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Leader: Government must prioritize economy

Tackling unemployment high on agenda: Rouhani

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian **d e s k** an President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that his government prioritizes cutting unemployment and creating over 900,000 job opportunities per year.

During a meeting of cabinet with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Rouhani said that "unemployment" and "economic problems" are the most serious challenges for the government.

He added that "fighting poverty" and "realizing social justice" are among other goals that the government seeks to reach.

The 12th government will make efforts to keep inflation at single-digit rate, Rouhani noted.

"Last year was an exceptional year for the economy of the country, because we witnessed double-digit rate of economic growth and Iran was first in the world from the economic growth point of view," he added.

He also highlighted the necessity of making the economy and banking system more people-friendly.

"If we want to reach this goal, the banking interest must be reduced and ministries and banks are required to refrain from doing business," he added.

Elsewhere, Rouhani said that the issue of water shortage and economic problems are among the other issues that the 12th government will prioritize. **->2**

Pentagon's concealment of total troops in war zones under fire

The United States Pentagon has been concealing the true number of the U.S. troops in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, raising doubts about sincerity towards the governments of these countries and concerns regarding democratic accountability to the U.S. public.

Jason Dempsey, an Afghanistan war veteran who is now a researcher at the Center for a New American Security, believes the Pentagon can deal with operational security while still maintaining core American democratic values expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

"Accurate troop level numbers are something the public absolutely deserves to know," according to Dempsey as quoted in Politico website on Saturday.

Nevertheless, the Pentagon and U.S. President Donald Trump seem to share the idea that troop numbers' transparency is not required.

Trump in a nationally televised speech at Fort Myer on Monday unveiled his new strategy in Afghanistan.

He said the U.S. military presence would continue in the conflict-stricken country but refrained to elaborate on the scope, suggesting that the lack of overall transparency on troop levels will continue.

The Pentagon, for its part, under the so-called Force Management Level policy does not count troops who are in the war zones for fewer than 120 days in the public numbers.

U.S. military leaders defend the policy saying accurate disclosure of troops numbers "did not make sense".

"It just didn't make sense to increase the Force Management Level when you were just bringing in some engineers for a little while to build a facility and then take them out," said Lt. Gen. Sean MacFarland, who was the U.S. commander in Iraq and Syria from 2015-16, and is currently deputy commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command.

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis has announced that he will release the true numbers publicly. **->13**

Royan Intl. Research Award to honor Iranian, foreign researchers

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The **d e s k** an International Research Award will appreciate ten Iranian and foreign researchers for their achievements during a ceremony which is scheduled to be held in Tehran on August 30.

Iranian researchers along with foreign researchers from around the world will accept awards on behalf of their scientific achievements concurrent with Royan International Twin Congress on Reproductive Biomedicine and Stem Cells Biology and Technology (August 30-September 1).

According to the Royan congress official website the event is a unique scientific event in its own fields in Iran and the Middle East. The congress is a joint of two separate congresses with different themes held by Royan Research Institute Reproductive Biomedicine and Stem Cells Research Center. Speakers from the UK, Europe and the U.S deliver speeches at the event annually.

"Thank you for all of exceptional assistance in arranging my most interesting visit to the Royan institute and Iran. It was the best congress I have ever been at, everyone was

extremely conscious, kind and helpful," said Stuart Howards, Professor of University of Virginia Charlottesville, U.S., about the event published among the views on the event in Royan congress website.

Elsewhere Professor Jorge Ferrer, Chair in Genetics and Medicine, Section Head, Genomics and Genetics Theme Leader, Imperial College London, UK said "thank you for your note and most importantly thank you for all of exceptional assistance in arranging my most interesting visit to the Royan institute and Iran..." **->12**

139 countries could use 100% renewables by 2050, scientists say

More than 70 percent of the countries in the world – including the UK, U.S, China and other major economies – could run entirely on energy created by wind, water and solar by 2050, according to a roadmap developed by scientists.

And they pointed out that doing so would not only mean the world would avoid dangerous global warming, but also prevent millions of premature deaths a year and create about 24 million more jobs than were lost.

One of the scientists said the social benefits of following their roadmap were so "enormous" and essentially cost free that human society should "accelerate the transition to wind, water and solar as fast as possible".

Rooftop solar panels and major solar power plants; offshore and onshore wind turbines; wave, hydroelectric and tidal schemes;

and geothermal energy would also be used to replace fossil fuels to generate electricity, power vehicles and heat homes.

The UK is about to publish its own Emissions Reduction Plan, which is supposed to set out how Britain will meet its international commitment in the fight against climate change – to cut emissions by 57 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

"The seriousness of air-pollution, climate, and energy-security problems worldwide requires a massive, virtually immediate transformation of the world's energy infrastructure to 100 percent clean, renewable energy producing zero emissions," a team of researchers led by Professor Mark Jacobson, of Stanford University in the U.S., wrote in the journal Joule.

"For example, each year, four to seven mil-

lion people die prematurely and hundreds of millions more become ill from air pollution, causing a massive amount of pain and suffering that can nearly be eliminated by a zero-emission energy system.

"Similarly, avoiding 1.5C warming since pre-industrial times requires no less than an 80 percent conversion of the energy infrastructure to zero-emitting energy by 2030 and 100 percent by 2050.

"Lastly, as fossil-fuel supplies dwindle and their prices rise, economic, social, and political instability may ensue unless a replacement energy infrastructure is developed well ahead of time."

The roadmaps were developed for 139 countries for which information about energy systems was available, out of the total of 195. (Source: independent.co.uk)

Israeli settler runs over, kills Palestinian girl in occupied West Bank

A Palestinian girl has reportedly lost her life after an Israeli settler ran her over in the north-central part of the occupied West Bank.

Palestinian medical sources said the 8-year-old victim, identified as Asil Tariq Abu Aoun, was struck near Hamra checkpoint in Furush Beit Dajan village, located 10 kilometers east of Nablus, on Saturday, Arabic-language Palestine al-Yaum news agency reported.

The victim sustained serious injuries in the crash, and later succumbed to her wounds.

There have been scores of "hit and run" incidents targeting Palestinians in different parts of the occupied West Bank, with most of them largely going uninvestigated by Israeli authorities. Some of such events have resulted in fatalities.

On August 10, an Israeli settler ran over four Palestinian children in the predominantly Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan on the outskirts of the Old City of al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The Wadi Hilweh Information Center later identified the victims as 6-year-old Hamza Tayser Abu Sbeih, 9-year-old Yousif Mazin Raman, 9-year-old Amir Tayser Abu Sbeih, and 11-year-old Anas Himoni.

Raman broke a tooth in the fall, Amir Abu Sbeih sustained a deep injury in his knee that required stitches, while the two others sustained bruises.

The center added that a group of Israeli forces simply stood by and did not take any measures, before locals called an ambulance that transferred the children to Hadassah Medical Center in al-Quds.

A 37-year-old Palestinian man, identified as Omar Ahmad Issa, was struck in the town of al-Khader, located five kilometers west of Bethlehem, on July 7, while riding his motorcycle near a checkpoint leading to occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Issa was critically injured in the crash and later pronounced dead at the hospital.

(Source: Press TV)



Tehran hosting national crafts expo

The 28th National Crafts Exhibition was inaugurated at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground on Thursday. The weeklong event will touch upon woodwork, illuminated manuscript, miniature, textile printing, enamel, leatherwork, handwoven products, calligraphy, traditional musical instruments, metalwork, and marquetry, amongst a lavish patchwork of other works.

Over the past couple of years, dozens of high-quality Iranian handicrafts have been honored with the UNESCO Seal of Excellence.

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



New mayors, governors to begin term within month: Rahmani Fazli

POLITICS TEHRAN — Interior Minister Abdolreza Desaki Rahmani Fazli has said the new mayors and governors will officially begin term of office by the end of the [Persian] month of Shahrivar (September 22).

Speaking to the Islamic Republic of Iran News Network (IRINN), Rahmani Fazli said the Interior Ministry aims to have very little replacements.

He also said the appointed governors must champion the Rouhani administration's plans and policies, and also follow a moderate approach in their job.



President Rouhani's UN trip not definite: Zarif

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Saturday that President Hassan Rouhani's attendance at this year's United Nations General Assembly in New York is not definite yet, Tasnim news agency reported.

Zarif said Tehran has not made the final decision on the level of the delegation representing Iran in the 72nd regular session of the UN General Assembly in September.

The UNGA is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN), the only one in which all member nations have equal representation.



Enemies won't dare attack Iran: commander

POLITICS TEHRAN — The chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces has warned of the high costs of a military assault against Iran, saying an attack against the country is not plausible for the enemies.

Speaking during a meeting on Saturday to introduce the Army's new chief Abdolrahim Mousavi, Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said Iran's enemies have come to the conclusion that a military attack against the country would result in a "humiliating defeat" and heavy losses for them.

"This is why the enemies have gone for proxy wars against Iran," he added.



Rouhani urged to ensure full implementation of Citizen Rights Charter

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mohammad Reza Aref, head of the reformist parliamentary Hope faction, has called on President Rouhani to ensure the successful implementation of Citizen Rights Charter during his second term in office.

If authorities take one step toward the people, Aref wrote on his personal website, people would take ten steps toward them.

He also urged the Rouhani administration to spare no effort in serving the nation.

Late in 2016, Rouhani declared the Citizen Rights Charter, saying upholding citizens' rights is a policy of his government.



Parliamentarian team to visit Lebanon on abducted diplomats

POLITICS TEHRAN — An Iranian lawmaker says a team of investigators will be dispatched to Lebanon to look into the case of four Iranian diplomats who were abducted in the Arab country on 4 July 1982.

"So far, we've held three or four meetings regarding this issue and we've talked with the families of the diplomats," said Shahrouz Barzegar, who represents Salmas electoral district, on Saturday.

He added that the goal of the local investigation is to reach a comprehensive conclusion on the issue.



Nigerian aircraft lands in Tehran for Hajj flights

POLITICS TEHRAN — A passenger aircraft that Iran Air has leased from a Nigerian airline landed in Tehran on Saturday to carry Iranian pilgrims visiting Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj rituals.

The Boeing 747-400 airliner landed at Tehran's Mehrabad Airport on Saturday, Tasnim news agency quoted a source as saying.

The Iranian Leader's Representative in Hajj Affairs, Seyyed Ali Qazi Askar recently announced that Iran Air will operate three fourth of this year's Hajj flights from different cities in Iran to Saudi Arabia.

Iran says new nuclear project to go on stream soon

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Salehi, the director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, has said that a new nuclear project will be launched at Fordow nuclear plant in future days.

"The project has to do with stable isotopes and research centers at Fordow, the preliminary stage of which will be launched in next two weeks and the main opening ceremony will be held on April 9, 2018," he told IRIB in an exclusive interview published on Saturday.

He also said that many changes have been made to the Fordow nuclear plant whose remarkable part is related to stable isotopes.

Salehi said on Tuesday that Iran can resume uranium enrichment to the purity of 20 percent in five days in the



Fordow plant if necessary.

He said based on the nuclear deal many changes have been made to the Fordow plant, however, the changes are in a way that Iran can resume uranium enrichment to the level of 20 percent immediately.

The remarks by Salehi came as U.S. President Donald Trump assigned, according to the Foreign Policy, a team of his close aides to assess Washington's withdrawal from the nuclear deal.

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.

Leader: Government must prioritize economy

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran has said economic issues are the country's top priority, urging Iranian officials to make relentless efforts to solve problems facing people, including unemployment among the youth.

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with President Hassan Rouhani and the members of his newly formed government. Rouhani was elected president for a second term on May 19. His cabinet received a near-full vote of confidence last week.

"Economy must be the top priority of all members and sectors of the government," the Leader said and highlighted the important roles that issues pertaining to banking, investment, liquidity growth and smuggling play in the economy.

Ayatollah Khamenei recommended that the president

and members of his cabinet serve the Iranian people and establish close links with them "in order to reach a better understanding of the realities of the people's lives."

The Leader stated that Iranian officials must practice patience in the face of critical remarks and show courage to make decisions and implement them, stressing the importance of devising precise scientific plans.

Ayatollah Khamenei further stated that the Islamic Republic must be a source of honor in diplomatic issues, adding, "We must feel dignified about conforming to national norms, i.e. the norms stemming from the revolution such as resistance against arrogance, fight against oppression and opposition to the hegemonic system."

He said Iran's foreign diplomacy must be open to all in the world and must not be focused on relations with just a few countries.

Ayatollah Khamenei urged Iranian officials to act

swiftly and wisely in foreign diplomacy and continue to stand up to enemies.

Ayatollah Khamenei in 2015 set a target economic growth rate of 8 percent for Iran.

President Hassan Rouhani has said attaining that economic growth rate is bound to some prerequisites, including foreign investments.

According to governmental estimates, each year Iran will need \$30 billion to \$50 billion of foreign investment in order to reach that economic growth.

Ayatollah Khamenei has upon occasions stressed that the government needs to adhere to the resistance economy policies, which require minimum reliance on foreign resources.

The policies of the resistance economy are a security-minded set of rules to reduce the country's reliance on world powers in lower the potential harm of sanctions.

Tackling unemployment high on agenda: Rouhani

POLITICS TEHRAN — He described "renovation of the industries", "development of knowledge-based economy" and "reliance on non-oil revenues" as other priorities of the government.

Rouhani also said that the government promised the people to eradicate "absolute poverty" and added that reforming the system of paying taxes is essential to achieve this goal.

Iran's inflation rate had climbed above 30 percent, before Iranian President Hassan Rouhani came to power in mid-2013. Nonetheless, for the first time over the past 26 years, that figure declined into a sin-

gle-digit row, bottoming out at 8.6 percent in June 2016. Despite that fact, according to the country's Central Bank report for the 12-month period ending on July 21, inflation rate peaked at 10.3 percent.

Iran condemns terrorist attack on mosque in Afghanistan

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi condemned on Friday terrorist attack on a Shia mosque in Kabul, Afghanistan which left at least 28 people killed. "Terrorists have targeted the Afghan people's unity and solidarity," he said.

"Undoubtedly, fuelling religious division and undermining unity among the Afghan people are among the terrorists' objectives," he said.

He noted that it is essential for the Afghan government and people to make the terrorists and their supporters "disappointed".

Qassemi also expressed sympathy with the Afghan government, people and the families of the victims.

A suicide bomber set off his explosive at a Shia mosque in capital city of Kabul when many Muslim worshippers had gathered for Friday prayers. After the

blast, gunmen stormed into the mosque and opened fire on people.

The attack claimed lives of at least 28 people and left over 50 ones wounded.

Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack.

An official at Afghanistan's Interior Ministry earlier said at least eight policemen had been wounded.

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

U.S. access to Iran's military, nuclear sites inconceivable: parliamentarians

TEHRAN — Alireza Rahimi, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of Iran's Parliament, said on Saturday that U.S. questioning IAEA for Iran's nuclear activities is an unconventional intervention in the international body's affairs.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has informed the Agency of its activities in full transparency and within the framework of the Additional Protocol and all visits from Iran have been in the framework of the Protocol, Rahimi was quoted as saying by Mehr.

He added that there are no unannounced visits in this protocol, and all visits to Iran's nuclear facilities have been made within the framework of the IAEA's monitoring protocols.

"In this regard, Iran has made necessary cooperation beyond the Agency's expectations and has not committed

any breach on the framework of the standards of the Agency," Rahimi noted, adding any visit to Iran's military sites would need the Islamic Republic of Iran's permission and the visit to military installations would not be available due to closure of the so-called Possible Military Dimensions (PMD) file. "With the PMD file being closed, there will not be any room for recent U.S. baseless allegations."

The Foreign Ministry has taken timely and constructive positions in this regard; the Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently fulfilled its obligations; U.S. approach is different from the European Union, and it is not constructive, Rahimi underlined, pointing to U.S. historic hostile approach with Iran which would pose threats to the implementation of JCPOA and to the interests of the involving parties.

No permission for U.S. access to Iran's nuclear sites: MP

An Iranian lawmaker denounced the U.S. UN envoy's recent talks with the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency on the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers, stressing that Iran will never allow the US to have access to or inspect its nuclear facilities.

U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley's recent visit to Vienna and her meeting with IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano was meant to press the UN nuclear agency for U.S. inspection of Iran's nuclear facilities, member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Mohammad Ebrahim Rezaei told Tasnim.

Iran would never permit Americans to visit its nuclear sites, he underlined, Tasnim reported.

On Wednesday, U.S. President Don-

ald Trump dispatched Haley to Vienna to press the UN nuclear chief on their reading of Iran's compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear agreement between Iran and the Group 5+1 (Russia, China, the US, Britain, France and Germany).

Thereafter, Iran's mission to the IAEA issued a statement, saying the objectives and the results of Haley's trip to Vienna "contradict" the JCPOA and Resolution 2231, which the UN Security Council adopted to endorse the nuclear agreement.

In a letter dated August 19 but released on August 23, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif warned about US lack of adherence to the nuclear deal.

Zarif has also said that Haley's visit to the IAEA undermines "the independence and credibility" of IAEA inspectors.

(Source: staff and agencies)

'Riyadh's failure in Syria, Yemen main reason for rapprochement policy towards Iran'

TEHRAN (FNA) — Abdel Bari Atwan, the editor-in-chief of Rai al-Youm newspaper, has said that Saudi Arabia's failure in attaining its goals in the Syria and Yemen wars has made the country alter its path of foreign policy in an effort to revive good bilateral ties with Iran.

"Saudi Arabia was the key actor in the U.S. scenario to overthrow the Syrian government but after 7 years it understood that Bashar al-Assad will remain in power with the help of Russia, Iran and Hezbollah and it has admitted this to its allies among the Syrian dissidents," Atwan wrote on Saturday.

Another reason for Riyadh to improve relations with Iran is the failure of its 2.5-year-long war against Yemen to return fugitive President Mansour Hadi to power, he said, adding that during this time Iran has shown patience and pragmatism and has always welcomed talks and normalization of ties with Saudi Arabia.

Atwan also referred to the recent visits by several Shiite figures to Saudi Arabia, including prominent cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who were welcomed by Riyadh, and said this shows that the Saudis are after the shortest way for mediation and improvement of ties with Tehran.



Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 following demonstrations held in front of its embassy in Tehran and its consulate in Mashhad by angry protesters censuring the Al Saud family for the execution of prominent Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr in Riyadh on January 2.

Nimr's execution caused international outrage and sparked anti-Saudi demonstrations in many other countries. Riyadh has been attempting to rock the boat in re-

lations between Iran and other world states and has spared no efforts to pressure Tehran.

In April 2017, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani took Saudi Arabia responsible for the darkened relations between the two countries, saying that the root cause of Riyadh's hostile behavior should be found in its failures in Syria and Yemen.

"The fault is not on us but the distance has been created by them (the Saudis)," Rouhani told reporters in a press conference in Tehran.

He referred to the tragic Mina incident on 24 September 2015, the execution of prominent cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr by Saudi Arabia in January 2016 and the angry people's attack against the Saudi embassy in Tehran (which was condemned by the Iranian officials), and said, "Apparently, Saudi Arabia had prepared itself for an incorrect behavior towards Iran whose root cause, I personally think, can be traced in its failures in Syria and Yemen."

He, meantime, underscored Iran's readiness to improve ties with Riyadh, and said, "I hope that Saudi Arabia will stop its incorrect (military) operation against Yemen, which certainly prevents improvement of relations (with Iran)."

Iraqi forces 'capture majority of Tal Afar' from ISIL

Iraqi forces said they have dislodged the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorists from the majority of Tal Afar, a stronghold of the terrorist outfit in northwest Iraq.

The offensive on Tal Afar, which lies on the supply route between Syria and the former ISIL terrorist group stronghold of Mosul, began on August 20.

"Seventy percent of the city has been liberated ... God willing, the remaining part will be liberated soon," Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari said at a news conference on Saturday alongside his French counterpart, Jean-Yves Le Drian, and French Defense Minister Florence Parly, in capital Baghdad.

France deployed artillery as part of the international coalition against the ISIL, according to Parly.

"Units of the Counter-Terrorism Service liberated the Citadel and Basatin districts and raised the Iraqi flag on top of the citadel," Commander of Tal Afar Liberation Operation Lieutenant General Abdul Amir Yarallah said in a statement.

The city, located 80km west of Mosul, has produced some of ISIL's most senior commanders.

Up to 2,000 terrorists remain in the city, according to the United States and Iraqi military commanders.

Civilian suffering

Meantime, waves of residents began fleeing the city weeks before the battle started.

Those remaining are threatened with death by ISIL terrorists who have held a tight grip on the city since 2014, according to aid organizations and residents who managed to escape.

On Tuesday, the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said those who had fled were suffering from dehydration and exhaustion, having lived off unclean water and bread for three to four months.

People arrived at camps for the displaced with wounds from sniper fire and mine explosions.



Ayatollah Sistani's call

Elsewhere, the spiritual leader of Iraq's Shia majority has called on doctors to help civilians fleeing clashes.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani said medical workers should travel to areas around the battle for Tal Afar to help "to treat the wounded and treat them as a humanitarian, national and religious duty."

Iraq military discovers mass graves of 500 ISIL victims near Mosul

The developments follow as Iraqi military investigators say they have discovered mass graves of 500 people in the vicinity of an ISIL prison near the northern city of Mosul.

In a Friday statement, the Media Cell Security Investigation team said one grave near the Badoush Prison contained the bodies of 470 inmates killed by ISIL Takfiris, while a second grave contained

the bodies of 30 other victims.

According to a security official who spoke on condition of anonymity, the majority of the victims were presumably Shias or from other minority groups in the city.

In March, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that the ISIL terrorist group had executed possibly hundreds of detainees in Mosul and buried them in a mass grave that could be the largest one discovered in the country so far.

Witnesses told the New York-based rights organization that the victims, including several members of Iraqi security forces, were executed between June 2014 and May or June 2015, with their bodies dumped in a sinkhole at a site in western Mosul.

Terrorists had also laid landmines and booby-traps in the mass grave in

an attempt to "maximize harm to Iraqis," according to Lama Fakih, the HRW deputy Middle East director.

Iraqi forces took control of the site in mid-February 2017. The rights group visited the site on March 7 but was unable to inspect the grave due to the landmines.

Human Rights Watch says ISIL has executed hundreds of detainees and dumped their bodies in one of the largest mass graves found in Mosul.

Earlier in March, Iraqi forces announced they had found another mass grave near ISIL's Badoush Prison, where between 500 and 600 detainees were held. Later on, an Iraqi general told Human Rights Watch that under the military's supervision, medical experts from Baghdad had exhumed about 400 bodies from the site.

(Source: agencies)

Turkey opposition chief hosts 'justice congress' in challenge to Erdogan

Turkey's main opposition leader on Saturday begins hosting a four day "justice congress" in a bid to keep up the momentum from the success of a month-long foot march protesting against alleged injustices under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Kemal Kilicdaroglu, head of the secular Republican People's Party (CHP/Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), is holding the congress at an open-air site in the northwestern province of Canakkale, with sessions each day focusing on different rights violations in Turkey.

With politics heating up in Turkey even two years before the next elections, Erdogan will on Saturday host a mass rally at the opposite end of the country marking the anniversary of the 1071 Battle of Malazgirt where pre-Ottoman tribes defeated the Byzantines.

The pick of the region for the CHP congress is also significant as it was the site of the World War I Battle of Gallipoli where the Ottoman army successfully repelled Allied forces.

The CHP was founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who was a Turkish commander in the Gallipoli campaign where the heroism of Turkish troops is said to have helped lay the foundation of the modern republic.

Kilicdaroglu earlier this summer walked 450 kilometers (280 miles) from Istanbul to Ankara to protest against the sentencing of one of his MPs, Enis Berberoglu, to 25 years in jail for leaking classified information to an opposi-



tion newspaper.

Under the simple slogan "justice", the march culminated last month in a huge rally in Istanbul that attracted hundreds of thousands, the biggest event staged by Erdogan's critics in years.

More than 50,000 people have been arrested under Turkey's state of emergency, imposed after last year's failed coup, and almost three times that number have lost their jobs, including teachers, judges, soldiers and police officers.

The foot march angered Erdogan, although police were praised for ensuring its security rather than impeding

its progress.

"The justice march has gone far beyond the ordinary," Kilicdaroglu told the NTV broadcaster late on Wednesday.

"The march received bigger public support than even I expected because this country has a thirst for justice," he said.

Erdogan has darkly hinted that the CHP leader could find himself under investigation, even if other Turkish officials have emphasized that nothing is in the pipeline.

"Don't be surprised if Kilicdaroglu's links to the case of the individual in jail (Berberoglu) are revealed," the Turkish

leader said.

Erdogan won an April referendum boosting his powers but Turkey is already in the throes of what appears to be a long election campaign, heading to November 2019 parliamentary and presidential elections.

The Turkish president, who is already signaling he will stand for another term, has urged the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP/Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) to get in better shape for the election fight.

In a sign of the rancor between the two men, a photo depicting the CHP leader wearing a white undershirt while dining in a trailer during the justice march drew a sharp response from Erdogan.

"Someone has made a so-called justice march, sitting from time to time in a trailer, having dinner wearing a vest ... that's an insult to my citizens," Erdogan said.

The mildly-spoken Kilicdaroglu is sometimes compared by supporters to the Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi, and Erdogan took particular offence at a newspaper headline describing him as "citizen Kemal".

The CHP leader responded that the trailer picture just showed "a family from Anatolia" where "I am peacefully eating with my daughter."

"I didn't come from the palace. I am an ordinary, plain, Joe Public ... I say justice, he says vest."

(Source: AFP)

Jordan hopes to reopen border crossing with Syria as ties go 'in right direction'

The Jordanian government has expressed hope for the reopening of its border crossing with Syria as it says relations with Damascus are "in the right direction."

Speaking in a Friday televised speech, Jordanian government spokesman Mohamed Momani highlighted the "stability" of the situation in southern Syria across the border from Jordan, noting, "If the current situation continues and southern Syria stabilizes, it would allow for the reopening of the crossing points between the two states."

"Our relations with the Syrian state and regime are going in the right direction," AFP quoted Momani as saying.

Jordan, which shares a border of more than 370 kilometers with Syria, is one the few Arab countries which have not closed its diplomatic mission in Damascus. The

Syrian Embassy is also open in Amman.

The current closure of Syrian and Iraqi borders due to the ongoing wars in both countries has severely damaged the Jordanian economy.

Following attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group in 2016 which killed seven Jordanian soldiers, the country declared desert regions that stretch northeast to Syria and east to Iraq as "closed military zones."

Jordan is part of a coalition that allegedly fights ISIL in Iraq and Syria. The country has justified its presence in the alliance, which operates under the leadership of the United States, as a way to block the spillover of the militancy from the two Arab countries that share long borders with Jordan.

While according to the United Nations, Jordan hosts



over 650,000 Syrian refugees, Amman puts the actual number at 1.4 million.

(Source: Press TV)

Russia creates unified air defense system in Syria

Russian and Syrian military experts have established "a unified integrated air defense system" on Syrian territory amid the ongoing Damascus-Moscow cooperation against the terrorist groups operating in the Arab state.

Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander of the Russian Aerospace Forces Major-General Sergey Meshcheryakov said on Friday, "Today, a unified integrated air defense system has been set up in Syria. We have ensured the information and technical interlink age of the Russian and Syrian air reconnaissance systems."

Addressing a round table dedicated to the Syrian experience at the Army-2017 International Military-Technical Forum, Meshcheryakov added that, "All information on the situation in the air comes from Syrian radar stations to the control points of the Russian force grouping."

Meshcheryakov further noted that the air defense missile systems in the Hmeimim airfield in Syria's Latakia Province "are capable of destroying targets within a range of up to 400 kilometers at an altitude of up to 35 kilometers."

The Russian air defense group in the Hmeimim airfield area includes a radio engineering battalion, a battery of the Pantsir-S air defense missile and gun systems as well as the S-400 air defense missile systems.

Meshcheryakov further said that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists group's infrastructure suffered substantial damage thanks to the Russian airstrikes against its ammunition and fuel depots, weapons and military equipment repair plants in Syria.

He added that the aerial attacks conducted by the Russian fighter jets on ISIL-controlled oil infrastructure and oil convoys belonging to the terrorists inflicted "substantial" economic losses on them.



ISIL makes gains against Syrian army in Raqqqa province

Elsewhere, ISIL terrorists have killed at least 34 Syrian government troops and seized their vehicles, pushing back the army advancing on Maadan, one of the last ISIL-held towns in Raqqqa province.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the early on Friday counterattack by the ISIL also left 12 of its fighters dead.

The development set the government back about 30km to the west of Maadan and allowed ISIL to recapture a number of villages in the areas it lost to advancing Syrian soldiers last month.

ISIL media channels posted images of the attacked Syrian army convoy and bodies of more than a dozen soldiers.

(Source: agencies)

Saudi regime forces demolish Shia mosque in Awamiyah

The House of Saud regime forces have reportedly razed a Shia mosque in the kingdom's oil-rich Eastern Province as Riyadh presses ahead with its heavy-handed clampdown on members of the religious community.

Local sources, requesting anonymity, said Saudi regime troops leveled Ayn Imam Hussain mosque to the ground in the town of al-Awamiyah, located some 390 kilometers northeast of the capital Riyadh, on Friday.

Video footage published on Twitter social media network showed dozens of concrete blocks and pieces of iron scattered around.

Since May, Saudi regime forces have imposed a deadly crackdown on Awamiyah – the hometown of late prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, whose execution by the Al Saud regime drew firm international condemnation and sparked mass protests across the Middle East.

Saudi regime authorities call the clampdown a "security campaign" against the gunmen there, and have used the measure as a pretext to launch almost daily attacks against the town, destroying residential areas, setting fire to buildings, and reportedly threatening the residents to either leave or face potentially deadly swoops.

Earlier this month, foreign journalists paid a visit to Awamiyah after they were permitted entry for the first time, and witnessed the substantial level of destruction that Saudi forces had wrought on the town.

The residents said Saudi regime authorities had prevented emergency services from reaching wounded locals since July 26, and failed to provide humanitarian assistance to the trapped citizens of the town.

They noted that the only chance for people to leave Awamiyah had been short periods coordinated with local volunteers and pro-democracy activists.

Earlier this month, Stephane Dujarric, the spokesman for the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, said that the world body could not independently verify the reports coming out of Awamiyah, but stressed all Riyadh's actions should be in line with its commitments to human rights.

This is while multiple human rights groups have voiced concerns over the situation in Awamiyah, and criticized Western countries for keeping mum on Saudi Arabia's atrocities there. Last month, Ottawa expressed "deep concerns" over Saudi Arabia's apparent use of Canadian military equipment in their crackdown against the minority Shia citizens in the restive Eastern Province.

Prominent human rights groups have on numerous occasions called on Saudi Arabia's major arms suppliers, including the United States and Britain, to stop selling military equipment to Riyadh.

(Source: Press TV)

Central banks' pursuit of inflation has turned Sisyphean and some are calling for it to end

Central banks globally have spent years fruitlessly trying to awaken long-dormant inflation, and some analysts say it's time to stop trying.

Anemic inflation has become a bugaboo for global central banks, with frequent mentions in the meeting minutes.

It's been a speed bump in the U.S. Federal Reserve's path toward normalizing interest rates, with members voting at the July meeting to keep the current target rate in a 1 percent to 1.25 percent range.

Minutes from that July decision show some policymakers were pushing for caution on rate hikes due to low inflation. The Fed's target is for 2 percent inflation, and its preferred measure of inflation is at about 1.5 percent.

It's not limited to the U.S. by any stretch: Japan's colossal struggle to goad inflation to life has been a stalemate at best.

Since the Bank of Japan launched a massive quantitative easing program in 2013, the country has exited deflation. But even the September 2016, introduction of a "yield-curve control" policy, seen by markets as essentially a "whatever it takes" stance on boosting inflation, hasn't seemed to move the needle much.

Japan's core consumer price index, which includes oil products and excludes fresh food, rose 0.5 percent year-on-year in July, Reuters reported.

That compared with the BOJ's goal of inflation to meet or exceed its target of 2 percent "in a stable manner." It also was oddly jarring compared with Japan's economy growing a better-than-expected annualized 4 percent year-on-year in the April-to-June quarter.

Some analysts have said the persistently low inflation was a signal that central banks shouldn't be using inflation to guide monetary policy.

"If we've got growth at trend, which most places appear to have, if we've got the unemployment rate at full employment, which most places appear to have, then we shouldn't even worry about what inflation is doing," Rob Carnell, head of research for Asia at ING, said recently.

"This constant attempt to drive it higher and make it bigger, because it's not 2 percent is just wrong," he added, noting that quantitative easing was distorting markets.

As an example, he pointed to Thailand's 10-year treasury bond. That was yielding around 2.42 percent on Friday, compared with the arguably far less risky 10-year U.S. Treasury, which was yielding only a slightly lower 2.1886 percent.

Instead, Carnell said inflation should only be a secondary target, with more attention paid to the rate of credit growth. Advocating eschewing an inflation target, or at least moving away from aiming for a 2 percent rate, isn't an entirely new idea.

Robert Heller, a former Federal Reserve governor from 1986-1989, said that, in his opinion, the 2 percent inflation target wasn't entirely in line with the central bank's Congressionally mandated goal of price stability.

Instead, the goal should be zero percent inflation, he said, but acknowledged the difficulty of hitting that target exactly.

"If the Fed and other central banks say they want 2 percent or less, that's fine with me. The closer to zero you get the better it is," he said.

Others didn't think getting rid of inflation targets would happen anytime soon.

"Almost all central banks have adopted it," said Shirai Sayuri, a professor at Keio University whose five-year term at as a Bank of Japan governor ended in 2016. "They worry if they change the framework, it'll have an impact on inflation expectations."

In Japan's case, "it's very difficult to achieve 2 percent for a while, but that doesn't mean they should abandon the 2 percent target," she said. "As a central bank, it's not a good idea to drop a target that they've already introduced," although the bank can extend the time frame for when it can be achieved.

But she added that the massive monetary easing programs, particularly in Japan's case, weren't sustainable and she was very concerned about market distortion.

At least one analyst was sticking with the importance of keeping an eye on the inflation ball.

"What we know from experience, both theory and historical experience, when inflation moves to extremes, either very low or very high, generally that ends up having a bad outcome on economic growth, on employment, on other indicators we care about," Manpreet Gill, head of fixed income, commodity and currency investment strategy at Standard Chartered Private Bank, told CNBC's "Street Signs" on Wednesday.

"We do need to care about it," he said.

(Source: CNBC)

IMF: We see a broad-based global recovery

The global economy is doing well, the chief economist for the International Monetary Fund told CNBC.

The IMF's new forecast on the world's economy is expected in about five weeks, Maury Obstfeld said. And while he wouldn't divulge what that may be, he did say the organization "certainly" isn't going to lower the number from its last projection.

In July, the IMF forecast global economic growth of 3.5 percent for 2017 and 2.5 percent for 2018.

"We see broad-based recovery. The importance is that it's really broad-based in a way that it hasn't been in a decade," Obstfeld said in a "Closing Bell" interview from the sidelines of the Federal Reserve's symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

That doesn't mean there won't be concerns ahead. While there are not any immediate downside risks, there are longer-term ones, he noted.

"One risk is just continuing tepid growth. What we're seeing now is a cyclical upswing, but potential growth remains slow," Obstfeld said.

"That brings with it political tensions which we've seen spilling over into protectionist rhetoric, for example." (Source: cnbc)

Iran's steel targeting Arab markets amid EU anti-dumping move

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Mobarakeh Steel Company, the largest steel producer in Iran, is shifting its export target to regional Arab countries as Europe has made the country subject to anti-dumping duties.

The European Steel Association (EUROFER) wrote on its website on July 20 that the European Commission has released details of its proposed anti-dumping measures on Hot Rolled Flat (HRF) steel and named Brazil, Iran, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine as the five countries included in this anti-dumping case.

During the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22) Mobarakeh Steel Company exported 476,000 tons of crude steel worth \$200 million, Tehran chamber of commerce website quoted the company's managing director, Ahmad Sadeqi, as saying.

Oman, the UAE, Jordan, and Egypt were the main targets, while the company also exported products to Thailand and some European countries, he added.

According to a January report published by the World Steel Association, Europe's steel import from Iran has increased by nearly eight times between 2013 and 2016, placing the country at the third spot next to China and India.



India Essar's July oil imports from Iran up 24% on month

ENERGY TEHRAN — Indian oil major Essar Oil's import of Iranian crude oil increased by 24 percent in July from its preceding month.

The company shipped in 152,000 barrels per day (bpd) of Iranian crude in July compared to 122,000 bpd in June.

However, according to the tanker arrival data obtained from trade sources and ship-tracking services on the Thomson Reuters terminal, Essar Oil shipped in 18.3 percent less oil from Iran in July compared with a year ago, at about 152,000 bpd.

In the first seven months of the year, the refiner received 4.8 percent less oil from Tehran at about 151,300 bpd, the



data showed.

Russian oil major Rosneft and partners closed a \$12.9 billion purchase of Indian refiner Essar Oil on August 21, giving them a foothold in one of the world's fastest growing oil users.

Essar Oil's new owners will settle over 2 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) owed to Iran for past oil purchases.

Iran-Netherlands annual trade expected to rise 50% this year

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's Ambassador to the Netherlands Alireza Jahangiri announced that the annual trade between the two countries is expected to witness a 50-percent rise this year, IRIB news reported on Saturday.

Addressing a news conference in the Netherlands, Jahangiri referred to the expanding economic ties between the two sides as of the implementation of Iran's nuclear deal (January 2016) and said that during the past almost two years, Tehran and Amsterdam have exchanged tens of economic, trade, and political delegations.

"Iran is ready to develop its eco-



nomic bonds with European countries including the Netherlands," he said, "Novel investment opportunities are available in Iran and the ground is set for inking new contracts."

"Iran's embassy in the Hague has tried to ease the way for the presence of Dutch investors in various Iranian economic sectors," he added.

Thai PTTEP presents study results for 3 oilfields to NIOC

ENERGY TEHRAN — Thailand's state-owned PTT Exploration and Production Public Company Limited (PTTEP) presented the results of its development studies on three Iranian oilfields to National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) on Saturday.

According to Shana, The results of development studies on Changouleh and Dalpari fields in western Iran and Balal field in the Persian Gulf were presented in a meeting attended by NIOC Deputy Managing Director for Engineering and Development Gholamreza Manouchehri, some officials from Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) and Iranian Central Oil

Fields Company (ICOFC) as well as representatives of the Thai company.

In December 2016, PTTEP signed a memorandum of understanding with NIOC to carry out development studies on the mentioned oil fields and now based on the agreement the company handed its proposal in.

Norwegian oil and gas company, DNO has also conducted development studies on Changouleh field and the company submitted the results earlier this month.

Balal and Dalpari fields' studies are also awarded to other companies as well, South Korea is studying Balal and Austrian OMV is studying Dalpari.

EAEU mandate on free trade zone deal with Iran can be received in fall

ASTANA (TASS) — The Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) can request a mandate for signing a temporary free trade zone (FTZ) agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in October 2017, EEC trade minister Veronika Nikishina said on Friday.

"We have a chance to report completion of talks to presidents of five countries by October and request a mandate for agreement signing. If we do not complete talks in coming days but insist on continuation and improvement of quality of arrangements, then we will most likely pass to a longer stage of talks," Nikishina said.

Intensive talks with Iran last for eight months and are actually completed, the minister said. "The deliverable of talks consists of three parts. Firstly, this is the text of the agreement, regulatory matters determining rules of the game. This is highly important because Iran is not the WTO member," she said.

Agreements were reached on duties for industrial and agricultural products, the minister said. "Talks have been actually completed. Things left are to negotiate individual goods, where parties have not yet reached mutual satisfaction," Nikishina said.

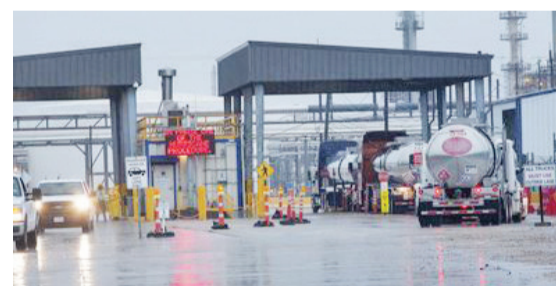
Harvey hits U.S. oil hub with massive winds, torrential rain

Hurricane Harvey became the strongest storm to hit Texas in more than 50 years, making landfall in the heart of the U.S. energy sector with winds as strong as 130 miles (210 kilometers) per hour.

The Category 4 storm came ashore between Port Aransas and Port O'Connor, Texas, packing gusts strong enough to strip the roof off of houses and menacing Houston, the country's fourth-largest city, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said in an advisory at 10 p.m. local time. By midnight the storm was near the mouth of Copano Bay.

Along with powerful winds, Harvey's forecast to dump as much as 40 inches (101 centimeters) of rain on the region and cause substantial flooding, raising the potential of lengthy power outages, damaged refineries and blocked shipments of oil and agricultural products.

"Storm surges and 100-mile per hour plus winds will result in widespread coastal devastation near and northeast of landfall," said Todd Crawford, chief meteorologist at The Weather Company in Andover, Massachusetts. "Amongst all the im-



pacts from wind damage and storm surge, the freshwater inland flooding may end up being the biggest story all."

Category 4 winds will tear walls and roofs off well-built frame houses, snap or uproot most trees and tear down power lines and poles causing outages that can last for weeks and sometimes months, according to the National Hurricane Center. Many people may find themselves isolated due to debris and flooding.

The storm is striking a region that has a cluster of refineries that process 5 million barrels of oil a day. By Friday, About 1 million barrels a day of crude and condensate refining capacity in Texas has been shut down by companies including Valero Energy Corp., according to company statements, government releases and people familiar with the situation. About 22 percent of Gulf of Mexico oil production has also been shuttered, along with the port of Corpus Christi, which ships the largest amount of U.S. crude overseas.

- So far, Harvey has resulted in:
- Shutdowns at the ports of Corpus Christi, Houston and Galveston
 - BNSF halting train traffic in the Galveston area
 - More than 104,000 customers in Texas to lose power
 - Grain elevators to stop shipments of more than 300,000 bushels of sorghum
 - Stopped drilling in the Eagle Ford shale formation

(Source: Bloomberg)

Trump targets new Venezuelan debt in latest round of sanctions

The Trump administration barred trade of new debt issued by the Venezuelan government and its state oil company in U.S. markets and blocked dealing in some existing bonds owned by the country's public sector to further clamp down on President Nicolas Maduro's regime.

The Treasury Department will issue licenses for some transactions "to mitigate harm to the American and Venezuelan people," the White House said in a statement Friday. Trading would be allowed for the vast majority of existing Venezuelan bonds in secondary markets and will allow short-term financing for most commercial trade, such as the import and export of petroleum. But it will block the Venezuelan government from restructuring its debt with

U.S. investors.

"Today's executive order demonstrates the U.S. government's condemnation of tyranny and dictatorship in Venezuela," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said at a briefing. "The Maduro regime has consistently shown hostility to the rule of law, democratic institutions and the Venezuelan people. This has been a catastrophe for the country."

The new restrictions, put in place through an executive order from President Donald Trump, are a bid to choke off funding to Maduro's government, which is running out of money. The U.S. is acting in response to Maduro's moves to seize more authority amid a crippling recession and months of violent protests. (Source: Bloomberg)

Swedish govt. avoids no-confidence bid, dropping two planned tax hikes

Sweden's opposition has dropped plans for a no-confidence vote on some members of the minority centre-left coalition after it said on Saturday it would drop two of three planned tax hikes in its 2018 budget.

The government said it would still go ahead with an airline tax, however.

The daily Expressen reported earlier in the week that the coalition government had agreed with the Left Party, whose support it relies on, to withdraw plans for changes to tax rules for small companies and a measure to increase the number of people paying state income tax.

The centre-right opposition had threatened a vote of no-confidence in

a number of government ministers if the minority coalition did not abandon its proposals to raise taxes.

"It is regrettable that the government pushes through the airline tax, but we won't demand a no-confidence vote due to that," Center Party leader Annie Loof of the opposition said on Twitter.

Sweden's usually stable bloc politics have been thrown into turmoil in recent years with the rise of the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats.

Neither the centre-left nor centre-right is able to form a majority government without them, which they are reluctant or committed not to do. (Source: Reuters)

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Why more migrants are dying in the Sahara

A major international emergency is unfolding in northern Africa, and the world has yet to notice: Smugglers are abandoning hundreds of migrants as they attempt to cross the unforgiving sands and heat of the Sahara. In an effort to evade new patrols by the Nigerien military, the human traffickers are leaving their charges to die of thirst in isolation.

The European Union and the United Nations blame the smugglers for broadening "the death trap from the Mediterranean to the Sahara Desert." But the dangers of the Saharan route have been exacerbated by the European Union's own policy, which has pushed the hazards of irregular migration further into the desert and out of sight of the media and global attention.

European Union's efforts

After the European Union's efforts to stem the tide of migrants crossing the Mediterranean proved more complicated to accomplish than expected and failed to stop boat arrivals, it has expanded its partnership with Niger and focused its attention on the desert routes used by smugglers.



With Niger's 2015 law against smuggling as legal pretext, the union has provided financial and logistical support to the sub-Saharan country, which has used its military and police to crack down on West African migrants crossing from northern Niger into Libya and Algeria.

Since 2016, Niger has arrested more than 100 human traffickers and confiscated more than 95 vehicles. At the same time, it has intercepted more than 2,000 migrants at the Niger-Libya border and sent them back to their home countries. The number of migrants observed by the International Organization for Migration, a United Nations agency, crossing from Niger into Libya via established routes through the northern Niger town of Séguédine has been sharply reduced since September 2016 when the new measures came into effect.

"Our cooperation has reached an unprecedented level," wrote a European Union spokesperson, who declined to be named, via email. "In only one year, we are seeing good results."

But the crackdown has not stopped migrants from making the trip. Instead, it "has had the practical effect of people carrying out this quasi-legal activity further in the shadows," said Peter Tinti, a senior research fellow with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, a watchdog group.

"It's a known fact that the routes are changing and becoming more dangerous, which exposes migrants to more risks," said Monica Chiriac, a spokeswoman for the International Organization for Migration in Niger, also via email. Her agency estimates that up to 6,000 people a month are traveling along a more dangerous route, which cuts to the east across the border with neighboring Chad.

When smugglers believe there are police or military in the area, or if they have technical problems because of the greater hazards of the desert tracks, they have taken to kicking the migrants out of their vehicles and leaving them to fend for themselves, without water, food or shelter, aid workers report. Already this year, the local government and the United Nations agency have rescued at least 1,000 migrants who were left stranded by traffickers. But the agency counts only people it finds alive; the number of those who died of thirst in temperatures that can reach over 110 degrees is unknown, but likely exceeds the number of those rescued. Aid workers say this is the most dangerous year yet for these migrants.

"There are more being abandoned now," said Taher Lawal, who works with the Nigerien Red Cross in the northern oasis town of Bilma, which is along the migration route. "This year there have been so many deaths."

According to his organization, more than 40 migrants, including three babies and two other children, died in May when their vehicle broke down in the desert. The only reason the story got out was because six survivors walked for days to a village where they were rescued. The following month, at least 50 perished after they were abandoned.

In addition to migrants being abandoned, the security operation has also hampered trade and the local economy, causing a critical loss of jobs for the region.

"Our youth are being prevented from revenue-generating activities in our region, simply because Europe does not want migrants," said Mohamed Anako, the president of the regional council in Agadez, a city in central Niger, on local radio.

The number of people found abandoned, dead or alive, in the Sahara exposes the fact that the European Union and Niger are not living up to their commitments to uphold the human rights of migrants and to protect them from abuse. To meet its obligations, Niger should ease its restrictions on vehicles passing through the towns of Dirkou, Madama and Séguédine. And as a matter of urgency, it should expand its search and rescue missions for abandoned migrants.

The European Union has already pledged 610 million euros (about \$720 million) for programs that aim to reduce the migrant flow in Niger, but not enough will go to creating economic opportunities in the country. The Union should focus its efforts to stem the flow of migration on helping other sectors of Niger's economy grow and on regulating the trade, rather than further criminalizing it. The European Union's funding for Niger's anti-trafficking operations would be better spent if a smaller proportion of it were earmarked for the security forces and its enforcement measures against the smugglers.

The alternative is stark. "If this situation continues, the number of deaths in the desert will be equal to that in the sea," said Mr. Lawal of the Red Cross. Merely displacing the problem out of sight of the world's media is no solution to North Africa's migration crisis.

(Source: The NYT)

A 'Trump Doctrine' emerges on foreign policy

President Trump's speech on Afghanistan follows a similar pattern that began in Europe and then with North Korea

By Jake Novak

President Donald Trump's speech explaining his strategy for the war in Afghanistan continued a new trend in U.S. policy that we can call "The Trump Doctrine." And, in true Trumpian fashion, we can sum up the Trump Doctrine in seven blunt words: "Put up, pay up or shut up."

In more detail, this is a doctrine where the U.S. puts pressure on its traditional allies to contribute more towards shared strategic goals. And at the same time, it's a doctrine where the U.S. insists on taking the risk of publicly calling our sometimes hostile allies to take more control of rogue elements in their respective regions of the world.

President Trump seems to have settled on this course of action after a series of surprise foreign policy successes. It started when he successfully pressured some of our traditional European allies to up their financial contributions to NATO. Similar, if more gentle, pressure was applied to Japan in the wake of the North Korean nuclear threat, and Tokyo announced it's going to chip in \$500 million in new funds for East Asian military security. And then there's the biggest potential success of the Trump tenure so far, as it looks like his public demands that China do something to rein in North Korea's Kim Jong Un has yielded some peaceful results.

And that brings us to Monday night, where no one should have been surprised when President Trump's Afghan policy speech pushed every one of those strategies in the hopes of turning the tide in America's longest war.

Just like he did when pushing our close European allies on NATO funding and Japan on increasing naval strength, President Trump called for India to provide more financial support for and economic cooperation with the Afghan government.

The tricky angle

But that's the easier part. The tricky angle was President Trump's demand that Pakistan get its act together with the following key quote:

"Pakistan has also sheltered the same organizations that try every single day to kill our people. We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting. But that will have to change. And that will change immediately."

To be sure, President Trump also offered praise and potential carrots to the government in Islamabad. He noted that Pakistan has been a "valued



Clearly, Trump believes that putting pressure on U.S. allies and quasi-allies is the key to success overseas despite some tricky complications.

partner" in the past, how its people have suffered greatly from terrorism, and how that nation has "much to gain" from partnering with us in our Afghan goals.

Unlike the pressure the Trump administration has successfully placed on China in connection with North Korea, this time we're asking Pakistan to partner with not only the U.S. but its mortal enemy, India. No one said this was going to be easy.

And President Trump's new thrust on foreign policy isn't getting knee jerk approval from some of his supporters. Newly ousted chief White House strategist Steve Bannon's Breitbart News website wasted no time lighting into the speech with an article pointing out its similarities to President Obama's promises about Afghanistan in 2009. And while President Trump insisted he won't make America's troop numbers public, it's been widely reported that he has approved sending about 4,000 more troops to Afghanistan as part of this new policy.

Breitbart took particular issue with that, featuring a piece by former Blackwater CEO and Navy SEAL Erik Prince to blast that move as a mistake and push for a private contractors to carry out more of the war. Breitbart also featured pieces noting that people like Senator Lindsay

Graham, a regular Breitbart punching bag, supported President Trump's speech.

Focused goals

But there are clear differences in this strategy. Trump's plan is to use the troops for more focused goals and less to support the Afghan government's administrative agenda, i.e., more search and destroy and less guard duty.

Indeed, Bannon's ouster, which had at least something to do with his public objections to the Trump team's handling of the North Korea situation, is a clue to where President Trump is looking for guidance on foreign policy these days. And it's not Bannon's ilk, nor is it the voice of then-private citizen and candidate Donald Trump, who called for speedy withdrawals from Afghanistan several times beginning in 2012. The president is clearly now listening to the generals he once mocked.

That's because the Trump Doctrine is forged from the positive reinforcement the president is getting from the successes with NATO and North Korea. While critics were calling for withdrawals and soothing talk, the White House sees that the president's twitter threats, the introduction of new THAAD missile batteries, and increased bomber readiness near North Korea helped convince China to act. And

the administration clearly hopes that the new weapons it's sending to Saudi Arabia and demands it's made on the Saudis on curbing terrorism will bear fruit as well.

However short-lived these positive developments may turn out to be, this White House clearly craves more of them than it wants ideological support from some of the president's 2016 voting base. Or perhaps it's just betting that more isolationist elements in the Trump camp will eventually come around.

That makes the Trump Doctrine a domestic political gamble just as much as it's a tricky global gamble with nuclear powers like Pakistan, India, and North Korea involved. But if playing it safer in Afghanistan and East Asia is the wiser course of action, one could very justifiably ask why playing it safe for so many years before now yielded such unsafe and lousy results well before President Trump came on the scene.

Legislative successes and strong poll numbers may be eluding President Trump right now, but a coherent and so far potent foreign policy is emerging. For those Americans and Afghans who have suffered for so long in this war, the Trump Doctrine is a bold new attempt to put that suffering to an end.

(Source: CNBC News)

Who's afraid of North Korea's Kim Jong-un? Well, not South Koreans

By Anna Fifield

Sirens blared out over the South Korean capital at 2 p.m. on August 23, but no one took much notice. In the center of Seoul, cars stopped — but only because police officers with fluorescent batons made them. Pedestrians outside City Hall went down into the subway, but only because metropolitan officials directed them down there.

The increasingly brazen threats coming from North Korea in recent weeks have caused jitters in Washington, but residents of Seoul — who live within artillery range of North Korea — have been pretty much carrying on as usual.

"I've read the stories in the papers about the threats, but this time doesn't feel any different from the other times," said Kim Young-ae, an officer worker who was meeting some friends after lunch. She wasn't going to bother with the drill — she had somewhere to be.

"I think this is how most South Koreans think," she said.

The South Korean government simulated an air raid last Wednesday to encourage people to prepare for an attack from North Korea. When the sirens went off, people were supposed to stop what they were doing and take cover.

For the first time, planes were also supposed to fly over the city emitting colored smoke, meant to represent the enemy's bombs. But the heavy rain and low cloud meant that even the planes couldn't be seen, let alone any smoke.

The drills, which take place as South Korean and American forces conduct joint exercises to prepare for an attack by or on North Korea, have been taking place every year since 1972.

Increasing threat

This year's drills were little changed from previous years, despite the steadily increasing threat. After all, North Korea's development of an inter-continental ballistic missile able to reach the United States changes nothing for South Koreans, who have been within range for decades.

Instead, the emphasis was on making sure their



The increasingly brazen threats coming from North Korea in recent weeks have caused jitters in Washington, but residents of Seoul — who live within artillery range of North Korea — have been pretty much carrying on as usual.

message got through.

"We are trying to send a message to the public that there are simple things they can do to save their lives, such as seeking shelter underground as soon as possible," said Jung Han-yul, director of the civil defense division at the Interior Ministry.

Seoul, a city of some 10 million people, has more than 3,200 underground shelters, many of them in subway stations or parking garages, or even tunnels on the

highway. But they were designed to withstand attacks with conventional artillery, not chemical or nuclear weapons.

People even a mile away from the detonation point could be saved if they were deep enough underground, Jung said.

An instruction sheet put out by the ministry tells people to move underground as soon as the sirens go off, plus some unlikely guidance for what to do in a nuclear attack.

People should lie down but facing the opposite way from where the nuclear bomb landed, and they should keep their mouth open while covering their eyes and ears. They should also make sure their stomach is not touching the ground — purportedly because if a nuclear bomb is dropped, it would shake the ground so much that it could damage the internal organs.

Some residents, while being disinterested in the drills, still think that the preparations are not enough.

"North Korea will not attack Guam with a nuclear missile. North Korea will attack South Korea with chemical and conventional weapons, but South Korea is not ready for that kind of attack," said Seok Hwan-soon, a journalist for a magazine covering tax issues.

The citizens' hall, a common space under City Hall, was already full with its usual weekday crowd of pensioners after lunch Wednesday.

Civil defense officials tried to whip up some excitement among them for the drills, saying how they needed to practice responding to a chemical attack, but most continued to look at their phones.

"Please applaud if you understand this," an official with a microphone called out. Then he turned to low-level bribery. "If you participate properly, I'll give you the gas masks for free. You need to move fast — there's a Washington Post reporter here."

The "volunteers" who'd be cajoled up onto the stage were still struggling to figure out how to put on their masks when the siren blared again, marking the end of the drill.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Tramp's anger at security stability in Sweden

By: Hanif ghafari
Analyst for Scandinavian issues

Some time ago, Trump pointed to a terrorist incident in Sweden which basically had not happened! In other words, he blackmailed medially and politically against security situation of Sweden. Although some analysts believed that this media goof of Trump has been totally unintentional, his later insistence on framing domestic situation of Sweden as insecure showed that incidentally the President of the United States has said well-thought-out words in this regard.

It was just after that we saw limited rebellion in the Rinkeby area (in Stockholm suburb). In the course of the incident, 10 cars were burnt down and some public places were damaged, but this was not the end! After the rebellion in Rinkeby, a deliberate fire broke out at the center of the refugee town of Vänersborg (80 km away from Göteborg). The incident resulted in the wounding of 15 refugees. After the incident, we also saw terrorist incident in central Stockholm. As we see, the beginning of the security crises in Sweden has been Trump's remarks and claims.

The fact is that Donald Trump not only does not welcome the existence of multicultural societies in Europe, but also aim at destroying this multicultural structure. Trump basically believes that in order to cope with Muslims and immigrants, multicultural societies should be targeted.

Sweden is one of the most significant examples of multicultural societies in Europe. In the wake of the immigration crisis that had intensified since 2015, Sweden played a big role in immigrant admissions. This issue was of high price for Trump, who essentially demands for increased maneuverability of anti-immigration and nationalist groups in Europe. Meanwhile, Trump and his like-minded companions have come to the conclusion that the main way to deal with this trend is indirect support for the security crises in Sweden. The emergence of security crises in Sweden will strengthen the right wing extremism and the Swedish Democratic Party by leadership of Jimmy Axon and his companions. It should not be forgotten that the Swedish Democratic Party is now the third strongest party in the country's parliament. However, in the past decade, there was basically no sign of this party in the Swedish parliament (RIKSDAG). Therefore, it must be accepted that extreme right in Sweden has begun to recruit widely.

One of Trump's dreams is that, with the escalation of the security crisis in Sweden, this country is no longer seen as a defeat for anti-immigration and counter-multiculturalism. Another of his goals is the strengthening of right-wing extremists in Sweden, which can be analyzed and evaluated in Trump's overall support for nationalist trends in Europe.

Infact, No probabilities can be excluded in the future studies of political and social issues. This rule also applies to the current situation in Swedish society. It must be accepted that security alert factors have been increased more than ever before in cities like Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö and even student cities like Umeå, Uppsala. However, we have been witnessing a peaceful coexistence of immigrants and Swedish nobilities since a few years ago., at the moment, the possibility of security



challenges in Sweden has increased, as the same process has happened in other European countries.

For example, the central station of the city of Stockholm was the commuting place for many different sections of the community, immigrants, Swedish nationals and other citizens of the world. The overall process still exists in Stockholm, but the level of security alerts has increased in the country. This is precisely the goal that the extreme right currents and the current American president advocates of these currents are pursuing.

In general, Sweden faces two types of security crisis: the first is the crisis that exists from takfiri terrorist groups such as ISIL, and the second is a crisis awaiting the country from supporters of neo-Nazism and right-wing extremists.

During the last decade, a number of neo-Nazi currents' fans have been arrested in Sweden and other Nordic countries. In the meantime, the danger of the extreme right wing is greater than the neo-Nazi currents, as this flow, due to its presence in the power and the political scene, is becoming more and more involved in the Swedish society. Although the center-right (moderate-right) and socialist parties in Sweden are united against the extreme right and the Democratic Party, this unity is not enough. In this regard, the Swedish Security Service (Säpo) needs to take more serious measures. The extreme right front in Sweden is a security risk, not a political one! Therefore, this dangerous current should be treated as a security risk. The same is true about the terrorists and takfiri currents. In January, officials from the Swedish Security Service announced that 150 supporters of terrorist and takfiri groups had returned to the country.

This is while, according to available information, there are a number of other Swedish-supported ISIL and other takfiri groups in Iraq and Syria and have not yet returned to Sweden. Recently, talks have taken place between the Iraqi police and the Swedish security authorities regarding the arrest of the country's nationals (who are in the

queue of takfiri groups), according to which the parties intend to arrest these people on Iraqi soil which is in turn a step forward. At the moment, the city of Malmö, in southern Sweden, is in pursuit of the Takfiri terrorist attacks more than any other city. Dozens of Swedish nationals from this city were in Syria and Iraq, and among members of ISIL and Nusra Front. The recent attack by one of ISIL's supporters on the Shia Husseinieh in the city of Malmö can be assessed in this regard. Malmö is now one of the potential sources of the security crises in Sweden although other cities are not immune from terrorist attacks. In any case, the Swedish government and security forces need to halt the takfiri currents and dangerous right currents.

Eventually, the Sweden encounter with the hidden and obvious security problems in this country is not related to the presence of the right-wing or left-wing coalition in this country. All Swedish parties, apart from the Swedish Democratic Party, have a relatively stable approach to dealing with security crises in the country despite their small differences in how security policies are applied.

there is little difference between former Prime Minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt, and current Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven. It should not be forgotten that over the past decades Sweden has experienced some security crises that have affected the country. The assassination of Sweden's Socialist Prime Minister, Olof Palme, in 1986, and then the assassination of Sweden's Foreign Minister of the time, Anna Lindh, in September 2003, were both major shocks to Sweden. However, the type of the security crises in Sweden is different from before.

The social Democratic Party, the Moderaterna and other Swedish parties, including the Christian Democrat, the Green Party and the Central Party, etc., are all aware of the fact that the emergence of chronic and overwhelming security crises in the country, risks to the structure of the welfare state. So, in the area of domestic security, we are seeing an effective like-mindedness and sympathy of the Swedish parties with each other.

America and Iran's Riddle

By: Saeed sobhani

With the passage of four decades of the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, America seems to be more incapacitated than any other time in opposition to the Iranian nation.

In domestic politics, enemies of the Islamic Republic intend to polarize relations between 'revolutionary' forces of the country. The only effective solution to counter this dangerous strategy and block the enemy's path towards infiltration is unity around the Supreme Leader and values of the Islamic Republic, and introducing a realistic distinction between friends and enemies of the Revolution. If we believe that a major part of the enemy's stratagem is designed not beyond our borders, but inside our domestic politics and through fostering infighting among loyalists to the Islamic Republic, then we will definitely opt for a smarter and more rational plan against this multi-layered and complicated operation.

In the field of foreign policy, the enemy aims to 'deform' our regional and global strategies and replace them with new ones. Their first step is to show that Iran's tenets in foreign policy are negotiable. In other words, the United States and other enemies of the Islamic Republic will initially convert the principles of our foreign policy into flexible tactics, and after breaking the outer shell, design them in the way they want. Washington's game in this regard is quite complicated. They may even agree with keeping the outer appearance of Iran's diplomatic principles, but they

aim to make its hard core malleable. They will monitor dialogue between their opponents and proponents inside the country in order to form a discourse that approves of disemboweling Iran's strategies.

Three) in the security field, Washington and its allies will run parallel strategies through various fronts to advance their infiltration. Firstly, Washington aims to simplify security equations of the Muslim World by denying its own role in intentionally creating an unsafe zone. Instead of showing its true face as the creator of the terrorism crisis in the region, the West will emerge as the solution to the region's security crises. In this equation, the West will never address neither its open nor its backstage support for the Zionist Regime, ISIS and some Arab states of the region such as Saudi Arabia which has led to increasing insecurity in the Muslim World; but it will represent a skewed portrayal of itself to the global public opinion. Western media will function as a catalyst in this equation to manufacture consent among the regional and global public opinion as quickly as possible. In such a situation, even direct support by the US for Israel, and Washington's, the UN's and the IAEA's silence against anti-security measures of Israel (such as its nuclear stockpile) will face a media boycott. Clearly, in such a situation, not only blocking the path of infiltration, but also reinforcing Iran's security capabilities, such as its domestic missile power, will help. This is the main reason for the West's distress with Iran's unveiling of its recent nuclear achievements: they will



block infiltration of usa

Also in the economic field, the US is trying to turn the JCPOA into the cornerstone of Iran's economy, in order to prevent it from flourishing based on its potential capacities in the fields of economy and industry. In other words, the West's economic infiltration works through establishing a JCPOA-reliant economy. As said many times, since the JCPOA is potentially exposed to violation by the West and even other members of the P5+1, it cannot be the cornerstone of Iran's economy. At this critical point, endogenous economy, or resistance economy, should be viewed as the only solution to counter the West's economic infiltration in Iran in the post-JCPOA era. The principle of

mistrust in the other party and also economic principles necessitate that, instead of relying on a variable capacity, we rely on the country's domestic capacity that is independent from the enemy's behavior. If resistance economy turns into our model in the fiscal and trade areas, and the JCPOA falls under this category, then we can block the enemy's path, redefine our economy in a correct fashion and hold the upper hand in competition against the US. However, if the JCPOA and sanctions turn into the spirit of economy and dominate resistance economy, instead of being a proactive player in the economy, we will be limited to showing reactions. Foreign actors will replace domestic capacity in that situation.

More ISIL terrorist leaders flee areas in Deir Ezzor

The reporter added that the army launched artillery strikes in parallel with airstrikes on the terrorists' infiltration points and sites in the villages of al-Shmeitieh, Ayyash, al-Kharita and al-Bugheiliyeh, destroying ammunition and killing a number of terrorists, including the Saudi terrorist Issa Nasser al-Hijazi, the leader of the so-called "al-Hisba" in al-Qasbi town in the northwestern countryside of Deir Ezzor.

In light of the escalation of the locals' operations in rejection of the presence of ISIL terrorists in their areas, local sources confirmed to SANA correspondent that clashes erupted between the residents of al-Qouriya village in al-Mayadin area and members of an ISIL patrol when terrorists attempted to arrest a number of young people in the village and force them to fight in the battle to cover the huge shortage of members their ranks suffer from due to losses in battles against Syrian Arab Army and the allied forces.



The sources added that the clashes resulted in the injuring of a number of terrorists, including Khaled al-Azawi, who is known as "Abu al-Adia", the media official in al-Ashara city.

The sources pointed out that ISIL patrols arrested 23 young men from al-Bseira area and Maadan city, noting that more ISIL leaders have fled away, including Ammar al-Sattam, Mohammad al-Hmeidan, Mohammad al-Fahd and Mohammad al-Akkaf.

(Source:SANA)

New thinking in Turkey's Iran strategy

By Payman Yazdani

There were some reports that Turkey and Iran have discussed possible joint military action against Kurdish militant groups, after talks in Ankara last week between the chief of staff of Iran's armed forces and Turkish leaders.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has denied the claim by some Turkish officials that the two countries were planning to conduct joint military operations against Kurdish rebel groups beyond the country's borders.

On August 22, IRGC in a statement announced, "We have not planned any operations across the borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. But as always we will strongly confront any group, team, or person who wants to penetrate into Iran's territory for anti-security or terrorist operations."

To shed further light on the feasibility of such a joint action, Payman Yazdani had an interview with Professor Nader Entessar the Prof. and Chair, Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice, University of South Alabama, Nader Entessar.

Here is the full text of this interview:

■ How feasible is joint military action by Iran and Turkey against threatening groups?

Iran and Turkey are two major countries in the Middle East, and each has its own unique capability. If there is political will, the two countries can certainly coordinate their military activities and use their combined military capabilities against their adversaries. However, we should also remember that priorities of Tehran and Ankara are not the same in many cases. This may make sustained joint military action difficult under the current political situation.

■ Can these agreements be considered as a shift in Turkey's strategies toward Iran?

The agreements are certainly among the most significant ones in the past 40 years between the two countries. They may also signal a new thinking in Turkey's strategic outlook towards Iran. Only time will tell if the agreements are truly strategic or simply tactical moves necessitated by changing conditions in the region.

■ How can Turkey make a balance between its cooperation with Iran and NATO and the West?

Turkey's NATO membership will continue to present one of the most formidable obstacles on a close Iran-Turkey military alliance. There are treaty obligations that Turkey is bound to honor as a crucial pillar of NATO's southern flank, and Ankara cannot afford to deviate significantly from NATO's policies when it comes to military cooperation with Iran.

■ Will this visit lead to two sides' cooperation in Syria?

In the past few months, Turkey has been gradually changing its hard-line Syria outlook and has been participating with Russia and Iran in different fora (e.g. Astana meetings) to tackle the crisis in Syria. General Bagheri's recent visit to Turkey and his high-level talks in that country were about different issues, but the Syrian crisis played an important role in these talks. I am certain the two sides discussed methods by which they can enhance their cooperation in dealing with the Syrian crisis.



Nader Entessar the Prof. and Chair, Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice, University of South Alabama

Buhari's unconvincing return from medical leave

By Fisayo Soyombo

Muhammadu Buhari, President of Nigeria, brought his 103-day medical leave in the UK to a grand end on Saturday. Despite protests at home and abroad against his lengthy absence from work, his return to Nigeria was surprisingly heroic.

Once Femi Adesina, his much-maligned spokesman, confirmed the president's anticipated return, a "joie-de-vivre" atmosphere enveloped the capital, Abuja. The most important figures in governance all converged on the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport while a not-so-privileged crowd, numbering in tens of thousands, lined up outside.

At exactly 04:46 PM., Buhari disembarked from the plane, held Vice President Yemi Osinbajo with his left hand and with his right acknowledged cheers from the crowd and his cabinet. Buhari's drive home was not easy, his security details worked hard to clear off the delirious crowd outside the airport to allow the president's car to move forward. It was a truly remarkable sight to behold, reminiscent of the

wild celebrations that greeted Buhari's landmark victory at the 2015 polls.

"Buhari is a man whose presence looms large", an excited Adesina remarked afterwards in an apparent jibe at those who mocked the president's ill-health. A few days later, there are huge question marks over the accuracy of Adesina's assessment.

Two days after his return, Buhari transmitted a letter to the legislature confirming his official resumption of duties. But he signed that letter at home - not at his office. Ordinarily, that wouldn't be worrisome, but there's been some bad precedent.

■ Absented himself from FEC

On April 26, when Buhari absented himself from the weekly Federal Executive Council (FEC) meeting for the second time in a row, Lai Mohammed, Minister of Communication, leapt to his defense, saying: "He will be working from home. He has asked all his files to be taken to him in the house".

Eleven days after, Buhari announced that he was embarking on medical leave, reluctantly admitting he needed more treatment time in

the UK. In all, he had missed four consecutive FEC meetings, including one that was cancelled altogether on frivolous grounds. This is why this week Buhari's latest relocation of his office to his residence is not ordinary.

After working from home on Monday, he met service chiefs on Tuesday - again at his residence. And on Wednesday, it has been announced that this week's FEC meeting was cancelled as President Muhammadu Buhari continues to work from home. The excuse given by Garba Shehu, Buhari's second media aide, is that "following the three months period of disuse, rodents have caused a lot of damage to the furniture and the airconditioning units in the President's office," consequently rendering it unfit for use. It's the shakiest defense possible: Buhari's aides had prior knowledge of his return, and had all the time in the world to fix his office.

Buhari came to power in 2015 on the back of a reputation for integrity and incorruptibility. While the latter has never been in doubt, this is the time he must prove the former.

Unfortunately, enormous work awaits Buhari. Nigeria's yearlong recession could extend beyond expert postulations unless urgent measures are taken to curb high inflation and stagnation. Since the freeing of 82 Chibok girls in exchange for five Boko Haram commanders in May, insurgency has blossomed in the north-east. Earlier this month, Boko Haram killed 27 and wounded 83 in triple suicide bomb blasts in Konduga, near Maiduguri.

Buhari's anti-corruption war is in tatters, with anti-graft and security agents hustling to outshine one another - consequently negating rather than complementing each other's work. Buhari's effort to cleanse his own cabinet of corruption has lost gumption due to the lack of a definitive leader. For example, no one knows the fate of Babchir Lawal, his secretary, whom he suspended and ordered to be probed by an Osinbajo-chaired panel. The panel's report is ready and it will be presented to Buhari on Wednesday, but who will enforce it? All these, and much more, mean it is neither in Nigeria's nor the president's interest for him to combine

recuperation with work.

It is increasingly looking likely that Buhari returned to Nigeria out of determination - maybe desperation - to recover the power he temporarily surrendered to his deputy, and to shut down calls for his return or resignation.

■ Two-thirds majority

Constitutionally, Buhari has done no wrong by clinging on to power even if he can only work from home. Unless two-thirds majority of his cabinet passes a resolution declaring him incapable of discharging the functions of his office, unless this declaration is verified by a five-man medical panel appointed by the Senate president, unless the medical panel certifies the president unfit, and unless the two heads of Nigeria's bicameral legislature gazette the panel's finding, all in that order, Buhari can commit no constitutional breach by recuperating in at home for as many months as his doctors prescribe. There's not even a chance for this scenario to occur, given the most vital members of his cabinet have previously taken turns to lie about his recovery. ➔13

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Nepal outlaws menstruation huts, but what will take their place?

By Sugam Pokharel and Karma Dolma Gurung

Radhika Kami lives with her family of six in a traditional mud-and-brick house in a rural village in Nepal's Kanchanpur district -- for most of the year.

For about five days each month, the 16-year-old is banished to a hut -- a windowless, ramshackle shed with a small door and poor sanitation and ventilation -- and is forbidden from touching other people, cattle, any fruits and vegetables that are growing, even books.

It is known as a menstruation hut, and Radhika must go there each time she has her period.

The family practices Chhaupadi, a centuries-old custom in the remote west of Nepal in which women, considered "impure" during menstruation, are sequestered for the extent of their periods.

"I feel bad that I have to go sleep (in a separate hut) every month, but what can I do?" Radhika asked.

She is not even allowed to use the family toilet during menstruation, instead making a trip to a nearby river.

But she hopes this won't have to happen for much longer.

On August 9, Nepal's Parliament passed a bill that would criminalize the banishment of women during menstruation. Once the bill goes into effect, set for August 2018, anyone who forces a woman into a menstrual hut will be sentenced to three months in prison or fined US \$30.

"It closes the door for us"

Advocates of the ban believe, however, that the real challenge will be enforcing it. If girls like Radhika continue to practice Chhaupadi or if they are forced to practice it by senior members of their family, will they report it to authorities?

"Yes, criminalizing it validates the fact that the government of Nepal thinks it is a criminal offense, but it does not in any way ensure that people will stop doing it," said Pema Lakhi of the Nepal Fertility Care Center, one of the country's leading menstrual hygiene activists.

Activists have long pressured lawmakers for a law to punish those who force women to practice Chhaupadi, a ritual rooted in Hindu taboos about menstruation. But campaigners believe that more awareness programs are needed to change behavior and mindsets, and they are not convinced that the law alone will solve the problem.

Lakhi is also concerned that



On August 9, Nepal's Parliament passed a bill that would criminalize the banishment of women during menstruation. Once the bill goes into effect, set for August 2018, anyone who forces a woman into a menstrual hut will be sentenced to three months in prison or fined US \$30.

criminalization will make people stop talking about the issue and may be counterproductive to the work she and other activists do.

"We are currently working to destigmatize menstruation. ... We talk to girls about Chhaupadi and why they practice it. (Now) they are not going to come up and say 'yes, I (practice) Chhaupadi,' Lakhi said. "It closes the door for us to actually understand strategic approaches."

Through conversations with women and girls who practice the tradition, Lakhi and her colleagues say, they have learned that many do it because they want to. "In many cases, the ritual is passed on the generation and not necessarily enforced," she said.

Amar Sunar, a human rights and menstrual rights activist based in western Nepal's Dailekh district, is "delighted" that a law will punish Chhaupadi enforcers.

Sunar tried to file a police report in July

after the death of 19-year-old Tulasi Shahi, who died from a snake bite while taking part in the Chhaupadi ritual. His case was against the girl's parents, but police refused to accept it because there was no law criminalizing the practice, he said.

"Now, this law is going to make it easier for us to legally fight against the perpetrators," Sunar said.

Challenges on the ground

But Sunar adds that he is not very optimistic about immediate change in the villages themselves.

"People may demolish the menstrual huts, but then they will send the girls to some dark unused corners of the house during their menstrual period ... which would be difficult for authorities to monitor," he argued. "Laws don't change attitude."

Some residents of these rural regions are not happy with the ruling, especially those who believe that violating the

practice means angering the god or goddess and could bring bad luck to their homes.

"This is absolute high-handedness. Government should have advocated for a safer way to practice Chhaupadi instead," said 69-year-old Laxman Shahi, who lives in a village in the Dailekh district.

Shahi says she will abide by the law but argues that the government is showing no respect for longstanding culture and tradition. "Will the government be responsible if our village is cursed with bad luck?" she asked.

Sunar thinks targeting religious leaders could be crucial to change attitudes among local residents. "What the government should also do is run awareness programs targeting local religious leaders and shamans. They are the ones promoting these superstitions in villages," he said.

(Source: CNN)

Peanut butter for weight loss

Peanut butter diet tips to help you slim down

By Jennifer R. Scott

Are you a peanut butter eater? If you're trying to lose weight, you might be in luck. Some experts and researchers recommend peanut butter for weight loss. But if you want your peanut butter diet to be successful, you need to follow a few smart rules.

Peanut butter and weight loss

While peanut butter has health benefits, many dieters avoid eating the popular spread because of the calories and fat, as well as the sweeteners added to some brands.

This is why it is not included in various weight loss diets. Peanut butter typically has 190 calories in a 2-tablespoon serving, with 144 calories from fat.

However, research has shown that snacking on peanut butter can be an effective way to control hunger without weight gain. Why does it work? Because peanut butter provides a feeling of satiety or fullness. Further, a study found that women who included more nuts in their diet were found to be less likely to gain weight over an eight-year period.

When you're trying to lose weight, watching your fat intake is important. But treating yourself to peanut butter in your diet can actually curb your appetite and prevent overeating. And what happens when you stop overeating? You lose weight!

A peanut butter diet

A Purdue University study showed that subjects who snacked on peanuts and peanut butter were able to adjust their diets so that they didn't gain weight when they consumed these higher calorie foods.

The study gives hope to dieters who love nuts and don't want to banish them from their diets.

Researchers found that peanuts and peanut butter produced more eating satisfaction and feelings of fullness for several hours after eating. By comparison, when the participants ate other snacks like rice cakes, hunger returned within a half hour.

The research also supports previous long and short-term studies that indicate that regular consumption of peanuts does not promote weight gain.

Healthy fats for a healthier heart

The Purdue research and other studies also



When you're trying to lose weight, watching your fat intake is important. But treating yourself to peanut butter in your diet can actually curb your appetite and prevent overeating.

suggested you may benefit from positive changes in the type of fats you eat when you eat nuts and peanut butter in moderation. Study participants who ate peanut butter decreased their saturated fat intake and increased their intake of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Monounsaturated fats raise the "good" cholesterol levels without raising total blood cholesterol. This and other factors may be why nut consumption is associated with a lower risk of metabolic syndrome and heart disease.

How to eat peanuts and peanut butter in your diet

How can you increase peanut butter in your diet and still maintain the calorie deficit needed for weight loss? The key is to eat peanut butter in moderation. A single serving of peanut butter is just two tablespoons.

You can eat the peanut butter on a single serving of whole grain bread or with fruit or vegetables. The Peanut Institute even suggests that you can sprinkle toasted peanuts on your salad instead of croutons.

Eliminating added fat and sugar with natural peanut butter

Another tactic is to eliminate added fats and sugars by buying or making unadulterated fresh ground peanut butter. Look in the bulk food section of your market for peanuts and a grinder available to make your own peanut butter right in the store. You can then adjust the flavor at home, adding a bit of salt or sweetener if desired. You'll find that natural peanut butter mixes better in smoothies and works well as a dip.

(Source: verywell.com)

Two keys to strong bones: calcium and vitamin D

Although bone-weakening osteoporosis is quite common among older people, it isn't an inevitable part of aging. There's a lot you can do to shield your bones from this disease.

The best insurance against osteoporosis is building the highest bone density possible by your 30s and minimizing bone loss after that. But if you're already in midlife or beyond, there is still much you can do to preserve the bone you have and perhaps even to replace lost bone. Daily weight-bearing exercise, like walking, is the best medicine. Getting enough calcium and vitamin D are two other critical strategies for keeping bones strong.

Calcium

Calcium is an important nutrient for building bone and slowing the pace of bone loss. But it's not a single magic bullet, and some scientists suggest that too much calcium or dairy products may be unhealthy. Keep in mind that in addition to calcium, there are other nutrients and foods that help keep your bones strong — most importantly vitamin D, but also vitamin K.

How much calcium? The recommended daily intake for calcium is 1,000 milligrams (mg) a day for adults up through age 50 and 1,200 mg a day for people ages 51 and older, when bone loss accelerates. With age, the intestines absorb less calcium from the diet, and the kidneys seem to be less efficient at conserving calcium. As a result, your body can steal calcium from bone for a variety of important metabolic functions.

Ideally, you should get your calcium through dietary sources. Some research suggests that getting too much calcium from supplements may increase the risk of heart disease and prostate cancer. Therefore it's best to talk with your doctor if you think you need a calcium supplement.

Vitamin D

In building bone, calcium has an indispensable assistant: vitamin D. This vitamin helps the body absorb calcium, and some researchers think that increasing vitamin D can help prevent osteoporosis. Milk sold in the United States is fortified with vitamin D. Vitamin D is also prevalent in fortified breakfast cereals, eggs, and vitamin supplements. Some brands of yogurt are fortified with it, as well as some juices.

If possible, a small amount of sun exposure can help your body manufacture its own vitamin D — about five to 30 minutes of sunlight between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. twice a week to your face, arms, legs, or back without sunscreen will enable you to make enough of the vitamin. People with fair skin that burns easily should protect themselves from skin cancer by limiting sun exposure to 10 minutes or less.

Food and sun exposure should suffice, but if not, some experts advise getting 1,000 IU of vitamin D daily from a supplement.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

These are the real health benefits of apple cider vinegar

By Cynthia Sass

Apple cider vinegar has been touted as a cure-all for decades. I've seen claims that it can do everything from halt hiccups to whiten teeth, and even banish dandruff. Whether or not it's capable of all those things, there is some solid research to back up apple cider vinegar as a healthy elixir, as long as you use it correctly.



One promising benefit: It seems to help regulate blood sugar. A study published in *Diabetes Care* looked at men and women with type 2 diabetes. The researchers found that when the participants downed two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar before bed with a snack (one ounce of cheese), they had lower blood sugar levels the next morning, compared to when they ate the same bedtime snack paired with two tablespoons of water.

Another study published in the same journal compared the effects of apple cider vinegar on healthy adults, people with pre-diabetes, and people with type 2 diabetes. Study participants in all three groups had better blood glucose readings when they consumed less than an ounce of apple cider vinegar with a high-carb meal (a white bagel with butter and orange juice), compared to when they had the same meal and drank a placebo. People with pre-diabetes improved their blood glucose levels with vinegar by nearly half, while people with diabetes cut their blood glucose concentrations by 25%.

Some research also suggests that apple cider vinegar may ward off scale creep. In a study published in the *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry*, mice fed a high-fat diet along with acetic acid—vinegar's key component—developed up to 10% less body fat than control rodents. The researchers believe the findings support the notion that acetic acid turns on genes that trigger enzymes to break down fat and prevent weight gain.

Apple cider vinegar may also be a boon to digestive health, based on the results of a study done on mice with ulcerative colitis. The researchers found that when acetic acid was added to their drinking water, they had higher levels of good bacteria in their guts, such as *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacteria*, and reduced symptoms of the gastrointestinal disease.

(Source: health.com)

Tehran crafts expo dedicates section to children, young adults

HERITAGE TEHRAN — The 28th National Crafts Exhibition in Tehran has dedicated a section to children and young adults in an innovative approach to closely make them familiar with ancient skills passed down from generation to generation.



Children attend a special training section at the 28th National Crafts Exhibition in Tehran on August 23, 2017.

"We are running workshops on seven branches of handicrafts including pottery, basketry, printmaking, inlaying, woodwork and marquetry with the help of experienced trainers," CHTN quoted Farideh Mehrinia, curator of the children's booth, on Thursday.

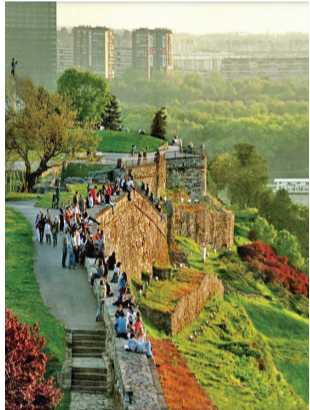
The initiative is set up by the Cultural Heritage Tourism and Handicraft Organization in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the report added.

Wide-ranging handicrafts from every corner of the country are on show during the 7-day exhibition, which opened doors to public at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground on August 23.

Craftspeople native to 31 provinces are attending the event to promote demanding skills of woodwork, illuminated manuscript, miniature, textile printing, enamel, leatherwork, handwoven products, calligraphy, traditional musical instruments, metalwork, and marquetry, amongst others.

Serbia expects more tourist arrivals from Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — The number of Iranians visiting Serbia is expected to rise as the south-eastern European country has recently decided to waive visa requirement for Iranian nationals.



Travelers visit the historical Belgrade Fortress on the confluence of River Sava and Danube in Serbia

The decision will enable undisturbed arrival of tourists, as well as potential investors, in order to create a more favorable business environment, and bring bilateral relations to a higher level, InSerbia reported on August 23.

Earlier this month, Maja Gojkovic, the president of the National Assembly of Serbia, vowed to put to vote in parliament lifting visa restrictions for Iranian travelers, Tasnim reported.

She made the remarks in meeting with Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani in Tehran, during which the officials explored ways to widen relations in various arenas, and tourism in particular.

ROUND THE GLOBE Abbey of St Gall

The Abbey of St Gall is located in the town of St Gall in the north-eastern part of Switzerland, and largely owes its present appearance to the construction campaigns of the 18th century.

A UNESCO World Heritage site, the Abbey of St Gall is an outstanding example of a large Carolingian monastery and was, since the 8th century until its secularization in 1805, one of the most important cultural centers in Europe.

It represents 1200 years of history of monastic architecture and is a typical and outstanding ensemble of a large Benedictine convent. Almost all the important architectural periods, from High Middle Ages to historicism, are represented in an exemplary fashion. Despite the diversity of styles, the conventual ensemble gives the impression of overall unity, bordered on the north and to the west by edifices of the town of St Gall that are, for the most part, intact.



A view of the Abbey of St Gall, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Switzerland

It is an impressive architectural ensemble comprising different buildings regrouped around the main square of the abbey. The west side includes the ancient abbatial church (the present cathedral), flanked by two towers and the ancient cloister, which today houses the abbatial library, located on the east side is the "Neue Pfalz", the present seat of the canton authorities. (Source: UNESCO)

Shiraz to host UNESCO meeting on intangible heritage

HERITAGE TEHRAN — The Iranian city of Shiraz will host the coordination meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage-related Category 2 Institutes and Centers from September 10 to 12, IRNA reported.

The intangible cultural heritage has been adopted as the dominant theme for the event that will also have an eye on the 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.

It will convene directors and representatives from Category 2 headquarters in Algeria, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Japan, Peru, and South Korea as well as UNESCO regional offices in Bangkok, Beijing, Venice, and Havana, the report said.

The event is jointly organized by Shiraz Municipality and the Category 2 Center of Iran. The latter is tasked with conducting research for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in West and Central Asia.

UNESCO says that each center is associated with specialized fields of activity and a set of functions in order to accomplish those shared objectives.

Category 2 centers are running under the auspices of the UNESCO, established and funded by member states to contribute to the achievement of UNESCO's objectives in global, regional and inter-regional scales.

Iran's entries to the UNESCO Intangi-



Photo depicts traditional Lenj vessels being built in southern coasts of Iran. Traditional skills of building and sailing Iranian Lenj boats in the Persian Gulf added to the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2011.

ble Cultural Heritage list include radif of Iranian music, traditional skills of carpet weaving in Kashan, ritual dramatic art of ta'ziye, music of the Bakhshis of Khoras-

an, and Qalishuyan rituals of Mashhad-e Ardehal near Kashan.

Moreover, dramatic story-telling called naqqali, traditional skills of build-

ing and sailing Lenj boats in the Persian Gulf, and traditional skills of carpet weaving in Fars are amongst other admissions to the prestigious list.

Iranians visiting Istanbul on the rise

TOURISM TEHRAN — The number of Iranian travelers to Istanbul has followed an upward trend in the recent years, ranking second after Germans when it comes to the distribution of tourists visiting the Turkish city by country.

Iranians account for 7.5 percent of all tourists arrivals to Istanbul, and numerically they may soon surpass that of Germans, who make up for 9.4 percent of the visitors to the city, Daily Sabah reported on Wednesday.

According to information compiled from the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 386,339 Iranian tourists visited Istanbul in 2013, 590,920 in 2014, 755,707 in 2015, 648,176 in 2016, and 337,259 in the first half of 2017.

Iran ranked seventh in 2013 in the distribution of tourists visiting Istanbul, while the position jumped to second after in 2014, 2015, 2016 and the first six months of 2017. The number of Germans visiting Istanbul in the first six months of this year stood at 403,235, the report added.

There is a rapid increase in the number of Iranian tourists among other tourist groups visiting Istanbul, Ercan Cecen, board member and Iranian market representative of the Middle East Tourism and Travel Agents Association (OTSAD), told Anadolu Agency.

Iranian tourists will soon be top on the list replacing Germans due to the fact that they mostly prefer Istanbul among other [Turkish] destinations, Cecen said.



A woman takes photographs in front of the New Mosque by the Bosphorus strait in Istanbul, Turkey, January 12, 2016. (Reuters/Murad Sezer)

Turkish tourism arrivals surge 46% in July as Russians return

ANKARA (Reuters) — The number of foreign visitors arriving in Turkey rose almost by half in July, official data showed on Friday, as the number of Russian tourists surged due to an improvement in relations between Ankara and Moscow.

Foreign arrivals rose 46.4 percent in July to 5.08 million, marking the sharpest rise in 13 years, albeit off of last year's low base, the data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism showed. The rise follows a turnaround in tourism numbers in April, when the number of foreign visitors rose for the first time in nearly two years.

The number of Russian visitors increased more than 16-fold in July and around 10-fold in the first seven months of the year. Tourism was one of the worst hit industries after the crisis that followed Turkey's shooting down of a Russian in November 2015.

"Compared to 2016, geopolitical stress continued to be mild in July but tension with the European Union increased," said Melis Pocar, vice president of research at Oyak Securities.

"However, capacity constraints in various European holiday destinations, high prices and a weak lira should have supported the figures," she added.

UK tourism is booming as more Brits choose to go on staycation

The UK hospitality industry is booming as the nation gears up for the final bank holiday of the year, new research has found.

Small businesses catering for holiday-makers saw turnover jump 8.3 per cent in the first half of 2017 compared to the same period last year, according to research by Barclays.

Three-quarters of people have been on, or are planning, a UK staycation this year, up from 70 percent in 2016.

The most popular spot for Brits holidaying in their home country is the South West of England, which is attracting a third of staycationers.

Despite the increased appetite for a

UK staycation, holiday budgets are feeling the pinch; the average spend per trip in 2017 is £530 – 14 percent down on 2016 when holidaymakers were reported to be spending £613.

The weak pound has helped to boost UK businesses in accommodation and food services by making the UK a more attractive holiday destination for many overseas tourists this year.

Recent official figures showed 3.5 million overseas residents chose to holiday in the UK in June 2017 – up 7 percent from the same period in 2016. Tourists also spent more, splashing a total of £2.2bn – a 2 percent rise on the same period last year. (Source: The Independent)

Free Alaskan salmon: Just bring a net and expect a crowd

By JULIA O'MALLEY

Wenceslous Fru, a physician assistant from Anchorage, stood on the sandy shore of the Kenai River and imagined the dinner he would put together once he felt the jostle of a salmon in his long-handled dip net. He would make it the way they do back home in Cameroon, splitting it down the belly and opening it like a book, rubbing it with ginger, garlic and spices, and then slipping it under the broiler.

Fishing nearby, Raviwan Dougherty, an Anchorage restaurant worker from Thailand, envisioned steaming hers and bathing it in fish sauce, lime juice and chiles.

Lyubov Miroshnick, who works in a dental office in Wasilla, planned to smoke her catch after a soak in her Ukrainian grandparents' brine recipe.

"Mainly, we fish for the winter," said Ms. Miroshnick, who had a dozen family members with her. "That's how most people survive here. It's the cheaper way."

There is no more popular fishery in Alaska than the Kenai (KEEN-eye), a three-hour drive southwest of Anchorage, where millions of sockeye salmon ripple through the silty turquoise water each summer to spawn.



To fish, most people stand elbow to elbow along the shoreline, wearing waders, chest-high in the cold river.

And there is most likely no more democratic fishing spot in America — a place where any Alaska resident, from an oil company executive to a carwash attendant, can fill a freezer with premium salmon for only the cost of gas and gear.

Most of the Kenai's fish are caught by commercial boats and sold around the world. The rest go to sport fishermen, who catch them with a rod and reel, and, increasingly, a wildly diverse group of mostly urban dip-netters, who crowd the river's mouth for three weeks in July, hoping to

score a winter's supply of wild salmon that most can't afford to buy. In the roughly 20 years since the state started regulating dip-net fishing in the region, the number of permits it issues has doubled, to more than 30,000.

Now, when the dip-netters descend, the beach takes on the motley, slightly claustrophobic feel of a music festival. Whole families set up camp in the sand, hauling tents, chairs, dogs, children and nets by four-wheelers from the packed parking lot. This year, a church group brought in a

bouncy house and grilled hot dogs. A cart sold espresso. People on the beach spoke Hmong, Korean, Tagalog, Spanish and Thai. They played Christian rock, reggaeton and Pacific Island R&B.

To fish, most people stand elbow to elbow along the shoreline, wearing waders, chest-high in the cold river. Each holds a long steel pole with a five-foot-wide net basket on the end. When a fish hits the net, the fisher drags it onto the beach and bonks it on the head with a short bat. Some people also fish by boat to avoid the crowd, holding their nets overboard as they drift with the current.

Occasionally, a commercial boat patters by. There's always a little tension.

Commercial fishermen catch salmon by stretching large nets in the inlet near the mouth of the river. When things are slow, dip-netters grumble that the larger boats take too many fish.

The commercial fishermen, on the other hand, must sometimes stop work for a few days at the direction of state biologists who monitor the number of fish in the river for conservation purposes. They don't love watching the dip-netters filling their coolers. (Source: The New York Times)

Faster, more precise, more stable: Study optimizes graphene growth

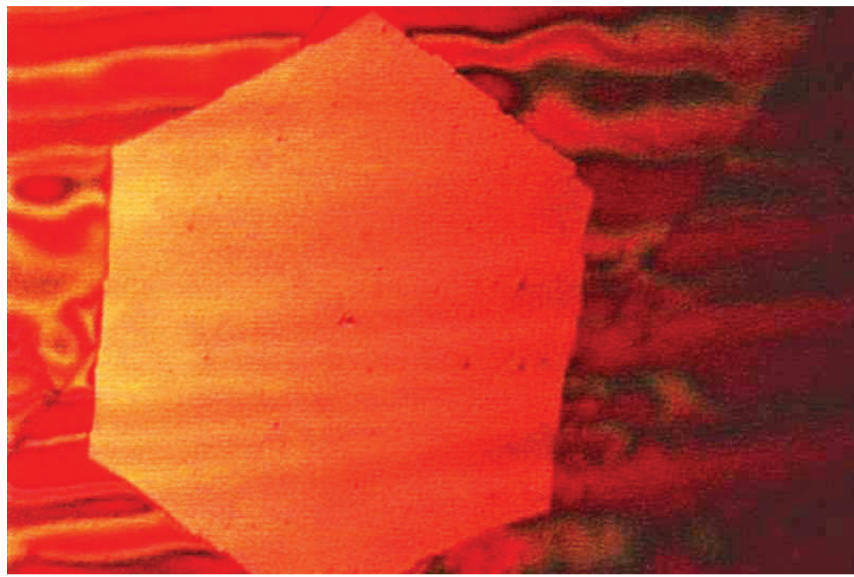
Graphene is seen as the material of the future. It is ideal for e.g. producing ultra-light electronics or highly stable mechanical components. But the wafer-thin carbon layers are difficult to produce. At the Technical University of Munich (TUM), Jürgen Kraus has manufactured self-supporting graphene membranes, and at the same time systematically investigated and optimized the growth of the graphene crystals. He was awarded the Evonik Research Prize for his work.

Graphene breaks all records. It is the thinnest and most stable material in the world, ultralight, tear-proof, electrically conductive, and highly resilient. Since it was discovered in 2004, the two-dimensional structures composed of carbon atoms have fueled the imagination and inventive spirit. Science fiction authors consider the material suitable for building cables to drive space elevators.

Material researchers are experimenting with graphene displays, transistors, and electrodes, which purport to make the electronics of the future lighter, more stable, and longer-lived. In the scientific community, films of highly pure graphene are highly coveted, as they allow gases and liquids to be packaged in an ultra-dense manner.

Basic requirements

"Currently, however, the basic requirements are still lacking. There are various manufacturing processes which are suitable



for the mass production of graphene. However, this material is not free of defects.

Graphene of the highest crystalline quality cannot be reproducibly manufactured in this manner", explains Sebastian Günther, Professor for Physical Chemistry at the TUM. His team has now succeeded

in analyzing, monitoring, and optimizing the growth of graphene crystals through chemical vapor deposition (CVD for short). The findings were recently published in the *Annalen der Physik* (Annals of Physics).

Theoretically, it is very easy to produce graphene: All that is needed are a heat-

ed glass vessel, a reactor, in which carbon-containing gas such as methane is fed into, as well as copper as a catalyst. At temperatures of around 1,000 degrees Celsius, the methane decomposes on the copper surface to produce hydrogen and carbon.

Two-dimensional structure

While the hydrogen subsequently leaves the copper surface, the carbon atoms collect on the surface of the copper film used during this chemical precipitation from the gaseous state -- a process called chemical vapor deposition. Here, the atoms cross-link and form graphene "flakes", spot-like two-dimensional structures with the typical honeycombed structure. What remains is the hydrogen, which can be extracted via suction.

However, in practice, the devil is in the details.

The "biggest problem is that the two-dimensional crystal structure is often not entirely homogeneous, because growth begins simultaneously at multiple locations", explains Jürgen Kraus, who carried out the experiments. "At first glance, it appears that a continuous graphene film is appearing on the copper, but the hexagonal honeycombs are not all oriented in the same manner, and the structure is weakened at locations where they meet.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Graphene of the highest crystalline quality cannot be reproducibly manufactured in this manner", explains Sebastian Günther, Professor for Physical Chemistry at the TUM.

Exercise in a pill? Scientists move one step closer

What if you could reap the benefits of exercise without moving a muscle? A new study from England has taken an important step toward understanding how the human body senses when it's exercising and developing a potential way to flip this "switch" without breaking a sweat.

But don't cancel your gym membership just yet: The new study was done in mice, and much more research is needed to explore the effects in humans.

During exercise, a person's heart rate increases, pumping more blood throughout the body. But this increased blood flow doesn't reach all parts of a person's body equally; more blood goes to a person's skeletal muscles and brain, and less goes to internal organs such as the stomach and intestines.

Body diverts blood

What wasn't clear, however, was how the body knew to divert blood from one part of the body to another during exercise, said senior study author David Beech, a professor of cardiovascular science at the University of Leeds in England.

In the new study, the researchers identified a protein in mice that appears to do just that: detect when ex-

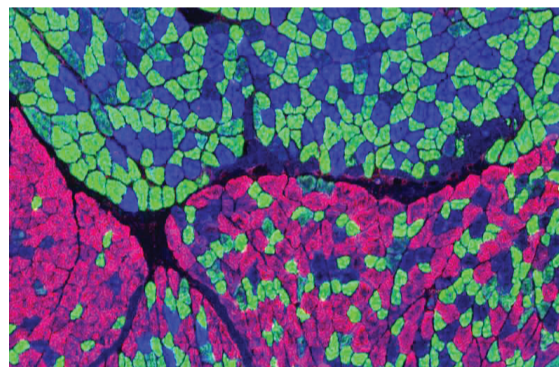
ercise is happening and divert blood flow accordingly, Beech told *Live Science*.

The protein, called Piezo1, acts as an "exercise sensor," Beech said. It's found in the cells that line the inner parts of the blood vessels near the stomach and intestines. During exercise, the blood flows faster, and Piezo1 can sense this change in speed. In turn, the protein triggers the blood vessels near the digestive organs to constrict, so that less blood flows to this part of the body and more goes to the skeletal muscles and the brain, according to the study.

Physical activity

In the study, the researchers compared the blood flow in normal mice with the blood flow of mice without the Piezo1 protein. During physical activity (in this case, running on a wheel), the blood vessels near the digestive organs didn't constrict in the mice without the protein. In addition, the mice that had the protein performed better physically than the mice without the protein.

Exercise plays an important role in a person's health, and a big question is whether this protein could contribute to these health benefits, Beech said. And, if that's the case, could scientists develop a drug that could activate



the protein?

Beech and his team have already taken a step in that direction. In another part of the study, the researchers did experiments with a compound called "Yoda1" that interacted with the Piezo1 protein. (Yoda1 was given this name by a different group of scientists because it was known that the protein it interacted with had something to do with force, Beech added.)

(Source: *Live Science*)

What happens when two neutron stars collide?

Last week, as some staff astronomers embarked on trips to see Monday's solar eclipse, two of NASA's space-based observatories — Hubble and Chandra X-ray — and at least two land-based telescopes scrambled to capture a far more explosive event.

The astronomers who stayed behind trained their telescopes on a patch of sky where they hoped to find an astrophysical Rosetta stone: a cataclysmic event capable of producing electromagnetic signals on top of gravitational waves separately detected by the Advanced Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (Advanced LIGO).

Original story reprinted with permission from *Quanta Magazine*, an editorially independent publication of the Simons Foundation whose mission is to enhance public understanding of science by covering research developments and trends in mathematics and the physical and life sciences.

Gravitational waves

The LIGO collaboration made headlines in February 2016 when it announced it had detected gravitational waves from two colliding black holes. Four months later, while still in its first observing run, the team confirmed the detection of a second black hole merger. A third such

merger was detected in January during Advanced LIGO's second observing run, which ended Friday. This possible new event could represent something special.

While two merging black holes are thought to produce nothing detectable beyond a crescendo of gravitational waves, events involving two neutron stars or a neutron star and a black hole could also leave behind a glowing wreckage for telescopes to see. LIGO has yet to confirm that such an event has been detected. "Some promising gravitational-wave candidates have been identified in data from both LIGO and Virgo during our preliminary analysis, and we have shared what we currently know with

astronomical observing partners," said an announcement posted by the LIGO team this morning.

But there has been speculation on Twitter, in a *New Scientist* article and on astronomer Peter Coles's blog that such a link has been found, based on publicly available observation logs.

Discoveries in astronomy

"If the detection is true, it would be transformative for the field and probably one of the greatest discoveries in astronomy," said Enrico Ramirez-Ruiz of the University of California, Santa Cruz, who refused to discuss any specific results.

(Source: *Wired*)

CBI Governor: Contract Inked with S. Korea, a Sign of Global Trust to Iran's Banking System

A bilateral agreement inked between Iran's EDBI and Korea's Import and Export Bank (Exim Bank) signifies the recurrence of world's trust to Iran's banking system.

Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CB) Valiollah Seif announced the above statement and reiterated: "A couple of days ago, a mutual contract was inked between Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) and South Korea's Import and Export Bank (Exim Bank) to finance development of projects in Iran.

Granting €9 billion worth of South Korea's loan to Iran is a sign of return of global trust to Iran's banking system in post-sanctions era, he said, adding: "Signing and sealing this contract can boom and flourish Iran's development projects."

After a landmark nuclear deal inked between Iran



and six world's major powers following the implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA),

the official title of nuclear deal, Iran's banking ties accelerated with the outside world, he reiterated.

Not only signing long-term financing contracts will have direct impact in the implementation of country's development and production projects, but also these projects will be able to generate more employment opportunities, he said, adding: "In addition, signing and sealing reciprocal contracts will indicate high inclination and interest of other countries to establish long-term relations in the related field."

In the end, CBI Governor Seif once again pointed to the amelioration of Iran's banking system with the outside world in post-sanctions era in particular and said: "Rosy and bright future awaits for Iran's banking system in the worldwide."

IKRC's Chief Praises Salient Achievements of Bank Mellat

Head of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (IKRC) Seyyed Parviz Fattah expressed his appreciation on the salient achievements taken by the senior officials of Bank Mellat, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

In a letter sent to First Vice President, IKRC's director pointed to

the Note 26 of 2016 Budget Act on the allocation of 10,000 billion rials worth of facilities out of interest-free loan of the banks to the job-generating projects of the Committee and added: "With paying the amount of 2,415 billion rials, Bank Mellat has got the lion's share of paying facil-

ities and loans as compared to the other banks."

Since its establishment, giant steps have been taken by IKRC in the field of empowering disadvantaged and underprivileged class of society in the best form possible, he emphasized.

In the end, Head of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (IKRC) Seyyed Parviz Fattah once again expressed his special thanks to the unsparing and unflinching efforts of the managing director of the bank and wished evermore success for this bank as well.

New high-tech 'yarn' could make electricity: study

Researchers in the United States and South Korea have invented a new kind of yarn that can generate electricity when it is stretched or twisted, according to a new study.



Researchers in the United States and South Korea have invented a new kind of yarn that can generate electricity when it is stretched or twisted, said a study Thursday.

The material, called "twistron," could be used to harvest energy from the motion of ocean waves, or from changes in temperature, said the report in the journal *Science*.

The "easiest way to think of twistron harvesters is, you have a piece of yarn, you stretch it, and out comes electricity," said co-author Carter Haines, associate research professor at the University of Texas, Dallas.

The yarn is built from carbon nanotubes, which are hollow cylinders of carbon 10,000 times smaller in diameter than a human hair, according to the report.

In order to generate electricity, the yarns must be either submerged in or coated with an ionically conducting material, or electrolyte, which can be as simple as a mixture of ordinary table salt and water.

"When you insert the carbon nanotube yarn into an electrolyte bath, the yarns are charged by the electrolyte itself," said co-author Na Li, a research scientist at UT Dallas's NanoTech Institute.

"No external battery, or voltage, is needed."

The research is still at an early stage, and scientists caution that the technology is not meant for large-scale electricity projects, at least not yet.

Instead, lab experiments have shown that a "twistron yarn weighing less than a housefly could power a small LED, which lit up each time the yarn was stretched," said the report in *Science*.

(Source: *AFP Relaxnews*)

Converted missile launches military satellite to track spacecraft and debris

A satellite designed to help the U.S. military keep tabs on the ever-growing population of orbiting objects took to the skies atop a converted missile early on August 26.

The Air Force's Operationally Responsive Space-5 (ORS-5) satellite lifted off from Florida's Cape Canaveral Air Force Station at 02:04 A.M. EDT (0604 GMT) on Saturday atop an Orbital ATK Minotaur IV rocket, which carved a fiery orange arc into the sky as it rose.

If everything goes according to plan, ORS-5 will settle into a circular orbit 372 miles (600 kilometers) over the equator. From this vantage point, the 310-lb. (140 kilograms) satellite will scan the geosynchronous belt, a region about 22,300 miles (35,800 km) up that harbors many valuable communications and weather satellites, both government and commercial.

Geosynchronous orbit is an appealing destination for such craft because objects there orbit at the same speed that Earth rotates, allowing satellites to hover over the same patch of Earth 24/7.

ORS-5, which is also known as SensorSat, will monitor the satellites and space junk in the geosynchronous belt to "aid the U.S. military's space situational awareness," Orbital ATK representatives wrote in a statement. And it will do this on the relative cheap: ORS-5 was developed and launched for less than \$100 million, Col. Shahnaz Punjani, director of the Air Force's Operationally Responsive Space office, said during Orbital ATK's launch webcast this morning.

(Source: *space.com*)

Grizzly bears go vegetarian due to climate change: study

Grizzly bears have stopped eating salmon in favor of elderberries after being forced to make a choice due to climate change.

Warming temperatures meant that the berries are ripening earlier than usual, at exactly the same time as the freshwater streams on Alaska's Kodiak Island are overflowing with sockeye salmon.

The island's brown bears typically feed first on salmon in early summer, followed by elderberries later in the season, in late August and September.

"What you have is a scrambling of the schedule," said William Deacy, a biologist at Oregon State University that studied the phenomenon.

"It's essentially like if breakfast and lunch were served at same time and then there is nothing to eat until dinner.

"You have to choose between breakfast and lunch because you can only eat so much at a time."

The study found that during the unusually warm summer of 2014, the bears, which would traditionally kill up to 75 percent of the salmon, were nowhere to be seen near the streams.

Instead, they were in the hills busy munching on berries, which contain less protein and therefore take less energy to break down, causing them to gain weight more quickly.

(Source: *The Telegraph*)

Iran revises controversial recruitment rules for teachers

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran's Ministry of Education has revised a widely criticized set of recruitment guidelines for teachers which prohibited them from teaching based on their physical appearance or diseases, ISNA reported.



The set of guidelines, published initially by Fars news agency on August 23, excluded individuals with a wide range of illnesses including poor eyesight, skin conditions, lung and kidney diseases, bladder problems, brain tumors, migraine, strokes, mental disorders, speech impairment, gallstone, hepatitis, autoimmune diseases, female reproductive system diseases, breast, cervical, and ovarian cancer.

The list went viral on social media and many argued that a great deal of illnesses listed in the guidelines do not necessarily affect someone's ability to teach.

The guidelines were drawn up and enforced for two years supposed to make an improvement upon the previous recruitment policies, according to Esfandiar Chaharband, head of the Center for Human Resources Planning and Information Technology of Education Ministry.

However, he explained that the guidelines were reconsidered and some parts, particularly the ones pertaining to female reproductive system diseases are totally omitted.

He further noted that no-one has ever been banned from work on this basis and the diseases were only reported as medical record for each individual.

As Shahindokht Molaverdi, presidential aide for civil rights affairs, wrote on her twitter account on August 24, the guidelines were re-evaluated and the newly altered ones will be declared soon.

Royan Intl. Research Award to honor Iranian, foreign researchers

1 → Professor Maarten van Lohuizen, Researcher at Netherlands Cancer Institute and invited speaker of 15th Royan Congress also said "...best of luck with your work, I am very impressed with the achievements you make at the Royan stem cell Institute and sincerely hope that the restrictions will be soon lifted to aid your scientific work."

Each year the prominent researches with outstanding help in solving problems in reproduction and stem cell fields, are announced, appreciated and rewarded. This annual award is a prize given to prominent research projects in the field of reproductive biomedicine, stem cell biology and technology and other related subjects.

Royan annual award is extending into a higher quality event every year, increasing the scientific level and number of the submitted papers. The submitted research articles are categorized according to nine scientific groups: female infertility, reproductive genetics, epidemiology, ethics, embryology, andrology, reproductive imaging, stem cell biology and technology and biotechnology.

This year's winners are comprising of 5 Iranian and 5 foreign researchers.

Thomas Braun from Germany for his research on compaction of chromatin seals quiescence of muscle stem cells, Riccardo Fodde from the Netherlands for his research titled diet, inflammation, and stem cells: trading off regenerative response with cancer risk, and David



16th Royan International Research Award winners (2015)

Greening from Australia for his research entitled exosomes: a new paradigm in embryo-maternal cross-talk for successful implantation.

Two Japanese researchers will accept the award: Kaei Nasu for his research called roles of aberrantly expressed microRNAs in endometriosis, and Khaleque KHAN for his research on Mmolecular detection of intrauterine microbial colonization in women with endometriosis are the five winners of the award.

Moreover, Iranian researchers including Mahnaz Ashrafi for her research titled assisted reproductive outcomes in women with different polycystic ovary syndrome phenotypes: the predictive value of anti-Müllerian hormone, Mahdi Sheikh for his research focusing on granulocyte colony stimulating factor in repeated IVF failure, a randomized trial, and Hossein Ghanbarian for his research examining RNA-directed programming of embryonic stem cell.

Additionally, Fereshteh Esfandiari for her research entitled in vitro generation of meiosis-competent germ cells from embryonic stem cells by engineering the delivery of BMP4, and lastly Kambiz Gilany for his research called untargeted metabolomic profiling of seminal plasma in Non-obstructive azoospermia men: a non-invasive detection of spermatogenesis are announced as the winners of the annual award.

Royan International Research Award was founded by the late director of Royan Institute, Dr. Saeed Kazemi Ashtiani, with the aim of encouraging the researchers and appreciation of their efforts. This annual award is extending into a higher quality event every year, increasing the scientific level and number of the submitted papers. The research papers are evaluated through an intense jury procedure by Award's national and international Jury board.

Royan Institute is a public non-profitable organization which is affiliated to Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR) and was established in 1991 by the late Dr. Kazemi Ashtiani as a research institute for reproductive biomedicine and infertility treatments. In 1998 this institute was approved by Ministry of Health as Cell Based Research Center. Now this institute acts as leader of stem cell research and also one of the best clinics for infertility treatment.

Some patients treated for putting sunblock in their eyes during eclipse

Those experiencing blurred or impaired vision after watching the solar eclipse may want to see an eye doctor.

Nurse Practitioner Trish Patterson told our sister station KRCR it usually takes 24 hours before people start noticing symptoms, including visual defects or blurriness.

Pain is not expected because there aren't pain receptors in the retina.

Patterson said they treat looking directly into the sun the same as a welder's flash.

So far, she said they haven't had any patients with damage from looking at the eclipse, but they've had a few customers experience pain after they put sunscreen in their eye Monday since they did not have protective glasses.

"One of my colleagues at moonlight here stated yesterday that they had patients presenting at their clinic that put sunscreen on their eyeball, and presented that they were having pain and they were referred to an oph-

thalmologist," Patterson said.

She said it only takes a few seconds of staring directly at the sun for retina damage.

Other signs to look out for dark spots in the center of vision and cloudiness.

People experiencing those symptoms should get checked right away with a thorough eye exam using a slit lamp, and visit an ophthalmologist.

(Source: wcyb.com)

Quake, flood, subsidence pose great risks to Tehran: official

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Earthquakes, flooding, and land subsidence are the three biggest threats to Tehran and the urban management should prioritize plans to cope with critical situations, an official with the National Disaster Management Organization said.

Reinforcement of buildings, especially in old urban structures, should be paid special attention in this regard, ISNA quoted Mohammad-Farid Latifi as saying.

The municipality should put restrictions on building construction near watercourses and the city council should have control over such operations, he added.

The issue of subsidence, particularly in highlands is of vital importance, he said, explaining that drilling subway tunnels partially accounts for land subsidence and drilling unauthorized wells should be dealt with. Meanwhile, demographic factors could increase the risk of disasters in Tehran, he concluded.

First Announcement



N.I.O.C
1396.2359



National Iranian Drilling Company

Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First Publish/Seconed Publish)					
One-Stage(compressed)					
TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO
Euro	Rial				
30,365	1,180,000,000	23,580,194,291	PART FOR CORE BARREL ADJUSTABLE HEAD 4-3/4"X 2-5/8", HEAVY DUTY:XO	1/497/465	Tender No.:FP/23-96/035 Indent No.:9445035
					No 1

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

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

B) Preparation of tender documents:
Purchasing of documents:
In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.
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 be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign 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 ducments(B) along with qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document recived deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.
Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) Tender Guarantee:
Type of guarantee:
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activities licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.
Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.
More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. WWW.NIDC.IR
Foreign Procurement Dept
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N. Korea fires several short-range missiles as S. Korea, U.S. conduct drills

North Korea fired several short-range missiles into the sea off its east coast early on Saturday, South Korea and the United States military said, as the two allies conducted annual joint military drills that the North denounces as preparation for war.

The U.S. military's Pacific Command said it had detected three short-range ballistic missiles, fired over a 20 minute period.

One appeared to have blown up almost immediately while two flew about 250 km (155 miles) in a northeasterly direction, Pacific Command said, revising an earlier assessment that two of the missiles had failed in flight.

The test came just days after senior U.S. officials praised North Korea and Leader Kim Jong Un for showing restraint in not firing any missiles since late July.

The South Korean Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said the projectiles were launched from the North's eastern Kangwon province into the sea.

Later on Saturday, the South Korean Presidential Blue House said the North may have fired an upgraded 300-mm caliber multiple rocket launcher but the military was still analyzing the precise details of the projectiles.

Pacific Command said the missiles did not pose a threat to the U.S. mainland or to the Pacific territory of Guam, which North Korea had threatened earlier this month to surround in a "sea of fire."

Tensions had eased somewhat since a harsh exchange of words between Pyongyang and Washington after U.S. President Donald Trump had warned North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un he would face "fire and fury" if he threatened the United States.

North Korea's last missile test on July 28 was for an intercontinental ballistic



missile designed to fly 10,000 km (6,200 miles). That would put parts of the U.S. mainland within reach and prompted heated exchanges that raised fears of a new conflict on the peninsula.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said the missiles did not reach its territory or exclusive economic zone and did not pose a threat to Japan's safety.

U.S.-S. Korea Military drills

Meantime, the South Korean and U.S. militaries are in the midst of the annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian drills involving computer simulations of a war to test readiness and run until Aug. 31.

The region where the missiles were launched, Kittaeryong, is a known military test site frequently used by the North for short-range missile drills, said Kim Dong-yub, a military expert at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies in Seoul.

The United States and South Korea are technically still at war with the North

since the July ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) test.

Tillerson had said he hoped that the lack of missile launches or other "provocative acts" by Pyongyang could mean a path could be opening for dialog "some-time in the near future."

Trump also expressed optimism earlier this week about a possible improvement in relations. "I respect the fact that he is starting to respect us," Trump said of Kim.

North Korea's state media reported on Saturday that Kim had guided a contest of amphibious landing and aerial strike by its army against targets modeled after South Korean islands near the sea border on the west coast.

The official KCNA news agency quoted Kim as telling its Army that it "should think of mercilessly wiping out the enemy with arms only and occupying Seoul at one go and the southern half of Korea."

A new poster on a North Korean propaganda website on Saturday showed a missile dealing "a retaliatory strike of justice" against the U.S. mainland, threatening to "wipe out the United States, the source of evil, without a trace."

On Wednesday, Kim ordered the production of more rocket engines and missile warheads during a visit to a facility associated with North Korea's ballistic missile program.

Diagrams and what appeared to be missile parts shown in photographs published in the North's state media suggested Pyongyang was pressing ahead with building a longer-range ballistic missile that could potentially reach any part of the U.S. mainland including Washington.

(Source: Reuters)

Hurricane Harvey makes landfall in Texas as category 4

Hurricane Harvey settled over southeast Texas early on Saturday, lashing the state's Gulf Coast with damaging winds and dumping torrents of rain over hundreds of miles of coastline that braced for what forecasters predicted would be life-threatening storm surges — basically walls of water moving inland.

The fiercest hurricane to hit the United States in more than a decade made landfall on Friday night about 30 miles (48 kilometers) northeast of Corpus Christi as a Category 4 storm with 130 mph (209 kph) winds. It gradually weakened over the next several hours and the National Hurricane Center said that by 5 a.m. Saturday Harvey was downgraded to a Category 1 — still sustaining winds of 90 mph (144 kph).

It had already dumped more than 9 inches (228.6 millimeters) of rain in the South Texas city of Victoria and had knocked out power to more than 200,000 customers. Harvey's approach sent tens of thousands of residents fleeing inland, hoping to escape the wrath of a menacing storm that threatens not only the coast but a wide swath of Texas that is home to oil refineries, chemical plants and dangerously flood-prone Houston, the nation's fourth-largest city.

No deaths were immediately confirmed in the hours after Harvey's arrival, but officials noted emergency crews couldn't get out in many places due to high winds. Melissa Munguia, deputy emergency management coordinator in Nueces County, which includes Corpus Christi, said early Saturday that it could be hours before crews could fully assess the damage in coastal communities.

State officials said they had no count on how many people actually left their homes.

The storm posed the first major emergency management test of President Donald Trump's administration. The president was expected to receive briefings during the weekend at Camp David, and signed a federal disaster declaration for coastal counties Friday night.

The last Category 4 storm to hit the U.S. was Hurricane Charley in August 2004 in Florida. Superstorm Sandy, which pummeled New York and New Jersey in 2012, never had the high winds and had lost tropical status by the time it struck. But it was devastating without formally being called a major hurricane.

Harvey is the first significant hurricane to hit Texas since Ike in September 2008 brought winds of 110 mph



(177 kph) to the Galveston and Houston areas, inflicting \$22 billion in damage.

It's taking aim at the same vicinity as Carla, which had wind gusts estimated at 175 mph and inflicted more than \$300 million in damage. The storm killed 34 people and forced about 250,000 people to evacuate.

(Source: AP)

Organizers cancel far-right rally in San Francisco

Organizers of a far-right rally set for Saturday in San Francisco said they have cancelled the event over fear of a "huge riot."

Joey Gibson, leader of the group Patriot Prayer, said on Friday that members had been in contact with police and decided tomorrow's event "seems like a set up."

"It doesn't look safe, a lot of lives are going to be in danger," he said in a Facebook video. "In our opinion, it seems it would have been a huge riot."

He blamed local politicians and the media for drumming up fears by "saying that we are white supremacists."

The United States remains on edge after a white supremacist mowed down crowds of anti-racist protesters, killing at least one, at a rally in Charlottesville on

August 12.

Earlier in a written statement, Nancy Pelosi, the U.S. House Democratic leader, had condemned the planned Patriot Prayer gathering as a dangerous "white supremacist rally."

Organizers said they would instead hold a press conference at the liberal city's Alamo Square Park at 2:00 pm (21:00 GMT).

However, San Francisco's mayor said he did not trust the group.

Mayor Ed Lee said that despite organizers saying it was called off, they have not cancelled the event in writing so the city was proceeding as though it was still happening.

"We don't trust this group. I never



have from the beginning," Lee said, as he urged people not to show up at the news conference the group plans to hold instead of the rally.

No permits had been requested or

granted for the press conference location.

"Public safety is always our top priority. We are prepared for contingencies and spontaneous events," Lee said.

A "No to Marxism in America" rally in neighboring Berkeley planned for Sunday was also up in the air, with organizer Amber Cummings asking people not to attend.

Police are on watch in both locales, with counter-protests still possible.

Anti-racists had planned on demonstrating against the Patriot Prayer group in the same location, Crissy Fields. Authorities had feared a clash could erupt between the two groups.

(Source: agencies)

Militants kill Indian police officer, 2 troops in southern Kashmir: police

Three Indian troops have been killed after several militants launched an attack against a military base in Indian-controlled Kashmir, police say.

An unspecified number of heavily-armed militants carried out a pre-dawn attack against a police headquarters in the southern district of Pulwama in the restive Kashmir valley on Saturday, killing a police officer and fatally injuring two paramilitary troops, police said in a statement.

It said the militants lobbed grenades and fired automatic assault rifles in an attempt to storm the base but faced heavy resistance from police and troops, adding that one of the militants managed to enter the government compound but was fatally wounded by police gunfire.

At least six police personnel and paramilitary troops also sustained injuries by the militants' indiscriminate firing during the clashes, the statement said.

Director General of Police S.P Vaid said the district

headquarters also housed families of some officers but "we are evacuating the families from there."

Police also said the exact number of militants, who were holding up in the compound, was not immediately known.

The so-called Jaish-e-Mohammad militant group, which is based in Pakistan, has reportedly claimed responsibility for the deadly assault.

Back in April, suspected militants also attacked a military base in Kupwara town near the Line of Control (LoC), a de facto borderline that divides the disputed Kashmir region between India and Pakistan, killing three Indian soldiers.

Last September, however, at least 18 Indian army personnel were killed, when a group of militants stormed a police complex in the town of Uri, some 10 kilometers east of the LoC. The assault is considered as one of the deadliest attacks against the Indian police in the Himalayan region, which is perceived as one of the world's most dangerous potential flash points.

India regularly accuses Pakistan of arming and training militants and pushing them across the restive frontier in an attempt to launch attacks on Indian forces. Pakistan strongly denies the allegation.

India has already deployed some 500,000 soldiers to the disputed region to further boost the security of the borderline and suppress pro-independence demonstrations in its share of Kashmir, where anti-India sentiments are high.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan but claimed in full by both since the two partitioned and gained independence from Britain in 1947. Militant groups have also for decades been fighting for independence or a merger with Pakistan.

The two countries have fought three wars over the disputed territory. Despite a ceasefire agreement that was reached in November 2003, sporadic skirmishes continue in Kashmir.

(Source: Press TV)

No military action against Venezuela soon: McMaster

White House National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster has said that the administration of the United States President Donald Trump is not planning any "military actions" against Venezuela "in the near future."

"Obviously, all our decisions would be made in conjunction with our partners in the region," McMaster told reporters on Friday afternoon during a news conference. "No military actions are anticipated in the near future."

Earlier this month, Trump said he might order military action against Venezuela, saying, "We have many options for Venezuela, including a possible military option, if necessary."

But, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence said on Wednesday the United States will use "economic and diplomatic power" to restore democracy in Venezuela.

On Friday, the United States imposed potentially hard-hitting economic sanctions on Venezuela, barring banks from any new financial dealings with the government or state-run oil company PDVSA. The White House announced that Trump had signed an executive order "imposing strong, new financial sanctions" on the government of Venezuela.

McMaster and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Friday briefed reporters on new economic sanctions the Trump administration has imposed against Venezuela following the oil-rich nation's election of the new assembly tasked with re-writing the constitution.

(Source: Press TV)

Pentagon's concealment of total troops in war zones under fire

Meanwhile, media reports from leaked sources say the U.S. already has as many as 12,000 troops in Afghanistan, significantly higher than its 8,400-person cap.

If President Donald Trump deploys 3,900 additional troops, as reports say, the total will be nearly double the current public number.

In Iraq, where the government faces political opposition to a large U.S. troops presence in the country, the 5,200 troop figure the Pentagon uses in public is a fictitious number.

In fact, according to recent reports, more than 7,000 U.S. troops are in Iraq.

Elsewhere in Syria, the official 503 U.S. troop figure covers special operations units. Hundreds of more troops, who support them and their local allies, which include Army Rangers and Marines who are repeatedly seen in photographs taken by reporters, remain to be unaccounted.

(Source: agencies)

Afghanistan: Bombers, gunmen attack Shia mosque in Kabul

A suicide bombing followed by gunfire as Shia Muslims gathered for Friday prayers at a mosque in Kabul killed at least 28 people, with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group claiming responsibility.

Mohammad Salim Rasouli, the chief of Kabul's hospitals, announced the new death toll on Saturday, as burials began. He said at least 50 people were injured.

Wailing mourners gathered at the mosque on Saturday to lay the bodies of the dead side by side in graves.

Four hours of gunfire, explosions

After the blast at the Imam Zaman mosque in Afghan capital's Qala-Najara neighborhood, gunmen stormed in and began shooting.

Terrified worshippers endured about four harrowing hours of gunfire and explosions during the afternoon before the four attackers were killed.

The cleric who was performing the prayers was among the dead, said Mir Hussain Nasiri, a member of Afghanistan's Shia clerical council.

The mosque is large and can accommodate up to 1,000 people.

Police made an attempt to enter the mosque but withdrew after one of the attackers set off an explosion, said police official Mohammad Sadiq Muradi.

ISIL's affiliate in Afghanistan claimed responsibility. ISIL-linked Aamaq website said on Friday two of its fighters carried out the assault. It did not give further details.

The attack was the latest by ISIL to hit the Afghan capital. Last month it hit the Iraqi embassy in Kabul and afterwards issued a warning to all Shia in Afghanistan, saying its cadres would attack Shia places of worship.

Within days of the embassy attack, ISIL also took responsibility for a suicide assault on a Shia mosque in western Herat province that killed 32 people.

(Source: agencies)

Buhari's unconvincing return from medical leave

That a president could be away from work for that long, in the first place, is one of the many blemishes of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). Buhari came to power in 2015 on the back of a reputation for integrity and incorruptibility. While the latter has never been in doubt, this is the time he must prove the former. He was on medical leave for 153 of the first 231 days of the year - that's 66 percent of the year! - and his return has so far been unconvincing.

Buhari's stay in office or resignation is simply an integrity question - and integrity is personal, not constitutional. Unfortunately, no one other than the president, based on medical advice, knows if his body is able to withstand the rigor of his office. Buhari reserves the right to treat himself and recover fully but the country shouldn't be held to ransom. Nigeria deserves a substantive president - not just in name but also in practice.

(Source: Aljazeera)

Sebastian Vettel extends Ferrari contract until 2020

Sebastian Vettel has signed a new three-year deal to stay at Ferrari until the end of the 2020 season.

The news was confirmed ahead of qualifying for the Belgian Grand Prix – directly contradicting Vettel's insistence that there would be no news about his future in Spa this weekend or at Monza next week.

The 30-year-old German, who was due to be out of contract at the end of the season, had told Sportsmail on Thursday: 'The main focus is on the race and that will be the same next week, so I don't expect news within the next two weeks.'

He follows team mate Kimi Raikkonen in committing his future to Ferrari, after the Finn extended his stay by another year earlier this week.

Vettel's decision to stay where he is would appear to end any possibility of Lewis Hamilton going to Ferrari.

The four-time champion had also been of interest to Mercedes, with Valtteri Bottas also out of contract at the end of the year. However, it is expected they will hand Bottas a new deal.

With Daniel Ricciardo and Max Verstappen also set to remain at Red Bull, it looks as if the top three teams head into next season with unchanged line-ups.

(Source: Eurosport)

'Hacked' Real Madrid Twitter account announces Messi signing

Real Madrid's official Twitter account seems to have been hacked, after a post welcoming Lionel Messi to the club appeared on their feed.

Just days after Barcelona's account was taken over by hackers OurMine, which announced Paris Saint Germain's Angel Di Maria had joined the club as a hoax, the group was at it again, this time on the Champions League winners' account.

At 5.30am BST, accompanied by a video of Messi scoring for Barcelona against Real Madrid, a post on Real's Twitter said: 'Benvingut Messi! ¡Bienvenido Messi! Welcome Messi! Bienvenue Messi! #Messi.'

The group, which has hacked a series of high-profile accounts over the past 12 months, then followed it up with a series of tweets claiming responsibility for the hacking.

The post went viral, with over 27,000 retweets in the first 45 minutes of it being up.

(Source: PA Sport)

Zidane has no doubts over Ronaldo's Madrid future

Zinedine Zidane insists Cristiano Ronaldo is not looking to leave Real Madrid but would not be drawn on the prospect of the four-time Ballon d'Or winner signing a new contract.

Ronaldo's future with the Spanish and European champions has been the subject of speculation since Spanish prosecutors filed a complaint in June that alleged he evaded €14.7million in taxes relating to his image rights between 2011 and 2014.

Before and during the subsequent court proceedings, Ronaldo has denied any wrongdoing, while his start to the season has been interrupted by a five-match ban for pushing the referee after being sent off in Madrid's Supercopa de Espana win at Barcelona.

Amid reports this week that the 32-year-old wants a new contract at Madrid to take his earnings above what Neymar and Lionel Messi earn at Paris Saint-Germain and Barcelona respectively, club captain Sergio Ramos said "the best players in the world should be the best paid".

Speaking ahead of Sunday's LaLiga home game against Valencia, Zidane refused to be drawn on such economics but has no doubt over his star forward's future plans.

"I don't talk about money here. This is an issue for Cristiano and the club, not for me," he said, before addressing whether he feared a Ronaldo departure.

"No, not at all. There has been a lot of talk but no substance. Cristiano is here and he's not going to leave.

"This is his club, his city, his team and I think he's very happy to be here and with everything he's got here.

"I have no doubts when it comes to that."
PSG are now viewed as the frontrunners for Monaco striker Kylian Mbappe and, despite Ronaldo's present absence, Zidane seemingly ruled Madrid out of a "Galactico" swoop for the teenager.

(Source: FourFourTwo)

FIFA to launch 'Super Club World Cup'?

FIFA will reportedly replace the Confederations Cup in 2021 with a new Club World Cup in China, consisting of 24 teams.

According to Mundo Deportivo and Gazzetta dello Sport, the tournament will be played in the second half of June every four years, in place of the Confederations Cup.

It would be marketed as a club version of the World Cup, while teams would qualify through their confederation competitions.

The 24 sides in this 'Super Club World Cup' would be distributed in eight groups of three, the winners of which would reach the knockout stages.

In principle, there would be 12 European clubs, five South American, two African, two Asian and two North American.

A solution is also being sought for Oceania to have a representative, with a playoff against a team from another confederation being speculated.

The 12 European clubs would be the four preceding winners of the Champions League, the four preceding finalists and the four others with the best UEFA coefficient.

However, it remains to be seen whether the format would affect the current Club World Cup, which is contested at the end of each year between the winners of six confederation competitions and a club representing the host nation.

The Confederations Cup, meanwhile, is essentially an international edition of the Club World Cup and held every year before a World Cup.

(Source: Football-Espana)

UEFA chief vows to enforce FFP rules: 'We can't be a tiger without teeth'

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin gave the strongest indication yet that his organisation was ready to "severely" punish clubs who violate Financial Fair Play (FFP) regulations.

"I am very serious, you will see," he said on Friday, speaking to a group of journalists the day after the UEFA Champions League draw. "We will try to help [the clubs respect the rules]. We will try to advise them [on legal points related to FFP]. But [if they don't comply] we will punish. And we will punish severely."

The issue has come to the fore during a summer that has seen Paris Saint-Germain smash the world transfer record to acquire Barcelona's Brazilian striker Neymar in a deal worth €222 million (\$264.5m).

PSG were found to be in breach of FFP regulations four years ago and sanctioned by UEFA with a fine, as well as squad and spending restrictions. The club is owned by a Qatari sovereign fund and is heavily reliant on sponsorship from Qatari entities.

"I am not talking about PSG. I am talking about every club in Europe. We are monitoring the situation, the transfer window is not closed yet. Trust me, we're working on it," Ceferin said, adding that, in any case, club spending this summer would be subject to the FFP assessment process, which looks at spending over a three year period.

The earliest indication of whether a club breached FFP rules wouldn't arrive until the autumn of 2018 and the earliest sanctions could be imposed would be for the 2018-19 seasons.

"It's impossible to say anything [about a specific club] until our team finishes [their audit]," he said. "It would not be fair to say anything at this moment, it would be like a judge deciding the verdict before the trial is finished."

As to the possibility, raised by some, that clubs who breach FFP might get off lightly, Ceferin was adamant.

"We have to follow the rules," he added. "Otherwise, it's better if we leave. Just close the door and go home if we



don't respect our own regulations. I said it yesterday [in conversation with football officials] many times. We can't be a tiger without teeth."

During the wide-ranging interview, Ceferin also lamented the growing polarization in the world game, echoing remarks he had made in the spring, when he said "we can not allow the greatness of some to overshadow and drown out [others]. If we allow gaps [between rich and poor] to become too great, we will be neglecting those who have no opportunity."

Asked if he still felt that way, Ceferin said: "I think everybody knows we have to do something, we have to react. Even the big [clubs] agree. We will not [eliminate] the gap. But let's stop if from growing. Or, at least, stop it growing so quickly."

Without discussing specific details, Ceferin raised the possibility of using both "sporting measures" — such as limiting squad sizes and the number of players a club could loan out — and tools such as salary caps or luxury taxes to address the issue.

(Source: ESPN)

Mourinho tells Zlatan he will not be first choice at Manchester United

Zlatan Ibrahimovic's return to Manchester United came with a warning as Jose Mourinho told the striker to forget about being an automatic first choice.

Ibrahimovic signed a deal until the summer on significantly reduced wages, with greater emphasis placed on appearance bonuses.

Mourinho will include the Swede in his 25-man Champions League squad next week in the unlikely event of a recovery from the cruciate knee ligament injury he suffered in April.

But Ibrahimovic, who hit 28 goals last year, might be playing second fiddle behind both Romelu Lukaku and Marcus Rashford when he returns after Christmas.

"Zlatan knows me. And he knows that I play the players that I think are the best for the team," Mourinho said on Friday.

"If he comes here and he proves that he is the best, he plays. If the other ones don't give him a chance to prove that, that's life. I always try to be honest with my players. Maybe sometimes I don't do the correct things. But I always try."

"Zlatan is going to arrive into a

made team, mid-season with the team playing in a certain way and with players having what I call the functional links in the dynamic of the team. We are going to be a better squad. He is one more option, one more player that can play (as a) No 9 or 10.

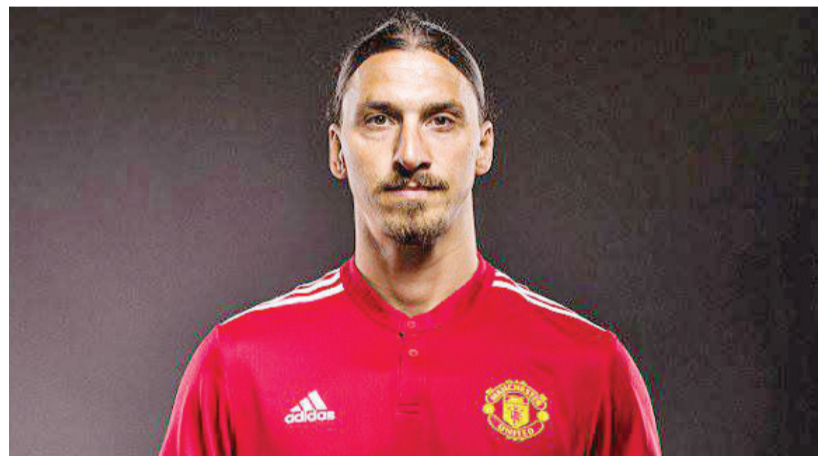
"Probably, in January, I would have been knocking on Ed Woodward's door asking for a striker and (now) I don't need to. I have one of the best in the world."

Mourinho, who admitted United's transfer business is finished after missing out on Inter Milan's Ivan Perisic, suggested the club were almost duty bound to offer Ibrahimovic fresh terms.

"A club like United, in my opinion, has to show how big it is in the details," he added. "This is a big detail. A player who gets injured in a United shirt, fighting for United, the club has to be there for him."

Mourinho claimed he holds no hope of the 35-year-old starring in the Champions League group stages, where United will face Basel, CSKA Moscow and Benfica, a draw of which he is wary.

(Source: Daily Mail)



Conte: I can't win the title with only 11 players

Chelsea boss Antonio Conte has turned up the heat on the club's board to bring in reinforcements by warning it will be 'impossible' to navigate four competitions using only '11 or 13 players.'

Chelsea have already spent in excess of £120m this summer on Antonio Rudiger, Tiemoue Bakayoko and Alvaro Morata, but having lost John Terry and Nemanja Matic and with Diego Costa absent without leave, Conte is determined to bolster his squad.

Chelsea technical director Michael Emenalo and director Marina Granovskaia now have six days to ensure the strife of this summer is left behind when the transfer window closes on Thursday.

They are continuing to pursue deals for Arsenal's Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, Leicester's Danny Drinkwater and Everton's Ross Barkley, while Southampton's Cedric Soares remains an option.

Conte, who benefited from the club's absence from European competition last season, warned that signings are needed as September brings seven fixtures in four competitions.

Conte said: "I hope after the interna-

tional break to have the whole team. We play seven games in a month, and I need to rotate players. If someone is thinking that I can use only 11 players or 13 players, it's impossible. Impossible. I have to rotate. We must be ready to face this situation."

"We are trying to strengthen our squad and, if we are in the transfer market, that means we need to improve the squad."

Conte once again seemed downcast compared to the upbeat character of last season. When asked by a reporter whether he is feeling 'grumpy', Conte insisted he is more relaxed than this time last year.

He did not deny, however, that there has been tension behind the scenes despite signing a new two-year deal this summer.

"It's normal," Conte said. "When you are at a great team, this is normal. In Italy, at a club like Juventus or Inter Milan, it's the same."

"Maybe this season will be tougher than last season for many reasons. We must be ready." Conte dropped his guard briefly, breaking into a smile as he admitted he only relaxed last season after winning the Premier League.

(Source: Mirror)



Federer favorite as absentees offer hope to young guns

An injury-ravaged U.S. Open men's draw offers the best opportunity yet for a young pretender to claim a maiden grand slam crown but in this most retro of seasons Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal will look to turn back time in New York.

With the physical demands of modern-day tennis taking its toll the tournament will start without four of the top 11 in the ATP rankings including defending champion Stan Wawrinka who ended his season early with a knee injury.

Twice champion Novak Djokovic (elbow), 2014 runner-up Kei Nishikori (wrist) and Milos Raonic (wrist) are also absent while 2012 champion Andy Murray and 2014 winner Marin Cilic have been sidelined since Wimbledon by injuries.

Federer, looking to win three grand slam titles in the same year for the first time since 2007, withdrew from Cincinnati with a back niggle and while Nadal, who returned this week to world number one, is fit, his form of late has been patchy.

All the more reason that Alexander Zverev, Dominic Thiem and Nick Kyrgios — to name but three — will be relishing seizing a golden opportunity in the Big Apple.

Of those Germany's 20-year-old Zverev looks the best bet to shake it up after rising to sixth in the world after beating Federer in the Rogers Cup in Montreal — the biggest title so far for the six-foot-six-inch powerhouse.



"Is Zverev ready to step up best of five?" four-times Flushing Meadows champion John McEnroe, part of ESPN's commentary team, said this week.

"If he is he's got a great chance to step forward and get to the final, at least the semis."

Unpredictable Australian Kyrgios has shown signs of delivering on his potential this year, most recently when beating Nadal in the quarter-finals in Cincinnati before losing to Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov, another U.S. Open title candidate, in the final.

"You can say he's slowly hopefully but surely going in the right direction," McEnroe said of the 22-year-old Kyrgios.

Austrian Thiem appears to have left his best tennis on the European clay, struggling on the North American hardcourts.

Jack Sock, John Isner and Sam Querrey will lead the American challenge in the men's tournament — hoping to end a six-year wait for a men's quarter-finalist for the host nation.

"I don't see any of them winning it. I see all of them being dangerous," McEnroe said.

The 36-year-old Federer, seeded third, will be most people's title pick having produced a stunning year since returning from a six-month lay-off in January — compiling a 35-3 record.

Having claimed a first Australian Open title for seven years, a first Wimbledon title for five years he could surpass even those feats with a first U.S. Open since 2008 and take his grand slam tally to a record-extending 20.

"At the moment we are assuming that Roger is going to pull the rabbit out of the hat again," McEnroe said.

"If Roger wins this, this will be one of the great stories in the last 50 years or ever."

Should either the Swiss or French Open champion Nadal, twice a champion in New York, prevail it would be the first time since 2010 that the duo have scooped all of the year's majors.

(Source: Reuters)

We want to keep our unbeaten streak against S. Korea: Carlos Queiroz

S P O R T S Iran national football team coach Carlos Queiroz says that they are going to keep their unbeaten streak against South Korea.

Team Melli have been scheduled to face South Korea at Seoul World Cup Stadium on Thursday.

The Taeguk Warriors have a poor record against Iran of late, losing their last four meetings 1-0.

Iran, who have already booked their berth in the 2018 World Cup in Russia, will also play Syria five days later in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

"South Korea are one of Asia's most powerful teams. It will be a good opportunity for us to learn and to continue our progress," the former Real Madrid coach told the reporters at Incheon International Airport.

"I've never lost a game to South Korea yet and we are going to keep our unbeaten record against them. We will do our best in this match," Queiroz added.

"Iran will not defend against South Korea and we will display our best performance. Team Melli have already qualified for the 2018 World Cup but we are going to defeat South Korea because I believe that the best way for learning is victory," he stated.



Iran's Mojallali wins bronze at ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships



S P O R T S Adel Mojallali from Iran claimed a bronze medal at the 2017 ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships on Saturday.

The Persian finished in third place at the C1 men's 200m with a time of 38.605 seconds. Gold medal went to Belarus' Artsem Kozyr, who posted a time of 38.161 to ensure top honors.

Georgian Zaza Nadiradze took the silver, clocking 38.439.

The 2017 edition of the Canoe Sprint World Championships began Aug. 23 in Racice, Czech Republic.

The event also features the new Paralympic sport paracanoe which made its debut at the Canoe Sprint World Championships in 2009 and has remained on the championship program ever since.

Competition in Racice concludes on Aug. 27.

Hassan Yazdani snatches gold medal at Paris World Championships



S P O R T S Iran's Hassan Yazdani Charati claimed a gold medal on the opening day of freestyle events at the Paris 2017 Wrestling World Championships.

Yazdani, who won a gold medal in the Rio 2016 gold medalist at 74kg, defeated Boris Makoev from Slovakia 10-0 in the 86kg final match.

"I am not satisfied with my

performance in the first two matches because I was sick. Afterward, I did a better performance and I am happy I made the Iranian people happy," Yazdani said.

"I dedicate my gold to Iranian people who prayed for me. Our nation deserve the best," he added.

Vladislav Valiev from Russia and J'den Cox from the U.S. claimed the bronze medal.

S. Korea will display different style against Iran: Kim Shin-wook

South Korean striker Kim Shin-wook said the national football team is evolving with the new head coach, emphasizing that they will display a different style of football in the upcoming World Cup qualifiers.

Kim is one of the 26 players called up by head coach Shin Tae-yong for South Korea's last two matches in the final Asian qualifying round for the 2018 FIFA World Cup. South Korea will host Iran next Thursday and take on Uzbekistan five days later in Tashkent.

Kim, who returned to the national team for the first time in five months, said the national team is changing with Shin, who took the helm last month after Uli Stielike's ouster.

"The new coach is implementing a new football style," Kim said to reporters at the National Football Center in Paju, north of Seoul, where he has been training since Monday. "He emphasizes designated set-pieces and organized movements on the pitch more."

Kim, who has 10 goals in 26 matches in the K League Classic this season, is the tallest player on the roster at 196 centimeters. The Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors



striker said Shin seems to know how to utilize a target man like him. He has so far scored three goals in 37 matches for South Korea.

"It's not easy to build up the plays and organize movements in such a short period of time," he said. "But with this early call-up, we're working on everything from

build-up to pressing on the pitch."

Kim, 29, said Iran are a "smart" team, but the Taeguk Warriors can win this time at home. Since 2012, South Korea have suffered four consecutive 1-0 losses to Iran.

Iran have already qualified for the 2018 FIFA World Cup with two matches remaining. They have secured the top spot in Group A with 20 points, seven points ahead of No. 2 South Korea and eight points above No. 3 Uzbekistan. In Asia, the top two team from each group directly advance to the World Cup in Russia.

Kim said South Korea's offense will end Iran's clean sheet streak in the final round. Carlos Queiroz's side has yet to concede a goal in the final round. South Korea have netted 11 goals in the final round, most among the Group A teams, but also surrendered 10 goals, tied for the worst with Qatar.

"Iran also have their weaknesses and I think our good wingers can penetrate their defense," he said. "I think our offensive ability can unlock Iran."

(Source: Yonhap)

Lionel Messi must seek new challenge to prove greatness - Mino Raiola

Lionel Messi must leave Barcelona if he wants to prove his greatness, according to football agent Mino Raiola.

Messi, 30, has spent his entire professional career at Barca since arriving from Argentina as a teenager.

He has been named World Player of the Year on five separate occasions, but Raiola -- who represents players including Paul Pogba and Zlatan Ibrahimovic but not Messi himself -- suggested a change of scenery would benefit him.

"A player like Messi must try another experience with a different club and prove how great he is," the agent told Marca.

Raiola's comments come as the wait for Messi to sign his new contract, which the club announced earlier that summer, continues.

President Josep Maria Bartomeu said on two separate occasions that Messi had signed the extension, but was contradicted by vice-president Jordi Mestre.

It has since been confirmed that Messi has not yet signed the contract, leading to speculation that Manchester City would be willing to pay his €300 million buyout clause.

"The market as we know it no longer exists," Raiola said. "Now it is countries who are signing players, and that isn't football."

"But transfers of €200m are going to be normal from now on -- it won't be crazy to see that." Unless he signs a new deal, Messi is free to strike a pre-contract agreement with another club from Jan. 1 and move on a free transfer next summer.

Agusti Benedito, a former Barca presidential candidate who will launch a vote of no confidence against Bartomeu and his board at the beginning of September, told ESPN FC: "It's not impossible [that Messi leaves]."

"It might be impossible for him to go for €300m next week, though, because from January he's free."

"I am almost convinced that Messi, like all the players at Barca, is seeing the severity of the institutional situation at the club."

"I think Leo's waiting to see what happens with the vote of no confidence, the signings that are made, how things are going in October, November... He's going to wait and wait."

(Source: ESPN)

Hamilton equals Michael Schumacher's all-time record

Lewis Hamilton has etched his name into Formula One folklore after equalling Michael Schumacher's all-time record by securing pole position for the Belgian Grand Prix.

The triple world champion, competing here in his 200th race, delivered a dominant performance to soar to the top of the order at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit and claim the 68th pole of his glittering career.

Championship leader Sebastian Vettel, who earlier on Saturday committed his long-term future to Ferrari, will join his rival Hamilton on the front row, with the pole-sitter's Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas in third.

Hamilton has been in a buoyant mood on the sport's return to action following its summer hiatus, and the 32-year-old Englishman, as he has so often done during his decade-long career, provided the goods when it mattered the most with a record-breaking lap.

Hamilton's best time of one minute and 42.553 seconds enabled him to finish one quarter of a second clear of Vettel,

who pipped Bottas in the closing moments of the session.

F1 director Ross Brawn, the English mastermind behind Schumacher's seven championship triumphs at Benetton and then Ferrari, delivered a congratulatory message on behalf of the German's family.

Little is known of Schumacher's condition after he suffered severe head injuries following a skiing accident more than three years ago.

"They want to congratulate you on equalling Michael's record, and as Michael always said, records are there to be beaten," Brawn said.

Hamilton, who trails Vettel by 14 points in the championship, replied: "It is special. To hear the message that Ross just gave I have to say a big thank you."

"I think and pray for Michael all the time. I've had the privilege of racing with him and always admired him and still do. I'm just honoured to be up there with him now in the poles, but he will still be one of the greatest of all time."

(Source: Independent)

Iran's Naft-O-Gas beaten by Esperance Sportive de Tunis at IHF Super Globe

Debutant Naft-O-Gas-Gachsaran were defeated against Esperance Sportive de Tunis at the 2017 IHF Super Globe placement round on Saturday.

The Iranian representative lost to the African powerhouse handball team 35-28 in Doha, Qatar.

Naft-O-Gas-Gachsaran had a stronger start to the match, taking an early lead before Esperance Sportive de Tunis came back to level the score at 3:3 just before the 10-minute mark.

The score remained locked until Es Tunis created the first two-goal advantage at 8:6 in the 18th minute, after which the African team maintained firm control through to the final buzzer, increasing their advantage to a decisive seven goals.

A key to the strong game from Es Tunis was the performance of goalkeeper Ahmedamine Bedoui, who recorded a 57% save rate in the first half and finished with 46% overall. Both coaches barely changed their line-ups through the first period, at the end of which only 12 players had contributed to the score board.

Es Tunis took a four-goal lead into the half-time break, and though Gachsaran tried different tactics defensively in an effort to control the strong attack against them, the match belonged to the African team. As the last quarter of the match began, Tunis was in front 27:20 and were on their way to the 5/6 placement match.

Naft-O-Gas started the competition on Friday with a loss to Macedonian HC Vardar.

(Source: IHF)

Sterling hits late winner and sees red as City down Bournemouth

Raheem Sterling fired a stoppage time winner and was later sent off as Manchester City beat Bournemouth 2-1 at the Vitality Stadium.

Pep Guardiola made four changes to the side that drew with Everton on Monday but it was Bournemouth who started the better and took the lead with 13 minutes gone, with Charlie Daniels firing an unstoppable effort into the top corner from an acute angle.

However, City were level a matter of minutes later when Gabriel Jesus latched onto a David Silvathrough ball to slot home.

Asmir Begovic ensured the sides went to the interval all square after he saved from both Danilo and David Silva as City probed for another.

Joshua King went closest for Bournemouth in the second half but his well-struck effort came back off the bar, and the Cherries were denied their first point of the season when Sterling fired home deep into stoppage time.

Sterling jumped into the crowd as he celebrated which duly saw him receive a second yellow and his marching orders.

(Source: Eurosport)

'This is a catastrophe' - Sammer blasts Dembele for strike

Ousmane Dembele's protracted transfer from Borussia Dortmund to Barcelona finally went through on Friday, but former Bayern Munich sporting director Matthias Sammer has branded it "a catastrophe".

The talented French winger was immediately linked with a move to Camp Nou following Neymar's world-record move to Paris Saint-Germain.

Dembele did everything he could to push the deal through and was subsequently suspended by Dortmund.

He was not the only man linked with Barca, with Liverpool's Philippe Coutinho also said to be wanted by the Catalan giants, but ultimately it was the France international who succeeded in getting his move.

Barca confirmed a deal had been struck with Dortmund that will see the Bundesliga side receive €105million up front, and potentially another €42m in add-ons.

Dembele will undergo a medical on Monday before completing his switch, the 20-year-old agreeing a five-year deal.

But while some were celebrating the move, Sammer, who worked as Bayern's director of sporting operations until 2016, is outraged that Dembele's behavior has essentially been rewarded with exactly what he wanted.

"His strike brought him where he wanted," Sammer told Eurosport. "This is a catastrophe."

"In the interest of the cleanliness of football, such a behavior should not be rewarded."

(Source: Goal)

I haven't decided anything - Nainggolan makes international retirement U-turn

Radja Nainggolan has insisted he is yet to make a decision on his future with Belgium after he was quoted as saying he has retired from international football due to disagreements with coach Roberto Martinez.

The all-action midfielder is regarded as one of the best in the world in his position, but Martinez caused a shock by omitting him from his squad for upcoming World Cup qualifiers against Gibraltar and Greece.

Nainggolan then gave a fiery interview to a Belgian newspaper in which he discussed his issues with Martinez and reportedly said it "makes no sense" to keep fighting for a spot in the squad, adding he was "going to stop international football now".

But there has been another twist in the tale, with the Roma star taking to his official Twitter account on Saturday to back-track and claim he has not made a final decision.

He said: "If something official is to be said, you will hear it from me. I'm just disappointed. I have not decided anything at all."

(Source: Daily Star)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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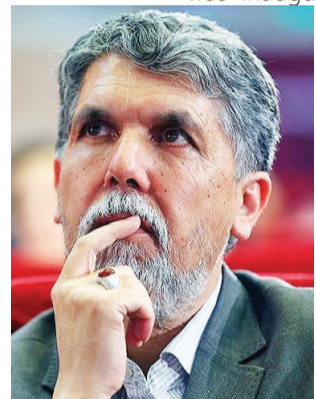
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www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
Printed at: Rooztab - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



New Iranian culture minister inaugurated

CULTURE TEHRAN — Seyyed Abbas Salehi was inaugurated as the new minister of culture and Islamic guidance during a ceremony at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Saturday.



New Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi in an undated photo

He was the deputy culture minister for cultural affairs before being selected as culture minister. First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, former culture minister Reza Salahi and a number of cultural figures attended the ceremony, which opened with a performance by the Tehran Symphony Orchestra.

Tehran to host National Festival of Youth Music

A R T TEHRAN — The 11th National Festival of Youth Music will be held at several halls in Tehran.

Over 500 solo and group performances in various genres will be staged by younger musicians during the event from August



A poster for the 11th National Festival of Youth Music

30 to September 18, the organizers announced on Saturday. In a press conference held on Saturday, veteran musician Hossein Alizadeh, who presides over the traditional section of the festival, called the event "a spiritual move toward music" that should be supported nationally.

The Iran Music Association is the main organizer of the festival, which will also showcase classical and regional performances.

Movies from Iran competing in Love Is Folly festival

A R T TEHRAN — Two Iranian films are competing in the 25th International Film Festival Love Is Folly that opened in Varna, Bulgaria on Friday.

"Melancholy" by Morteza Atashzanzam is scheduled to go on screen today while Asghar Farhadi's Oscar-winning drama "The Salesman" will be screened on September 2.



Laleh Eskandari (L) and Mohammadreza Hedayati act in a scene from "Melancholy".

"Melancholy" is about a young woman, Mina, who finally becomes pregnant after suffering several medical problems but she feels ignored by her husband, Hesam.

She finds out that Hesam is more concerned about the personal problems of his colleague Shirin, who has recently been divorced.

"The Salesman" tells the story of a young couple who move into a new flat in the center of Tehran. An incident linked to the previous tenant dramatically changes their life.

The festival will run until September 3.

Chinese translations of books by Iranian writer unveiled at Beijing fair

A R T TEHRAN — Chinese translations of Iranian writer Hushang Moradi Kermani's "The Water Urn" and "A Sweet Jam" were unveiled at the Beijing International Book Fair on Friday.

"This is a great day for me," Moradi Kermani said during an unveiling ceremony held for the book at Iran's pavilion, the Persian service of ILNS reported on Saturday.

"I am very pleased to see that my two works have been published in Chinese and they are being unveiled here," he added.

"The Water Urn" tells a heartwarming story about the daily misadventures and experiences of the village children and their beloved schoolmaster, Mr. Samadi, inside a two-room schoolhouse in mid-20th century Iran. It provides an inspiring look at provincial life in a quintessential Iranian village where survival means that all members of a community must learn to work together to achieve a common goal.

"The story is set in the village in which I spent my childhood," said Moradi Kermani, 72, who is mostly known as a teen's writer.

"It is about a severe water shortage in the village at that time," he added.

"A Sweet Jam" is about a 13-year-old boy who fails to open a jar of jam. He faces many adventures while on his way to open the jar of jam.

"This story represents the relations of various people in an urban society," Moradi Kermani said.

Iranian director Marzieh Borumand made a film of the same title based on "A Sweet Jam" in 2001.

"The Water Urn" and "A Sweet Jam" have been translated into Chinese by Elham Sadat Mirzania, the director of the Chinese Language Department at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran.



Iranian writer Hushang Moradi Kermani delivers a speech at Iran's pavilion during the 24th Beijing International Book Fair on August 26, 2017. Copies of the Chinese translation of his works "The Water Urn" and "A Sweet Jam" were unveiled at the book fair on Friday. (Photo by ISNA)

Both of the books have previously been published in several languages.

An English translation of "A Sweet Jam" by Caroline Croskery was released by the CreateSpace Independent

Publishing Platform in the United States in 2015.

Croskery is also the translator of "The Water Urn", which was published by Candle and Fog in London in 2014.

Iranian publishers visit Beijing Zhonghua Book Company

A R T TEHRAN — Eleven Iranian publishers, who are attending the 24th Beijing International Book Fair, have visited the Zhonghua Book Company in the Chinese capital, the Persian service of ILNA reported on Saturday.

A plan to edit and republish a rare version of a Chinese-Persian dictionary was discussed during the meeting, the Persian service of ILNA reported on Saturday.

They also talked about translating works by contemporary Iranian writers such as Gholam-Hossein Saedi and Sadeq Hedayat into Chinese, and publishing books on tourism and art based on mutual pacts.

The Zhonghua Book Company is a major Chinese publishing house that was founded in 1912 by a former manager of the Commercial Press, another publisher



Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing

that had been established in 1897.

Dozens of cultural organizations, publishers and writers from Iran have attended the 24th Beijing International Book Fair, which will come to an end on Sunday.

Iran is the guest of honor at the book fair, and China will attend the Tehran International Book Fair as a guest of honor in 2019.

Swedish festival to screen Iranian films

A R T TEHRAN — Three Iranian films will go on screen at the 9th Afghan International Film Festival in Stockholm, Sweden on September 9 and 10.

"Parting", a joint production of Iran and Afghanistan by Navid Mahmudi, "Overruled" by Iranian filmmakers Farnaz and Mohammadreza Jurabchian and "The Shade" by Parham Keivani will be screened during the festival.

"Parting" tells the story of teenage lovers Nabi and Fereshteh who are separated by her family's flight from Afghanistan. After years apart, Nabi decides to find Fereshteh and risk the hardships of flight and resettlement in Europe with a hope of a better life.

"Overruled" is about the lives of some young Afghan refugees in Iran. They work as ball boys in tennis clubs in Tehran, so they have learned how to play tennis. But



The problem is they are not accepted in this society in any way and will always remain as outsiders.

Leonard Bernstein project celebrates musician with call for memories

NEW YORK (Reuters) — For some, Leonard Bernstein was the person who opened up the world of classical music for the first time. Others played in his orchestras. One man remembers hearing of Bernstein's death as a 9-year-old.

Composer, conductor and teacher, Bernstein touched the lives of millions of people around the world during his 50-year career, and now they have a chance to tell their stories for generations to come.

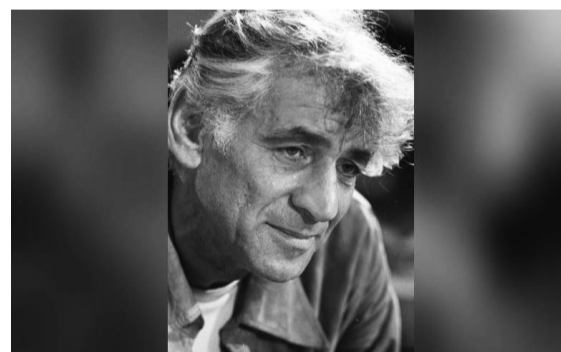
"There were so many people that were moved and inspired by Leonard Bernstein, not only in a public way but in a very personal way," said the conductor's longtime personal assistant, Craig Urquhart.

The Leonard Bernstein Memory Project invites fans, friends or just people who were influenced by his work to contribute brief anecdotes, photos or videos online.

The project is part of a two-year centenary celebration of the musician's life and work called Leonard Bernstein at 100 that starts in September and will feature more than 1,000 concerts and celebrations around the world.

"We hope to hear from people who studied with him, musicians who performed with him in orchestras," Urquhart said.

Bernstein, the longtime director of the New York Philharmonic, was known for the emotion he brought to his



American composer Leonard Bernstein is shown in this 1971 photo in rehearsal for his musical theatre work "Mass", provided August 25, 2017. (Courtesy Marion S. Trikosko/U.S. News & World Report Magazine Photograph Collection/Library of Congress/Handout via Reuters)

conducting and interpretation of classical works. He died in 1990, leaving a legacy that includes popular musicals like "West Side Story," television lectures and hundreds of recordings.

Jacob Slattery, who is building the Leonard Bernstein

Memory Project website (leonardbernstein.com/memories), calls it a "digital quilt of remembrance."

"It's a very unique thing. I can't think of other artists who have this digital memorial in the way that Leonard Bernstein will do," Slattery said.

Urquhart said Bernstein, whose Facebook page has some 320,000 followers, was happy to spend time with fans after concerts "sometimes to the chagrin of his hosts. He would stay for an hour, or an hour and a half to interact with them." One memory already submitted comes from Matt Walter in Los Angeles, who recalled his 9-year-old self seeing his mother's grief at hearing the news of Bernstein's death at age 72.

"I felt a strange and unsettling loss, like my own grandfather had died, without even knowing who the man was," Walter wrote. "Later on in life, I listened to Leonard's recordings, read his biographies, watched his Young People's concerts and lectures, and came to know and love him almost like he was a friend."

The project and the centennial celebration also aim to introduce Bernstein to people born after his death.

"There is a whole generation of people who didn't know Bernstein personally, or who never had the opportunity to hear him conduct, but their lives were affected by him even after he passed away," Urquhart said.

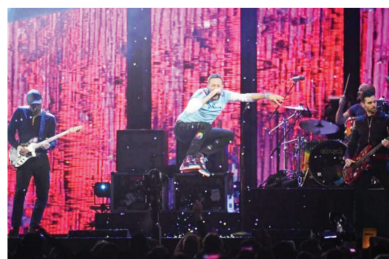
Hurricane Harvey forces Coldplay to postpone Houston show

HOUSTON (Reuters) — British rock band Coldplay was forced to postpone a concert in Houston scheduled for Friday night as the most powerful hurricane in a dozen years bore down on Texas, the band said on Friday.

Hurricane Harvey is forecast to come ashore on the southern Texas coast late on Friday. Houston is not directly in the path of the storm, but it is expected to receive up to 20 inches of rain.

"We really wanted to play tonight, but sitting here all together watching the news about the storm we feel that we can't ask anyone to put their safety at risk," the band said on Twitter. "So, sadly, we will have to postpone."

Details about rescheduling and re-funding would be published later, the band said.



Coldplay perform at the Brit Awards at the O2 Arena in London, Britain, February 22, 2017.

(Reuters/Toby Melville/File Photo)

Coldplay, which is on a U.S. tour, tweeted from Houston on Thursday night that it was in communication with local authorities and prepared to play or cancel, depending on the weather and safety.

Amazon's "The Tick" pokes fun at world of comic book superheroes

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Marvel and DC Comics superheroes may be battling for box office domination, but on the small screen, a little known blue superhero is offering up a satirical take on larger-than-life crusaders for justice.

"The Tick," a new Amazon Studios series premiering on Friday, follows the adventures of eccentric superhero The Tick, a man in a blue spandex suit with feelers sticking out of his head who has no memory of his own origins.

He and his bumbling sidekick Arthur fight incompetently against strange villains like Ramses IV, Ms. Lint, The Terror and Overkill, while encountering respected superheroes.

"It's set in the real world where superheroes exist. I'm also a superhero, but even the superheroes think I'm weird,"

actor Peter Serafinowicz said in an interview of playing The Tick.

Superheroes have saturated Hollywood in recent years, including Disney-owned Marvel's 2008 action "Iron Man" and Warner Bros rebooting the DC Universe with Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman.

On television, shows such as "Gotham," "Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D." and Netflix's "The Defenders" have offered a more in-depth take on superhero stories.

The Tick, created by cartoonist Ben Edlund in 1986, has had two previous iterations on television, in a 1994 animated series and in a 2001 live-action series. The story has "always been in dialogue with whatever has been big in superhero pop culture at the time," said actor Griffin Newman, who plays Arthur.