implications of a collapsed regime in North Korea extend far beyond China's strategic interests. Indeed, it would have a major economic and political impact throughout the region. That is all the more reason to put a comprehensive plan in place to ensure a peaceful transition.

I recently conducted a quantitative assessment of the economic impacts of unification on North and South Korea under several hypothetical scenarios, assuming North Korea's sudden collapse. As it turns out, a peacefully managed unification process, characterized by comprehensive economic reform and opening-up, could enable North Korea to achieve sustained double-digit GDP growth, despite a sharp slowdown immediately following the collapse.

The key to success would be to allow North Korea to take advantage of its relatively abundant human and natural resources, including rich mineral reserves, to achieve export-led industrialization. As for South Korea, with sufficient preparation, effective policies, and more financial resources, it can manage a peaceful reunification and mitigate the adverse effects of the shock.

By contrast, in a scenario where South Korea is unprepared for reunification and the North quickly dissolves in a state of disorder, the risk premium on the Korean Peninsula would jump sharply, and reforms would be delayed. This would lead to persistently weakened investment and GDP growth across the Korean Peninsula, causing South Korea's GDP to decline by more than 3% in the initial years of the crisis. Inflows of migrants from the North would compound the risks, potentially disrupting South Korean labor markets and causing social unrest.

For now, the international community, including China, should continue to push for North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and pursue economic reforms, using ever-stronger economic sanctions. Meanwhile, South Korea must continue its efforts to resume a dialogue with the North on humanitarian, health, and environmental issues. Civilian exchanges and information flows could nurture forces that would bring about fundamental change from the inside.

Even after 70 years of division, South Koreans must not give up hope for peaceful reunification with our northern brethren. On the contrary, we must plan for it.

(Source: project-syndicate.org)

The true face of Donald Trump

U.S. President Donald Trump is a racist and a hate preacher. It's time to stop trivializing the immense damage he is causing.

By Klaus Brinkbäumer

Ninety years ago, in the New York borough of Queens, around 1,000 members of the Klu Klux Klan clashed with police. Fred Trump was among those arrested. His case never reached trial because times were different back then. But Fred Trump raised his son Donald to believe that he belonged to a white elite. When asked about the ugly KKK episode in 2015, the presidential candidate answered, "This never happened. This is nonsense and it never happened. This never happened. Never took place. He was never arrested, never convicted, never even charged. It's a completely false, ridiculous story." Does this mean that something can only be true if it winds up in court?

In 1973, Donald Trump was sued because he preferred renting his 14,000 New York apartments to white tenants rather than blacks. It was documented and proven. Applications were marked with a "C" for "colored" and sorted out. Black people were rejected and white people were given the apartments only minutes later. During the 1980s, casino operator Trump considered black employees to be lazier than whites. He said he feared blacks would steal from him. In April 1989, when white investment banker Trisha Meili was raped in Central Park and beaten until she fell into a coma, four blacks and a Latino were arrested. "Bring back the death penalty!" read the full-page newspaper ads Trump took out in response. A court convicted the men, who were innocent, and they were only released from prison years later.

In November 2016, Americans elected this Trump as their president. The same man who had denounced Barack Obama as a Muslim and claimed he had been born in a foreign country. The same man who campaigned under the slogan "Make America Great Again" -- in which "great again" means a social Darwinist U.S. where American-born locals rule over immigrants, heterosexuals over homosexuals, whites over blacks and men over women. Based on his speeches, his decrees and his hiring decisions, there is no other possible interpretation of what he stands for and who he is.

■ America has lost its moral compass

Trump is a racist. He is a preacher of hate. Those who pretend he is not, those



A KKK rally in Tampa, Florida in 1939

The White House is supposed to be home to America's moral compass. Instead, though, it currently houses the country's chauvinist-in-chief.

who portray him as merely being an unpolished, somewhat chaotic old man, as a person who explicitly sought to avoid becoming a slick politician, are merely enabling him. "Trump tests ideas on Twitter and then he repeats and repeats them so often to the point that they have been learned," says German cognitive scientist and linguist Elisabeth Wehling, who is currently at the University of California in Berkeley. Many Americans, she says, see the world as a fundamentally aggressive place, as a dichotomy between good and evil. Trump, she says, precisely articulates these people's reality. In an uncertain time of change, the president has identified the scapegoats: immigrants and the elite. And just in case there is another terrorist attack in the U.S. in the future, Trump has already identified who is to blame -- namely the liberal judges who are now allowing refugees into the country. The White House is supposed to be home to America's moral compass. Instead, though, it currently houses the country's

chauvinist-in-chief.

Everyday racism generally works in subtle ways. It starts with prejudice and discrimination: coins are thrown at Jewish children or blacks are subjected to police checks more often than whites. Then there are the racist activists on the dark fringes and, thirdly, politicians who openly service clichés. All those things can take place independently of each other. But there have repeatedly been phases when it all comes together in a perfect storm. That's what happened with National Socialism in Germany and with apartheid in South Africa. Hungary has been experiencing such a phase in the last few years -- and now Trump's America has followed. During these phases, the full impact of racism is on display and inhibitions drop.

In communist East Germany, it was thought -- prematurely as we now know -- that capitalism had been overcome. In the Western world, meanwhile, we had hoped that misogyny, homophobia, anti-Semitism and racism had been largely

relegated to the past. That too, though, was premature. The aim of racist rhetoric is to bring taboos back into the sphere of "legitimate debate," placing racism on the same footing as tolerance. Thesis and antithesis. Just an expression of opinion. The U.S. is a free country.

David Duke, the leader of American racists, had good reason to thank Trump this week. When the president of the United States says that the victim is just as responsible as the murderer, or that the counterdemonstrator is just as guilty as the Nazi waving the swastika flag and shouting, "Jews will not replace us," and when Trump's own party doesn't drop him even now, then Duke and Trump have already achieved a key goal. Tolerance, empathy, kindness and diversity of opinion are all disparaged as political correctness. It becomes OK to say anything else, and if you can say it, it becomes easier to justify violence. The wheel of civilization has made a turn in reverse.

(Source: Spiegel)

Italy and France are playing a dangerous game in Libya

The current EU anti-migration and anti-terror policies towards Libya will only destabilize it further.

By Guma El-Gamaty

After the United Nations lifted sanctions imposed on Libya in 2003, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi set off to improve relations with Europe. He knew that the two most important cards he held were oil money and migration. He knew that France was looking for yet another market for its arms industry and he knew that Italy, being closest geographically to the Libyan shore, was most interested in curbing migration.

In August 2007, France announced arms deals worth \$405m with Libya - the first such deal for Tripoli with a Western country since the sanctions had been lifted. The previous month, then French President Nicolas Sarkozy had enjoyed a good deal of PR, helping secure the release of five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian held in Libya.

In August 2008, Gaddafi signed a "friendship" agreement with then Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in which he agreed to toughen security measures, including joint maritime patrols, to stem the flow of "illegal migrants" to Europe. In return, Italy pledged to pay \$5bn to the Gaddafi regime in compensation for the colonial crimes Italy committed during its decades-long rule of Libya.

Gaddafi held up his part of the deal. According to UNHCR figures, the number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean into Europe from Libya dropped from almost 40,000 in 2008 to about 5,000 in 2010.

But with the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, the migration route was reactivated, and in 2016 the number of migrants crossing from Libya to Italy grew to 170,000. At the same time, various extremist groups took advantage of the situation and set up camp in Libya, which the European Union, and especially France (which suffered a number of terrorist attacks in recent years), has perceived as a growing terror threat.

In response, Europe is resorting to its old ways in resolving its issues with Libya -- striking a deal with Libyan leadership.

European tug-of-war in Libya

In an attempt to conclude another migration deal with Libya, Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni invited the leader of the UN-backed National Accord government, Fayez al-Sarraj, to Rome last month. He managed to convince Sarraj to allow the Italian navy to operate inside Libya's territorial waters in order to stem the flow of migrants.

Italy's parliament voted on the move, but Sarraj did not consult others in Libya before accepting Italy's offer, and as a result, he faced widespread criticism back home for allowing what critics deemed "a violation of Libyan



The permanent resettlement of millions of sub-Saharan migrants in Libya would cause dramatic demographic changes in the country and eventually lead to major social and economic upheaval.

sovereignty". Sarraj defended himself by explaining that he did not sign a new deal with Italy and all he agreed was to re-activate parts of the 2008 "friendship" agreement between Gaddafi and Berlusconi, which included joint naval patrols inside Libyan waters.

Joining the wave of criticism was military leader Khalifa Haftar of the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army. After the announcement in Rome, he threatened to bomb Italian ships if they entered Libyan waters.

But just a day before Sarraj's trip to Rome, the two Libyan men met in Paris under the auspices of French President Emmanuel Macron. The reconciliation talks between Sarraj and Haftar - brokered by Macron - resulted in a 10-point statement that expressed commitment on both sides to a ceasefire and the holding of national elections, which angered Italy.

While France and Italy led in unison the 2011 military campaign against Gaddafi, today the two countries are playing a tug-of-war in Libya, which is further destabilizing the country. Rome is standing firmly behind Sarraj, hoping he could help with a solution to the migration issue and Paris is backing Haftar, seeing his army as an effective counterterrorism measure.

But as the two EU countries are pulling in opposite direc-

tions in Libya, reconciliation and a final solution to the current crises will become that much more difficult to achieve.

'Dumping' refugees

Back in 2009, when Gaddafi visited Rome to celebrate the ratification of this "friendship" agreement, the refugee policy director at Human Rights Watch, Bill Frelick, said that the agreement looked "less like friendship and more like a dirty deal to enable Italy to dump migrants and asylum seekers on Libya and evade its obligations".

Unfortunately, eight years on, Italy and the rest of the EU intend to dump again an international problem on Libya.

The EU wants to temporarily return migrants to centers and camps in Libya, from where their asylum claims to Europe can be processed. It is no secret that the overwhelming majority of the migrants will not be granted asylum in Europe and hence their temporary housing in Libya will become permanent.

Due to the ongoing violent conflict, Libya is a divided, unstable country with no strong central political authority in place. Some western countries perceive and present the migration crisis as part of this internal conflict and want Libya to take responsibility for thousands of migrants who, after embarking on the dangerous sea crossing, fail to reach or obtain permanent settlement in Europe.

Some have even gone as far as suggesting that Libya - being Africa's third largest country with the highest reserves of natural resources coupled with a very small population (six million) - can permanently accommodate millions of poverty stricken sub-Saharan Africans who want to leave their countries of origin. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, said last year that a "giant refugee city" should be built in Libya.

This strategy would practically transform Libya into a buffer zone "protecting" Europe from sub-Saharan migrants. Any such policy, if realized, would jeopardize the future of Libya and would definitely not provide safe and acceptable living conditions to millions of migrants.

The permanent resettlement of millions of sub-Saharan migrants in Libya would cause dramatic demographic changes in the country and eventually lead to major social and economic upheaval. The consequent instability, poverty and violence in Libya would, of course, push desperate people across the Mediterranean again.

So the "solution" to the migration problem that the EU is envisioning is not a solution at all. If it continues to push for it and to have a destabilizing effect on Libyan politics, the end result will be much worse than the current situation.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Charlottesville clashes typify racial turbulence in U.S.

By Abayomi Azikiwe

Thousands of people filled the streets in downtown Durham on August 18 after rumors circulated that the Ku Klux Klan had been granted a permit to march in the city.

Soon a standoff between anti-racist demonstrators and the police threatened to erupt into a rebellion. As the marchers moved to the Durham County old courthouse, four white men were confronted after making racist comments directed towards African Americans. Two arrests among the white men later followed. Another arrest was made after protesters refused a command by the police to disperse.

The events of August 18 reflect the rising tension in Durham and across the United States involving the continued existence of institutional racism. Reports from the demonstration indicate that some people were armed with axes and carbine rifles in an obviously open carry state in the South.

On the same day, August 18, Steve Bannon, the White House chief strategist was relieved of his duties within the administration of President Donald Trump. Bannon had given a number of what was described as "unauthorized interviews" to media outlets where he drew the ire of chief of staff Gen. John Kelly.

Trump's apologist view of the neo-fascist and racist demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 11 and 12, went up against the standard view of the American elites in regard to issues of race and political culture. Although the U.S. political and economic structures are permeated with racial and national oppression which remain the order of the day as it relates to the social status of African Americans, the posture of Wall Street and the Washington establishment is not to acknowledge this reality.

The display of neo-fascist sentiments on the campus of the University of Virginia and in downtown Charlottesville was far too much for anti-racist and social justice activists to contemplate without a response. Thousands came out into the streets to oppose the "Unite the Right" rally designed to preserve the Southern Confederate heritage.

Police units withdrew when the alt-right operatives went on the offensive attacking the anti-racists and anti-fascist contingents. Eventually the racist mob was not able to hold its event at the location of the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. In retaliation, one of their numbers plowed his vehicle into a crowd of anti-racist demonstrators, killing one young woman, Heather Heyer, and injuring 20 others, including five critically and four seriously.

People across the U.S. were outraged at this blatant act of right-wing terror. Demonstrations flourished spontaneously in various cities and towns from the east coast to the west.

What added further fuel to the crisis

was the response of Trump to the developments in Charlottesville. He appeared to be blaming "both sides" for the disturbances and consequently the death of Heyer. The following Monday, August 14, the president then made a statement which seemed to be scripted condemning the neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klan members who marched through Charlottesville with burning torches chanting "we will not be replaced."

A former KKK Grand Wizard told the corporate media that Trump must remember who put him in office. It was the white people and not the radical Left who voted for him in large numbers last November.

On August 15, Trump sought to add some luster to his non-existent "infrastructure program" through a press conference from Trump Towers where he was said to be on a "working vacation." After a brief statement, he took questions which inevitably asked him about his views on white nationalists who have claimed that they are his supporters.

The president resurrected the "both sides are responsible" argument going even further insisting that not all of those present in the neo-fascist demonstrations were white nationalists, that some were "good people." Taking to twitter on the morning of August 17, he reiterated this view while condemning what he called the "alt-Left."

By the previous day, the White House manufacturing and business councils had been disbanded. Since the events in Charlottesville and Trump's utterances on racism and neo-fascism, many leading council members from some of the largest multi-national corporations had resigned. All during the week of August 14-18, the stock market in New York experienced a precipitous decline, revealing the uncertainty over the direction of the current administration in Washington.

Durham socialists take direct action on confederate symbol

During an anti-racist rally on August

A former KKK Grand Wizard told the corporate media that Trump must remember who put him in office. It was the white people and not the radical Left who voted for him in large numbers last November.

15, members of Workers World Party Durham branch led a political operation which took down a statue commemorating Confederate soldiers. Assisted by activists from other local organizations, those present sought to emphasize the necessity of anti-racists and anti-fascists to take matters into their own hands: to immediately remove symbols of the slave system independent of the official policies of the state.

Taqiyah Thompson, 22, a student at the Historical Black North Carolina Central University, climbed the statue and placed a rope around the neck of the soldier while others brought it tumbling down to



Durham socialists take direct action while ruling class seeks to reposition itself for a renewed political struggle

destruction. No arrests were made at the time since Durham police claimed they had no jurisdiction due to the fact that the statue was on County property.

At a press conference called by WWP on Wednesday August 16, the activists relayed why they resorted to direct action. Thompson was quoted as saying:

"I did the right thing. Everyone who was there—the people did the right thing. The people will continue to keep making the right choices until every Confederate statue is gone, until white supremacy is gone. That statue is where it belongs. It needs to be in the garbage."

Chronicling the direct line from the Confederate withdrawal from the U.S. in 1861, the four year battle they waged to preserve slavery as an economic system and today's lethal force utilized by law-enforcement against the African American people, Thompson emphasized that racism and national oppression remain as vestiges of the historical legacy of America. Over the last four years there has been an upsurge in anti-racist demonstrations in response to the police killings of Black

sheriff deputies. They have been charged with both felonies and misdemeanors.

By Thursday August 17, eight people had been arrested, charged and then released on \$10,000 bond. All of them remain committed to direct action against racist monuments throughout the South and the country.

National campaign launched to defend Durham activists

Immediately a nationwide effort to raise legal defense funds for the activists began. On August 17, when four other activists who were informed that warrants were issued for their arrests turned themselves in at the Durham County Court-house, dozens of people in solidarity attempted to solicit arrest as well. Those without warrants were turned away by the County.

According to the Herald Sun:

"Peter Gull Gilbert, 36, Dante Emmanuel Strobino, 35, and Ngoc Loan Tran, 24, all of Durham, walked into the courtroom with their lawyer Scott Holmes, a private attorney and law professor at N.C. Central University... Taylor Alexander Jun Cook, 24, turned himself in Thursday (August 17) afternoon. Three others – Raul Mauro Arce Jimenez, 26, of Durham; Elena Everett, 37, of Durham; and Aaron Caldwell, 24, of Raleigh surrendered at the Durham County magistrate's office Thursday morning. All four faced warrants charging them with three misdemeanors – disorderly conduct by injury of a statue, damage to real property valued at more than \$200, and damage to real property – and two counts of felony inciting a riot to cause property damage in excess of \$1,500."

Supporters of those charged are asking concerned people to demand that all of the felony and misdemeanor counts be dismissed. A statement released in the aftermath of the arrests says that people should call the DA (919-808-3010, press 4) – to insist the charges be dropped and for the sheriff and county prosecutors to halt all attempts to harass, detain or charge anti-racist activists.

Please don't bring Muslims into Charlottesville

By Domenica Ghanem

On August 13 I found myself giving into what's become somewhat of an every night occurrence in the Trump administration: furiously refreshing my Twitter feed during a breaking news event.

This time it was the horror in Charlottesville. A white supremacist rally that ended in one neo-Nazi ramming his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing one.

I scrolled past 140-word analyses on the inconsistencies of behavior by law enforcement, prayers in solidarity, and outrage at Donald Trump's response. I nodded to myself in agreement. But, as a Muslim, I also waited nervously for what else was coming.

Sure enough, there it was: "Can you imagine what Trump would be tweeting if a group of militant Muslims were marching, carrying guns & starting fights in the street?"

With more than 20,000 likes and over 9,000 retweets, I believe this tweet by self-described MSNBC commentator Matthew Miller was intended to combat Trump's Islamophobic rhetoric.

But actually, it had the opposite effect.

At first glance, it seems harmless. The point he was trying to make was that Trump is a racist hypocrite because he would have named the incident in Charlottesville "Islamic terrorism," as he likes to call it, if it were perpetrated by Muslims. Yet he refuses to call out violent neo-Nazis.

But instead, what Miller's done is talk about Muslims in the context of militancy, even as they had nothing to do with this violence. It wasn't just him. I saw this sentiment over and over again on my Twitter feed and Facebook timeline.



Muslims are almost never mentioned in the media except in the context of national security or terrorism. In fact, the Newseum reports, research shows that "9 in 10 of all news reports about Muslims, Islam, or Islamic organizations are related to violence — war or terrorism."

It's messages like these — repeated by Democrats, Republicans, and self-identifying progressives alike — that reinforce the stereotype that equates Muslims with terrorism.

I've even seen it from other Muslims who have internalized these pervasive Islamophobic stereotypes.

From Barcelona to Charlottesville, there's an obvious double standard in how Trump treats terrorism. But let's be careful how we talk about it.

While Trump has made derogatory remarks about many other groups, no one thought to associate this incident with them. I saw no posts saying, "If a journalist were driving that car, Trump would call this a terrorist attack."

That's because the comparison simply doesn't make sense.

Journalists don't perpetrate attacks in the U.S. at rates higher than other demographics. And neither do Muslims. But the reason people think we do is because terrorist attacks perpetrated by Muslims are covered significantly more often in the media, and for longer periods of time, than those perpetrated by others.

In fact, after the recent attack in Barcelona that killed at least 13 people, it took Trump just a couple hours to respond by advocating for committing war crimes against Muslims. With a president like that, we definitely don't need the added press of those who call themselves allies perpetuating these associations.

So next time — and in this sad time where white supremacist groups feel so emboldened that they no longer need to wear hoods, there will be a next time — don't equate Muslims with hate and violence while you're trying to denounce hate and violence.

Instead, you could say something like: Trump regularly scapegoats and criminalizes people of color while refusing to condemn violent white supremacists.

That's a message that clearly points out where Trump's loyalties lie, and doesn't reinforce Islamophobia. And better yet, it still leaves 47 characters for you to attach a relevant meme.

The bottom line is, as your mom probably taught you, if you don't have anything nice to say about us, don't say anything at all. (Source: FPIF)

Does Britain have a secret travel ban against Arabs?

By Yvonne Ridley

Britain stands accused of operating a secret travel ban against Arabs after it emerged that a large number of internationally renowned academics, religious leaders, musicians, artists and performers from the Middle East have been refused visas to enter the UK. All were booked to appear or perform at the world famous Edinburgh Festival in Scotland but were rejected on the grounds that they would not return to their home countries after the festival ends on 28 August. The move by the Home Office in London is said to have angered many in the Scottish government, which has long wanted to determine its own immigration, asylum and border controls instead of relying on the British government.

Included in the Arab ban list is the Reverend Rola Sleiman, the first Christian woman to be ordained in the Middle East. Like the others whose visa applications were rejected by the Home Office, she was informed that she had been refused because it was feared that she would not return to her home in Lebanon where her children live.

Reverend Sleiman, of the National Evangelist Presbyterian Church in Lebanon, has a Syrian father and Lebanese mother. Although she was born and has lived in Tripoli all of her life, and considers herself to be Lebanese, she does not have Lebanese nationality. Lebanese mothers cannot pass on their nationality to their children, so Sleiman is Syrian like her father and must periodically renew her Syrian passport and residency permit to maintain her legal status in Lebanon.

Her church, situated in the centre of the old city, is surrounded by Muslim shopkeepers in the largely Muslim neighbourhood. Its decision-making body, the Synod, voted 23 to one in favour of her being ordained in February this year.

Despite the intervention of the Scottish National Party's Carol Monaghan MP, the Reverend Sleiman is just one of many who were prevented from travelling to the Scottish capital for the festival. The ban, described as Kafkaesque by some, has cost event organisers and promoters thousands of pounds in cancelled air tickets.

UNESCO's Dr Nazmi Al-Masri, of the Islamic University of Gaza, was also refused a visa, despite having visited the UK in 2015. His colleague Alison Phipps, a language professor at Glasgow University and UNESCO chair in refugee integration, had also booked musicians and dancers from Ghana's Noyam African Dance Institute as part of a UK-government funded academic project in June, but several had their visas refused.

"Effectively it is now a universal ban on travel from global south countries regardless of whether you are a world leading academic or artist, or a first time traveller on a humanitarian or development project working with UK institutions," said Phipps, who in 2012 was awarded an OBE for services to education.

We can only surmise that there is a secret travel ban in place now in the Home Office.

This is denied by the government. A Home Office spokesman issued a statement to MEMO refuting claims of a secret travel ban, bias or discrimination in the visa rejections, claiming instead that every case was dealt with on its own merit.

"UK Visas and Immigration continually reviews its global visa operation to improve performance and ensure it continues to deliver fast and fair decisions to customers," said the official. "All visa applications are considered on their individual merits and applicants must provide evidence to show they meet the requirements of the immigration rules."

The Home Office decisions have forced the cancellation of a production in the first showcase of Arab theatre and dance at the Edinburgh Fringe, with a further two under threat. Four members of the Cairo-based production team have also been denied visas to travel to Britain, including the technical director who has been the point of contact between the companies and the three venues hosting the shows.

Sara Shaarawi, an Egyptian playwright, translator and performer who is now based in Glasgow, is co-producing the showcase, made up of 10 productions, from Scotland. She described the process of trying to get visas for Arab performers by making reference to the nightmarish, red-taped fictional world of author Franz Kafka.

Some of the decisions were appealed against, with endorsements and supporting documentation from the prestigious Fringe Society, all of the venues and the British Council. They were rejected a second time.

The Elephant Your Majesty, to be performed by teenage Syrian refugees from Lebanon, is one of the shows which has been cancelled, while others are under threat or being heavily rewritten to accommodate smaller casts. Your Love is Fire has already had to be reworked after two of the Berlin-based Syrian cast were unable to get the necessary residency papers needed to apply for visas.

"While we're uncertain of the status of several shows at the moment," explained Shaarawi, "the majority of our showcase is otherwise unaffected and we're looking forward to presenting the first significant showcase of Arab theatre and performance at the Edinburgh Fringe. Our aim is to represent the diversity of performance within the Arab region and we feel it is more vital now than ever that we take this opportunity to celebrate this work as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe's 70th anniversary."

In the end, it was mainly performers from Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Sudan who were affected by the travel ban, despite 18 months of planning and preparation.

The response in Edinburgh is typical of the vitality and spontaneity for which the Fringe is renowned. Every night at an event called Chill Habibi, actors are reading out one of the visa refusal letters from the Home Office. Last Tuesday, Emma Thompson made a surprise appearance to read a rejection letter which said that the visa official was:

not satisfied on the balance of probabilities, that you will leave the UK at the end of your visit... I am not convinced you are genuinely seeking entry to the UK for a purpose that is permitted by the visitor rules and that you will not undertake any prohibited activity

The Oscar- and Bafta-winning actor looked exasperated after reading the letter.

After Barcelona: Brexit will put Brits at more risk of deadly terror attacks

By Elizabeth Ball

As the United Kingdom proceeds with negotiations to leave the European Union (EU), it must account for mounting security concerns regarding the potential drop-off in shared intelligence with EU countries.

A recent report published by the UK's House of Lords EU Home Affairs Sub-Committee concluded there will be a "barrier" to security if data transfers between EU nations and the UK are obstructed after Brexit, which would negatively impact the national security and counterterrorism efforts of not only the UK, but EU member states as well.

In recent years, especially after the attacks in Brussels, Paris, Nice, and Berlin, there has been more cooperation within the EU to keep European citizens safe, highlighting both the growing importance and validity of intelligence sharing.

The most recent attack in Barcelona on August 17, when a vehicle driven through crowds of pedestrians killed twelve and injured eighty, only underscores the growing need for

collaboration in counterterrorism efforts throughout Europe. As a result, the UK needs to make the reconciliation between its security system and that of the EU a priority in the Brexit negotiations, working hard to secure the best UK-EU intelligence-sharing arrangement possible.

Intelligence sharing supports police and other authorities who respond to terrorism. Former UK Metropolitan Police Chief Commissioner Lord Paul Condon has said that losing access to the EU's intelligence data would hinder the ability of UK police to fight terrorism, drug dealing, smuggling, and crime in general.

According to Condon, unless a post-Brexit UK can establish an intelligence sharing system that mirrors the one currently in place, British citizens will be less safe after their departure from the EU.

Currently, as part of the EU, the UK both contributes to and benefits from the EU Intelligence Analysis Center (EU INT-CEN). INT-CEN data is based on intelligence gathered from EU member states' own intelligence and security services.

This exclusive information includes analytical products, such as: long-term strategic papers, threat assessments for particular EU member states, and various intelligence reports. All of this strategic analysis is open to EU decision-makers, as well as leaders of all member states.

Intelligence-sharing structures

Europol, the EU's law enforcement agency, also plays a critical role in facilitating and utilizing intelligence-sharing structures among EU member states. In January 2017 Europol released a statement saying information-sharing on counterterrorism in the EU had reached an all-time high.

With the launch of Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) in January 2016, Europol's counterterrorism efforts have led to an increase in the exchange of information and analysis, as well as coordination of operational support among EU member states.

As a result of increasing collaboration with regard to shared security concerns, Europol has noted a significant increase in trust and awareness among law enforcement agencies in EU member states, leading to an increase in

new leads for investigation and the identification of new targets.

Sir Julian King, European commissioner for the security union, noted that after the terror attacks in France, Europol was able to offer 800 intelligence leads, as well as over 1,600 leads on suspicious financial transactions.

With heightened security concerns after attacks throughout Europe, there is pressure to even further improve the exchange of information within the EU. Should the UK forfeit access to such a network, its counterterrorism and security systems would be severely weakened.

Despite this reality, there are those who downplay the effectiveness of intelligence sharing between EU member states, citing the need for control of information on a national level.

Jean-Marie Delarue, a former French intelligence official, commented: "Is it not in the nature of intelligence agencies to keep the information for themselves? Information is power. In intelligence, one only has enemies, no friends."

→13

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Tea vs coffee - which cuppa should you be drinking?

By Lisa Drayer

Reading this with a mug of coffee in your hand? Then you have permission to feel smug. The latest pan-European research, led by epidemiologist Dr Marc Gunter of Imperial College, London – following a study of more than half a million people over 16 years – has shown that those who drank the most coffee had a reduced risk of premature death from any cause.

But what if you're reaching for a cuppa char instead? Don't panic: a compound in black tea could help gut bacteria fight infections and prevent severe influenza, say scientists at the Washington University School of Medicine in the latest issue of the journal, *Science*.

It's good to know that the nation's two favourite hot drinks can be healthy – but which one would be best for you?

Best for... longer life? Tea

If you want to live longer, pop the kettle on. The latest study on coffee backs up evidence from the National Institutes of Health, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2012, which reported that, compared with men who did not drink coffee, men who drank six or more cups per day had a 10 per cent lower risk of death, whereas women in this category of consumption had a 15 per cent lower risk.

But regular tea drinkers have also been found to live longer than average. An Australian study published in *The Journal of Clinical Nutrition* in 2015 showed that women in their 70s and 80s lived longer if they had the equivalent of two cuppas a day. This may be due to a unique compound in tea that can change the body's genetic code.

Veronica Ek, from Uppsala University, whose study was published in *Human Molecular Genetics* in May, found that regular tea- (but not coffee) drinking is associated with epigenetic changes in 28 different gene regions known to interact with cancer or oestrogen metabolism.

Best for... antioxidants? Coffee

Both coffee and tea contain lots of antioxidants called polyphenols, nutrients that can help to reduce inflammation and repair cellular damage. Dr Bob Arnot, whose latest bestseller *The Coffee Lover's Diet* (HarperCollins, £18.99) reveals how to get the most health benefits from the drink, explains: "We know now that the driving force behind many illnesses such as heart disease and stroke is inflammation, which is something polyphenols can help with. And coffee contains two and half times more polyphenols than tea on average."

But he also warns that there is a staggering difference between brands, thanks to methods of roasting – and even among types of beans from different countries. "If you want to get the most polyphenols (and thus the most benefit) from drinking coffee, choose beans grown at high altitude, such as Nyeri in Kenya." For starters, try Waitrose's Kenya AA, a medium-roasted arabica (£3.50 for 100g).

"Better still is dark Greek or Turkish roast, as these retain higher levels of polyphenols than lighter French or Italian roasts," says Dr Arnot. "But for the very best health, you want varieties of polyphenols. So do drink tea, too."

Best for... heart health? Tea

Be still your (rapidly beating) heart: both coffee and tea have been linked with reduced cardiovascular diseases. Dutch research, published in *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology: Journal of the American Heart Association* in 2010, found that drinking more than six cups of tea per day was associated with a 36 per cent lower risk of heart disease compared to those who drank less than a single cup of tea per day. Coffee drinkers with a modest two-to-four cups per day had a 20 per cent lower risk of heart disease compared to those drinking less than two or more than four cups.

"The polyphenols may help your heart," says Dr Arnot, "but if you are a slow caffeine metaboliser, it can lead to increased blood pressure and a higher pulse rate. Know your caffeine tolerance level and how much goes into the average shop-bought coffee. No one should have more than 400mg of caffeine a day (equivalent to four espressos). Anyone who finds that caffeine particularly affects them – ie, that it disturbs their sleep – should have no more than 200mg a day." One Starbucks Caffe Americano Venti



Coffee consumption decreases the risk of colorectal cancer and a premature death from any cause.

contains 300mg of caffeine.

Best for... the digestive system? Coffee

The jury is out on whether coffee can trigger irritable bowel syndrome, as some sufferers claim, but researchers at the University of Southern California (USC) Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center of Keck Medicine of USC reported last April that coffee consumption decreases the risk of colorectal cancer.

"We found the more coffee consumed, the lower the risk," said Dr Stephen Gruber, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and senior author of the study. The indication of decreased risk was seen across all types of coffee, both caffeinated and decaffeinated.

Best for... weight loss? Tea (as long as it's green...)

If you've swallowed fitness magazine advice to neck an espresso before a fat-burning workout, this might give you pause for thought. Black coffee has been the staple of many a dieter's regime, but it may be doing more harm than good. An April 2011 study from the University of Guelph reveals not only that a healthy person's blood sugar levels spike after eating a high-fat meal, but that the spike doubles after having both a fatty meal and caffeinated coffee – jumping to levels similar to those of people at risk for diabetes. Ultimately, said researchers in the *Journal of Nutrition*, saturated fat and fat combined with caffeinated coffee hinder the body's ability to clear sugar from the blood, and having high blood sugar levels can take a toll on our body's organs.

There are a number of small studies that indicate the use of green tea in supporting weight management, says Euan MacLennan, a medical herbalist with a central London NHS General Practice. "In a study carried out with 35 obese men and women, it was found that those who drank four cups of green tea daily for two months lost significantly more weight than those who consumed a placebo. "Green tea may support weight loss in several ways: increasing thermogenesis (calorie-burning), increasing fat oxidation (burning of fat for energy), reducing fat absorption and even reducing appetite."

Best for... lowering cholesterol? Tea

Drinking coffee may be raising your cholesterol. According to US research from the Baylor College of Medicine published in the July 2007 edition of *Journal of Molecular Endocrinology*, a compound found in coffee called cafestol elevates cholesterol by hijacking a receptor in an intestinal pathway critical to its regulation. Cafetiere, or French press coffee, boiled Scandinavian brew and espresso contain the highest levels of the compound, which is removed by paper filters used in most other brewing processes. If your cholesterol is high, stick to PG Tips.

Best for... alertness? Tea

We drink coffee to pep us up, but that feeling may be an illusion, say researchers from the University of Bristol. A June 2010 study, published in *Neuropsychopharmacology*, reports that frequent coffee drinkers develop a tolerance to both the anxiety-producing effects and the stimulatory effects of caffeine. Frequent consumers may feel alerted by coffee, but the evidence suggests that this is the reversal of the fatiguing effects of acute caffeine withdrawal. And given the increased propensity to anxiety and raised blood pressure induced by caffeine consumption, there is no net benefit.

However, MacLennan, who is Herbal Director at Pukka Herbs, quotes Portuguese research published in *Frontiers in Bioscience* in 2011 which suggested that compounds found in green tea can cross the brain-blood barrier to reach neural tissue. "They can help to protect neurons (nerve cells)," he says "and reduce the decline in brain function."

"Studies also suggest that L-theanine, the 'relaxing' amino acid in green and matcha tea, may have benefits for memory and reducing the decline in cognitive function as we get older."

Best for... improving bone strength? Tea

Thanks to caffeine's slight "blocking" effect on calcium absorption, coffee is often mistakenly pilloried as contributing to weakened bone density. (In fact, any such effects of caffeine on calcium absorption is so small, it is fully offset by the tiniest splash of milk.)

Conversely, studies have long linked black tea with improved bone strength – but, says MacLennan, the benefits of green tea may be even greater.

He cites research from Texas, published in 2013 in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*: "It found that the epigallocatechin (EGCG) compound, which is abundant in green tea, can decrease the numbers of osteoclasts in the body – these are the cells that break down bone – and increase the numbers and activity of osteoblasts, the cells that build bone. Green tea may also be helpful if you need to speed up the healing process of a broken bone."

Coffee may not boost bone strength, but according to a report by the Society for Experimental Biology, by sports scientists at Coventry University in June 2012, caffeine does boost the power of older muscles. So, a cup of coffee could help elderly people to maintain their strength, reducing the incidence of falls and injuries.

(Source: telegraph.co.uk)

New way to activate stem cells to make hair grow

UCLA researchers have discovered a new way to activate the stem cells in the hair follicle to make hair grow. The research, led by scientists Heather Christofk and William Lowry, may lead to new drugs that could promote hair growth for people with baldness or alopecia, which is hair loss associated with such factors as hormonal imbalance, stress, aging or chemotherapy treatment.

The research was published in the journal *Nature Cell Biology*.

Hair follicle stem cells are long-lived cells in the hair follicle; they are present in the skin and produce hair throughout a person's lifetime. They are "quiescent," meaning they are normally inactive, but they quickly activate during a new hair cycle, which is when new hair growth occurs. The quiescence of hair follicle stem cells is regulated by many factors. In certain cases they fail to activate, which is what causes hair loss.

In this study, Christofk and Lowry, of Eli and Edythe Broad Center of Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at UCLA, found that hair follicle stem cell metabolism is different from other cells of the skin. Cellular metabolism involves the breakdown of the nutrients needed for cells to divide, make energy and respond to their environment. The process of metabolism uses enzymes that alter these nutrients to produce "metabolites." As hair follicle stem cells consume the nutrient glucose -- a form of sugar -- from the bloodstream, they process the glucose to eventually produce a metabolite called pyruvate. The cells then can either send pyruvate to their mitochondria -- the part of the cell that creates energy -- or can convert pyruvate into another metabolite called lactate.

"Our observations about hair follicle stem cell metabolism prompted us to examine whether genetically diminishing the entry of pyruvate into the mitochondria would force hair follicle stem cells to make more lactate, and if that would activate the cells and grow hair more quickly," said Christofk, an associate professor of biological chemistry and molecular and medical pharmacology.

The research team first blocked the production of lactate genetically in mice and showed that this prevented hair follicle stem cell activation. Conversely, in collaboration with the Rutter lab at University of Utah, they increased lactate production genetically in the mice and this accelerated hair follicle stem cell activation, increasing the hair cycle.

"Before this, no one knew that increasing or decreasing the lactate would have an effect on hair follicle stem cells," said Lowry, a professor of molecular, cell and developmental biology. "Once we saw how altering lactate production in the mice influenced hair growth, it led us to look for potential drugs that could be applied to the skin and have the same effect."

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

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Meanwhile, most travelers prefer to use the coastal waters of Mazandaran Province to make unforgettable memories along with family or friends.

Among coastal cities of Mazandaran Province, Izadshahr is an ideal place for summer trips due to its favorable climatic condition. This city is located at 8 km West of Mahmoudabad and 7 km east of the Noor city in Mazandaran Province.

"SHAHR" Welfare Complex is one of the best welfare and recreational hubs in Izadshahr which is offered to the northern travelers. It has a beautiful residential and tourist area along with all amenities and facilities and can be considered as the most suitable option for staying a few days along the Caspian Sea.

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All units of this residential and welfare complex are equipped with two- and three-bedrooms, duplex, fully furnished (with stylish and classy furniture). It should be noted that the beachfront terrace has increased the attractions of the surrounding environment to a great extent.

Of the other amenities of this Complex, it should be referred to the private beach, a children's park, a football field, beach volleyball, basketball, Ping-Pong, a gym, a bike ride, a swimming pool, sauna and Jacuzzi as free of charge, etc.

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Open-air museum to be set up near Persepolis

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Iran's heritage body aims to build an open-air museum on the ruins of a lately-unearthed archaeological site adjacent to the legendary Achaemenid city of Persepolis, south of the country.

The Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization intends to further promote tourism in the region through launching such a museum, IRNA quoted Alireza Askari who led the archeological excavations as saying on Sunday.



Foreign travelers pose for a photo during their visit to Persepolis, southern Iran.

The joint efforts by Iranian-Italian archaeologists in 2014 led to the excavation of Tal-e-Ajory mound that bears vestiges of imperial citadels, gardens and an impressive gateway in the vicinity of Persepolis.

The discovery unveiled some ambiguous concepts about the Persian Empire under the Cyrus the Great and Cambyses.

Askari described the gateway a rare example of its kind that can be compared to a prehistoric counterpart constructed in Babylon, a great city of ancient Mesopotamia, now lies in south of modern Iraq.

The unified style between the two [prehistorical] gates reveals a cultural connection between Persepolis and Babylon, he added.

A UNESCO World Heritage site, Persepolis lies just only an hour's drive from north-east of Shiraz, itself a main tourist destination of the country.

Persepolis boasts extensive structures, including monumental staircases, exquisite reliefs and imposing gateways as one of the great wonders of the ancient world.

Tehran's intl. Halal conference slated for December

TOURISM TEHRAN — Iran will debut its first International conference on Halal food and business in Tehran during December 4 to 7, IRIB news reported on Sunday.

"Halal Orientation, The New Global Trend" has been adopted as a motto for the event, which is organized by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture in close collaboration with the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization and the private sector.

"During the past couple of years, various countries have put the promotion of Halal [business] atop agenda by holding conferences not only in national or regional scale but also in international arena," IRIB quoted ICCIMA Deputy Director Mohammadreza Karbasian as saying.

The conference is expected to raise the country's share of the global Halal market, he added.

Back in June, the Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI) announced plans to establish a set of standards to promote Halal tourism in the country.

The Arabic word Halal refers to what is permissible or lawful in traditional Islamic law; frequently applied to permissible food and drinks. A subcategory of traveling, Halal tourism is geared toward the specific needs of Muslim individuals who seek to abide by the Islamic rules.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Blue and John Crow Mountains

A UNESCO World Heritage site, Blue and John Crow Mountains encompasses a rugged and extensively forested mountainous region in the south-east of Jamaica, which provided refuge first for the indigenous Tainos fleeing slavery and then for Maroons (former enslaved peoples).

They resisted the European colonial system in this isolated region by establishing a network of trails, hiding places and settlements, which form the Nanny Town Heritage Route.

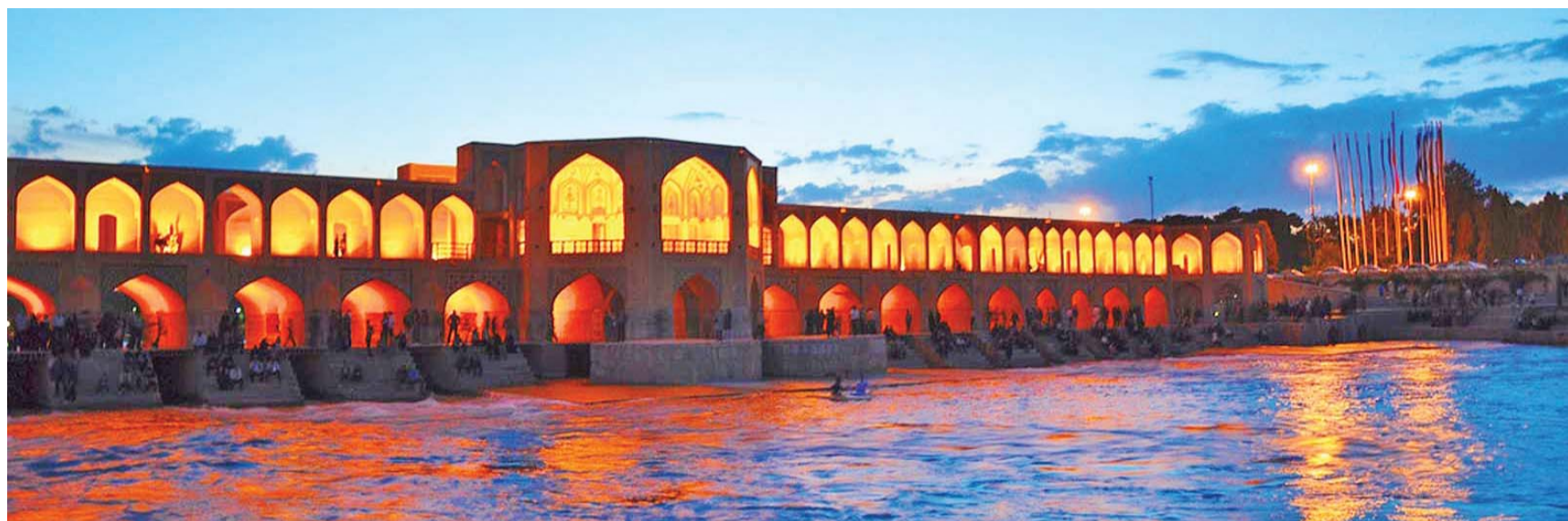
The forests offered the Maroons everything they needed for their survival. They developed strong spiritual connections with the mountains, still manifest through the intangible cultural legacy of, for example, religious rites, traditional medicine and dances.



The site is also a biodiversity hotspot for the Caribbean Islands with a high proportion of endemic plant species, especially lichens, mosses and certain flowering plants.

The Blue and John Crow Mountains property lies within the Jamaican Moist Forests Global 200 priority eco-region, and is part of one of the 78 most irreplaceable protected areas for the conservation of the world's amphibian, bird and mammal species. (Source: UNESCO)

Pol-e Khaju: Architecturally interesting, visually appealing



People revel in the peaceful atmosphere of Pol-e Khaju in Isfahan. The 17th-century bridge is lit by glorious colors at dusk.

TOURISM TEHRAN — To experience Isfahan, a vibrant tourist city in central Iran, it is most magical to walk across Pol-e Khaju at sunset when the 17th-century bridge is lit by glorious colors.

A total of 23 arches, decorative motifs and tiles, adjoining arcades and an octagonal pavilion embedded right in the middle are amongst main features of the picturesque bridge that spans Zayandeh-Rood, one of the largest rivers in the central Iranian Plateau.

Zayandeh-Rood is less roaring nowadays and usually bone dry in the summertime due to decades of the harsh climate change.

In its heyday, the central passageway on the upper level of the bridge was utilized by horse-riders and carts while the vaulted paths on either sides were dedicated to pedestrians.

Measuring 133 meters long and 12 meters wide, Pol-e Khaju is equipped with several sluice gates under its lower archways that doubles it as a dam.

The monument was completed around 1650 under the patronage of Shah Abbas II, the seventh Safavid king who ruled the country from 1642 to 1666.

It used to be a temporary hangout for the king and the royal family of the time and later turned to a place for public meetings where locals, domestic and foreign travelers come to revel in a cozy atmosphere and take the air.

Narratives say that the bridge was replaced the ruins of an older one, which dated to the time of Tamerlane, the Turco-Mongol conqueror who reigned from 1370 to 1405.

Abundant Persian gardens, gorgeous Islamic buildings, historic bazaars and picturesque bridges along with ubiquitous tree-lined boulevards gives the city a significant visual appeal.

Under tourists' eyes

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

'Fascinating structure'

I'm no expert on architecture. All I can say is that this structure is worth visiting in late afternoon and if possible, go back in the evening to see it all lit up. This bridge spans a river that is bone dry in the summer and acts as a dam when the rain starts. It's known for its unique Persian architecture and is one of the well-known wonders of Isfahan, Well worth a visit. (Robert E. from Virginia, the U.S.; visited August 2017)

'The most beautiful of Isfahan bridges'

Great piece of architecture and a contact with local community - art and architecture students come to draw it, families to take a stroll, teenagers to hang out. A must when in Isfahan! If you plan to see all 4 of the bridges (or the 3 that are most centrally located) - I would suggest to end your walk with Khaju, as it's truly the prettiest of them. (Maria D. from Poland; visited May 2017)

'Beautiful moments beautiful bridge'

I visited the bridge during the day and

the atmosphere was special. That's why I decided to come back for sunrise to take pictures and experience the morning activities!

This was a very good decision as there was regular come and go from people going to work, people who had spent the night there sleeping, couples enjoying the sunrise, gentlemen singing and joining in groups for conversation, etc.

This was magic and I'm glad I did go! Wonderful experience. (Aumuc from Germany; visited May 2017)

'A must to experience the ambience of Isfahan'

Great place to spend the evenings. Always busy with locals and very scenic. Sit in the arches and listen to the singing locals mainly men exercising their vocal cords.

Stunning place and in my opinion a good place to experience Isfahan. Very relaxing and enjoyable. We went there every evening during our visit and miss it greatly. (Mo. D. from the UK; visited May 2017)

Fahraj mosque amongst oldest Islamic structures in Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN — At over 1400 years old, Jameh Mosque of Fahraj still stands tall in a township of the same name in Yazd province, central Iran.

Some archeologists believe that the mosque is the oldest surviving Islamic structure in the country, erected following the conquest of Persia (637-651) by Muslims that put an end to the mighty Sasanian Empire.

The Jameh Mosque of Fahraj primarily consists of an internal courtyard, vaulted sanctuary and arcades, and a clay minaret which are essentially built of sun-dried, unfired clay tiles and mud bricks.

The minaret were added to the mosque later as a lighthouse for caravans around 400 years ago. It features a tapering cylinder with an internal spiral staircase.

Its modest internal courtyard is lined with clay tiles and contains a now dry central ablution tank. The internal facades are near symmetrical and consist of three arched bays defined by thick piers, partly relieved by vertical niches, according to the Islamic Architecture Community.

In the surrounding area, there are a crumbling castle, a hammam (bathhouse) and an ab-anbar (water reservoir) with four badgirs (wind tower or ventilation shaft) used to catch breezes and funnel them down into a building to cool it.

The term jameh mosque (or masjid jami) or collective mosque is referred to a large center of community worship and a site for Friday prayer services in Islamic countries.



A view of Fahraj congregational mosque in Yazd province

Cuban entrepreneurs take a bigger slice of profits thanks to reforms

Small enterprises, such as pizzerias in Havana, are springing up all over Cuba after 2011 licensing changes and relaxed U.S. restrictions on tourism.

Pizza is falling from the sky in Havana ... Actually, it's being lowered in a basket from a third-floor balcony belonging to a small pizzeria called A. Mi Manera, run by two Cuban cuentapropistas, or entrepreneurs, Marta Maria del Barrio and Marta Juana Castaneda in densely populated Centro Habana. Business is booming and they open from 9am until midnight every day - Castaneda is adamant they take no holidays.

Cubans call this street food pizza de cinco pesos because five pesos (15p today) used to be the standard price in a country where the average monthly wage was about £15. But things are changing. In 2011, Raul Castro's economic reforms permitted individuals to take out private business licenses. A decade ago, pizzerias were few and far between; now, they are all over the city.

Many of these, like A Mi Manera, are run from private homes. For del Barrio and Castaneda, who started their business five years ago, this posed a specific problem. Del Barrio's family owned the top two floors of the building but not the ground floor. Running up and down the stairs was too tiring so,

with typical Cuban resourcefulness, they devised a solution: take orders in the doorway, phone them up to the rooftop kitchen, then lower the pizzas down by rope.

At A. Mi Manera, prices are much higher than the historic five pesos, but the two Martas offer an improved product. Their pizzas are larger and less greasy than the traditional taco-sized street pizza. A cheese and tomato pizza starts at 25 pesos (about 75p), a Hawaiian costs twice that and a lobster pizza is about £3.

A. Mi Manera estimates it sells 900 pizzas a week, mostly to Cubans. "I have clients coming all the way from Playa," Castaneda

said, referencing a neighborhood 20 minutes away by car. "This is the best pizza in Havana."

Their success is evidence of a growing Cuban middle class with disposable income. With the increase of private enterprise, President Obama's relaxation of restrictions on U.S. travelers and the introduction of Airbnb to Cuba in 2015, more tourist money has been going directly into the hands of the people instead of into government-owned hotels and restaurants. Private business owners are making incomes that far exceed anything they could earn working for the state. (Source: The Guardian)

Kazakhstan's Triumph Travel holds road show in Iran

Triumph Travel, a tour company in Kazakhstan held a road show in Iran on Wednesday to familiarize the Iranian tourism industry with Kazakhstan's opportunities. The event was held with the following message:

The company "Triumph Sat group travel" LLP welcomes you and takes this opportunity to express our respect and hope for mutually beneficial cooperation. Our company, on behalf of the Akimat (Local mayor Administration) of Astana city, Kazakhstan, organizes a road show in order to familiarize foreign tour operators, the media and other representatives of the tourist community with the tourist potential and opportunities of the city of Astana. Carrying out a road show will contribute to a formation of an effective international communication in the tourist sphere with a view to further developing a mutually beneficial partnership!

Ministry of Culture's message

During a conference Triumph Travel held in Parsian Azadi Hotel in Tehran on Wednesday, Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediuly noted that the concept analysed the international experience of some countries that have defined tourism as one of the priority directions of economic development. The analysis showed a number of the most effective measures of



state support for tourist activity.

"All these examples can be called successful, both in terms of giving a powerful impetus to the development of the tourism industry in the country, and taking into account the return of public investment. Given the priorities of the Concept of the Cultural Policy, approved by the President's decree, as well as the implementation of the 86th step of the Plan of the Nation, tourist clusters have been revised, their names have been changed and a sixth cluster has been added," the

minister explained.

The Astana tourist cluster has been divided into urban and rural sections. The Astana — Heart of Eurasia cluster includes the city of Astana. The Unity of Nature and Nomadic Culture goes beyond to include the Ulytau State Nature Reserve and the Northern Trans-Balkhash area.

Department of International Cooperation and MICE-Tourism

Also, Asel Karbayeva, senior manager at the Department of International Cooperation and MICE-Tourism delivered a speech as follows:

Good morning dear guests. First of all let me to introduce myself. My name is Asel. I came from Astana city, the capital of Kazakhstan Republic.

Also let me thank you for coming here today and sharing your time with us.

I'm representing Astana Convention Bureau, the initiator and one of facilitators of today's event.

Honestly, we didn't expect such huge audience and we hope that today will be the start of long-term mutual beneficial partnership in the area of establishing and increasing the tourist exchange between our cities.

Voyager 1 scientist says NASA needs new interstellar probes

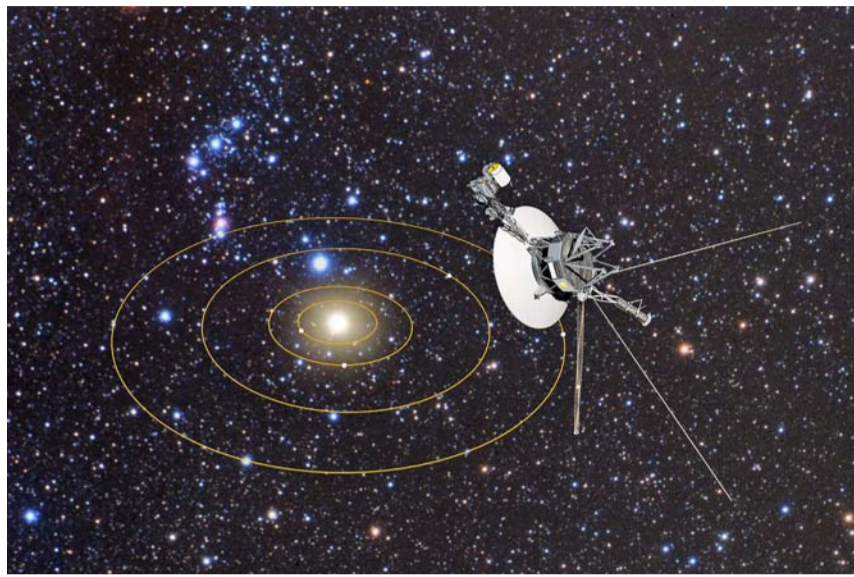
Forty years after launch, NASA's Voyager 1 spacecraft is still alive and kicking -- now heading in the direction of the constellation of Ophiuchus -- its camera long turned off. Four of its ten original instruments are all still operating and sending back meaningful data. Yet rather than bask in its continued glory, one of Voyager 1's original science team members says now is the time to mount a handful of new such missions.

Those would be ones designed to solidify our understanding of the local interstellar environment that would head out of our solar system from several different directions and at much higher velocities than Voyager 1.

"These missions do not need to be nearly as complex as Voyager, but they do need to have a much higher velocity so that we can get there sooner and reach much greater distances than Voyager 1 will achieve," Don Gurnett, the principal investigator for the spacecraft's plasma wave instrument and a physicist at the University of Iowa, told me.

Plasma wave

It was Gurnett and colleagues' own plasma wave instrument that confirmed that on August 25, 2012, Voyager 1 had indeed crossed over into interstellar space. Our observations were based on vibrations in the plasma caused by two



The heliopause is a boundary of equilibrium between the influence of charged particles from the solar wind and particles, stellar winds and cosmic rays from the interstellar medium.

shock waves that propagated into the interstellar medium from energetic solar flares at the Sun, he says.

A plasma is typically a superheated gas whose atoms have been stripped of some

or all of its electrons. Yet unlike normal gas, is also electrically-conductive and subject to the forces of magnetism. Since 2012, Voyager 1's plasma instrument has detected three more such solar shock

wave events.

Such distant plasma measurements have enabled Gurnett and colleagues to directly probe the interstellar medium. And for the first time they have a profile of the plasma density going outward into the interstellar medium from the heliopause.

Charged particles

The heliopause is a boundary of equilibrium between the influence of charged particles from the solar wind and particles, stellar winds and cosmic rays from the interstellar medium.

But it was the frequency of vibrations that enabled Gurnett and colleagues to determine that in August 2012, the local plasma density at this distance was nearly a factor of fifty greater than the density of the solar plasma. Thus, it was consistent with densities expected of the local interstellar environment. In fact, the team determined that the plasma density in the local interstellar medium averages some one hundred thousand particles per cubic meter.

Gurnett says Voyager 1's most exciting results are the extent to which shock waves from solar flares can propagate so far from the Sun and make major disturbances in the local interstellar medium.

(Source: Forbes)

Have flowers devised the ultimate weapon of distraction?

Nectar, the high-energy 'honey' produced by flowers, might be a brilliant distraction technique to help protect a flower's reproductive parts, according to new research.

Rather than merely providing a 'come-on' to bees and other insects to attract them to pollinate the flower, nectar could be playing a much more subtle and entrancing role.

Scientists from across the world have studied the part played by herbivores, such as sawflies, which eat petals and nectar, on an iris found in the Himalayas. They are now confident that a visiting insect which feasts on the nectar and the gland which produces it, and makes merry, is playing into the hands of the flower and ensuring it survives and thrives.

Scientists at the universities of Wuhan, China; Calgary, Canada; Portsmouth, UK; and at the Fairy Lake Botanical Garden in Shenzhen, China, have published their findings in *Biology Letters*.

Pollinating insects

Scott Armbruster, Professor of Ecology and Evolution at the University of Portsmouth, and one of the authors, said: "Contrary to the accepted wisdom, the role of nectar seems in this instance to not be just about attracting and rewarding pollinating insects.

"It seems nectar and nectaries, the glands which produce it, attract herbivores that would otherwise feed on other flower parts. Thus the nectar and nectaries may be acting as a decoy. Like nectar thieves and robbers, the herbivores we observed have a high energy demand, and because nectar is rich in nutrients, it appears flowers are using it as a distraction, to keep herbivores away from critical reproducing parts of the flower, which are also edible.

"They are sacrificing their nectar and nectaries for the greater goal of maintaining other floral parts that are critical for attracting pollinators, and hence



being pollinated."

Colorful petals

The researchers studied Iris bulleyana, with showy, large, colorful petals, which conventional wisdom says are a means of attracting the attention of bees and other pollinators.

Nearly all 98 percent of the flowers studied in natural conditions were damaged by herbivores, but in 85 percent of the flowers, damage was restricted to just the nectaries, suggesting nectar was being sacrificed to protect more critical parts of the plant. The researchers saw sawflies 'frequently' using the flower as a mating site during which all the nectar and nectaries were eaten, mainly by female sawflies, causing no damage to the stamen and stigma, the reproductively critical parts of the flower.

Even though colorful -- and edible -- petals play no direct role in producing seeds or pollen, they do attract the interest and attention of pollinating insects, such as bees. When sawfly herbivores grazed on the petals, damaging them, fewer pollinators visited the flower, meaning its chances of reproduction plummeted. By offering up a decoy of calorie-rich nectar, the herbivores were distracted enough to not damage the petals or other parts of the flower critical to its chances of being pollinated.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Stem cells from young hearts of may help reverse the aging process

A new study from the Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute reveals that stem cells taken from younger rats provided older rats with youthful vigor when injected into their hearts. After a month, the rats ran longer, and regrew hair faster.

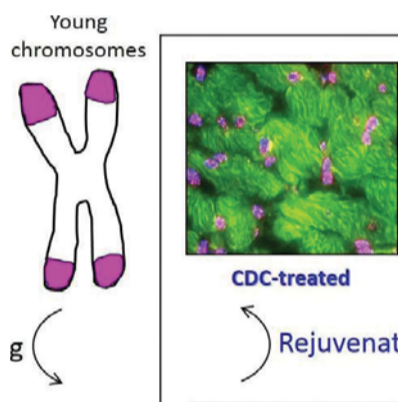
Old hearts may find new life, according to a new study, which shows that stem cells taken from younger hearts can be used to reverse the aging process. This could potentially cause older hearts to act and perform like younger ones.

The study, conducted by the Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute and published by the *European Heart Journal*, set out to observe the effects of cardiac stem cells on various aspects of the heart, including its function and structure. Prior applications of Cardiosphere-derived cells (CDC) resulted in positive effects, but this was the first time its effects in the aging process were tested. This is different from the tests performed last month at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where the hypothalamus region of the brain was discovered to be a key part of aging in mice.

Cedars-Sinai researchers instead took CDC cells from newborn mice and injected it into the hearts of older mice, while another group of older mice were injected with saline. Blood, echocardiographic, hemodynamic and treadmill stress tests were performed on all mice after injections, with the older groups tested 1 month later.

Heart functionality

The mice given the Cardiosphere-derived cells saw a number of benefits compared to their saline counterparts. They had improved heart functionality, were able to exercise 20 percent longer, regrew hair at a faster rate, and had longer heart cell telomeres. This is important



because telomeres are compounds found at the ends of chromosomes whose shortening is directly correlated to the aging process.

Tests on rats have shown that CDCs have shown cardiac and systemic rejuvenation on the aging process, but there is much work to do before the anti-aging treatment is tested on people, let alone over the table. Lilian Griorian-Shamagian, MD, Ph.D, who was co-primary researcher on the study, notes that it's still unclear if the cells actually extend the lifespan of the rats, rather than simply providing a new heart in an old body. It's also unknown if CDCs need to be taken from younger hearts in order to be effective. If any CDCs, regardless of their origin, can be used, it could lead to a new round of tests comparing the effects of CDCs from the young to the CDCs from the old or middle-aged.

If stem cells were used for medical purposes, they could help those suffering from heart failure, or the Duchenne muscular dystrophy Marbán and his team are hoping to treat. Beyond that, it could lessen the number of deaths caused by heart disease, which is currently responsible for over 610,000 deaths a year.

(Source: Futurism)

BIM Releases Remarks of Deputy PM of Singapore on "Challenges of Development and Progress" in a Booklet

Bank of Industry and Mine (BIM) published the outstanding remarks of Deputy Prime Minister of Republic of Singapore Tarman Shanmugartnam stated in the opening ceremony of a Conference on "Change of India", "Realizing Capacities of India in the World Economy" entitled "Challenges of Progress and Development", the Public Relations Dept. of the

bank reported.

The booklet has been compiled and authored by Deputy Prime Minister of Republic of Singapore with regard to the development and its necessities.

He pointed to the concept of "education" and paving suitable ways to access education for all walks of life as the main principle of development and

placed special emphasis on practicing education in whole periods of life, the report added.

In the end, Deputy Prime Minister of Republic of Singapore once again placed special emphasis on the concept of education and called on all responsible officials to take the said issue into serious consideration.

IIC Chief Executive Congratulates New MEAF Minister

Following the decisive vote of confidence of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iranian Parliament also called Majlis) and selection of Masoud Karbasian as the new minister of Economic Affairs and Finance (MEAF), Mohsen Pourkiani Chairman of the Board of Directors and Managing Director of Iran Insurance

Company (IIC) conveyed a congratulatory message for this appointment.

Turning to the macroeconomic management of the country, he emphasized: "Undoubtedly, these precious experiences will be the greatest opportunity for the country and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance (MEAF) in the

next four years."

With due observance to the said issue, Iran Insurance Company will move forwards in line with materializing supreme objectives of the 12th government and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance (MEAF), the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

In the end, senior official of Iran Insurance Company wished evermore success for the new minister of Economic Affairs and Finance in the 12th government and said: "It is hoped that the ministry will materialize most economic objectives of the country in the current year."

A pulsing red circle of data to understand how abnormally hot Earth is getting

Earth is constantly breaking heat records. The latest international State of the Climate report noted that 2016 was the hottest year on record, and NASA just announced that July 2017 tied with July 2016 as the hottest July on record. We've heard a variation on this theme, well, a few times: 16 of the 17 warmest years on record have all happened since 2001.

The whole premise of heat records is abnormality. But as the headlines pile up, it can be difficult to keep in perspective how unprecedented the trend really is.

Some scientists call this "shifting baseline syndrome" -- when we become numb to the severity of the situation simply because we start to forget where the baseline was before.

Antti Lipponen, a climate researcher at the Finnish Meteorological Institute, put together a striking graphic using 1900-2016 global surface temperature data pulled from NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies' Surface Temperature Analysis (GISTEMP).

Watch to the end as the bars--they represent the severity of abnormally high temperatures in different countries--begin to radiate outward in more places in the 1990s. By 2016, they form a sort of pulsing red circle.

(Source: Quartz)



Awesome tech you can't buy yet: Art lenses, tankless diving, Shazam for birds

At any given moment, there are approximately a zillion different crowdfunding campaigns happening on the Web. Take a stroll through Kickstarter or Indiegogo and you'll find no shortage of weird, useless, and downright stupid projects out there -- alongside some real gems. We've cut through the Pebble clones and janky iPhone cases to round up the most unusual, ambitious, and exciting new crowdfunding projects out there this week. That said, keep in mind that any crowdfunding project -- even the best intentioned -- can fail, so do your homework before cutting a check for the gadget of your dreams.

If car camping and tailgating are your thing, then drop what you're doing and check out STCKBLS: a modular, portable grilling system that just launched on Kickstarter. The grill promises to revolutionize outdoor dining by providing an efficient, powerful, and easily transportable way to make meals at the campsite, big game, or anywhere else you might want to go. The STCKBLS system consists of three individual units, each of which plays an important role in cooking.

At the heart of this modular approach is a portable gas grill capable of producing up to 12,000 BTUs per hour. The grill, which comes in both propane and butane versions, gives chefs 280 square inches of cooking space, which is sizable enough to cook plenty of food to feed a hungry crew. The other two STCKBLS modules include a utility storage unit for stashing cooking utensils and supplies, and a rugged cooler for keeping fresh food and beverages chilled.

What makes the STCKBLS system unique is how all of the different modules have been engineered to work together. The three components share the exact same 18-by-18-inch footprint, which makes them highly stackable.

(Source: Digital Trends)

Sedentary behavior increases risk of death for frail, inactive adults

Sedentary time, for example, time spent sitting, increases the risk of death for middle-aged and older people who are frail and inactive, but does not appear to increase the risk for nonfrail people who are inactive, according to a new study.

Many studies have looked at the benefits of physical activity on health, although little data exists on sedentary behavior and risk of death linked to levels of frailty. Frailty refers to a person's overall health state, determined by the number of health problems this person has.

To understand if level of frailty and prolonged sitting are linked to a higher risk of death, researchers looked at data on 3141 adults aged 50 and over.

Participants used activity trackers during waking hours and were assessed using a 46-item frailty index; they were then followed until 2011 or date of death.

"We found that in people who scored low on the frailty index, sitting time was not linked to risk of death," states Dr. Olga Theou, Department of Medicine, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. "Prolonged sitting was associated with a higher risk of death only in vulnerable or frail people who did not meet the weekly recommendation for 2.5 hours of moderate physical activity."

The authors note study limitations such as limited activity tracking data for people with higher levels of frailty, which prevented them from segmenting people with severe frailty into one category for analysis.

"Physicians should stress the harms of inactivity with patients, similar to the harms of smoking, to encourage movement," states Dr. Olga Theou. "Even something as simple as getting up and walking around the house with a walker or cane can benefit frailer people."

The authors suggest this key public health message should be included in health promotions about the importance of healthy behaviors.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Malay-Muslim women singled out for online abuse, activists say

KUALA LUMPUR — Malay-Muslim women in Malaysia are particularly targeted for attacks on social media because of certain societal expectations, activists say.

UK's BBC News reported that several Malaysian Muslim women faced abuse online, including those who did not wear the headscarf, who said their bodies were often scrutinized and that it was mostly Muslim men attacking them on the Internet.

"We are seeing a trend where Muslim women [particularly Malay-Muslims] are targeted in a different way, especially when it comes to how they present themselves," women's rights activist Juana Jaafar was quoted saying.

She reportedly said the 'jaga tepi kain' (minding your neighbor's business) culture was commonplace in many conservative communities here, as well as the idea of "airing one's dirty laundry in public" encouraged partly by Malay-language gossip sites.

"The religion doesn't encourage the [jaga tepi kain] behavior. There are hadiths that talk about respecting privacy," said Juana, who noted it was more of a cultural than religious issue.

DAP Socialist Youth executive committee member Dyana Sofya Mohd Daud told the BBC that local gossip sites have often insulted her clothes and appearance, something which she said her male counterparts did not experience.

"The female body is a constant battleground for men to argue [about]. A woman may be covered from head to toe, but someone will still complain that the covering is not baggy enough or long enough," she was quoted saying.

Malay Mail Online reported last March five times Malaysian Muslim women were attacked online simply for being female.

(Source: themalaymailonline.com)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Lime pie

"This recipe uses condensed milk and sour cream. Fabulously easy... a summertime favorite! If you have time, a homemade graham cracker crust is better! Garnish with whipped cream and thin slices of lime if you like."

Ingredients:



- 1 (9 inch) prepared graham cracker crust
- 3 cups sweetened condensed milk
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 3/4 cup key lime juice
- 1 tablespoon grated lime zest

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). In a medium bowl, combine condensed milk, sour cream, lime juice, and lime rind. Mix well and pour into graham cracker crust.

Bake in preheated oven for 5 to 8 minutes, until tiny pinhole bubbles burst on the surface of pie. Do not brown! Chill pie thoroughly before serving. Garnish with lime slices and whipped cream if desired.

LEARN ENGLISH

Hockey

A: Hello everyone! I'm Rick Fields, and here with me is Bob Copeland.

B: Howdy folks, and welcome to today's game! You know, Rick, today is a **key** game between Russia and Canada. As you know, the winner will move on to the **finals**.

A: That's right, and it looks like we're just about ready to start the match. The **ref** is calling the players for the **face-off**... and here we go! The Russians **win possession** and immediately set up their attack! Federov gets **checked** hard into the boards!

B: Maurice Richard has the **puck** now, and passes it to the center. He shoots! Wow what a **save** by the **goalie**!

A: Alright, the puck is back in play now. Pavel Bure is on a **breakaway**! He is flying down the ice! The defenders can't keep up! Slap shot! He scores...

B: What an amazing goal!

Key vocabulary

key: very important

finals: last game or series of games in a tournament or championship

ref: person who makes sure the players follow the rules in a game

face-off: a way of beginning a game by dropping the puck between two players

win possession: get control

check: use your body to push someone in hockey

puck: small, round, black object that is used to play hockey

save: the act of preventing a ball or puck from going in the net

goalie: position in hockey; person who tries to stop the puck from going in the net

breakaway: state of becoming separated from a large group (especially in sports)

Supplementary vocabulary

hockey stick: long wooden stick shaped like an L; used for playing hockey

arena: large building where sports are played

rink: ice surface used to play hockey or skate on

NHL National Hockey: League; group of professional hockey teams that play in Canada and the U.S.

League: a group of sports teams that play against each other

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Iran holds first Women in Science Award

WOMEN TEHRAN — Winners of the first national Women in Science Award in the fields of medical sciences, technical and engineering sciences, agriculture, and humanities were announced during a ceremony in Tehran on Saturday.

The award was bestowed on women who had attained notable achievements in conducting innovative research projects and writing articles or books on scientific subjects.

Moreover, the women who played an active role in the establishment of knowledge-based organizations, scientific associations, theorization chairs, university disciplines and scientific journals were honored, IRNA reported.

In the fields of medical sciences Azam



Iraji-Raad, Afsaneh Safavi, and Zahra Bathayee were ranked first to third respectively.

Mahrokh Shayesteh and Zahra Ranjbar held the second position in technical and engineering section while no women were placed at the first and the third places.

In the field of agriculture, Ziba Jamzad, Zahra Imamjome, and Fatemeh Sefidkan were respectively ranked first to third.

Meanwhile, Shamsosadat Zahedi and Majjeh Ghahroodi-Tali were placed at first and second places in humanities.

The category honoring young scientist women has been named after Maryam Mirzakhani, a prominent Iranian mathematician who died on July 15.

Pregnant, breastfeeding women among most at risk in Yemen's cholera outbreak

In the midst of the cholera outbreak in Yemen, where an average 5,000 people fall sick every day, the United Nations population agency is warning about the dangers to pregnant and breastfeeding women.

"Pregnant and breastfeeding women, especially those who are malnourished, are particularly vulnerable. An estimated 1.1 million malnourished pregnant women are at risk, requiring immediate care," the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) recently said.

One of these women is Ibtisam, who contracted cholera when she was nine months pregnant.

"I went to a health facility in my hometown in Rayma Governorate, but they did not know what was wrong with me," she told UNFPA. "I felt I was going to die and lose my baby. I was going to have my first child, and I was desperate not to lose my child."

Pregnant and breastfeeding women are especially vulnerable to malnutrition, and those weakened by the nutrition crisis are more prone to infections, including cholera.

Ibtisam and her husband then travelled five hours to the nearest hospital in the capital, Sana'a, where she was diagnosed and treated for cholera.

"Ibtisam was in her last month of pregnancy. If she



Hospital in Sana'a, Yemen, Dr. Farea checks in on a pregnant woman with cholera.

[arrived] a day or two later, we are not sure we could have saved her or her baby," Dr. Farea, who helped treat her, told the UN agency.

UNFPA has said that the cholera crisis in Yemen is the worst in the world, and its magnitude is linked to the ongoing conflict and displacement crisis, the breakdown of health and sanitation systems, and serious food insecurity.

Women as agents of change

While among the most vulnerable, women can also play a key role in controlling the spread of cholera because they are traditionally tasked with preparing food. Cholera often spreads through contaminated food or water.

"If women are made aware about the steps they can take to prevent cholera and detect its symptoms at an early stage, we can save a lot of lives," Dr. Farea said.

Amana, a 35-year-old mother of five, told UNFPA that was aware of the need for good hygiene, but hardship conditions have made disease prevention difficult.

"At home, I take all the precautions when preparing food, and make sure my children follow the same. Yet I was infected after visiting one of my relatives," she said. "I try to tell my friends and family to maintain good hygiene and wash fruits and vegetables with clean water several times before cooking."

The UN agency said it has stepped up efforts to assist women and girls in Yemen, distributing dignity kits – which contain soap, sanitary napkins and basic clothes – and supporting midwives, mobile clinics and community outreach.

(UN News Center)

England councils need 12,000 more women to close gender gap

A gender imbalance across local government has been exposed in a damning report that suggests councils – especially the new mayoral authorities – are lagging behind even Westminster in taking steps to improve equality.

The study, published on Sunday by the Institute for Public Policy Research, reveals that only 33% of councilors and 17% of council leaders in England are women, something the thinktank suggests is causing a "democratic deficit".

In the new mayoral combined authority boards, only 4% of constituent members – those with full voting rights – are women and all six bodies are led by men. The West Midlands, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the Liverpool City Region and the West of England authorities are all without any female constituent members.

The IPPR calculates that, to achieve equal numbers of male and female councilors in England, 3,028 more women need to be elected, an increase of more than 50% on the 5,800 or so currently in power. The thinktank estimates that, to achieve parity in gender balance, more than 12,000 women would have to apply for elected positions on councils. The shortfall means many policies that have a direct impact on women's lives are being drafted at the local level by male councilors with little practical experience of the issues at stake.

The report, Power to the people? Tackling the gender imbalance in local government & combined authorities, finds that women face a number of barriers to entering local government and progressing into leadership roles.

Despite calls from politicians on all sides for more women to enter politics, the percentage of female candidates selected by parties to stand in council ward elections has flatlined, at around a third, since 2007. By contrast, there have been much faster gains in parliament – the number of female MPs elected rose by 9% in the 2017 general election compared with 2015. In the past 20 years, the proportion of women councilors has grown by 5%, but at this rate it will take another 68 years to reach equal representation.

Labor MP Jess Phillips said it was time to consider a change to the law. "Councils and public bodies in the future need to look at whether they want to have targets that lead to local action. Without a target or a quota, nothing is going to change."

Despite a new generation of young women participating in politics, with voter turnout among women aged 18 to 24 reaching 53% at the last election compared with just 44% in 2015, the report finds that political parties are failing to engage more women, with the result that they are less likely to go on to become local councilors.

Women make up only 38% of Labor party members and only 36% of Conservative party members. "It cannot be right in 2017 that there are barely any women represented in the leadership of our newest democratic institutions, the combined authorities," said Clare McNeil, IPPR associate director.

"Efforts made to address this in Greater Manchester and elsewhere are to be welcomed, but radical change is needed if devolution is to be about bringing power to the people, rather than consolidating it among white middle-aged men."

The report states: "Many local government policy areas have a much greater impact on women than

on men. For example, local government has oversight of childcare provision as well as responsibility for delivering and funding social care. Women, who in 2017 still shoulder the greatest burden of caring responsibilities in the family, are simply more affected by decisions on who gets state-funded care, and how it is delivered."

The IPPR wants leaders of political parties to commit to achieving a 50:50 balance in male-female party membership. And it wants authorities to make a commitment that at least 45% of those on combined authority boards are women. If significant progress towards greater gender balance in local government and combined authorities cannot be achieved through these changes, then it says legislation should be introduced requiring elected positions to be filled equally by genders, or with a split of 60:40 or better.

"Political institutions and parties must introduce

more ambitious quotas to improve representation in the short term," McNeil said. "And local government should do more to encourage women to stand and support them effectively once they have been selected. Without these measures representation will continue to be deeply unequal. Leaders of political parties should back our call to recruit the 12,000 women needed to stand for election to achieve a better gender balance in local government by 2025. This would be a fitting way to mark next year's anniversary of 100 years since the first women got the vote."

Marianne Overton, vice-chair of the Local Government Association, believes that "change will only come about through a mix of support programs and direct action from political parties to encourage and sustain aspiring female councilors".

(Source: The Guardian)

Second Announcement

N.I.O.C
1396.2274

Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First Publish/Seconed Publish)

One-Stage(compressed)						
TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
12,800	448.500.000	8.970.000.000	P/F: PCE DOWNHOLE MOTORS	1.496.990	Tender No.:FP/04-96/033 Indent No.:08-22-9645018	1

Brief description of subject:
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements PCE DOWNHOLE MOTORS from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender (compressed) upon following terms and conditions:

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

B) Preparation of tender documents:
Purchasing of documents:
In order to receive the tender documents, 510,000 Rials should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.
Notice: According to N.I.D.C technical and commercial committee rule, the limitation for job referrals in procurement field is four active and in process contract.
Receiving of documents:
Tenderers must obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and receive tender documents from foreign procurement department in due date and participates in tenderwill be known as tenderer from tender committee.

C) Delivery of envelopes of bids and call quality evaluating:
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including bank guarantees(A), financial offer(C) and stamped and signed of tender documents(B) along with qualification worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document received deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor, Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN.
Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) Tender Guarantee:
Type of guarantee:
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activities licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranian Drilling Company.
Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.
More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on WWW.NIDC.IR
Foreign Procurement Dept
National Iranian Drilling Company
تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۵۳۰ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۵۳۱

Qatar crisis: Are the Saudis the real puppet-master?

1 → Have you ever thought what if the Saudi regime is just a player and not a very smart one as it tries to show.

A skeptic tries to look at the bigger picture which also has a glimpse on the Saudi regime's internal issues at the time being, ranging from royal family scandals, deaths, ousters, house arrests, kidnaps till human rights, accusations of supporting and sponsoring terrorism including funding extremist groups, preaching Wahhabism which is the base ideology for terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh), devastating war with Yemen without a United Nations mandate, the 9/11 tragedy and the Saudi regime's cover-up, even threatening the United States to pull all its money out of the U.S. if it lets the American families to file a law suit against the notorious kingdom. Have in mind that fifteen of the 19 hijackers in the September 11 attacks were citizens of Saudi Arabia, and the others were from the UAE, Egypt, and Lebanon. If you only add Bahrain and skip Lebanon you have your quartet that accuses Doha of sponsoring terrorism.

The list of Saudi regime's notoriety is much, much longer.

Few days ago the UAE ambassador to the United States, Yousef al-Otaiba, ridiculed and berated the House of Saud regime's leadership in a series of emails leaked by a computer hacking group.

In a 2008 email chain with his Egyptian wife Abeer Shoukry, published by the Middle East Eye (MEE) news website on Friday, Otaiba described the kingdom's leaders as "f*****ing coo coo".

"Global Leaks" leaked the correspondence. The correspondence reveals that Otaiba believes the UAE has "bad history" with Saudi Arabia.

Writing to his wife in another email, the UAE ambassador mocked the Saudi regime's decision to ban red roses on Valentine's Day.

"They're just so stupid... I'm sure Red roses are now being sold on the black market for extortionately high prices. They should've banned heart-shaped chocolate as well," the message read.

The latest leak comes after hackers released the first series of emails from the inbox of the UAE envoy in early June.

Those emails showed that the Emirati ambassador played a role in a campaign to downgrade the image and importance of Qatar as a regional and global power.

The emails also showed collusion with journalists who have published articles accusing Qatar and Kuwait of supporting



"terrorism".

The release of those leaked emails came a week after a cyber-attack on Qatar's official news agency, during which fake remarks critical of the U.S. foreign policy were posted and attributed to the Qatari emir.

In another email to The New York Times columnist Tom Friedman, the Emirati ambassador wrote, "Abu Dhabi fought 200 years of wars with Saudi over Wahhabism. We have more bad history with Saudi than anyone."

■ Influencing the 'Saudi throne'

The leaked emails have revealed the UAE's frustration with Saudi regime's leadership and the role which the UAE played in the rise of the Saudi regime's young crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, known in diplomatic circles by his initials as MBS.

The emails reflect a clear plan by UAE to paint Saudi Arabia as a dysfunctional backwater and religiously conservative country, whose best hope for reform was MBS, so the UAE started to think of selling the Saudi crown prince to Washington.

One document from Otaiba revealed that it was time for the Emiratis to get "the most results we can ever get out of Saudi".

Another email to New York Times columnist Tom Friedman said that the UAE saw bin Salman as a favorable change within Saudi Arabia.

An exchange with David Petraeus, the U.S. former CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) director and commander of coalition forces in Iraq, saw Otaiba suggest that bin Salman is more engaged in day-to-day issues, while dismissing the man he later replaced, Mohammed bin Nayef,

as being "off his game".

In a major reshuffle in late June, the House of Saud regime's King Salman appointed his son, bin Salman, as his heir, removing his nephew bin Nayef.

It seems that Abu Dhabi sees bin Salman, as its man in Riyadh.

This comes as the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed regards himself as Mohammed bin Salman's mentor and the two have been known to hold as many as three meetings a month.

According to the online news portal the MEE, Otaiba helped nurture high-level contacts between the young and inexperienced Saudi crown prince, and the U.S. President Donald Trump.

I like to draw your attention to the fact that Trump's visit to Riyadh was rewarded with a record deal, worth \$350 billion over 10 years and \$110 billion in military purchases. Analysts believe the UAE gets the credit.

Elsewhere, in his message to Friedman, Otaiba asserted that MBS could lead to better relations and a time to get "the most results we can ever get out of Saudi".

"With MBS, we see a genuine change. And that's why we're excited. We finally see hope there and we need it to succeed," the envoy added.

In other emails, Otaiba has hailed bin Salman as being "on a mission to make the Saudi government more efficient".

Another message showed Otaiba writing to Martin Indyk, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel, "I don't think we'll ever see a more pragmatic leader in that country. Which is why engaging with them is so important and will yield the most results we can ever get out of Saudi".

Some think-tanks and analysts ob-

serve the UAE's gesture as a crystal clear sign that the UAE envoy takes the Saudis as fools and takes side with the U.S. Well such a move by the UAE will keep both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, and of course brings loads of Saudi petrodollars.

■ Washington's charming man, Yousef Al Otaiba

Otaiba is a well-known figure in the U.S. national security circles, described by some as "the most charming man in Washington". He is an influential player in world politics and has participated in Pentagon strategy meetings at the invitation of defense officials.

"He is incredibly savvy, he throws great social events. He understands how Washington works, how the Hill works, which a lot of these countries don't," a former White House aide told the Huffington Post.

■ UAE & Egypt coup

This gets more interesting as the Qatari Ambassador to Turkey has accused the UAE of sponsoring "counter-revolutions in the Arab world and revival of dictatorships", stating that Abu Dhabi has spent millions of dollars for the overthrow of Egypt's first democratically-elected president Mohamed Morsi.

"The UAE and a number of allies have paid around \$40 billion to consolidate the military coup in Egypt alone," Salem bin Mubarak al-Shafi said in reference to Morsi's ouster by former army chief and current President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in July 2013.

"We say that these countries have not learnt their lesson well. Blaming Qatar, using broad terms such as counterterrorism and attacking moderates with an intention to win the heart of the West will not help them," he added.

"There are some Arab countries which are afraid of revolutions. Instead of reforming their regimes and fulfilling public aspirations, they heap the blame on Qatar," the Qatari ambassador commented.

Qatar crisis has just started and maybe it is a matter between the two tiny Persian Gulf states of Qatar and the UAE. However, the outcome has not been in the favor of the quartet for sure. Since the first days of the blockade by the quartet the regional power house Iran and its neighbor Turkey with which it has had a long and durable good relations stepped in to help Qatar.

Further the crisis go, more issues come to light, maybe the quartet backs down or maybe just maybe it finds a solution to the crisis. Analysts think the end of crisis will not be at Doha's initiation.

Over 100 Syrians killed in U.S.-led strikes in a week: SOHR

A so-called monitoring group says more than a dozen civilians have lost their lives in a week as the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the ISIL (Daesh) terrorist group conducted a series of aerial assaults in Syria's militant-held northern city of Raqqah.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on Monday that 125 civilians, including at least 40 minors and 25 women, have lost their lives in U.S.-led aerial attacks against the city, located about 455 kilometers (283 miles) northeast of the capital Damascus, between August 14 and August 21.

The Britain-based monitoring group added that 27 people, among them seven children and six women, died on Sunday when U.S.-led military aircraft bombarded Hara al-Badou and other neighborhoods in Raqqah.

The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates,

in two separate letters sent to UN Secretary General António Guterres and rotating President of the UN Security Council Amr Abdellatif Aboulatta on August 17, called on the United Nations to take on its responsibilities concerning the establishment of international peace and security to put an end to the U.S.-led coalition's crimes against innocent Syrians.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry also accused the U.S.-led coalition of using guided bombs and internationally-banned white phosphorus munitions in flagrant violation of international law and human rights principles.

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

The military alliance has repeatedly been accused of

targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of fulfilling its declared aim of destroying Daesh.

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

It is estimated that some 300,000 civilians are trapped inside Raqqah, including 80,000 displaced from other parts of Syria. Thousands have fled in recent months, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs believes about 160,000 people remain in the city.

On June 6, the U.S.-backed militiamen from the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said they had launched an operation aimed at pushing Daesh out of Raqqah.

(Source: SANA)

Most don't understand the relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam: anthropologist

1 → The Al-Aqsa Mosque is the traditionally believed site to which the Prophet Mohammad was transported to undertake a mystical "night journey" to view the power and majesty of God, and to encounter all of the saints of Judaism and Christianity as part of the journey. The site of the mosque was not only traditionally believed to be the site of "Solomon's Temple" but also the place where Abraham was ordered by God to sacrifice his own son as proof of faith, and his son (Isaac in Jewish tradition, Ishmael in Muslim tradition) was spared after Abraham demonstrated his faith. Additionally, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount was the site of many of the events surrounding the life of Jesus. Thus the Al-Aqsa mosque represents not only the holy traditions of Islam, but also the unity of all the "Abrahamic" religions.

■ How can mosque help better understand Islam and counter the rising Islamophobia?

A: ?On World Mosque Day, mosques will be open for non-Muslim visitors throughout the world. This is a wonderful opportunity for ecumenical understanding. If non-Muslims can come to understand the unity of all Abrahamic religions, this will reduce Islamophobia, but there needs to be much

more education among Jews and Christians (and other religions) about this religious unity. Having mosques open and welcoming to all is one way to reach non-Muslims and help them achieve this understanding.

In North America, August 21 is also the day of a great eclipse of the sun, the first full eclipse that has taken place here since 1918. Many millions will be witnessing this celestial event. It is appropriate that World Mosque Day should be the same day. It is a way to commemorate the power of God and the place of humans in the celestial order.

Environment matters: Couple tie the knot, pledge to plant thousand-plus trees

1 → Building numerous dams and digging wells resulting in wetlands total dryness and severe water scarcity, deforestation partially caused by executing development projects in forests, poor land-use planning, unsustainable agriculture depleting underground resources and leading to rapid land subsidence, unsafe waste disposal and leachate produced as waste decomposes, marine pollution, loss of biodiversity attributed to the influence of human beings on the ecosystem by deeply altering the environment, etc. are only tip of the iceberg.

Years of unsustainable development and conflicts especially in Middle Eastern countries coupled with global warming

and climatic extremes are rendering some parts of the region almost uninhabitable and this is only the beginning.

The vicious circle of conflicts, wars and catastrophic environmental challenges is what gradually but definitely destroying the environment at a rate unprecedented in centuries.

The matter is no different on a global-scale. Despite international treaties and environment conferences held annually to capture world attention to the environment some world leaders would prefer immediate gain at expense of lasting environmental harms to the world.

For one, the U.S., as one of the leading producers of

greenhouse gasses, has notified the UN of its intention to withdraw from the 2015 Paris climate agreement arguing that the agreement was a pernicious threat to the economy and American sovereignty.

Everyday scientist and environmentalist are all trying to warn the world leaders of an imminent grim future where the earth would not be suitable for living anymore, which seemingly falls on deaf ears.

The world should only wait, crossing their fingers and pray or the future where all world leaders would actually walk the walk and make the environment a priority. Let's hope it won't be too late.

Does Britain have a secret travel ban against Arabs?

7 → "Why would anyone ever want to visit this country?" she asked the audience.

Jogging, a Syrian play that opened on Wednesday, was also affected after a technician based in Lebanon did not get his visa, while the Palestinian children's play Jihan's Smile was affected by a visa refusal for a musician. To date, nearly a quarter of the performers from the Arab world have had their visas denied more than once.

One can't help but wonder that if we were talking about an arms fair in Edinburgh and not the world's largest cultural event of its kind, then the Home Office would be handing out visas left, right and centre to Arab applicants, especially those wanting to buy weapons of mass destruction. With Brexit making it even more tempting for the government to condone human rights abuses by Arab regimes in the hope of picking up million-pound arms deals, a few upset artists, musicians and luvvies from the region are unlikely to wreck Theresa May's friendship with Middle East tyrants.

Meanwhile, the State of Israel, which treats international law with contempt and is accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, was able to hold a "peace" event at the Edinburgh Festival. Sometimes not even the sweetest of roses can disguise the stench of hypocrisy emanating from officialdom these days.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

After Barcelona: Brexit will put Brits at more risk of deadly terror attacks

8 → Countries want to safeguard their intelligence, and are occasionally reluctant to share their information.

■ Data sharing for security

This is especially evident with regard to data sharing for security purposes. Key findings of the EU Home Affairs Sub-Committee report conclude that the best way for the UK to gain access to "unhindered flows of data" pertaining to European security is to secure "adequacy decisions" from the European Commission.

Adequacy decisions, as outlined under Article 45 of the European Commission's General Data Protection Regulation, allow for the transfer of data to a third country or international organization once the Commission has decided that that country or organization in question has ensured an adequate level of data protection.

These decisions would confirm that the UK's data protection rules, as they are adapted in the wake of Brexit, are on par with those used throughout the EU, thereby allowing for the continued transfer of information pertaining to security concerns between the UK and the EU.

Should the EU update its data protection rules in the future, the UK would have to once again align its domestic rules to those of the EU to maintain the rights to data-sharing with EU member states.

Consequently, the report stressed the importance of the British government securing a continual role for the UK on the European Data Protection Board, the body responsible for the maintenance of such guidelines.

However, like many of the issues Britain must tackle in the Brexit negotiations, little information has been given as to how the UK plans to approach an intelligence-sharing arrangement in the wake of its split from the EU.

This lack of information may be linked to UK Prime Minister Theresa May's position regarding the European Court of Justice (ECJ). May has called for an end to the UK's involvement with the ECJ after Brexit, making the issue non-negotiable in the separation talks.

For May, the issue of the UK's involvement with the ECJ appears to be one of sovereignty. In a speech early in 2017 she said: "We will take back control of our laws and bring an end to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in Britain ... because we will not have truly left the European Union if we are not in control of our own laws."

Leaving the ECJ would mean the UK would lose access to EU organizations, like Europol. Consequently, until May and her government establish how the UK will engage with the ECJ, if at all, the prospects of intelligence sharing will remain uncertain.

Despite May's position on the issue, many in the British government have voiced their opposition to this "red line," acknowledging the importance of remaining a part of, or close to, these EU institutions.

Should a change in the UK-EU intelligence sharing arrangement occur post-Brexit, it would not only negatively impact the UK, but it would also have an adverse effect on the EU. The UK is currently the largest contributor to Europol, therefore if the UK were to walk away from the law enforcement agency the EU would lose out on crucial intelligence.

In addition, European nations greatly benefit from the intelligence the UK contributes through the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance, comprised of the UK, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

The UK exerts a great deal of influence within Europol structures — not just in intelligence sharing, but operationally as well. If the UK and EU do not negotiate their separation carefully, the UK will not be the only nation to suffer from weakened security systems.

It is imperative that the UK work with the EU throughout Brexit negotiations to secure an intelligence-sharing arrangement that will enhance the national security of both parties. Cutting ties with the ECJ, and by default Europol, would be May's mistake, with far-reaching ramifications. Doing so would hamper the ability of British police and security services to do their jobs, making British citizens, residents, and visitors less secure.

Since intelligence-sharing efforts between London and Brussels are mutually beneficial, the UK's withdrawal from the ECJ and Europol would negatively impact citizens in other European countries as well.

(Source: Newsweek)

Ramos asks for more leniency from referees after red card record

Real Madrid defender Sergio Ramos believes English referees are more lenient than their Spanish counterparts and has asked La Liga match officials to take a leaf out of the Premier League book after being sent off in Sunday's 3-0 win at Deportivo La Coruna.

The captain earned a second booking in injury time for elbowing Deportivo's Borja Valle while challenging for an aerial ball, adding to the yellow card he received in the second half for slapping Fabian Schar in an off-the-ball scuffle.

"In some areas we need to look more at English football and let the players play on more, I like their system better. In Europe referees are more tolerant," Ramos, who received the 23rd red card of his Real Madrid career, told reporters.

"I don't agree with the (second) yellow card, it was harsh, but I respect the opinion of the referee. I have no intention of hurting him, I just supported myself, but you learn from everything."

Explaining the first incident with Schar, which occurred when Deportivo's Zakaria Bakkali player was injured on the floor, Ramos added: "We didn't kick the ball out because they didn't do it (earlier in the game)."

"They ran after me, Schar headbutted me and all I did was push him out the way without trying to hurt him."

Ramos is Real's most sent off player, with former defender Fernando Hierro trailing way behind on 12 red cards.

Out of Ramos's 23 red cards, 18 have come in the La Liga, three were shown in the Champions League and two in the King's Cup. The centre back, however, has never been dismissed in 143 games for Spain.

Five players were sent off in eight Liga games over the weekend, compared to two in nine Premier League games.

(Source: Goal)

Romanian player breaks finger in anger after failed 'Panenka'

Juventus Bucharest midfielder George Calintaru broke his finger when he punched a table in the dressing room after seeing his stoppage-time 'Panenka' penalty easily saved, that could have earned his newly-promoted club a draw against FCSB in Romania's Liga 1 on Saturday.

The 28-year-old missed the penalty in the sixth minute of added time after trying to chip the goalkeeper of FCSB, formerly known as Steaua Bucharest, angering his team mates.

TV footage showed Calintaru being pushed by vice-captain Valentin Barbulescu after the costly miss, which was the final kick of the game. The match ended in a 2-1 home defeat for Juventus, who had Iulian Carabela sent off after 72 minutes.

Local media reported Calintaru had been beaten by team mates after the final whistle but Juventus manager Daniel Oprită described the incident as "heated discussion".

Oprită, who joined the club in 2015, said after the defeat that he did not want to continue as manager.

Juventus, still searching for their first win of the season, remain bottom of the table with two points from seven matches. Unbeaten FCSB are third on 15.

(Source: Euronews)

Pacquiao versus Horn rematch confirmed for Brisbane

Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao's rematch with Australian Jeff Horn has been confirmed for Brisbane later this year, the city's mayor said on Monday.

Brisbane Lord Mayor Graham Quirk had earlier threatened to pull funding without confirmation from the Pacquiao camp but said he had been reassured at a meeting with promoters on Monday.

"I have had a meeting earlier today which has confirmed that Manny Pacquiao will definitely be in Brisbane this year for a rematch with Jeff Horn," Quirk told local media.

The fight is expected to be held in November at the same Lang Park stadium where a packed crowd of 50,000 saw former schoolteacher Horn upset Pacquiao for the WBO welterweight belt in an unanimous 12-round decision last month.

Quirk said Brisbane Marketing, the city council's major events subsidiary, would be re-engaged for negotiations with promoters Top Rank and Duco Events.

"It was a matter of Manny Pacquiao deciding whether he wanted to take up that clause in the contract to give a rematch in the event that he lost," Quirk added.

Horn's surprise win over 38-year-old Pacquiao caused controversy, with many observers outraged by the decision.

But a WBO scoring review later endorsed Horn as the rightful winner.

(Source: Reuters)

Man City outcast Nasri joins Eto'o at Antalyaspor

Samir Nasri has ended his six-year stint at Manchester City by joining Samuel Eto'o at Turkish club Antalyaspor.

City confirmed the move on their official Twitter account, with Antalyaspor also announcing his arrival shortly after.

The former France international is understood to have inked a two-year deal with the Super Lig side where he links up with former team-mates Jeremy Menez and Johan Djourou.

Nasri originally joined City from Arsenal for a reported £25million in 2011 and has won two Premier League titles and an EFL Cup with the Citizens, for who he made 176 appearances.

However, he was not part of Pep Guardiola's plans last season and spent the campaign on loan at Sevilla and, although he re-joined City for a pre-season tour of the United States, he has once again been deemed surplus to requirements.

Antalyaspor have made their ambitions clear with a host of recognisable signings after finishing fifth in Turkey's top tier last term.

(Source: Mirror)

FC Barcelona: Catalan club honors terror attack victims

It's normally a place of celebration. A place where FC Barcelona's fans passionately support their team.

But the mood Sunday was altogether more somber as the football club's supporters congregated at the Camp Nou stadium to watch Barca's first league game of the season against Real Betis.

Both teams and fans honored the victims of the Thursday van attack in Barcelona that left 13 people dead and 120 injured.

The Barcelona football club, whose slogan is "more than a club" because of its defense of the Catalan culture and language, is one of Catalonia's most important institutions.

"Freedom of expression is what Catalonia is all about," Catalan artist Joan Miró once said, and that spirit was very much in evidence.

Ahead of the match, applause rang out as both teams gathered in the center of the pitch with the match officials next to a banner that said: "TotsSomBarcelona," or "We are all Barcelona." The Barca players wore black armbands.

A minute's silence was then observed, a mark of respect that was also made at other matches across Spain over the weekend.

L'Esportiu journalist Sergi de Juan told CNN Sport: "It was the stadium saying: 'We don't have fear.'"

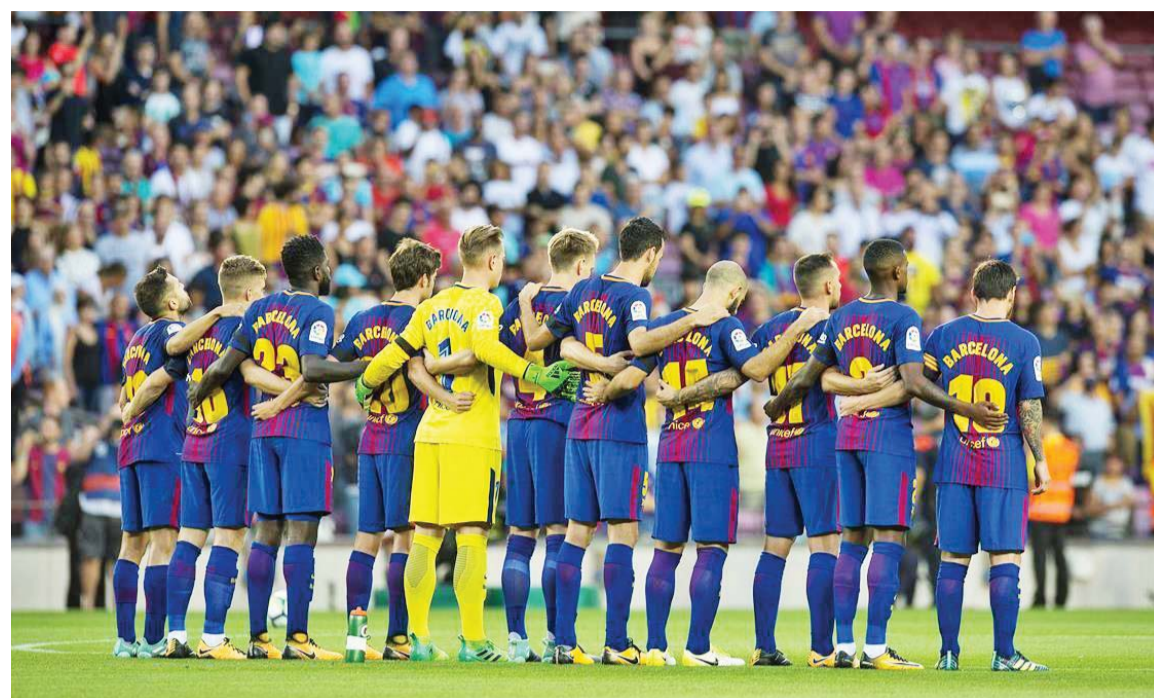
The front of the Barca players' shirts carried the #TotsSomBarcelona inscription, and Barcelona was inscribed on the back of the shirts rather than the players' names.

In the bleachers, one fan displayed a placard reading: "Let us stand against terrorism. Terrorism has no religion."

The attendance for the game was just over 56,000. Increased security included barriers at the Camp Nou entrances to stop vehicles.

Some fans, especially tourists, were reportedly deterred from attending the game and returned their tickets, with their money refunded by the club.

Earlier, hundreds gathered at Barcelona's famous Sagra-



da Familia church to mourn those killed. Spain's King Felipe and Queen Letizia were among those who prayed for the 14 people killed in Barcelona and Cambrils.

At midday, Barca and Betis officials delivered a floral tribute at Las Ramblas, where the van plowed through the crowds on Thursday.

After the attack, the team's star player, Lionel Messi, posted on Instagram: "I want to send my condolences and all my support to the families and friends of the victims of the terrible attack in our beloved Barcelona, as well as

rejecting totally any act of violence.

"We are not going to give up. We are many more who want to live in a peaceful world, without hate and where respect and tolerance form the base of coexistence."

On Saturday, Barca goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen tweeted: "We're playing for the whole city and for peace all over the world."

Barca comfortably beat Betis 2-0 thanks to Alin Toşa's own goal and a Sergi Roberto strike.

(Source: CNN)

Muguruza thumps Halep in Cincinnati final



Spanish fourth seed Garbine Muguruza fine-tuned her preparations for this month's U.S. Open by crushing Simona Halep 6-1 6-0 in the Cincinnati Open final on Sunday.

Muguruza's tennis was as hot as the summer sun in the early afternoon match on the outdoor hardcourt, as she wrapped up victory in less than an hour.

The Wimbledon champion kept her opponent pinned to the baseline and improved her career record to 3-1 against the Romanian second seed.

With the loss, Halep once again fell one win short of rising to the top of the world rankings.

The Romanian, looking to supplant Karolina Pliskova from the top spot, entered the final without dropping a set all week but on Sunday her game fell apart.

Halep's second serve proved to be a liability, winning only 11 percent.

Spaniard Muguruza, who had failed to capture a title for more than a year following her triumph at last year's French Open, was now celebrating winning two trophies in as many months as she backed up her Wimbledon victory

with her glorious run in Cincinnati.

She credited Sunday's win on saving three match points in her third-round encounter against American Madison Keys.

"The match with Keys gave me a lot of confidence," Muguruza told ESPN.

"I like the big matches. I believe I play well there. I'm happy to be there, happy to be in that situation."

"When I was a little girl I was dreaming to be there. That's where I want to play."

But Muguruza declined to build up her chances for the U.S. Open.

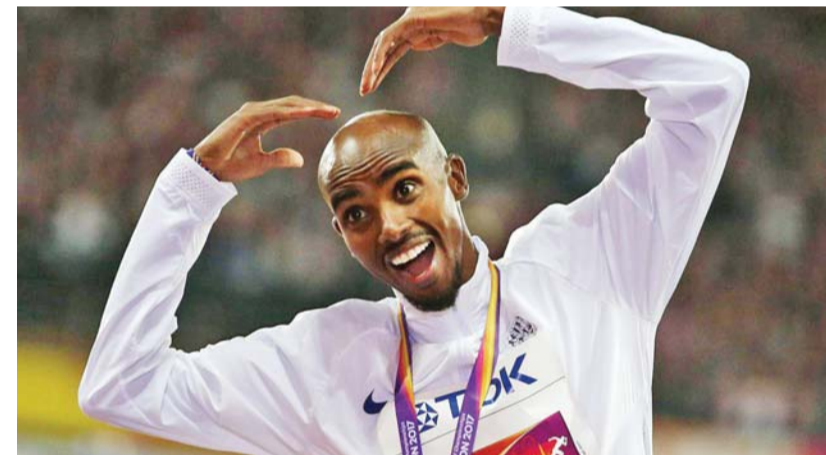
"The U.S. Open is a very long tournament," said the tall 23-year-old. "It's completely different. I'm just trying to play well."

Halep, who also squandered a chance to climb to the top of the world rankings when she was beaten in the French Open final in June, acknowledged she had performed poorly.

"I played so bad today and Garbine played so well," Halep, told the crowd. "I will come back next year and try to do better."

(Source: Reuters)

Farah wins his farewell track race in Britain



Mo Farah brought down the curtain on his peerless track career in Britain by winning his farewell race on home soil on an emotional afternoon at the Birmingham Grand Prix Diamond League meeting on Sunday.

In his penultimate track race — his final run will be at the Zurich Weltklasse meeting on Thursday — before becoming a marathon man on the roads next season, the quadruple Olympic champion outclassed a 3,000 meters field with familiar elan.

The weekend after winning 5,000 meters silver and a fortnight since his 10,000 meters triumph at the World Championships in London, the 34-year-old was presented with a more accommodating field for his domestic goodbye.

The crowd at the Alexander Stadium gave Britain's greatest racer — perhaps the best the world has seen too after 10 global title wins — a rapturous reception before watching him sprint away one last time down the home straight as he won in 7 minutes 38.64 seconds.

Farah, who clocked 56.89 seconds over the last lap to ease away from Spain's run-

ner-up, Adel Mechaal, the fourth-placed finisher in the world 1500 meters final, told the BBC: "It means everything to me."

"The emotion was high and I had a lot of support from the home crowd. This is what we dream of — having a home crowd cheer you on — and I want to thank everyone who has supported me and followed my journey."

"I never dreamed of becoming four times Olympic champion and a multi world champion. All I ever dreamed of was competing for Britain."

"Now I just want to continue to see what I can do on the road, without having a target on my back, and just try to enjoy it without so much pressure."

"I'm going to a completely new game on the roads with a new mind and I'm excited."

Five more newly-crowned world champions celebrated their London triumphs in style, headed by Qatar's magnificent high jumper Mutaz Essa Barshim, who produced the performance of the meeting with the world's best jump of the year, 2.40 meters.

(Source: Guardian)

Neymar slams Barcelona board: 'They shouldn't be in charge of Catalan club'

Neymar said he was already feeling at home at Paris St Germain after scoring twice in a dazzling display in his second match for the French club following his record transfer from Barcelona.

In addition to his two goals in his first match at Parc des Princes, Neymar set up two more and won a penalty as 10-man PSG trounced Toulouse 6-2 to go top of Ligue 1 on Sunday.

"I already feel at home here," he told local media. "The team plays in the Brazilian style and this helps my integration."

"I love the atmosphere of the Parc des Princes. The fans supported us until the last minute. They made a lot of noise."

"Now I want to adapt quicker... I think I can improve."

Neymar, who moved from Barcelona for 222 million euros (202.4 million pounds) earlier this month, has now scored three goals in two matches for his new club after opening his account on debut against Guingamp last week.

The 25-year-old left his best until last on Sunday, showing brilliant control, and benefiting from a bit of luck, as he danced around five defenders before planting the ball in the back of the net in stoppage time.

"I do not really remember what happened on my second goal, the most important thing is that it went into the back of the net," he said.



Toulouse striker Andy Delort, whose foul on the Brazilian led to the penalty converted by Edinson Cavani, compared Neymar's skills to those of another Brazilian who made his mark at Barcelona and PSG.

"He's a phenomenon, an artist," he told L'Equipe. "It was like Ronaldinho, we never knew what to expect when he got the ball. I do not know if there's a way to stop him."

"The only positive thing is that we have only have to face him once more in the championship."

The result moved PSG to the top of the table on goal difference, with champions Monaco and Saint-Etienne also maintaining their 100 percent records with three wins each.

PSG, last year's runners-up, host Saint-Etienne next weekend in their fourth match of the season.

Neymar also has slammed Barcelona's board, suggesting he would not have left the club if he had been treated properly. It came a fortnight after he moved to PSG for a world-record fee of around £200m prompting criticism from Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu.

"His way of doing things was not the best, it was not the behaviour we expect of one of our players," Bartomeu said at Barca's annual supporters' congress.

Neymar said Barcelona's board were not running the club properly and suggested a number of his team-mates are unhappy at the Camp Nou.

"I don't have anything to say to the Barcelona board," said Neymar. "Well, actually I have something to say: That I am disappointed with them."

"I spent four years there and was very happy. I began happy, spent four years happy and left happy. But not with them. For me, they shouldn't be in charge of Barca. Barca deserve much better, and everyone knows this."

(Source: Eurosport)

Iran runners-up at FIBA Asia Cup 2017

SPORTS Australia are the FIBA Asia Cup 2017 champions following a 79-56 victory over Iran in the final on Sunday evening.

Australia started the game as they meant to go on, jumping out to a 12-2 lead and convincingly controlling the contest the rest of the way, fiba.com reported.

Brad Newley had his best game of the tournament to lead Australia, finishing with 18 points, Daniel Kickert had 14, whilst Mitch Creek had another game in double digits with 12 points.

Hamed Haddadi had 18 points to lead Iran, and was joined by Behnam Yakhchali as the only other player in double figures with 10.

It was all Australia early, after their 12-2 opening in the first five minutes with Iran having no answers.

Iran, sparked by Haddadi, responded with a 9-0 run out of a timeout to get right back into the game, as the Boomers led 18-14 after the opening period in what started as a relatively low scoring affair.

Australia kept pressure up in second quarter, pulling away in the lead up to halftime with an 11-1 run as they got fast break opportunities from Iran's turnovers and saw success pulling Haddadi away from the basket.

Australia had a commanding 43-26 lead at the break, behind 8 points from Newley.

It took two and a half minutes for the lead to balloon to 20 in the third period from which point it was relatively plain sailing.

A final surge from Iran saw them get the deficit down to 11 in the final minutes of the third, but it was as close as they would get with Australia dominating the start of the fourth to seal their fate.

Korea finished in third place at the FIBA Asia Cup 2017, taking a 80-71 win to make it two wins from two against New Zealand in the competition.



Australia are good opportunity for Asia basketball: Mehran Hatami

Iran basketball coach Mehran Hatami believes that a high-level Australian team can help the Asian basketball teams in the future.

The Boomers won the title after beating Iran 79-56 at the 2017 FIBA Asia Cup final match in Beirut, Lebanon Sunday evening.

Australia and New Zealand made their debuts in the FIBA Asia Cup.

"Australia's participation in the



FIBA Asia Cup provides us with an opportunity to develop and find out about ourselves," Hatami said.

"Australia take advantage of high-quality players and it's a great opportunity for the Asian teams to develop their skills. Our players can learn from their rivals in the tournament," he added.

"I am satisfied with my players' performance in the tournament and I believe that they did their best," the Iranian coach concluded.

Iran's Hamed Haddadi named FIBA Asia Cup MVP

The Iranian national basketball team's center Hamed Haddadi has been named the Most Valuable Player (MVP) for the fourth time in the FIBA Asia Cup.

The 2.18 player had been previously named as MVP in 2007 (Tokushima), 2009 (Tianjin) and 2013 (Manila).

The center helped Iran finishes second at the 2017 FIBA Asia Cup in Beirut, Lebanon.

Haddadi had 18 points in the

final match against Australia.

Haddadi is the first Iranian to play in the National Basketball Association (NBA) when he debuted with the Memphis Grizzlies in 2008.

He'd also continue playing with the Grizzlies there until 2013, where he'd get traded to first the Toronto Raptors and then the Phoenix Suns before returning to Iran and then play in China soon afterwards.



Ex-Iran table tennis player Vahabzadeh dies

SPORTS Former Iran national table tennis player MohamOmad Vahabzadeh passed away at the age of 73.

He died in Germany Sunday night due to illness.

Vahabzadeh is survived by his son, Arya.

Vahabzadeh represented Iran in three World Table Tennis Championships 1971 (Nagoya), 1973 (Sarajevo) and 1977 (Birmingham).

He is the first Iranian to play abroad when he joined a German team in 1975.

Vahabzadeh is widely considered as one of the pioneers of Iran table tennis.



The Tehran Times staff offer heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family.

Iran to play Congo in friendly: Report

SPORTS Iranian media suggest that Team Melli will play a friendly match with DR Congo as part of preparation for the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

The Iranian football team have been scheduled to face Russia in Saint Petersburg on October 10 and it seems the Carlos Queiroz's team are going to arrange a friendly match with the African team five days earlier.

DR Congo sit above Tunisia, Guinea and Libya in Group A of the 2018 World Cup qualifiers.

Iran have already booked their spot in next year's World Cup as they



Iran have already booked their spot in next year's World Cup as they sit seven points clear at the top of Group A.

AFC Champions League Quarter-final preview: Persepolis v Al Ahli

Muscat: It will be a clash of two of West Asia's most popular teams when Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli take on Persepolis of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the quarter-finals of the 2017 AFC Champions League on Tuesday night in the capital of the Omani Sultanate.

Tehran giants Persepolis will look to make a long-awaited mark on the Asian level when they take to the pitch against Al Ahli. While the club did reach the semi-finals of the Asian Club Championship in 1997, 1998 and 2001, they failed to reach the quarter-finals of the revamped AFC Champions League before this year's edition.

The 2017 campaign saw Persepolis successfully navigate a tough group featuring Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia, Qatar's Al Rayyan and Emirati club Al Wahda. Finishing second in the group, they took on Doha side Lekhwiya in the Round of 16.

After a goalless first leg, it would take an own goal from Lekhwiya defender Chico Flores in the second leg to take Persepolis to the quarter-finals.

Persepolis have one man to thank in particular for getting this far in the com-



petition and that is IR Iran striker Mehdi Taremi. Despite not scoring in the previous round, the 24-year old has struck six times so far and sits in second place in the scoring charts behind Al Ain's Omar Abdulrahman.

The focus will turn to Taremi once again as the club aim to conquer further

ground in Asia.

Although Al Ahli have never won an Asian title, they were the first Saudi club to reach the final of the Asian Club Championship, back in 1985.

In the title decider, the Jeddah-based club lost to Daewoo Royals of Korea Republic. A similar fate ensued when Al Ahli

made their second appearance in a continental final with their 2012 AFC Champions League run, only to lose to another Korean side - Ulsan Hyundai.

Since that disappointment, Al Ahli have not made it past the quarter-finals. This year, Al Ahli will attempt to correct that record.

After finishing second in Group C behind Al Ain, Al Ahli faced their namesakes from the United Arab Emirates, who were runners-up in the 2015 edition.

Prolific front man Omar Al Soma was unavailable for both ties of the Round of 16 fixture due to injury, but the Saudi side managed to register a convincing 4-2 aggregate victory.

Syrian striker Al Soma is now back in the squad and will be ready to lead Al Ahli's attack once again after scoring four times in the group stage.

His scoring prowess is well-known and, recently, he was honoured by the club for finishing as top scorer for the last three seasons - which should serve as motivation ahead of the big continental clash.

(Source: the-afc)

My goal is not to beat Iran by a big score: Shin Tae-yong

South Korea football coach Shin Tae-yong said Monday that they are not going to beat Iran by a big score, but to go to the World Cup with a win.

Shin, who previously managed South Korea's under-20 and under-23 squads, said that he won't use his usual style of attacking football against Iran, but is ready to show that the Taeguk Warriors are a tough team.

"If we're meeting Iran in a friendly, I will make the team play attacking football," he said. "Of course, I want to pay back for the humiliation that we've suffered, but these matches are important. My goal is not to beat Iran by a big score, but to go to the World Cup with a win."

The match against Iran will be Shin's senior coaching debut.

South Korea haven't beat Iran since 2011, and their last four meetings all ended in 1-0 wins for Iran.

And while Iran have already booked their spot in the 2018 World Cup, South Korea are currently holding on to the last automatic qualification spot in Group A with 13 points, just one point above Uzbekistan.

(Source: Yonhap)

Iran's futsal 1st in Asia

In the new ranking announced in August, the Iranian national futsal team ranked 1st in Asia and 6th in the world.

According to the futsal world ranking website, Iran's ranking didn't change in comparison with the previous month.

Iran stands sixth after Brazil, Spain, Russia, Argentina, and Italy, and before Portugal, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan.

Japan and Thailand, the second Asian and the third Asian teams, ranked 15 and 16.

In the 14 rounds of the Asian futsal championship, Iran has won the cup 11 times, and Japan three times.

(Source: IRNA)

Zidane happy to see Real Madrid 'enjoy themselves' in 44 pass goal

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said he was especially happy as his team had enjoyed themselves in winning Sunday evening's La Liga opener 3-0 at Deportivo La Coruna, with the Frenchman playing down any controversy after captain Sergio Ramos was sent off late on.

After Depor striker Florin Andone was twice denied early by Madrid goalkeeper Keylor Navas, Gareth Bale took advantage of a mistake by home keeper Ruben to tap the opener into an empty net, and before the half hour mark Casemiro had made it 2-0 by knocking home Marcelo's cross from close range.

Madrid's third came just after an hour, with Karim Benzema, Isco and Bale combining excellently before Kroos found the net from 15 yards. There was late drama with Depor's Florin Andone missing a penalty, before Ramos was shown a second yellow card for catching opposition substitute Borja Valle with an arm during an aerial challenge.

Madrid's second goal was preceded by a move of 44 passes, involving all 11 players, which lasted 107 seconds. At the postgame news conference, the former galactico said the goal was an example of what he and his squad worked hard to try and show on the pitch, and he was particularly satisfied when it came off.

"We always try and play, we know we have the players to do that," Zidane said. "We want to enjoy ourselves and try and play well. The second goal was what we work on, what we want to do."

(Source: ESPN)

Barcelona insist Messi still committed after Joan Laporta claim

Barcelona maintain that Lionel Messi will sign his contract extension despite former club president Joan Laporta's suggestion he could leave if current chief Josep Maria Bartomeu is not removed from his position.

Messi's current deal expires next summer but Barca announced in July that an agreement had been reached for a new four-year deal, running until 2021.

However, the new terms have not yet been signed and reports over the weekend claimed Manchester City are prepared to pay the Argentine's €300 million buyout clause.

"If we want Messi to continue to be happy at Barca we have to get rid of Bartomeu immediately," Laporta wrote on Twitter after the links with City had surfaced.

However, Barca sporting director Robert Fernandez downplayed the idea Messi could leave the club and said that the contract extension will be signed soon.

"The agreement for Messi's renewal is total on both sides," he told beIN after Barcelona began the new La Liga season with a 2-0 win against Real Betis on Sunday.

"We are looking for the right moment to sign it, there's nothing else [to be said]. We already know how key Leo is. He's a very important player for football."

While Messi may not leave the club, Laporta's comments increase the pressure on Bartomeu, who was the subject of an online campaign last week asking for him to resign.

Neymar, who left Barca for Paris Saint-Germain earlier this month, has also weighed in against the club's board, saying they do not deserve to be in charge.

(Source: Soccernet)

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“Malaria” to compete in Russian festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Parviz Shahbazi’s “Malaria” will compete in the 10th East and West, Classics and Avant-Garde International Film Festival, which will be held in Orenburg, Russia from August 25 to 31.



A poster for “Malaria” by director Parviz Shahbazi

Starring Saghar Qana’at and Saed Soheili, the film tells the story of a young woman who elopes with her boyfriend to spend her time in the company of a band of street musicians in Tehran.

Afterwards, she plans to hoodwink her father and brothers by claiming that she has been kidnapped and wants them to promptly send the ransom money. “Malaria” has been acclaimed at several international events.

The 32nd Warsaw Film Festival honored the film with the grand prix for best film in 2016. It also was named best film at the 12th International Oriental Film Festival of Geneva (FIFOG) this year in April.

Indonesian painter Jihan Sukmantoro hangs works at Tehran exhibit

A R T TEHRAN — Works by 79-year-old Indonesian painter Jihan Sukmantoro are on display in an exhibition at the Eastern Gallery of Tehran’s Milad Tower.



Indonesian painter Jihan Sukmantoro poses with one his works in an undated photo.

The showcase opened on Sunday evening and will run until August 25.

The exhibition has been organized under the auspices of the Embassy of Indonesia as part of a celebration for the 72nd anniversary of the independence day of the country, the embassy announced in a press release on Sunday.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Culture minister announces appointment of new assistant

A R T TEHRAN — Seyyed Abbas Salehi, who won a vote of confidence as the new culture minister at the Iranian parliament on Sunday, appointed Mohammad Solgi as his acting assistant in cultural affairs today.

Salehi held the position before he was selected as culture minister in President Hassan Rouhani’s new administration.

Solgi was formerly the director of the Office for Development of Publications and Reading at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.



“Under the Smoky Roof” to hit silver screens in Germany

A R T TEHRAN — “Under the Smoky Roof”, Iranian director Puran Derakhshandeh’s drama about emotionally unavailable spouses, will go on screen at Kinopolis cinemas in eight German cities on October 1 and 2.

The film will be screened at Frankfurt, Bonn, Munich, Darmstadt, Koblenz, Giessen, Karlsruhe and Viernheim.

“Under the Smoky Roof” is about Shirin whose relations with her son and husband are gradually ruined. Shirin faces a new challenge when she wants to restore the relationship.

“20th Circuit Suspects” from Iran joins APISA race

A R T TEHRAN — Iran’s **d e s k** Documentary and Experimental Film Center has submitted Hesam Eslami’s acclaimed documentary “20th Circuit Suspects” to the 11th Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA).

The documentary depicts an unlikely friendship that forms between Eslami and Ehsan, the leader of the Iranian youth gang that breaks into his car.

Over the next six years, the director follows the gang in this gritty, nail-biting ride as they run wild in the streets of Tehran, breaking into cars, committing robberies and fighting in the streets. But when the gang’s cat-and-mouse games with police finally catch up to them and family tragedy strikes, they realize

their adolescent behavior may not be working for them any longer. Growing up is a reality they must face.

Earlier this week, the Iranian House of Cinema submitted nine films to the APSA. Among the submissions are “Release from Heaven” by Ali Nuri-Oskui, “The Villa Tenants” by Monir Qeidi, “The Skater” by Fereidun Najafi and “Ferrari” by Alireza Davudnejad

In addition, Mohammad-Ali Talebi’s “The End of Dreams” from Iran’s Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) was sent to the competition in July.

The 11th Asia Pacific Screen Awards will be presented in Brisbane on November 23.

Iranian Polo model writes book

A R T TEHRAN — Amir Zobdeh, an Iranian model who has collaborated with several major international companies such as Polo and Safilo, has authored a book on modeling.

Speaking to the Persian service of Honaronline on Monday, Zobdeh, 39, said that his book “A Practical Instruction for Modeling” was completed four years ago, and has recently been released by the Tehran-based publishing house Pardise Elm.

“New positive attitudes to designing Iranian and Islamic fashions in the country made me publish the book,” he added.

He noted that the book is informative and readable for people from all walks of life.



The cover of Iranian model Amir Zobdeh’s book “A Practical Instruction for Modeling”

Abba star asks fans to take a chance on new piano album

NEW YORK (Reuters) — It might take a few moments for fans of Abba star Benny Andersson’s to recognize the songs on his new album “Piano”.

Although it features Abba hits, including “Thank You for the Music”, and songs from Andersson’s musicals and solo work, he performs them alone at the piano without

any accompaniment and without vocals.

“The pieces I have chosen to play are an integral part of me”, Andersson said in an interview released by his record company. “In a strange way, I feel like I am playing my memoirs.”

Andersson was the chief songwriter in the Swedish pop group, which also includ-

ed Bjorn Ulvaeus, Anni-Frid Lyngstad and Agnetha Faltskog in the line-up.

The group broke up in 1982 but have maintained an enduring popularity with subsequent generations of music fans and are one of the biggest-selling acts of all time.

In 2010, Abba’s record company gave

the group an award for selling 375 million albums.

In addition to his musical output, it was recently announced that Andersson would serve as executive producer on an upcoming sequel to the film “Mamma Mia”, a hit 2008 musical featuring the music of Abba.

“Piano” will be released on Sept. 29.

Jerry Lewis, king of low-brow comedy and charity fundraiser, dies at 91

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Jerry Lewis, the high prince of low-brow comedy on stage and in film as well as a fund-raising powerhouse with his annual Labor Day telethon, died on Sunday at the age of 91, his family said.

Lewis died of natural causes at his home in Las Vegas on Sunday morning with his family by his side, the family said in a statement.

He had been hospitalized for about five weeks beginning in early June for a urinary tract infection, keeping him from traveling to Toronto to appear in a film, his spokeswoman, Candi Cazau, told Reuters by telephone.

Lewis rose to fame as the goofy foil to suave partner Dean Martin. At home, he was both loved and derided, while in France, he became a comic icon.

He once summed up his career by saying “I’ve had great success being a total idiot” and said the key was maintaining a certain child-like quality.

“I look at the world through a child’s eyes because I’m 9”, he told Reuters in a November 2002 interview. “I stayed that way. I made a career out of it. It’s a wonderful place to be.”

Jim Carrey, an actor whose style owed a heavy debt to Lewis, paid tribute to the comedian soon after news of his death.

“That fool was no dummy”, Carrey wrote. “Jerry Lewis was an undeniable genius an unfathomable blessing, comedy’s absolute! I am because he was!”

Lewis was 87 when his last movie, “Max Rose,” came out in 2013, playing a jazz pianist who questions his marriage after learning his wife of 65 years may have been unfaithful.

The son of vaudeville entertainers, Lewis became a star in the early 1950s as Martin’s comic sidekick in nightclubs, on television and in 16 movies. At their height, they set off the kind of fan hysteria that once surrounded Frank Sinatra and the Beatles.

Their decade-long partnership ended with a bitter split and Lewis went on to star in his own film comedies.

Lewis’ movie persona, like the character he created in the act with Martin, varied little from film to film. He was zany and manic, forever squealing, grimacing and flailing his way through situations beyond his control.

He starred in more than 45 films in a career spanning five decades. His cross-eyed antics often drew scorn from critics but he was for a time a box-office hit who commanded one of the biggest salaries in Hollywood.

The White House said Lewis had kept people laughing for more than a half-century and praised him as one of the greatest entertainers and humanitarians.

“Jerry lived the American Dream - he truly loved his



U.S. comedian Jerry Lewis attends a special screening of the feature-length documentary “Method to the Madness of Jerry Lewis” at Paramount Studios in Los Angeles, California, U.S. on December 7, 2011.

(Reuters/ Phil McCarten/File Photo)

country, and his country loved him”, said the statement from President Donald Trump’s press secretary.

Legend in France

Long after his celebrity faded at home, Lewis was wildly popular in France, where he was hailed as “le Roi du Crazy” (the king of crazy) and inducted into the Legion of Honor, France’s highest award, in 1984. He received a similar honor in 2006.

He explained his popularity in France, by saying: “The French are very visually oriented even though they are cerebral. They enjoy what they see and laugh. Then, later, they ask why?”

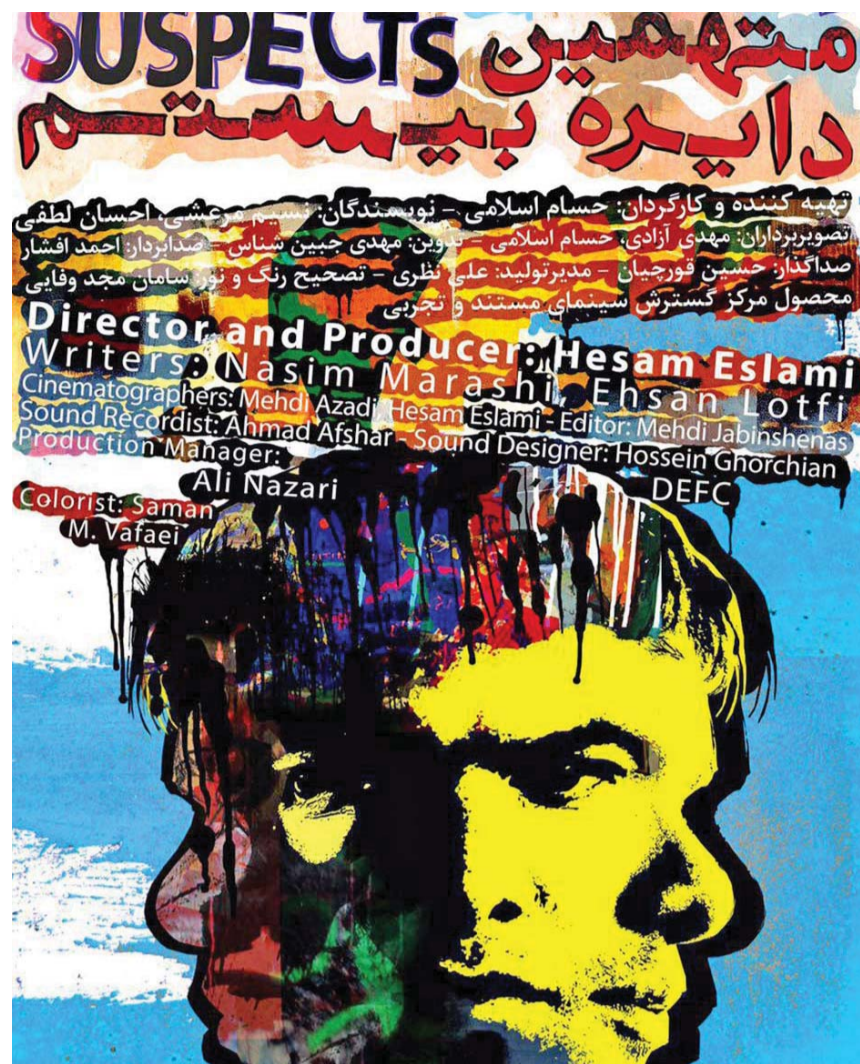
Lewis acknowledged that he elicited either love or hate from audiences - and little in between.

“When Jerry Lewis is funny on screen, I swear to God I laugh louder than anyone”, he said. “... When he’s not, he’s the worst there is.”

Lewis, born Joseph Levitch on March 16, 1926, in Newark, New Jersey, started on upstate New York’s Borscht Belt comedy circuit as a singer at age 5.

He first teamed with the debonair Martin in 1946 while they were performing in an Atlantic City, New Jersey, nightclub - Martin as a singer and Lewis as a comic.

Their largely improvised act, with Lewis making wild comic forays into the audience, was an immediate hit. Their 1950 movie debut, “My Friend Irma”, was followed by “My Friend Irma Goes West” the next year.



A poster for “20th Circuit Suspects”