

Iran condemns U.S. siege of civilians in Syria **2**

Iranian economy needs local investors supersede foreigners **4**

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Parviz Tanvoli vows to publicize Tehran Peace Museum **16**

Iraq victories have astonished all: Iran



Iran says Iraq must not be divided

POLITICS TEHRAN — Expediency Council Secretary Mohsen Rezaei said on Sunday that Iran is strongly against any move to disintegrate Iraq.

"Iraq is a well-known country, a member to the United Nations and a signatory to important regional agreements and a disintegration of

the country is a grave mistake which will be harmful to the Iraqi citizens, especially in the northern parts of the country," he said in a press conference in Baghdad.

He added that disintegration of Iraq will lead to dividing up Turkey and Syria which will have consequences for the whole region. **→2**

Burma soldiers 'burning bodies of Rohingya Muslims' to conceal evidence

by staff & agencies

Soldiers and civilians in Burma are attempting to cover up the massacre of the country's Rohingya Muslim population by gathering their bodies and burning them, an advocate for the minority group has said.

Chris Lewa, director of the Ar-

akan Project, which monitors violence in Burma's Rakhine state, said her organization had documented the killing of at least 130 people in one settlement in the Rathedaung region.

She added that there were reports of three other villages where "dozens" of people had been killed. **→3**

See Iran's World Heritage sites in landscaped miniature park

By Afshin Mojlesi

TEHRAN — For ones who are always short of time but fascinated with rich Iranian cultural heritage - no matter what age they are - visiting Tehran's Miniature Garden Museum, featuring replicas of the country's most important historical landmarks and landscapes, is a must.

"The miniature park is regularly visited by tour groups of schoolchil-

dren, students, families and domestic sightseers and it's also a destination for foreign travelers more or less," said the museum director Seyyed Pejman Bazargani in an interview with the Tehran Times on Monday.

Spanning 2.9 hectares in area, Miniature Garden Museum was launched in 2014 by the Tehran Parks & Green Space Organization of the Tehran Municipality. **→10**

PERSPECTIVE
By M.A.Saki
 Deputy editor-in-chief

Why is UN Security Council silent on genocide in Myanmar?

Reports of violence against the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar are horrific. The minority group is being brutalized at the hands of military and civilians as well.

The reports by rights groups and media outlets show that an ethnic cleansing is happening against the Rohingya.

According to the Independent, an advocate for the minority group has said soldiers and civilians in Myanmar are attempting to cover up the massacre of Rohingya population by gathering their bodies and burning them.

The Guardian also reported on Monday that Myanmar has blocked all UN aid agencies from delivering vital supplies of food, water and medicine to thousands of desperate civilians caught in the bloody conflict.

Now the question is why the United Nations Security Council is silent about this ongoing tragedy which its wounds open once in a while. If such a disaster was happening in a Middle Eastern country except Israel the Security Council would have even held an emergency meeting and even proposed military action against that country and immediately introduced sanctions against it.

However, it seems that despicable violence against the minority group in the-not-so-important country of Myanmar does not deserve the attention of great powers.

The brutality against the Rohingya is similar to what happened to the Bosnian people at the hands of extremist Serbs. At that time it was said that the Bosnian massacre is a shame on the forehead of the human being. However, today the Security Council does not even issue a statement to condemn the violence against civilians or even send a delegation to Myanmar to hold talks with officials to assess the situation.

The international community should expect that inaction to prevent such savage acts some Rohingya youth would become potential terrorists.

Budget deficit could delay Lake Urmia's revival: environment chief

By Maryam Qarehgozlou

TEHRAN — Lake Urmia is already saved from total dryness, however, budget deficit might postpone the lake's full restoration, the chief of the Department of Environment said on Monday.

"Currently full restoration of the lake depends on the budget the government allocates to the revival projects," Isa Kalantari said during his first press conference after taking on the position. "The effective measures needed to be taken to restore the lake are clear, but the later the budget is allocated the longer it takes the lake to fully revive."

Full restoration of the lake requires an annual budget of 20 trillion rials (nearly \$500 million), Kalantari said, regretting, "right now we are short of some 17 trillion rials (nearly \$425 million) per annum."

Kalantari who is also the head of Lake Urmia

restoration program explained that so far some 25 trillion rials (nearly \$625 million) is spent on lake restoration projects and some additional 200 trillion rials (nearly \$5 billion) is required to bring the lake back to its former glory.

In 1997 the volume of water at the lake measured at 30 billion cubic meters which dramatically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013 and again rose to 2.5 billion cubic meters in 2017, Lewis explained showing a table to the conference.

With a surface area of approximately 5,200 square kilometers, Lake Urmia in northwest Iran, was once the largest lake in the Middle East and the sixth-largest saltwater lake on Earth, but is facing a dramatic decline for some years now.

Old and inefficient irrigation methods, depleting ground water resources within the lake watershed, long periods of drought,

damming rivers which were supposed to flow into the lake and on top of that mismanagement and inappropriate measures intensified the lake's status over time.

The lake which was a major tourist attraction and a home to hundreds of thousands of migratory birds has shrunk substantially. In 1997 the volume of water at the lake measured at 30 billion cubic meters which dramatically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013 and while the lake had a surface area of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 the surface shrunk to one tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013.

However by planning restoration programs the volume of water rose to 2.5 billion cubic meters in 2017 and the surface area has now restored to almost half of the original amount measuring at 2,300 square kilometers.

Rouhancare: Iranian president's unsung domestic success

When Ali's father-in-law had a stroke in the Iranian city of Shiraz last year, the 67-year-old shopkeeper was rushed to Namazi hospital, where he received treatment for 20 days, including six days in intensive care.

While his father-in-law recovered, Ali turned his mind to how he would pay for the care. He borrowed money to build up a 100m rials (£2,000) reserve. But when he

picked up the bill, it amounted to just 5.8m rials (£116).

"We thought they may have forgotten to add a zero," he told the Guardian. "I looked at my brother-in-law, and we laughed. This was considerably less, it was almost nothing."

Before he fell ill, Ali's father-in-law had joined the healthcare program brought in during President Hassan Rouhani's first term, a scheme announced in 2014 and nicknamed

Rouhancare, in apparent homage to Obamacare, Barack Obama's patient protection and affordable care act. It meant that Ali and his family were only expected to pay a fraction of the total 128m rials.

In the course of the past three years, Rouhani's health ministry has insured nearly 11 million Iranians, meaning that those who were not previously covered, like the unemployed or the poor, are now protected. **→9**



Buffalos, children's playmates

Gavmish Abad (literally translated as the land of buffalos) is located on the outskirts of Karun county, southwestern Khuzestan province, where the life of the locals is mingled with the Karun River and buffaloes.

Drop of water level and the entry of various pollutants into the river have made the life of buffaloes tough as for the locals, but it won't wipe away laughter off their children's face.

'Syrian army to reach Dayr al-Zawr in 48 hours'

The governor of the Daesh (ISIL)-held province of Dayr al-Zawr has said that the Syrian army will reach the city within the next 48 hours.

"The heroes of the army will arrive at Dayr al-Zawr in 24-48 hours at the most," said Mohammed Ibrahim Samra on Sunday.

According to the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the army has reached the border of the besieged garrison's camp on the western edge of the city.

It added that intense fighting has broken out between the Daesh terrorists and the newly-arrived forces who are trying to link up with their besieged allies in the eastern Syrian city, which has been held by the terrorists since 2014.

According to Syrian military sources, a large number of terrorists have been killed during the operations which began earlier in the day.

"We carried out at dawn a successful raid against one of Daesh terrorists' barricades in the direction of the Water Resources area with several bombs when we approached the area, killing all the terrorists at the site," said one of the troops engaged in the operations.

Earlier in the day, a high-ranking American military commander said the US-backed militia from the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) will take part in the operation to retake the troubled eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr from the extremists.

In the past few months, Daesh has suffered multiple defeats across Syria, notably in the city of Raqqa, its de facto capital in the Arab country. It has also been heavily battered in neighboring Iraq, particularly by losing its main Iraqi base of Mosul in July.

Syria has been fighting different foreign-sponsored militant and terrorist groups since March 2011. The Damascus government has repeatedly blamed certain countries for the spread of the devastating militancy.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iranian, Turkish FM's discuss violence against Rohingya

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu have exchanged views about the ongoing violence targeting the persecuted Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar's troubled Rakhine State.

In a phone conversation on Monday, the two sides talked about possible measures to help the Rohingya.

The violence erupted in Myanmar's Rakhine state on August 25 when government forces launched attacks against the Rohingya Muslim community. Ever since, tens of thousands of the Muslim minority fled to Bangladesh.



Iran's military unveils drone base

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian military has unveiled an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) base for its fleet of drones, Press TV reported.

Head of the Khatam al-Anbiya Air Defense Base Farzad Esmaili inaugurated the airstrip on Sunday, as the headquarters released a video of UAVs parked on the tarmac at the undisclosed site.

Esmaili described the country's drone capabilities "an award for the heroic nation," noting that such capabilities send a warning to the enemies.

"Maybe, the enemy thinks it can attack us. But the main question is how it is supposed to escape unscathed," he said.



Putin's special envoy in Tehran to discuss Syrian crisis

POLITICS TEHRAN — Alexander Lavrentiev, President Putin's special envoy for Syria, has arrived in Tehran to hold talks with top Iranian officials about regional developments, especially Syria, Fars news agency reported.

Lavrentiev is scheduled to meet Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani on Tuesday evening.

The two sides will exchange views on the positions of the governments involved in the Syrian crisis, the ceasefire process, agreements reached, as well as the latest developments in fight against terrorist groups.



Military says helping government to tackle unemployment

POLITICS TEHRAN — Major General Mohammad Bagheri, the chief of staff of the armed forces, said on Monday that the military is helping the government to reduce the unemployment rate, ISNA reported.

Pointing to the economy as one of the most important issues, Bagheri said the General Staff of the Armed Forces has been working on how to resolve the unemployment issue.

He added that the armed forces are training soldiers as a way of helping the government.



Ambassador proposes forming Iran-Russia media association

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's ambassador to Moscow, Mehdi Sanaei, on Monday suggested that an association be established for Russia-Iran media cooperation to help solidify ties.

"I really hope that today's meeting will help us create a certain plan to create a kind of an organization for cooperation, something like an association of Iranian and Russian media outlets so as to expand this collaboration through this organization," Sanaei said, Mehr news agency reported.

He also said such organization would help strengthen Tehran-Moscow ties.



Tehran to host defense rights convention

POLITICS TEHRAN — The deputy defense minister for parliamentary affairs said on Monday that for the first time Iran will be hosting a convention on defense rights.

In an interview with the Islamic Republic of Iran News Network, Reza Taleai-Nik said the conference will be hosted on Tuesday by Iran's General Staff of the Armed Forces and Defense Ministry.

The conference will be attended by armed forces legal experts.

He also said that the laws and regulations of the armed forces have the fewest legal flaws possible.

Foreign Ministry condemns U.S. siege of civilians in Syria

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has condemned the U.S. move to impose an aerial blockade on civilians in Syria.

The subjects of the blockade are buses carrying women and children as part of a deal between the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement and Daesh terrorists.

"America's move to lay a siege to women and children seems to be illogical given the country's history of cooperation with Daesh," Bahram Qassemi said on Sunday.

Iran believes that this is an attempt to undermine the victory of the Lebanese government and the resistance movement over the terrorists, the Foreign Ministry official added.

There is a "fundamental difference" between fight against armed Daesh terrorists and the killing of innocent people, he noted.

Qassemi stated that blockading a number of women and children in a desert by the U.S. has no military value and would not diminish the power of Daesh terrorists. He added it would only stoke more violence in the region.

"The aerial siege against women and children in non-military buses and the death of several pregnant women over



the past two days may turn into a humanitarian disaster if continued," Qassemi said.

He went on to state that Daesh was nearing a complete collapse due to cooperation among the Iranian, Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi governments and their armies, adding that the fight against the terrorist group was forcefully ongoing to eradicate terrorism in Syria and Iraq.

The spokesperson also expressed Tehran's support for the humanitarian aid by the Lebanese government and Hezbollah to save innocent civilians, saying the move turned Lebanon's military victory into an even bigger one.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a country which is at the forefront of the fight against terrorism, particularly Daesh, asks the United Nations to intervene in this issue and prevent the killing of inno-

cent people," Qassemi said.

The Syrian government on August 27 agreed to a deal between Hezbollah and the Daesh terrorists, which allowed the transfer of the terrorists and their families from the strategic and mountainous region of Qalamoun, close to the border with Lebanon, to eastern Syria.

According to a statement released by Hezbollah, U.S.-led forces had left stranded most of the convoy's 17 buses in the Syrian desert by destroying the road to Dayr al-Zawr.

"They are also preventing anyone from reaching them even to provide humanitarian assistance to families, the sick and wounded, and the elderly," said the statement.

The Hezbollah resistance movement accuses the U.S. of hampering an evacuation deal with the Daesh terrorist group.

The deal has been criticized by Washington and some government officials in Iraq as the terrorists are being transferred close to the Iraqi border.

On August 19, Hezbollah and the Syrian army launched an operation to purge Daesh from Qalamoun, located about 330 kilometers (205 miles) north of the Syrian capital Damascus.

Hezbollah launched a major push on July 21 to clear both sides of Lebanon's border with Syria of "armed terrorists."

Iran says Iraq must not be divided

POLITICS TEHRAN — "The start of such process [disintegration of the regional countries] will pose big threat against peace and security in the region," Rezaei, the former IRGC chief, noted.

President of Iraqi Kurdistan Massoud Barzani tweeted on June 7 that an independence referendum is scheduled to be held on September 25, 2017.

The Iraqi government issued a statement on June 9 rejecting any unilateral move by Kurdish regional authorities to press for independence.

Rezaei said, "We are against this referendum and we want the Kurdish leaders to avoid taking such path."

"This is a dangerous game being played by some leaders in Iraqi Kurdistan for some personal motivations.

Many of the Kurdish leaders are against referendum."

Prime Minister of Iraqi Kurdistan Nechirvan Barzani told Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi in a meeting on July 16 that Iran can "play a positive role" in resolving disputes between the Iraqi government and the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

While all countries are insisting on territorial integrity in Iraq, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed interest in partitioning Iraq and establishing an independent Kurdish state during a meeting with a delegation of 33 U.S. Republican congressmen.

'Saudi Arabia should apologize to Iran'

Rezaei also said that Saudi Arabia should apologize to Iran if it seeks to reestablish ties with Tehran.

He added that Saudis should also apologize to Yemen and Qatar.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have been at odds since the conflict arose in Syria in 2011. The relations suffered more setbacks as 464 Iranian pilgrims were crushed to death in a stampede in Mecca in September 2015.

The relations started deteriorating as a number of Iranians attacked the Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran and Mashhad in protest to the execution of the pro-democracy cleric Nimr al-Nimr in January 2016. Though senior Iranian officials condemned the move, Saudi completely cut ties with Tehran.

However some signs are emerging that Saudi Arabia and Iran are seeking to restore ties.

Zarif says Iran can be good partner for South Africa

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that Iran can be a "good" and "reliable" partner for South Africa in the West Asia region.

During a meeting with South African National Assembly Speaker Baleka Mbete in Tehran, Zarif called South Africa a "friendly country" to Iran especially during the time of sanctions.

He also called for expansion of cooperation in various spheres.

For her part, Mbete welcomed expansion of relations especially banking ties.

She said that the two countries have many capacities to expand cooperation.

Mbete arrived in Tehran on Saturday.

Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larjani and President Hassan Rouhani met her separately on Saturday.

In a joint press conference with Larjani, Mbete said her country will

make efforts to bring Iran to the club of BRICS which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

She said during the visit by the South African president to Tehran in April 2016 the issue of Iran's membership in BRICS was raised and "we are interested in Iran's membership... and believe that by inclusion of new countries" the bloc will see more economic development.

The BRICS has become an important platform for exchanges and cooperation among the world's major emerging economies, brought real benefits for the member states and also a good reputation among the international community.

The BRICS members are all leading developing or newly industrialized countries, but they are distinguished by their large, sometimes fast-growing economies and significant influence on regional affairs.

Iraq victories have astonished all: Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Chairman of Iran's Expediency Council Seyed Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi said on Sunday that Iraq's successive victories against terrorists have astonished the world.

"Iraqi successive victories surprised the world and robbed the opportunity from the enemies of Iraq and its people," Hashemi Shahroudi said in a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in Baghdad.

Shahroudi said Iran fully supports the Iraqi government and people in their fight against terrorism and recapturing territories occupied by Daesh.

Abadi praised Iran's support for Iraq in fighting the terrorists.

He also said that his government will continue to win war against Takfiri terrorists thanks to the unity among

the Iraqi people.

The prime minister also said his country is celebrating victories against terrorists which have been achieved through sacrifices by armed forces and popular mobilization forces and a support by Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani.

The chairman of Iran's Expediency Council and the Iraqi prime minister also underlined the need to resolve the regional problems, including the Syrian crisis, through dialogue.

Hashemi Shahroudi, heading a high-ranking delegation, arrived in Baghdad on August 31.

In recent weeks, Iraq's military forces have made significant progress in their fight against Daesh terrorists by liberating the northern city of Tal Afar.

Mosul was liberated in July after 3 years of occupation by Daesh terrorists.

Australia strongly backs nuclear deal: diplomat

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Australian Ambassador to Tehran, Ian Biggs, said on Sunday that Canberra strongly supports the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The JCPOA helps establish peace in the Middle East region, he said during a meeting with Mahmoud Sadeqi, the head of Iran-Australia parliamentary friendship group.

However, Sadeqi said the sanctions against Iran by the U.S. Congress are contrary to international law.

Last month, the two houses of the U.S. Congress ratified non-nuclear sanctions against Iran. The sanctions were mainly targeted at Iran's missile capability.

Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council including the United States signed the nuclear deal in July 2015. It went into effect in January 2016.

On August 15, Rouhani said that Iran will quit nuclear agreement "in hours" and return to the previous stage if sanctions are re-imposed on the country.

Australia was a supporter of negotiations between Iran and great powers. Its foreign minister visited Iran after 12 years in April 2015. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also made a trip to Australia in March 2016.

Since the conclusion of the nuclear deal economic and scientific teams from Australia have visited Iran.

Australian experts are sharing knowledge with Iran on areas of water scarcity.

Economic, political ties

Ambassador Biggs and MP Sadeqi also exchanged views on economic and political ties. The ambassador said both the Australia government and parliament prioritize cooperation with the Islamic Republic.

Sadeqi said the two countries enjoy great capacities to strengthen ties in various spheres.

Parliamentary relations help expand interaction between Iran and Australia, the MP said.

Biggs also called for continued consular talks in line with efforts to resolve the problem of Iranian refugees in Australia.

Parliamentarians rule out inspection of military sites

POLITICS TEHRAN — Senior Iranian parliamentarians in separate statements on Monday refuted the prospect of foreign access to Iran's military sites.

The statements came in response to recent U.S. moves to have the International Atomic Energy Agency inspect Iranian military facilities.

Ali Larjani, the Majlis speaker, said the recent moves by the White House are aimed at implying that Iran is a politically isolated country.

Also, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said, "It is likely

that some people may seek access to our country's military information under the guise of Agency's inspectors."

He said the Americans are trying to sabotage the nuclear deal and its implementation, because they see themselves a loser as they have no diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic.

"Given the presence of many countries in the Iranian economic market, the Americans do not see a share staked out for them. Hence, they are seeking to disrupt the implementation of the JCPOA (the official name for the nuclear deal) and the lifting of sanctions," Boroujerdi remarked.

"As a result, the Americans are constantly looking for pretexts and putting pressure on Agency officials," he added.

Hossein Naqavi Hosseini, the spokesman of the parliamentary committee, also said, "As senior Iranian government and military officials have repeatedly said Iran's military sites do not have any connection with its nuclear facilities, and are substantially unrelated to our nuclear activities."

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley recently flew to the IAEA headquarters in Vienna to personally lobby with the nuclear agency for access to Iran's military sites.

Naqavi Hosseini advised the U.S. to remain committed to fulfilling its obligations under the 2015 nuclear accord "instead of addressing the aspirations that are impossible" and commenting on the "forbidden areas" and "red lines" of Iran.

"Under no circumstances will we submit to the inspection of military centers and we cannot allow the foreign side to visit our military centers," he said.

"If they have a discussion or a subject for discussion, they can discuss it with our diplomats, but they must know that Iran's military centers are secret and its doors will always be closed to the strangers."

Burma soldiers 'burning bodies of Rohingya Muslims' to conceal evidence

Malala: The world is waiting for Suu Kyi on Rohingya abuse

➔ A minimum of 130 people have been killed actually we think it's more," she told Newsday on the BBC World Service.

"The security forces have encircled villages and then [shot people] indiscriminately, but we also found that — compared perhaps to the violence that took place in October [and] November last year — there is more involvement of the local Buddhist population together with the military."

She added: "We have reports of at least three other villages where at least dozens of people have been killed."

"What we have found ... is that now after the killings the military and other civilians are actually gathering the dead bodies and burning them so [as] not to leave any evidence."

Nearly 90,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh in the last 10 days, uprooted by reported rapes, murders and acts of arson by the Myanmar army.

Vivian Tan, regional spokesperson for UNHCR, told Al Jazeera on Monday that women, children and the elderly made up the bulk of the 87,000 who had crossed into Bangladesh since violence erupted on August 25.

"We're seeing many pregnant women, new-born babies and the elderly make their way to relief camps on the Bangladeshi side of the border," she said.

"Sadly we're also hearing from many of them that they haven't eaten in days."

Viewed by the UN and the U.S. as one of the world's most persecuted minorities, thousands of Rohingya flee their homes every year in a desperate attempt to reach Bangladesh and other neighboring countries.

The latest mass exodus comes after suspected fighters attacked police posts and an army base in the western region of Rakhine.

The Myanmar government has blamed the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) for the violence, but fleeing Rohingya civilians accused the Myanmar army of carrying out a campaign of arson and killings — aimed at forcing them out of the country.

Tan told Al Jazeera that the latest figure of 87,000 Rohingya did not include refugees who had fled in previous decades or those who had set up temporary shelter in "no-man's land", an area between the Bangladesh and Myanmar border.

"Since the 1970s, only 34,000 Rohingya have been registered with the UN in Bangladesh," Tan said, with "estimates of unregistered refugees in the hundreds of thousands."

As a non-signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, Bangladesh has refused to register the Rohingya as refugees since the early 1990s, nor allowed them to lodge asylum claims.

Ro Nay San Lwin, a Rohingya activist and blogger based in Europe, said many of the refugees were struggling to accept they could ever return to their ancestral homeland.

Using a network of activists on the ground to document the conflict, San Lwin told Al Jazeera that some refugees walked seven or eight days from Buthidaung to make it to Bangladesh, while those from Maungdaw had to walk for five days.

Up to 30,000 Rohingya refugees live in Kutupalong and Nayapara, two government-run camps near Cox's Bazar, with tens of thousands more living in makeshift camps.



"All of them are very weak, dehydrated and hungry and the Bangladesh government is not helping their situation at all."

"Unless the Bangladesh government opens the border, they're receiving these refugees unofficially and it's unlikely they'll ever be able to return to their homeland officially."

Videos uploaded on social media showed dozens of men, women and children hiding in Myanmar's jungle after security forces reportedly destroyed their village.

In a separate video, a Rohingya woman said she and her family had not eaten in days.

"We're also hearing reports of several villages facing shortages of food," Lwin said. "If things continue as they are people could start starving to death."

According to the latest estimate by UN aid workers in Bangladesh, nearly 150,000 Rohingya have sought refuge in the country since October.

Rakhine is home to most of Myanmar's 1.1 million Rohingya, who live largely in abject poverty and face widespread discrimination by the Buddhist majority.

The Muslim Rohingya are widely reviled as illegal migrants from Bangladesh, despite having lived in the area for generations.

They have been rendered stateless by the government and the UN believes the army's crackdown may amount to ethnic cleansing — a charge the government of Aung San Suu Kyi vehemently denies.

■ The world is waiting for Suu Kyi

Meanwhile, Pakistani education advocate Malala Yousafzai has called on fellow Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to condemn the «tragic and shameful» treatment of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

In a statement posted to Twitter Sunday, the 20-year-old said the «world is waiting» for Suu Kyi, Myanmar's state counselor and de-facto leader, to address the violence that has forced almost 90,000 Rohingya people to flee into neighboring Bangladesh.

"Over the last few years I have repeatedly condemned this tragic and shameful treatment," she wrote. "I am still waiting for my fellow Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to do the same."

Yousafzai called for a stop to the violence, citizenship for the Rohingya people — who are effectively stateless, despite having lived in Myanmar for generations — and for her native Pakistan to offer shelter, food and education to Rohingya refugees.

"Today we have seen pictures of small children killed by Myanmar's security forces. These children attacked no one, but still their homes were burned to the ground," she said.

The Guardian reported Monday that UN aid agencies had suspended deliveries of vital supplies — including food, water and medicine "because the security situation and government field-visit restrictions rendered us unable to distribute assistance," according to the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Myanmar.

China pledges new funding for BRICS as group opposes protectionism

China will give \$80 million in funding for BRICS cooperation plans, Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Monday, while the bloc of five emerging countries pledged to oppose protectionism.

Xi offered 500 million yuan (\$76.4 million) for a BRICS economic and technology cooperation plan, and another \$4 million for projects at the group's New Development Bank (NDB) during a three-day leaders summit in the southeastern city of Xiamen.

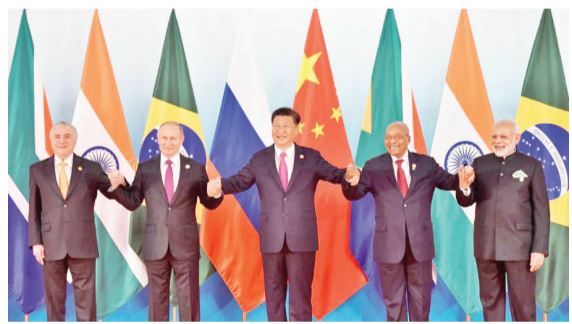
China's new contributions to BRICS pale in comparison to its \$124 billion pledge earlier in May for Xi's own Belt and Road initiative, which aims to expand links between Asia, Africa, Europe and beyond as a new way to boost global development.

The announcement came amid questions over the relevance of BRICS and China's commitment to the NDB in light of the Belt and Road initiative and the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, both key efforts by Beijing to bolster its global influence.

Xi said during a plenary session at the BRICS leaders' summit that the five emerging economies — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — should increase cooperation in sectors such as trade and investment, monetary policy and finance, and sustainable development.

"We should redouble our efforts to comprehensively deepen BRICS partnerships and open BRICS cooperation," he said.

Set up in 2015 as an alternative to the World Bank, the Shanghai-headquartered NDB was seen as the first major BRICS achievement after the group came together in 2009



to press for a bigger say in the post-World War Two financial order created by Western powers.

The BRICS leaders will gather in Xiamen through Tuesday, giving host China its latest chance to position itself as a bulwark of globalization in the face of U.S. President Donald Trump's "America First" agenda.

A draft "Xiamen Declaration" seen by Reuters, a formal version of which is expected to be issued later, said BRICS countries will continue to firmly oppose protectionism as they are committed to an "open and inclusive" multilateral trading system.

The communique emphasized the need to be vigilant in guarding against "inward-looking policies" that could hurt global market confidence, and called upon all countries to fully implement the Paris climate agreement.

The summit has been overshadowed by North Korea's sixth and most powerful nuclear test, which came on Sunday just hours before Xi opened the meeting with a keynote

speech, and prompted a vow of a "massive" military response from the United States if it or its allies were threatened.

Though China's Foreign Ministry has condemned the test, Xi did not mention North Korea during that 45-minute address or in his televised remarks during Monday's plenary session.

The BRICS grouping said in its draft communique that it strongly deplored Pyongyang's test, but that the problem over its nuclear program should only be settled through peaceful means and dialogue.

"We express deep concern over the ongoing tension and prolonged nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula," it said.

North Korea tested two ICBMs in July that could fly about 10,000 km (6,200 miles), putting many parts of the U.S. mainland within range and prompting a new round of tough international sanctions.

Though angered over the tests, China — North Korea's closest ally — has lambasted the West and its allies over recent weeks for promoting the "China responsibility theory" for North Korea.

The U.N. Security Council was set to meet later on Monday to discuss new sanctions against the isolated regime.

Chen Fengying, an economics expert at the state-backed China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said on the sidelines of the BRICS meeting that at the most BRICS countries will take note of the North Korean problem.

"Intervention is rather difficult. Our cooperation is mainly on global governance," she said.

(Source: Reuters)

Merkel leading in polls over Schulz after TV debate

Three weeks before elections, Angela Merkel appears to be heading for a possible fourth term as chancellor of Germany, with her rival Martin Schulz failing to halt her advance in a crucial televised debate.

Sunday's TV clash had been touted as Schulz's last chance to sway millions to his cause and halt a devastating popularity slide.

But polls following the 90-minute showdown gave Merkel, leader of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) since 2000, a clear edge over Schulz, a former European Parliament chief and leader of the Social Democratic Union Party of Germany (SDP).

"Merkel came out as sure, Schulz was hardly able to land a punch. The candidate is an honorable man. But being honourable alone won't make one chancellor," wrote Heribert Prantl, Sueddeutsche daily commentator.

There will be no further televised debates in the run-up to the election.

With millions of voters still undecided, Schulz had been looking to the debate to erode the commanding 17-percentage point lead of Merkel's CDU party and their Bavarian CSU allies ahead of the September 24 polls.

■ Merkel's migration policy

Schulz, who had previously complained that Merkel was lulling voters to sleep with her refusal to engage in combative debate, went on the offensive quickly on the hot-button issue of migration.

He accused Merkel of failing to coordinate plans with EU neighbors when she decided to open Germany's borders in 2015 to allow in refugees, many from war-torn Syria and Iraq.

But Merkel was not rattled, countering that: "In the life of a chancellor, there are moments when you have to make a quick decision."

And as Schulz voiced his wish to end EU membership talks with Turkey amid escalating tensions with Ankara,



Merkel stole the issue from under his feet as she said she did not "see them ever joining" the bloc.

Together with EU counterparts, she will examine if "we can end these membership talks", Merkel said.

Merkel's tough line comes after Ankara arrested two more German nationals for "political reasons", according to Berlin.

The plunge in bilateral relations began after Germany sharply criticized Ankara over the crackdown that followed last year's failed coup attempt there.

The pair also debated security, with Merkel saying Germany has learned from past mistakes regarding how to prevent attacks.

"Over 90 minutes of debate, [Schulz] went on the offensive against Angela Merkel and her actions as chancellor," said Al Jazeera's Dominic Kane, reporting from Berlin.

"Opinion polls suggested that viewers thought although Schulz had been more aggressive, they thought Merkel had been more competent and more persuasive."

■ Polls favor Merkel

Opinion polls following the program showed a clear victory for Merkel, with public broadcaster ARD saying 55 percent found her more convincing while 35 percent plumped for Schulz.

A ZDF survey was closer but still had Merkel ahead with 32 percent, against 29 percent who thought Schulz performed better.

Merkel "appeared to be more competent than in any previous duel. She was not brilliant, but sure. Schulz, on the other hand, was so stiff and dowdy, like Merkel was in previous duels", wrote Prantl.

Munich's Merkur daily also noted that "in an increasingly uncertain world which is led by testosterone-filled leaders, people don't know what Schulz wants. But they know what Merkel can do."

Members of Merkel's party feted the results, with Julia Kloeckner tweeting: "Angela Merkel: Stateswoman. Schulz: election candidate."

But Schulz's Social Democrats equally applauded the man who is known to be a fiery orator.

Manuela Schwesig, Mecklenburg-Pomerania state premier said: "Martin Schulz has shown that he can be chancellor."

Sunday's so-called television duel between the election campaign's two leading candidates is a highlight of Germany's electoral campaign season.

A poll published earlier Sunday by Bild am Sonntag said close to 30 percent of Germans believe that the TV debate would have a strong impact on the campaign, while 52 percent thought it would only have limited impact.

Having already fought three previous general elections, the famously cautious Merkel is no stranger to the TV format.

But this was the first time that she has prevailed, with surveys immediately after each of the previous three editions showing a popularity bounce for her opponents.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Turkey criticizes German 'populism' after Merkel shift on EU membership

A spokesman for Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan accused German politicians on Monday of indulging in populism after Chancellor Angela Merkel said she would seek an end to Ankara's European Union membership talks.

Merkel, seeking a fourth term in office in Germany's Sept. 24 election, said in a debate on Sunday it was clear that Turkey should not join the European Union, and that she would talk to other EU leaders about ending its stalled accession process.

"It is not a coincidence that our president Erdogan was the main topic of the debate," Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin tweeted, criticizing what he described as mainstream German politicians' "indulgence in populism".

"Germany and Europe's attacks on Turkey/Erdogan, by ignoring essential and urgent problems, are reflections of the narrowing of their horizons," he said.

"We hope that the problematic atmosphere that made Turkish-German relations

the victim of this narrow political horizon will end."

Turkey's ties with Germany and several other EU states have deteriorated sharply this year. Points of dispute have included the barring of Turkish politicians from holding campaign rallies in EU countries ahead of an April referendum, and concerns over the powers granted to Erdogan in the closely fought plebiscite.

Turkey has also restricted access for German parliamentarians seeking to visit Ger-

man troops at the Incirlik air base in southern Turkey, leading Berlin to announce it was moving those forces out of Turkey. It has also detained several German nationals, including journalist Deniz Yucel.

Turkey says it has sent Germany an extradition request for one of the main suspects it says was behind an attempted military coup in July 2016. More than 50,000 people have been arrested and 150,000 have been suspended or sacked in a security crackdown since the failed putsch. (Source: Reuters)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Transit of goods via Iran rises 24%

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Transit of goods via Iran rose 24 percent during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21- August 22) compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to a transport official.

Reza Nafisi, director general of Transit and International Transportation Department in Iran Road Maintenance & Transportation Organization, said over 4.018 tons of commodities have been transited via the country during the mentioned time, IRNA reported on Monday.

Of the mentioned figure, 1.229 million tons were oil products and 2.789 million tons were non-oil goods, he added.



Petchem output up 6% in 5 months

ENERGY TEHRAN — Petrochemical production in Iran increased by 5 percent during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21- August 22), Shana quoted Ali-Mohammad Bossaqzadeh, the production control director of National Petrochemical Company (NPC), as saying.

In July, Bossaqzadeh announced that seven new petrochemical projects were planned to be implemented in the country by the end of current calendar year (March 20, 2018).

He put petrochemical output at 51 million tons in the past calendar year, saying that the figure is estimated to reach 56 million tons by the end of this year, posting a record for the second consecutive year.



Tehran hosting 2 intl. exhibitions on mode, floor covering

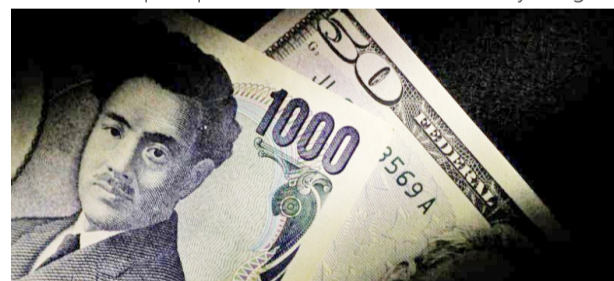
ECONOMY TEHRAN — Tehran is hosting the 9th International Carpet and Related Industries Exhibition and the 5th International Apparel Exhibition (Iran Mode 2017) at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground from September 4 to 7, IRIB news reported on Monday.

As reported, some 120 Iranian and foreign companies from Turkey, China, and Taiwan are showcasing their latest products and services at the 9th international floor covering expo.

Transfer of knowledge and data between producers and consumers, improving the quality of Iranian products, creating jobs, marketing, increasing exports, and etc. stand among the main targets of holding Iran Mode 2017.

Dollar weakens versus yen, franc on North Korea nuclear tests

LONDON (Reuters) — The dollar fell against the Japanese yen and the Swiss franc on Monday as concerns about geopolitical risks following North Korea's latest nuclear test over the weekend prompted a rush to traditional currency hedges.



Moves were confined within broad trading ranges, however, as investors assigned a low probability of a full-scale conflict breaking out.

"Rising geopolitical tensions have pulled the dollar below the 110 yen levels and though we are surprised by how events have unfolded in the last 48 hours, markets are unlikely to react much to this unless this escalates into a conflict," said Commerzbank foreign exchange strategist Thu Lan Nguyen.

The heightened risk aversion followed news on Sunday of North Korea's sixth and most powerful nuclear test, prompting the United States to warn of a "massive" military response if it or its allies were threatened.

The dollar came under renewed pressure against the yen on Monday afternoon and touched levels below 109.50, after South Korea's defense ministry said it was still seeing signs that North Korea planned to stage more ballistic missile launches, possibly including an intercontinental ballistic missile.

It fell 0.7 percent against the Japanese yen JPY= to 109.52 and weakened 0.5 percent against the Swiss franc CHF=.

The broader dollar index .DXY was down 0.2 percent at 92.65 and not far away from a 2-1/2-year low below 92 last week.

Low risk appetite turned global stock markets into a sea of red while precious metals such as gold XAU= and silver XAG= were each 1 percent higher.

Despite the dollar's weakness, the euro struggled to make progress as the overhang of large long euro positions and a European Central Bank policy meeting later in the week kept investors on the sidelines.

Latest positioning data showed long euro positions at their biggest in five years.

The euro EUR=EBS rose 0.3 percent on the day at \$1.1890 per dollar and was trading below a 2-1/2 year high above \$1.20 hit last Tuesday.

Iranian economy needs local investors supersede foreigners: Fraser's founder

By Mahnaz Abdi

Professor Michael Walker, the founder of Fraser Institute, believes that Iran should attach priority to motivate its citizens to invest in the country rather than attracting foreigners to do so.

Fraser Institute is a Canadian think tank which is the publisher of Economic Freedom of the World annual survey which attempts to measure the degree of economic freedom in the world's nations. Index of Economic Freedom measures economic freedom based on trade freedom, business freedom, investment freedom, and property rights.

Addressing a meeting held by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) in Tehran on Monday on the issue of economic freedom in Iran, the Canadian professor said: "I often say to them [Iranians] why you are concerned about foreigners' investment in the country and not the citizens investing in the country."

"You should first of all be concerned for getting investment from Iranians here in the country. As important as it is to attract investment from outside your country, even more important is to keep people in your country", he added.

'It's up to you to keep Iranian partners here'

Walker, who is from West Vancouver, said that there are 500,000 Iranians living there.

He referred to the proper business environment existing where he is living that have attracted some best business people from Europe and very best ones from Iran and said: "I am proud of that, but it's up to you to keep your environment attractive to keep your good partners in Iran."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Canadian economist referred to Iran's economic freedom index and said Iran is ranked 150th out of 156 countries in the world.

He said some people would say it's because of the sanctions; while he denied it and said sanctions do not have anything to do with the bad policies for example in the country's labor and also investment sectors.



"These are things that you are going to have to deal with", he asserted.

'Do things with least amount of opposition first'

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times on the sidelines of the meeting, the Canadian professor said for promotion of Iran's economic freedom the measures with the least amount of opposition should be taken.

He said: "We have got 42 different indicators [for measuring economic freedom]. In any movement in any of those, whether its tax rate or tariffs or regulations against employment or regulations against business to higher level of government involvement in the ownership of the enterprises, all of these things are important and as we've seen when we look at the other countries in the

world who prospered it's by getting all of those things right that you really get the maximum level of economic development."

"And so for me to pick any one of those, you have I think in your package got the least of all of those indicators and it's really you should do the things that can be done right away", he stated.

"The things that can be done fastest and can be done with the least amount of opposition, do them. And then work on the thing that are going to be more difficult like be more privatizing government enterprises and getting the government out of business and getting the government out of the exchange market and those things are going to be difficult. So do the easy thing first", the professor concluded.

Iran, Georgia hold joint business forum in Tehran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran-Georgia joint business forum was held at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and in the presence of both countries' ambassadors, the official portal of ICCIMA reported on Monday.

Addressing the forum, Georgia's Ambassador to Tehran Ioseb Chakhvashvili called Georgia a small country that can act as a bridge between Asia and Europe saying that "Iranian goods can be exported to Europe, some cities of Turkey, Ukraine, and Romania via Georgian ports."



Making remarks in the same event, Iranian Ambassador to Tbilisi Javad Qavam-Shahidi referred to the 6th meeting of Iran-Georgia Joint Economic Committee, which is set to be held in Georgia on October 9 and 10, 2017, underlining that the two countries should seize the upcoming event for developing bilateral economic bonds and capacities.

The Iranian Head of Iran-Georgia Chamber of Commerce Fatemeh Moqimi, for her part, highlighted the vitality of holding the joint economic committee meeting on the way to foster mutual economic ties.

South Korea raises alert over economic impact after nuclear test

South Korea's government said the impact of North Korea's sixth nuclear test could spread from financial markets to the real economy.

Existing uncertainty over trade policy and normalization of monetary policy in major economies could worsen the impact of North Korea's actions, Finance Minister Kim Dong-yeon said in a meeting with officials from the government, central bank and financial regulator. The impact on financial markets is unlikely to be limited to the short term, he said.

"The government will monitor markets, exports, commodities, and foreign investment around the clock and act accordingly based on a contingency plan," Kim said.

The recent spate of missile tests by North Korea had already raised concern among some South Korean economists as a risk to business and consumer sentiment.

North Korea conducted its latest nuclear test on Sunday, defying international

pressure and raising the risk of a military conflict. While past actions by North Korea have resulted only in increased market volatility, the central bank and some economists see the recent actions, including the missile tests, as raising the risk to the real economy.

One of the most important policy responses would be aimed at preventing a downgrade to South Korea's sovereign credit rating due to the geopolitical risks, Kwon Young-sun, an economist for

Nomura International Ltd., wrote in a report. The South Korean government will explain its contingency plan to major ratings agencies, and if situation worsens, could work toward restarting its currency-swap agreement with the Federal Reserve, Kwon wrote.

The won weakened 0.6 percent against the dollar on Monday to 1,129.80 per dollar as of 9:18 a.m. in Seoul. The Kospi stock index fell 1 percent.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Hong Kong checking banks' loans to China's HNA and Wanda

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority has asked banks in the city for details of their loans to HNA Group Co. and Dalian Wanda Group Co., according to people familiar with the matter.

Lenders were required to submit a survey to the city's de facto central bank providing information such as total credit extended and outstanding loans to the two companies, said the people, who asked not to be identified as the information isn't public. Checks on lending to Chinese conglomerates were stepped up in recent weeks, one of the people said.

In a statement to Bloomberg, the HKMA said it engages in discussions with banks on different issues, without commenting further. It's common practice for the authority to query banks over their exposures to certain sectors, as it has done with property loans in recent months.

While the checks aren't a guarantee of any regulatory action, the spotlight on real estate did lead to lending curbs in a bid to rein in Hong Kong's rampant housing market. HNA has been expanding its presence in the

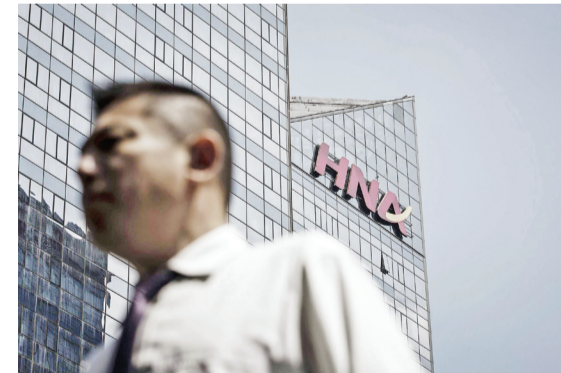
territory, spending about HK\$27 billion (\$3.5 billion) earlier this year on four government land sites in the former Kai Tak airport area.

Wanda declined to comment. Responding to a Bloomberg request for comment, HNA said in a statement that its Hong Kong businesses were in strict compliance with local regulations and the group's current operating situation was in "good shape."

The HKMA's scrutiny on loans to the two was reported by the Apple Daily earlier.

The move comes at a time when mainland Chinese regulators have also stepped up scrutiny of the companies behind last year's unprecedented spree of takeovers outside the country. China has embarked on a drive to reduce leverage in financial markets and snuff out systemic risks ahead of a Communist Party leadership transition later this year, while remaining vigilant for accelerated capital outflows that threaten to weaken the nation's currency.

The country's banking regulator has asked domestic lenders to provide information on overseas loans made



to firms including Wanda, HNA and Anbang Insurance Group Co., people familiar with the matter said in June. Authorities followed that with a directive restricting companies from making "irrational" overseas investments in industries such as real estate, hotels, entertainment and sports clubs.

(Source: Bloomberg)

UK construction growth unexpectedly slows to weakest in a year

UK construction growth unexpectedly slowed to the weakest in a year in August, as the industry was hit by reduced business investment and heightened economic uncertainty, according to IHS Markit.

The Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 51.1, the lowest since August 2016, and down from 51.9 in July. That's below the 52 forecast by economists in a Bloomberg survey, although it remains above the 50 level dividing expansion from contraction.

New business volumes fell for the second straight month, according to Markit, with survey respondents highlighting a lack of fresh orders to replace completed projects. Companies also exercised greater caution in their approach to hiring, with staff numbers growing at the slowest pace since July 2016.



Reduced levels of commercial work were also a major reason for the continued slowdown, offsetting more robust growth in residential building. Mean-

while, cost pressures were the weakest in almost a year, as the impact of the falling pound on material prices was counteracted by successful negotiations with suppliers amid weaker market conditions.

The report is latest to highlight the struggles the UK economy is facing is the wake of last year's European Union referendum, as growth slows and inflation continues to squeeze the pockets of consumers.

While a report last week showed manufacturing growth was the strongest in four months in August, an index of services, which make up almost 80 percent of the economy, will drop to 53.5 when it is published on Tuesday, according to economists in a Bloomberg survey.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil markets volatile in wake of Hurricane Harvey, North Korea nuclear test

Oil markets were volatile on Monday, with U.S. crude rising on production shutdowns while international Brent was pulled down by a flight into gold futures following a powerful North Korean nuclear test explosion.

Meanwhile, U.S. gasoline prices slumped back from a spike after the release of emergency fuel stocks and on signs that the damage from Hurricane Harvey to the Gulf coast energy infrastructure was not as bad as initially feared.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$47.42 barrel at 0411 GMT, 13 cents above their last settlement.

Traders said that this price rise was a result of crude production outages following Hurricane Harvey.

About 5.5 percent of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico's oil production, or 96,000 barrels of daily output, remained shut on Sunday, the federal Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement said.

At the same time, refineries that use crude to make fuel were gradually starting up again, along with the pipelines transporting products.

"Traders are hopeful that crude backlogs will be cleared," said Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst at futures brokerage OANDA.

Still, many analysts say it could take months before the U.S. petroleum industry fully recovers from Harvey, and Texas Governor Greg Abbott estimated damage at \$150 billion to \$180 billion, calling it more costly than Hurricanes Katrina or Sandy, which hit New Orleans in 2005 and New York in 2012.

Storm Harvey made landfall along the Gulf coast of Texas and Louisiana last week, knocking out almost a quarter of the entire U.S. refining capacity, causing a price spike and supply gap for fuels like gasoline, which traders around the world have been scrambling to fill.

Outside the United States, markets were nervously eyeing developments in North Korea, where the military



conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test over the weekend. Pyongyang said it had tested an advanced hydrogen bomb for a long-range missile, prompting the threat of a "massive" military response from the United States if it or its allies were threatened.

This put downward pressure on international Brent

crude as traders moved money out of oil - seen as high-risk markets - into gold futures, traditionally viewed as a safe haven for investors

Brent was at \$52.54 per barrel, down 21 cents, or 0.4 percent from the last close.

(Source: Reuters)

Big Oil to be usurped by gas in little more than a decade, experts warn

By Jillian Ambrose

THE dominance of Big Oil will be usurped in less than two decades by the dawn of a golden age for natural gas lasting at least until the middle of the century.

One of the world's biggest risk assurance experts in the global energy industry has predicted that gas will emerge as the world's most important source of energy by the mid 2030s after a slow descent for oil which will peak within ten years and the ongoing decline of coal.

Remi Eriksen, the boss of Norway's DNV GL, said the group's first conservative prediction for the future of the global energy industry has revealed a boom in renewable energy which will



meet around half the world's needs - but gas will be the largest single source of energy for decades to come.

"Gas will overtake oil as the world's biggest source of energy by 2034. By 2050 it will be the single biggest source at 27pc of demand," he said. He added that the demand for gas will tower over the use of individual renewable energy

sources such as wind, hydro and solar power, although when totaled together renewable energy will make up 50pc of energy use.

The fresh findings are reassuring for investors in oil super majors BP and Royal Dutch Shell which have both begun to shift their portfolios towards gas exploration and production in the wake of the global oil price crash.

Eriksen said Big Oil will continue to move towards gas on economic grounds due to its low cost compared to oil, and high demand for gas from electricity generators looking for a fuel which is less polluting than burning oil and coal.

"There will be oil and gas in the future, and there will need to be further exploration of our resources because the depletion of existing reserves will

be faster than the drop in demand," he said.

"But it will all depend on cost. The other factor is electric vehicles which by 2030 will really take a bit out of oil consumption from cars," he added.

Nonetheless Eriksen predicts that the world is still falling short of goals to limit global warming to within two degrees Celsius, the point at which climate change is predicted to wrought catastrophic consequences on the environment.

He said the gloomy prognosis could still be avoided if programs to use hydrogen for heat, together with carbon capture technology move ahead. But the findings should serve as "a wake-up call to all stakeholders in the energy system". (Source: The Telegraph)

Russian oil output hits year-low in Aug on offshore Arctic hiatus



Russian oil output slipped to a year-low of 10.91 million barrels per day (bpd) in August from 10.95 million bpd in July, Energy Ministry data showed, as Gazprom Neft suspended offshore Arctic production to carry out maintenance. In tons, oil output reached 46.144 million versus 46.309 million in July. It was the lowest level of output since 10.71 million bpd in August 2016, and it is down 3 percent from the October level, the benchmark when a global oil deal was reached on curbing oil production.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other leading oil producers including Russia agreed at the end of last year to cut their combined oil production by almost 1.8 million barrels per day in search of a supply and

demand balance amid weaker oil prices. Russia has agreed to reduce its output by 300,000 bpd from the October level of 11.247 million bpd. For the January-August period, oil output edged up 1.4 percent year-on-year. Russian oil pipeline exports in August rose to 4.34 million bpd from 4.1 million bpd in July.

According to the Energy Ministry data, Gazprom Neft, the oil arm of Russian gas giant Gazprom, reduced its output last month by almost 5 percent as it suspended production at the offshore Arctic Prirazlomnoye oilfield for maintenance. The local press has said the maintenance work at Russia's only producing offshore Arctic oilfield is due to be wrapped up in October. Gazprom Neft plans to produce 2.6 million tons (over 50,000 bpd) of oil at the field this year. Western sanctions introduced in 2014 prevent western companies from helping Gazprom Neft in developing its Arctic offshore fields.

Gazprom Neft launched production at the Prirazlomnoye field in Russia's Pechora Sea in 2013. Gazprom Neft has said that maintenance was not linked to sanctions. Oil production also declined by 2.7 percent month-on-month at Bashneft, which was acquired by Russia's largest oil producer Rosneft last year. Output at Bashneft is still reflected separately in the statistics. Projects, led by foreign majors under production sharing agreements (PSA), reduced their output by almost 15 percent last month to 324,000 bpd. Natural gas production was at 54.2 billion cubic metres (bcm) last month, or 1.75 bcm a day, versus 50.8 bcm in July.

(Source: Reuters)

Netherlands greenhouse gas emissions increase in 2016

The Netherlands saw an increase in greenhouse gas emissions last year. The total greenhouse gas emissions amounted to 197 billion kilograms of CO2 equivalents, 1 percent more than in 2015. Statistics Netherlands reported on Monday based on preliminary figures.

CO2 equivalents are used to add up the effects of different greenhouse gasses, such as methane and nitrous oxide, on the environment. 1 kilogram of CO2 equivalent is equal to the effect of 1 kilogram of CO2.

Compared to 1990, the greenhouse gas in the emissions in the Netherlands decreased by 11 percent. This means

the Netherlands still has some way to go to reach the 25 percent decrease the court ordered in the so-called Urgenda ruling in 2015. Another environmental group, Milieudefensie, also filed a lawsuit against the Dutch state demanding that more be done to improve air quality in the Netherlands.

The emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) increased by almost 2 billion kilograms to 167 billion kilograms last year. The chemical industry released 1.5 billion kilograms of CO2 more than in 2015. More natural gas was also used for heating homes and offices, resulting in 0.8 billion kilograms more

CO2 being emitted.

Last year energy companies used less coal for electricity generation. The proportion of coal in the Netherlands power generation dropped to 32 percent. In the period between 2011 and 2015, coal's share increased from 18 percent to 36 percent. The share of natural gas increased to 46 percent. Between 2011 and 2015 the proportion of natural gas decreased from 60 percent to 43 percent.

According to the stats office, the use of coal decreased due to the closure of three old coal plants last year, while the natural gas plants were used more. (Source: nltimes.nl)

China turns more to green energy for power supply

China is gradually turning to renewable energy to reduce its dependency on traditional power supply which caused massive pollution.

Currently, some 75% of the electricity in the country is still produced by coal fire, but the Government is consistent in developing green energy by investing in almost half of the world's new photovoltaic installations last year.

In June, Qinghai took the lead by running the entire province of 5.8 million people on wind, solar and hydro power for seven days as a trial project conducted by the State Grid, China's national electricity company.

In the north-eastern region of China, another province - Shandong - plays a vital role in the renewable energy sector. Last year, the province generated 23.67 gigawatt hours



(GWh) of electricity, an increase of 33.7% compared with the previous year. Among them, 60% was from wind power, 22% biomass power and 13% solar power.

The power generated was enough for 39 million households, about five times the total number of Malaysian households.

Here, in this rather new industry in line with the Chinese Government's strategy in promoting sustainable energy to reduce pollution, the intelligence of the Chinese is put into good use creating comprehensive projects that pushed their profits to great extent.

At the river mouth of Dongying, an industrial coastal city of Shandong province, Dongying Shuguang Solar Power invested in a renewable energy project.

A total of 230,000 solar panels were mounted on concrete piles above the water that covered an area of some 1,000 ha, the size of about 160 football fields.

"This is a solar-integrated agriculture project. We breed sea cucumber in the water, under the photovoltaic panels," said business manager Tang Yongchao, adding that such methods would make the land more productive.


Tang said the company invested 590 million yuan in the project and expected to see returns in seven years.

Last year, the company, which started in 2015, generated 86 gigawatt hours (GWh) of electricity - enough to cater for nearly 150,000 households in China.


"We will be opening up another sector of 30ha, which we believe can generate 26GWh of power," he pointed out, adding the electricity is sold to State Grid.

When the project runs on full-scale in the near future, the usage of coal in thermos-electricity power generation could be reduced by 28,000 tons a year.

Tang revealed that the same power-integrated agriculture method could be applied to farming, planting crops or fruits under the solar panels. (Source: thestar.com.my)



N.I.O.C
1396.2569



National Iranian Drilling Company

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

Two-Stage (compressed)

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	DESCRIPTION	Tenders Portal Reg. No. on http://iets.mp.org.ir	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
64, 460	2,256,000,000	46,800,000,000	High Speed Radial Bond Tools (RBT) for Well Logging Services	1/496/844	Indent No.: 43-22-9503848037 Tender No.: CGP/25-96/003	1
21, 000	720,000,000	14,400,000,000	Gyroscopic Survey Tool (GYRO) with All Accessories for Well Logging Services	1/496/830	Indent No.: 43-22-9503848046 Tender No.: CGP/25-96/004	2

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

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

B) Preparation of tender documents:
Purchasing of documents:
In order to receive the tender documents, 510,000 Rials should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.
Receiving of documents:
Tenderers must obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum 10 days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Sector Tenders, Foreign Procurement of Capital Goods dept., end of the workshop No. 8, Karoon Industrial Area, Ahvaz, IRAN.
Tel No.: 061-34142387

Notices:
1- Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and receive tender documents from foreign procurement department in due date will be known as tenderer from tender committee.
2- The capacity of referrals in the field of supply tenders, according to the National Iranian Drilling Company Technical Committee, is equal to 4 current and active contracts.

C) Delivery of call quality evaluating and envelops suggestions:
Tenderers shall submit the completed documents including qualification worksheets in form of software in CD/DVD and documentary along with envelopes Tender Guarantee (A) and technical (B) and financial (C) offers within 40 days from last day of document received deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1th floor, Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN. Tel No.: 061-34148205-6

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

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۱۴ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۱۵

U.S. attack on Palestinians at UN is dangerous

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently proposed appointment of former Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad as UN's Special Representative in Libya.

But then the usual happened; his proposal was shot down by U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley, purely because Fayyad was a Palestinian. Haley went even further down the road and indicated she would block any appointment of a Palestinian official to a senior role at the UN because Washington "does not recognize Palestine" as an independent state. This technically blacklists the Palestinians and declares them political outcasts, in a world body where some of them held key posts in a bygone era.



In most instances, Palestinians working at the UN have been nationals of member states, acquiring citizenships in countries such as UK, U.S., Canada, Kuwait, and Lebanon, among others. Guterres, who apparently relented to U.S. pressure by stepping back on Fayyad's appointment plucked up courage to tell reporters: "I believe that it is essential for everybody to understand that people serving the UN are serving in their personal capacities. They don't represent a country or a government — they are citizens of the world representing the UN Charter and abiding by the UN Charter."

Per usual, however, the U.S. representative at the UN found time to continue her vendetta against the Palestinian people while Israel, a serial violator of the International Law the UN was created to uphold, is able not only to sit at the UN but to serve on key committees — right beside the Saudis and in places like the Human Rights Council, and suchlike.

On its face, and as per UN Charter, all member states, including the U.S., cannot and should not block Palestinians from their rightful place in the community of nations. The U.S. administration would do better to push for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and welcome a fully sovereign State of Palestine to the UN. The problem is, Israel is not used to being surprised, and normally the White House consults it before making any major move on the Middle East situation!

Meantime, the UN should criticize the U.S. government for attacking Palestinians and express concern over the consequences of such action. It's really quite amazing when you think that the UN, not only sort of a cornerstone of International Law but very much something that the U.S. defended over the years, is now itself under attack from the U.S. administration. It's sort of a stunning turnaround. And ultimately the sequence is a dangerous one.

What this seemingly bold conclusion boils down to is that the U.S. doesn't want the UN to join the chorus of nations who want to recognize the Palestinians rights to freedom and self-determination.

The U.S. doesn't want the UN to join the chorus of nations who want to recognize the Palestinians rights to freedom and self-determination.

Instead of suggesting concrete measures to enforce previous and long-ignored UN resolutions, or to check Israel's violations which made a Palestinian state impossible, the U.S. simply wants the UN to fire its Palestinian staffs and to recognize an imaginary Palestinian state as a full member of the UN.

■ A negative spin on

If we try to put a negative spin on it, we could say that the "two-state solution" is already dead. After all, one of the "two states" — Israel — has been expanding its territory through building illegal settlements on Palestinian lands and occupying other lands for all that time. This "success" means that there is nowhere left for a second state — much less jobs for Palestinians at the UN. The U.S., like many other Western states, finds it easy to violate Palestinian rights, but does not have the courage to demand a complete end to the Israeli occupation.

Having itself been such a key part of the failed peace process, the U.S. now wants the UN to blacklist the Palestinians and declare them political outcasts, holding no key posts at the world body. Guess what? The UN will do just that and more. Given that all this is the case, the UN — under pressure by the U.S. and company — will never move to enforce its own resolutions violated by Israel.

It is still not far-fetched for the UN to recognize the Palestinian state with Jerusalem al-Quds as its capital on the borders exactly as they were on 4 June 1967. That would signal an intent to reinforce existing International Law and bring an end to the illegal Zionist occupation which both the U.S. and the EU have subsidized and politically covered for so long. Anything else would mark a new low in the UN's abdication of its responsibilities. Unless and until the UN decides to end its unconditional support for Israel, there will be no hope for peace.

(Source: farsnews.com)

Fire, fury — and confusion

Even allowing for its usual fiery exaggerations and accompanying uncertainty about its technical prowess, North Korea is making quick and alarming progress as a nuclear and missile power. The underground test Sunday of a nuclear device — Pyongyang claimed it was a hydrogen bomb — produced by far the largest yield of six nuclear explosions since 2006. In the face of this growing challenge, the response from the rest of the world, led by the United States and China, is a shambling mess.

There is no military solution to this crisis. Despite President Trump's bluster a few weeks ago about "fire, fury and frankly power the likes of which this world has never seen before," a war would engulf Seoul, only 35 miles from the inter-Korean border. Nothing is wrong with displays of strength designed to deter the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, but ultimately the danger he poses cannot be resolved by U.S. preemptive action without huge costs for both Koreas.

If the Trump administration is to accept this reality, China and other states must embrace more fully the need for sanctions and other measures — including cyber and information operations — to vastly turn up the pressure on North Korea. The latest round of UN sanctions will be effective only if China aggressively implements them, unlike the halfhearted approach of the past.

Ultimately, despite the long record of North Korea breaking deals, negotiations could be the path to a resolution. But the usefulness of talks right now seems doubtful — and the right response to the latest nuclear and missile tests is not to offer unconditional dialogue. What is needed is a unified and coherent message from the United States and its allies.



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Instead, Trump stirs division and confusion. He threatens "fire and fury" one day, then his secretaries of defense and state respond by emphasizing diplomacy or saying all options are on the table. Trump prematurely announced on Aug. 16 that he detected restraint by Mr. Kim. On Sunday, he was counterproductively chiding South Korea for its "appeasement" of the North and unrealistically threatening an

end to all U.S. trade with "any country doing business with North Korea."

Trump seems oblivious to the imperative that South Korea and Japan perceive rock-solid support from the United States, and that North Korea see a united front against it. On top of his insulting tweets, The Post reported this weekend that the president wants to scrap the South Korea free-trade agreement. This would be

a wildly irresponsible move, undermining relations with Seoul at the worst possible moment. It would be a gift to Kim, who dreams of splitting the bond between Seoul and Washington.

As it is, Kim may well see the confusion in response to his latest provocations, and feel undeterred. That only adds to the dangers.

(Source: The NYT)

Britain stumbles toward a new deal with the U.S.

By John Lloyd

To paraphrase a former U.S. secretary of state, Britain has lost a community but not yet found a friend. That the island is adrift became ever clearer last week as British officials made little progress in their third round of talks over the best way to exit the European Union.

While negotiators wait to get the preliminaries out of the way so substantive talks can begin, the real question may be how much more dependent has Brexit made the United Kingdom on the United States?

British leaders know they must build trade alliances, and Theresa May's government is trying. The British prime minister went to Japan this week to press for a bilateral agreement along the lines of the trade treaty Japan is about to sign with the EU, but Japanese leaders are cautious, delaying discussions until Britain's position becomes clearer.

For the UK government, the United States is the obvious — perhaps the only — port in a storm that may engulf the British economy. The U.S. is Britain's largest single trading partner, with trade between the two countries worth around \$230 billion annually, and investment in each other's economies amounting to \$1 trillion.

In Donald Trump, the Brexiters have an apparently ideal and strong ally; the president has commended a prospective accord as "very big and exciting" while at the same time condemning the EU as "very protectionist with the U.S."

The May government is thus respectful toward its big friend. She was the first leader to meet Trump after his inauguration and — unlike the chilly encounter between the president and German Chancellor Angela Merkel — appeared to enjoy the session.

The cabinet follows the same line. The mercurial Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, having once quipped that he would not go to New York for fear of meeting Trump, has since been ardent in his praise, saying Trump has "gripped the imagination of people around the world."

The U.S. wants access to the UK market most of all for the export of food, but here there are two large problems. American chickens are washed with chlorine, a process which the EU regards as a reason for keeping them at bay. And much of the U.S. grain sent to the UK would be genetically modified — another disagreement with the Union.

Were these products to be admitted into the UK, the protests from British farmers and environmentalists would be loud, long and damaging to any trade pact between the UK and the EU.

■ A further complication

A further complication is Trump's international isolation and unpopularity. Even May was moved to protest his many-sides-to-blame comments after a Charlottesville white supremacist march left a counter-protester dead. A state visit, planned for this year, is likely to be postponed after Trump told May he didn't want to make the trip if mass demonstrations were expected.

On the European side, the UK's Brexit secretary, David Davis, is locking horns with Michel Barnier, the European Union's chief negotiator. Barnier's charm is legendary. He is a politician with many terms of office in French cabinets and in the European Commission. It is clear that the EU will present a united front, with all



In Donald Trump, the Brexiters have an apparently ideal and strong ally; the president has commended a prospective accord as "very big and exciting" while at the same time condemning the EU as "very protectionist with the U.S."

27 other members agreeing to back Barnier. So far, in spite of disagreements between the Central European states (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) and the EU on immigration, none has given any sign of following the UK out of the Union.

The 27 will be unyielding, demanding a large "divorce settlement" — as high as 100 billion euros (\$112 billion) — together with a pledge that EU citizens living in the UK for at least five years gain permanent residence. A "concerned" Barnier warned that the latest talks yielded "no decisive progress on the main subjects." The UK negotiators say progress has been made, but is impeded by an over-rigid approach from the EU.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the European Commission president and the most bitterly opposed to Brexit of the EU's leadership, infuriated the UK government earlier this week by contemptuously dismissing the documents it submitted, saying that he "found none of them truly satisfactory."

Juncker's contempt tends to unite the Brits. More divisive are the nation's fears that the price for Brexit is beginning to be paid even before a settlement with the EU is reached. Banks, both UK and foreign, are discussing moving thousands of jobs out of the City of London. The pound is sinking, and Morgan Stanley thinks it may soon be on par with the euro.

A world in which states make individual trade pacts will cut against the EU's bloc approach, where trade negotiations are centralized and one size is meant to fit all.

■ The further logic

The further logic of the position in which Britain finds itself is that it must hope that the EU fails — if not in the economic sense (that would damage the British economy too) — then in its aspiration to further integrate at least the euro zone states. The conservative

vision of international relations that are still based on nation states would be in competition with the idealistic prospect of a post-national space, in which power would be shared among the EU, the nations, the regions and even the cities.

Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron seem committed to regenerate the Franco-German motor for the EU, pushing toward greater integration and even the appointment of a euro zone finance minister. Merkel, with the whip hand of a healthy economy, is the more cautious, and will make further movement dependent on radical change in France — especially in reforms to the labor market.

The future of a Franco-German EU depends largely on Macron's domestic success. Though couched in technocratic language, integration would be a huge political leap — the substitution of centralized economic decision-making overriding national priorities, carving deep into what has so far remained largely the prerogative of sovereign legislatures. If it does not succeed, the EU must come to terms with a reality which dictates the continuation of sovereign national states — willing to collaborate on trade and other issues like security and defense, but not to attempt the building of supranational political institutions. It's the Union most British political leaders always thought the only practical option. Ironically, it may come about in their absence.

The former secretary of state I cited at the beginning of this essay was the Truman administration's Dean Acheson, who said of post-war Britain that it had "lost an empire but not yet found a role." Britain has now found, or stumbled into, a role. It is, with the U.S., to make of the special relationship a separate pole of attraction, not just for each other, but also for the rest of the world.

(Source: Reuters)

American hegemony appearance is bewildering today: expert

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Gautam Adhikari, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress (CAP), says it is "The current international situation may well turn out to be different but as of now it would be hard to predict the emergence of a balanced and smoothly functioning multipolar world if American global power and influence did indeed decline sharply."

"In the global power architecture, American hegemony is still a fact even if its appearance is a bit bewildering today," Adhikari tells the Tehran Times.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ Some believe after possible decline of the US hegemonic power, there would be no other hegemonic power in the world because the other states would not be going to accept hegemonic power any more. What do you think of this?

A: Hegemonic powers do rise and fall -- Britain, France, the former Soviet Union in modern history -- but others may rise to move into the power vacuum. America's dominance -- contested for a few decades by the Soviet Union -- in military, economic, technological as well as cultural terms has lasted seven decades thus far. The current international situation may well turn out to be different but as of now it would be hard to predict the emergence of a balanced and smoothly functioning multipolar world if American global power and influence did indeed decline sharply. Whether rising powers accept US leadership or not may not be a critical issue. In the global power architecture, American hegemony is still a fact even if its appearance is a bit bewildering today.

The current erratic course of US foreign engagement may last long enough to sow serious doubt about the viability of the US role as a kind of conductor of the concert of nations, but American global dominance rests on a range of factors, in-



cluding its massive economic power, its huge military power, its scientific-technological lead across the board of daily life, and, importantly, its 'soft power', a term popularized by the political thinker Joseph Nye of Harvard. So, while American power might decline in the medium term, the world may not see a quick rise of a challenger in the same league.

■ If we face a multi-polar world in the future, what will be its effect on world order? Can we witness a more stable world under the shadow of a multipolar world?

A: A multipolar world in many ways is a reality even now, especially with the continuing rise of China and India and a likely consolidation of European power under the leadership of Germany and France. However, no nation other than the US seems prepared as yet to play a global leadership role, even though China has been spreading connectivity and influence far beyond its borders. It is possible that if US influence declines in the medium term and it withdraws into a nationalist fortress, a German-French-European center of world power will form

a new pole while China forms another. But as of now such a possibility is quite distant. Actually, a multipolar forum for providing global stability already exists. It's the United Nations. However, it rarely works in security-related areas with any kind of consensus. When it comes to ensuring global stability, its course of action is ultimately decided, or not decided as is often the case, by a group of just five nations with the power of veto in the Security Council. And they have differing global outlooks and interests.

■ Some believe that a multi-polar world will result in more obscure alignment of states. What do you think of this?

A: Right now the alignment of states is not as sharply visible as it was, say, during the Cold War and the decade after its end. It is a multipolar world in the sense that several centers of power have emerged or are emerging while the old alignments don't seem as resolute as they were. But it is still a world with several poles but only one superpower in the genuine sense of the term. Russia is very powerful militarily because of the size of

its forces and its massive nuclear arsenal. But it's not a superpower by any stretch. China is becoming more powerful both economically and militarily but it is feeling its way around the world while domestically it has a single institution that runs its affairs with a heavy hand, the Communist Party and its Politburo, and does not offer an appealing package of soft power to the rest of the world. It may become a superpower one day but it's far from being one today. Its population size, along with that of India's, may be worth watching however, both for understanding worldwide demographic shifts and the resultant impact on power politics.

■ If we believe in multi-polar world for future, which power components will affect world polarization? Basically which countries or organizations will form those poles?

A: Going by current trends, there are several contenders for forming poles of global power exertion -- China, Europe, maybe an India-Japan lineup -- but, apart from economic influence and power, swiftly changing demographic and migratory trends and tensions are likely to play important roles in determining the relative influence of major nations. By 2025 India will be the largest nation on earth by population just ahead of China and will have the highest component of young adults of any nation. Together, the two giants form close to 40 percent of the world's population. Europe, America and Japan have static or declining populations. Any growth in their sizes of population depends a lot on the future of inward migration. The African continent is expanding rapidly in numbers, so is Latin America. So the global power architecture is likely to change in a few decades. But as of today, America remains the only effective superpower with the ability to critically influence global outcomes. Much depends on how the US manages itself Domestically as well as globally, in the foreseeable future.

U.S. suffers diplomatic illiteracy to project power: professor

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute believes the U.S. ability to project hard and soft power is seriously constrained by its diplomatic illiteracy and lack of political culture, especially under the disastrous Trump presidency.

Any period of history evidencing a dramatic change in world political thought and the balance of power is referred as New World Order.

New World Order term was mostly used after the end of cold war. To describe the post cold era situation and the spirit of the cooperation between two super powers both Mikhail Gorbachev and George Herbert Walker Bush used New World Order term. Initial definitions and preferences of the New World Order brought up by Gorbachev included a wide range of issues and were mostly idealistic, but his capabilities to insist on them were very limited due to internal crises in former Soviet Union. Contrary to Gorbachev's viewpoint, Bush's viewpoint didn't include a wide range of issues and was more realistic.

Robert Cohen, a leading theoretician of neoliberal institutionalism believes that the US hegemonic power has begun to decline after 1970s. While the US leadership power has decreased, he believe all international regimes created after Second World War would continue to remain.

How the world order from the viewpoint of the polarization would be like, is among the most important issues in forming the states' foreign policy.

Payman Yazdani from Mehr News agency has discussed the possible next world order with Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies and Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute, Arshin Adib-Moghaddam by

here is the full text of the interview

■ Some believe after possible decline of the US hegemonic power, there would be no other hegemonic power in the world because the other states will not accept hegemonic powers any more. What do you think of this?

Hegemony is a practice and it is not always dependent on huge power resources. Saudi Arabia is acting in a hegemonic way in relation to Qatar without the power resources to dominate the region, even if the kingdom wanted to. Certainly, the United States does not have the ability to exercise its hegemony on a global scale, even if it wanted to. For hegemony to work the object of such oppressive power needs to play along, it needs to accept the suppression. Such acceptance is not apparent in the current international system.

■ what will be the effect of possible multi-polar world on world order? Can we witness a more stable world under the shadow of a multipolar world? And also Some believe that a multi-polar world will result in more obscure alignment of states. What do you think of this?

Stability is always relative. In the last two decades we have witnessed more internal wars such as in Syria and Yemen which have brought about immense calamity and human misery. The era of big inter-state wars has been over for a long time now, but this changed global context doesn't mean that there is stability. Multipolarity can be as disastrous as the bipolar world order of the Cold War. A first step towards a rather more peaceful international system could be regional alliances that stabilise the area of the member states and which position themselves as partners to other regions. The European Union and the ASEAN countries are good examples. The countries of West Asia and North Africa and their political inability to bring about a regional consensus geared to peace are the worse examples. Regional alliance systems can deliver the stability that is needed to work towards global peace.

■ If we believe in multi-polar world for future, which power components will affect world polarization? Basically which countries or organizations will form those poles?

I believe the poles have already emerged. The United States, the European Union, both enmeshed in an increasingly disintegrated and disintegrated narrative of the "west", China, Japan, Brazil, South Africa, Iran, Russia, India, all of these countries are major players due

to their geo-strategic location and/or cultural and economic gravitas. I certainly don't ascribe to the "realist" notion that power can be merely measured in material terms or more specifically in terms of military power. The United States is the undisputed leader in the military realm, yet its ability to project hard and soft power is seriously constrained by its diplomatic illiteracy and lack of political culture, especially under the disastrous Trump presidency. I had predicted this outcome when I first commented about him in the global media including in Iran. Furthermore, Qatar is a rather small country, yet it has become central to the global economy. The same applies to Singapore. Power is not concomitant to military power. In today's world, it is the power to persuade and to act as a model for a democratic, peaceful and freedom loving country that translates into prestige and diplomatic/economic/political success in world politics -- Ideas like that continue to be mightier than any sharpened sword.

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam is Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies and Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute. Educated at the Universities of Hamburg, American (Washington DC) and Cambridge, where he received his MPhil and PhD as a multiple scholarship student, he was the first Jarvis Doctoral Fellow in International Relations and Peace Studies at St Edmund Hall and the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford.

from power following the 2001 US-led invasion of Afghanistan, but they have stepped up activities in recent months, attempting to overrun several regions. During the past 16 years, the militants have been conducting terrorist attacks across the country, killing and displacing civilians. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned the massacre, saying, "This barbaric act of them (militants) is deemed a direct violation of human rights and a war crime."

"Criminal terrorists have once again killed civilians, women and children in Sayad district of Sar-e Pul Province, adding to their crimes," said the president.

(Source: MNA)

What happened in Mirza Olang

The recent massacre of civilians in the village of Mirza Olang, Sar-e Pul province of Afghanistan by terrorist groups is unprecedented in the recent years of armed conflicts in Afghanistan which has remain plagued by militancy despite the presence of foreign troops.

Local organizations and governmental officials have confirmed the massacre, which is a war crime and may amount to a crime against humanity.

According to the eyewitnesses, the systematic killing of approximately 52 civilians, including women and children, individually and en masse, without any distinction.

Hundreds of families have lost their

houses and properties and are displaced. Displaced families are deprived of their fundamental facilities including access to clean water, food and shelter and they urgently require assistance from the Government, national and international humanitarian organizations.

The targeted mass killing of civilians, including women and children, without distinction and the destruction without military necessity and pillage of civilian property are crimes that go against human values. They are violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, specifically Common Article 3 of the Geneva Con-

ventions 1949 and Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court 1998.

The Transitional Justice Coordination Group (TJCG) condemns the commission of war crimes in the village of Mirza Olang, Sar-e Pul province in the strongest possible terms.

According to Fidh.org, TJCG believes that the reason behind the commission and repetition of such egregious crimes in the country is the lack of ability of the Afghanistan to provide security for its citizens, especially for ethnic and religious minorities.

Taliban militants who were removed



from power following the 2001 US-led invasion of Afghanistan, but they have stepped up activities in recent months, attempting to overrun several regions. During the past 16 years, the militants have been conducting terrorist attacks across the country, killing and displacing civilians. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned the massacre, saying, "This barbaric act of them (militants) is deemed a direct violation of human rights and a war crime."

"Criminal terrorists have once again killed civilians, women and children in Sayad district of Sar-e Pul Province, adding to their crimes," said the president.

(Source: MNA)

Mossad and CIA created ISIL: expert

Iranian strategist says that the U.S. will probably dispatch the ISIL fighters to Central Asia countries and along the borders of Russia and China.



MNA — Davoud Shoja, a political advisor to the issues of the Western Asia made the remark in an interview with Mehr's contributor, Ramin Hosseinabadian, on Wednesday. The strategist answered questions about the current statistics of the battlefields in Iraq and Syria, the roots of Takfirist groups, and the future of the terrorists.

What made the interview noticeable is the recent course of events in Iraq and Syria where terrorists are conceding to repetitive defeats.

Mr. Shoja believes that the idea of creating ISIL was first proposed by a Mossad think tank and the American and Israeli intelligence services who kept Abou Bakr al Baghdadi in their prisons, picked him as a good choice to lead the ISIL. He thinks that after some years of training the ISIL fighters were dispatched to the countries of the region by the US.

According to the pundit, Saudi Arabia also played a role in the formation of Takfiri and Extremist terrorist groups.

About the length of operations to liberate Mosul and Tal Afar, Mr. Shoja asserted that the opposition of some Mosul residents with the government of Nouri al-Maliki pushed them to join the ISIL but quite the contrary in Tal Afar, the people of the city did not join the terrorists. He thinks that as the locals were against the terrorists and in support of Iraqi forces, the liberation of Tal Afar was conducted in a much shorter time than Mosul. He thinks that a global unity was formed to free Tal Afar; American and Turkish politicians signaled the green light and the population was much smaller.

Mr. Shoja hypothesized that the reason that the Americans did not obstruct the liberation of Tal Afar was the secret agreement brokered between Washington and Baghdad. According to the deal, the Americans will sell airplanes, military equipment, and weaponry to Iraq which makes elongates their 100% presence in Iraq and the region.

According to his speculations, the ISIL forces will completely be eradicated in Iraq in the next 3 or 4 months but the ideology of Takfirism and Wahhabism will continue its life in Iraq. "The Americans are now after moving Iraq from a military situation to a political and security situation which enables them to seek the disintegration of Iraq."

Touching upon the crisis in Syria, he holds that the ISIL will still hold sway over Deir ez-Zor for at least the next two years. He thinks that the liberation of Deir ez-Zor will further strengthen the resistance front, Hezbollah, and the strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran and that is why the Americans would not let the city be freed from the terrorists.

"Of course no," asserts the analyst in response to the question that whether the failed terrorists of Iraq and Syria are expired for the US. He maintains that the ISIL in Afghanistan is winning ground by the supports of Americans. "Today, the Americans are taking the survivors of the ISIL in Iraq and Syria to the Central Asia and Tajikistan to undermine Russia and China and cut the hands of the Russians from the region."

'Preserve rule of law': Obama's inauguration letter to Trump revealed

Barack Obama warned Donald Trump to uphold the rule of law and not undermine the "international order" in a newly revealed letter from the 44th US president to his successor.

The former president gave Trump three key pieces of advice in a letter he left in the Oval Office when he departed the White House. The letter was published on Sunday by CNN.

We've both been blessed, in different ways, with great good fortune," Obama told his successor. "Not everyone is so lucky. It's up to us to do everything we can [to] build more ladders of success for every child and family that's willing to work hard."

Turning to international relations, Obama told Trump, who had embraced isolationism throughout his campaign: "American leadership in this world really is indispensable."

He added: "It's up to us, through action and example, to sustain the international order that's expanded steadily since the end of the Cold War, and upon which our own wealth and safety depend." Thirdly, Obama urged his successor to protect "those democratic institutions and traditions -- like rule of law, separation of powers, equal protection and civil liberties -- that our forebears fought and bled for."

"Regardless of the push and pull of daily politics, it's up to us to leave those instruments of our democracy at least as strong as we found them," Obama wrote in the letter.

In January, Trump called the letter "beautiful" and said he would cherish it, adding: "We won't even tell the press what's in that letter."

The relationship between the two presidents has grown increasingly fractious after an initial attempt to build bridges on both sides quickly collapsed.

Obama invited his successor to the White House a few days after the election, telling Trump: "We now are going to do everything we can to help you succeed, because if you succeed, then the country succeeds."

Trump, who seemed somewhat daunted at the meeting, said he had "great respect" for the president he had excoriated on the campaign trail, and called Obama a "very good man." →13

Showdown in Guatemala

Jimmy Morales was elected president of Guatemala in 2015 on a promise of stopping the country's fabled corruption and restoring conservative values. A former television personality widely known for his comic role in the series Moralejas (Morals), Mr. Morales rode popular anger to victory in 2015 as an outsider whose slogan was "not corrupt, nor a thief".

But on Aug. 27, when a United Nations-backed anticorruption unit began getting uncomfortably close to him and

his supporters, Mr. Morales ordered its chief expelled. Guatemala's top court overturned the order, but the nation still faces a crisis.

Mr. Morales acted out of desperation. Iván Velásquez, the respected Colombian prosecutor who heads the unit, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, and the Guatemalan attorney general, Thelma Aldana, had already jailed Morales's older brother and nephew. On Aug. 25 they announced

they were seeking to strip the president himself of his constitutional immunity in a probe of fishy campaign contributions.

Every weekday, get thought-provoking commentary from Op-Ed columnists, the Times editorial board and contributing writers from around the world.

Combating crime and corruption

The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala was formed in 2006 at the request of human-

rights activists and Guatemalan officials, backed by the United States and other governments, to help Guatemalan prosecutors combat a blight of organized crime and corruption.

Much of that has seeped out of criminal networks formed by veterans of the Guatemalan Army that ravaged the country in its long civil war and who then turned the nation into what Amnesty International called a "Corporate Mafia State." ➔13

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Rouhancare: Iranian president's unsung domestic success

➔ The government's bimh salamet (healthcare) scheme pays 380,000 rials per person in monthly contributions, allowing most of those covered to pay a fraction of the cost of treatments.

Ali said he believed the healthcare plan was the president's biggest unsung domestic achievement, and one that helped lead to a landslide election victory in May, which increased his mandate for his second term by 5m votes. Rouhanimeter, an independent website tracking Rouhani's campaign promises, said it considers his pledges on healthcare to be a promise fulfilled.

"We have taken big steps to protect the social welfare of those with lower incomes and the nationwide healthcare plan's implementation means all Iranians are now covered by medical insurance," Rouhani said in his inauguration ceremony last month.

Initial estimates expected 5 million Iranians to apply for the scheme, but more than double that number have registered — many of whom did not dare to see a doctor previously for fear of the cost.

Shahram Shahbazi's mother was an aerobic trainer in Tehran before developing a spine condition a couple of years ago that has left her housebound. "This healthcare really came to our rescue, otherwise we couldn't afford the \$5,000 needed for the surgeries," Shahbazi, 27, said.

"It means that if she didn't have the insurance, my mother would still be in pain and we would have to stop treatment after the first surgery. Under the insurance, you're only supposed to have one big surgery a year, my mother had two and still they covered it."

Despite the scheme's success and popularity, it has not been without its problems. It is expensive — Rouhancare costs about £770m a year, while other major health reforms, such as introducing a referral system and family physicians, means the annual healthcare bill is three times that figure. Rouhancare's funding comes from 1% of Iran's 9% VAT rate and 10% of reserves saved through cut in subsidies.

Opponents of Rouhani claim that the plan was "on the brink of collapse" because it was not expertly thought-out and lacked funding.

"The nationwide healthcare plan is



A doctor examines a patient's eye for glaucoma at a clinic in Tehran. Photograph: Behrouz Mehri/AFP/Getty Images

facing serious financial problems and state insurance agencies are saying that they are not able to pay back their debts to hospitals and it's more than 10 months that they are facing those debts," a Fars article said. Officials have admitted to the lack of funding in initial years.

Although Rouhani has taken the credit for the healthcare plan, it was envisioned in law more than two decades ago and was partially implemented during Mohammad Khatami's presidency.

Iraj Harirchi, a deputy health minister and spokesman, said Rouhani's emphasis on the healthcare plan during his inauguration ceremony showed there was the necessary political will for its funding to continue.

"We're proud to say that there is no Iranian without a medical insurance that we would refuse to cover," Harirchi told the Guardian. "There may be some people who don't want to apply, or there are issues with their IDs, otherwise anyone who registers can be covered."

Nearly half of Iran's population is insured through Rouhancare or other means, with about 38 million having the

government paying for their national insurance contribution. The rest are covered by medical insurance provided by their employers.

Most people using the government's salamet insurance scheme contribute 6% of their overall treatment costs, and pay between 10% and 30% towards the costs of most drugs required for their care. Those assessed as unable to afford such payments are not charged.

Those covered by the government's healthcare insurance scheme pay between 10% and 30% of prescription costs.

"Before the [Rouhani's] health transformation plan, people on average paid for 37% of their treatments costs, now they pay 6% and if it's through referral only 3%," Harirchi said, adding the reforms have also significantly reduced corruption and bribery in the health sector.

About 90% of the 11 million people covered by salamet insurance live in the suburbs. The government has recently decided that those who can afford should pay between

15% and 100% of their contribution based on an income assessment, but it was not clear when the new requirement would come into force.

Harirchi acknowledged that funding remains a challenge, but he was confident the government would find the money. "Iran's population pyramid points towards an ageing population and this would increase the health and treatment costs so we would need more money."

Vahid Rosoukhi, a contractor specializing in software working in the healthcare sector in Tabriz, north-west Iran, said recent reforms had benefited those on low incomes, but added that more money was needed to meet demand.

"A big challenge facing the healthcare is the bigger picture. From the beginning, we've heard criticism from doctors citing its huge financial burden and the government access to limited funds. That's why from the beginning of this year, the government has relaxed some of its duties under the healthcare and limited its use to state-run health centers," Rosoukhi said, referring to a cabinet decision this summer which restricted patients covered by Rouhancare to only use state hospitals and doctors.

Hundreds of nurses have protested in front of the Iranian parliament, Majlis. In February, they complained that Rouhancare has increased pressure on them, while their salaries have stagnated.

Outside the medical profession, others view Rouhancare as a success, even those who did not vote for the president, including Roshanak, 39, a computer engineer based in Tehran.

"I don't know why he kept focusing on the nuclear deal during his election campaign while it was the healthcare that had the most tangible effect on those with lower incomes," she said.

"Before this plan, many people didn't even dare to go for a checkup or treatment because they were afraid of the costs but you look at people now and everyone has got a daftarche (insurance notebook)."

(Source: *The Guardian*)

There's a reason you feel like smells always get stuck in your nose

By Claire Gillespie

Here's why you can smell your co-worker's heavy perfume long after you've left the office.

In an ideal world, we'd all only ever smell our favorite aromas, like that amazing scented candle that transports us right back to that decadent spa weekend. Or smells that make us happy, like freshly cut grass, baby powder, peppermint, or pine. Unfortunately life doesn't always smell of roses (or peppermint, or pine) and often it's the smells we don't like that linger in our nasal cavities. And we're not just talking about the objectively terrible scents—it could be your co-worker's heavy perfume that won't stop haunting you. The reality, the offending smell is more likely stuck to your clothing or even nose hairs.

If you've ever sat around a campfire and smelled your clothes the following day, you know how scents can stick to clothing. There may be another dynamic at work, though: An interaction between the olfactory system (sense of smell) and brain. Sometimes, we even recreate a smell through our memory. Popular Science reveals that when psychologist Avery Gilbert performed studies on smell conjuring, he found that people are able to recreate odors in their minds, even when they dream.

"Odors induce reverberating circuits which can persist even after you left the smell," explains Alan Hirsch, MD, of the Smell & Taste Research Foundation. Hirsch suggests smelling alternative odors to try and get rid of the unpleasant smell, such as mint, or even chewing mint-flavored gum for a similar effect.

If you just can't get rid of a persistent smell, you may be suffering from a smell disorder, such as parosmia, which causes a change in the way you perceive smell and may give the impression that you have a bad smell "stuck" in your nose. Things that once had a pleasant odor may smell foul, or vice versa. According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), 1 to 2 percent of North Americans report problems with their sense of smell. Another smell disorder is phantosmia, which involves smelling odors that are not present. Instead, they are entirely created by your nose and your brain. Your physiology is causing you to "make smells up," which could come across as having a smell "stuck" in your nose. (On the other end of the scale, hyposmia is a reduced ability to detect odors, and anosmia is the complete inability to detect odors.)

(Source: *Reader's Digest*)

Ranked: the healthiest milk and milk alternatives for you

By Lydia Ramsey & Hollis Johnson

We've all been there: You get to the front of the coffee line, and you still haven't settled on what milk you should put in your latte. Soy? Almond? Skim?

We're here to help, at least on the nutrition end.

We evaluated some of the most commonly used dairy milk and milk substitutes and stacked them up based on how much protein, vitamins, and minerals they contain relative to their fat, sugar, and calorie content.

No. 10. Soy milk

Soy milk, unfortunately, hits the bottom of the list. According to the USDA, the average 8-ounce glass of soy milk has 8 grams of protein (the highest amount found in any serving of milk on this list). But it also contains 131 calories and 10 grams of sugar — high compared with the other beverages on this list — and comparatively few vitamins and nutrients.

Calories per 8-ounce glass: 131

No. 9. Rice milk

Rice milk packs in about 25% of your daily vitamin D content (an important nutrient that can be tricky to come by), but with 13 grams of sugar and less than a gram of protein per cup, it didn't stack up well with most of the other dairy and nondairy milks on the list.

Calories per 8-ounce glass: 112

No. 8. Whole milk

Whole milk may taste the best in a latte, but with 8 grams of fat, it's probably not the healthiest. Still, an 8-ounce glass of whole milk contains the most vitamin D of any of the milks on this list, with almost a third of your daily intake.

Calories per 8-ounce glass: 148

No. 7. Hemp

This earthy-tasting coffee alternative has 30% of your daily vitamin D intake and half of your daily calcium intake, but it also has the most sugar of any milks on the list at 14 grams per 8-ounce serving. Plus, it has only 3 grams of protein — pretty low compared with the rest.

Calories per 8-ounce glass: 140

No. 6. 1% milk

This dairy milk falls firmly in the center of our ranking. The drink has some fat (2.4 grams), 13 grams of sugar, but also packs in 8 grams of protein with fewer calories than whole milk.

Calories per 8-oz. glass: 103

No. 5. Coconut milk

Coconut milk (because there's a fair amount of variability here, we referenced Silk's version) had some of the highest vitamin B-12 content of the milks on the list



and was relatively low in calories. However, it didn't contain any protein, which is one of the main reasons people drink milk in the first place.

Calories per 8-ounce glass: 80

No. 4. Almond milk

Almond milk surprisingly doesn't have as much protein — 1 gram per serving — as you might expect from a nut milk. Almond milk makes up for its lack of protein in vitamin D and calcium content (25% and 45% of your daily content, respectively). It's also very low in calories. For this milk, we referenced Almond Breeze's nutritional label.

Calories per 8-ounce glass: 30

No. 3. Cashew milk

Cashew milk slightly edged out almond milk when accounting for calories and fat content, although their nutritional content was virtually the same. Cashew milk contained less than 1 gram of protein in a serving.

Calories per 8-ounce glass: 25

No. 2. Skim milk

As expected, skim or nonfat milk came in at the top of the dairy — and nondairy — milks, with only 0.2 grams of fat and 8 grams of protein, along with a solid amount of calcium and vitamin B-12. (The only place it came up short was vitamin D; it has none.)

Calories per 8-ounce glass: 83

No. 1. Skim Lactaid

The lactose-free milk alternative surprisingly topped the list, in part because it's fortified with 25% of your daily vitamin D, which gave it the edge on standard nonfat milk. With 8 grams of protein, 50% of your daily calcium intake, and just 90 calories, it reigned as the supreme milk included on this list.

(Source: *businessinsider.com*)

"SHAHR" Welfare Complex, a Gem in Northern Iran

Special Offer for Travelers Who Want to Enjoy a Trip in Northern Iran

In hot days of summer, travelers, who choose the coastal towns of Mazandaran Province for recreations alongside of the sea with breathtaking views, will experience a memorable days with their families in "SHAHR" Welfare Complex. Travelling to the northern cities of the country and visiting must-see sites and sceneries of the Caspian Sea is one of the first decisions taken by families for summer trips and holidays.

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

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

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

This modern and newly-built complex is equipped with 188 seafront apartment units, constructed in seven floors with a unique view, located in a dreamy town for passengers and travelers special of ESKANO.

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

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

On the other hand, senior managers of "SHAHR" Welfare Complex have considered special offer for government departments and organizations and can benefit from special discount within the framework of conclusion of a yearlong and/or long-term contract.



For more information about the facilities of this Complex and other units, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the following number: **01144536231, 01144536250 and/or 02144536093.**

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Iran makes leap forward in possible UNESCO inscription of Kandovan village

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Iran's heritage body seeks to remove obstacles for possible inscription of northwest Kandovan village on the UNESCO World Heritage list, so as to comply with the UN organization's requirements and criteria for assuming the privilege.



An undated photo shows some troglodyte homes carved out of noticeably eroded rocks in Kandovan village, northwest Iran.

The problem comes up with variety of inharmonious houses that severely distort genuine texture of the village which is filled with scenic troglodyte homes in the shape of stony ice-cream cones in East Azarbaijan province.

A total of 96 residential units have been ruled to be destroyed or being amended across the village based on Article 100 of the Supreme Council of Urbanization and Architecture, Mehr news quoted Morteza Abdar, the provincial director of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department as saying on Friday.

Situated near the city of Osku, Kandovan epitomizes genuine manmade dwellings that have been carved out of substantially eroded rocks and it has been continuously inhabited since the ancient times.

As to its shape and appearance, Kandovan is highly reminiscent of Turkey's Cappadocia, a UNESCO World Heritage site that features dwellings, troglodyte villages and underground towns with traces to human habitat dating back to the 4th century.

Indonesia's July foreign tourist arrivals +21.8% y/y

JAKARTA (Reuters) — Indonesia's foreign tourist arrivals in July rose 21.8 percent from a year earlier to 1.13 million, the statistics bureau said on Monday.

The increase was bigger than June's 16.2 percent annual rise.

The total number of foreign visitors, including those passing through Indonesia's borders from neighboring countries and foreign workers with permits for less than one year, in July was 1.35 million, up nearly 30.85 percent from the previous year.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Land of Frankincense

A UNESCO World Heritage site, the Land of Frankincense in Oman includes the frankincense trees of Wadi Dawkah, the remains of the caravan oasis of Shisr/Wubar, the affiliated ports of Khor Rori and Al-Baleed.

The four components dramatically illustrate the trade in frankincense that flourished in this region for many centuries. They constitute outstanding testimony to the civilizations in south Arabia since the Neolithic.



A view of the frankincense trees of Wadi Dawkah in Oman

The successive ports of Khor Rori (4th century BC to the 5th century CE) and Al Baleed (8th century till 16th century CE) and an outpost close to the Great Desert Rub Al Khali, Shisr, about 170 km inland, represent in a unique way the distribution of frankincense which was produced in the wadis of the coastal hinterland.

All three sites were exceptionally fortified. Wadi Dawka is an outstanding example of the growth of the frankincense tree (*Boswellia sacra*) from which the resin was produced, collected and traded.

The port of Khor Rori (the Moscha Limen of classical geographical texts) lies 40 km to the east of Salalah on a hilltop on the eastern bank of a sweet-water outlet (khor). About 400 meters from the open sea, it dominates the khor which opens to the sea and served as a natural harbor.

The remains of the fortress are located on a rocky spur running east-west, forming part of a wider defensive system, details of which are still evident.

(Source: UNESCO)

See Iran's World Heritage sites in landscaped miniature park

I → It is home to giant models of thirteen Iranian historical sites that have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Some visitors say the miniature park provides ample opportunities for people who are not able to traverse the country on tours of these heritage sites.

"One of the key characteristics of the ensemble is that its replica models have entirely been designed and constructed by domestic sculptors and artists," he said, adding the museum is home to some 70 to 80 species of floras and plants that are endemic to the country and it also embraces a permanent photo gallery showing variety of real shots of Iran's UNESCO sites.

Bazargani also pointed to some side section programs which the park hosts, saying "There are occasional sales exhibitions dedicated to breadwinner women to showcase their handicrafts such as hand-made shoes and clothing, embroidery, and traditional jewelry."

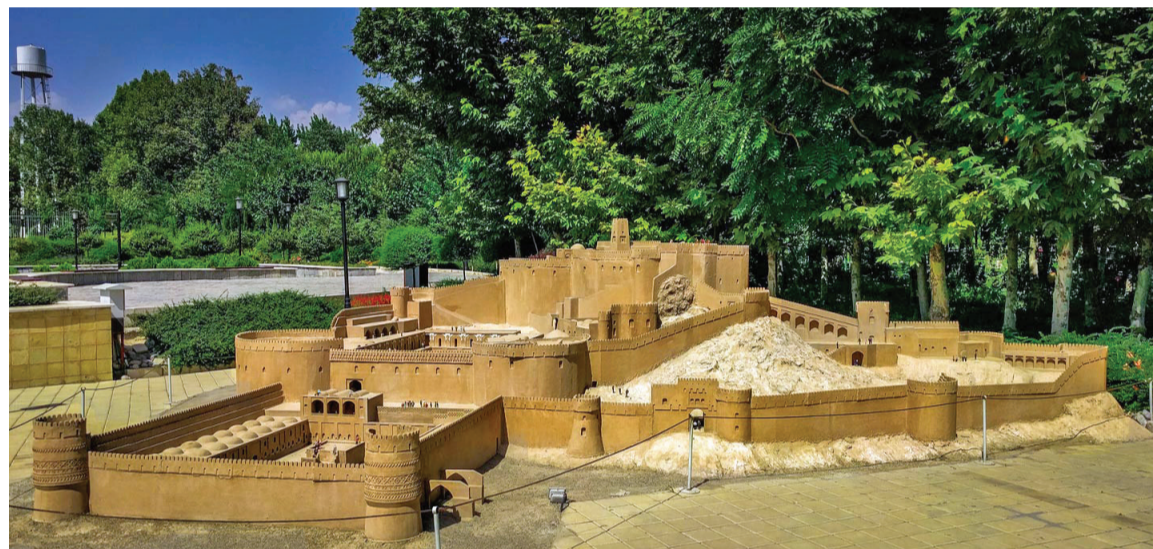
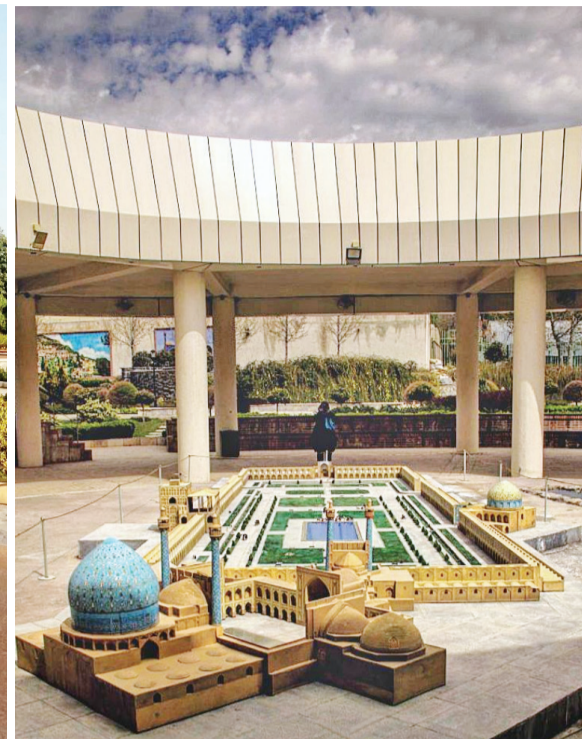
The replicas are at one twenty-fifth of their original size. One of the complex's highlights is probably the 17th-century Naghsh-e Jahan (Imam) Square that itself is composed of the Royal Mosque, the Ali Qapu Palace, the Mosque of Sheikh Lotfollah, the magnificent Portico of Qaysariyeh and a 15th-century Timurid palace all linked by a series of two-storied arcades.

The park also features copies of the Armenian Monastic Ensembles in the north-west of the country; Bam and its Cultural Landscape, and ancient mud-brick fortress in the south-east; magnificent ruins of Persepolis that was the capital of the mighty Achaemenid Empire in southern Iran; Tchogha Zanbil, a prehistoric Elamite ziggurat in the southwest; and Pasargadae which was the first dynastic capital of the Achaemenid Empire, founded by Cyrus II the Great.

According to the Tehran Municipality website, miniature maquettes of some other UNESCO-registered sites will be constructed in the future.

The sites include Gonbad-e Qabus, the one-millennium-old brick tower in the north; Jameh Mosque in Isfahan; the 18th-century Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran; rock-carved dwellings with the Cultural Landscape of Maymand at the southern extremity of Iran's central mountains; and several of famous Persian gardens scattered across the country.

The Miniature Garden Park opened its doors to the public in 2014. It is situated in district 8 of Tehran, sandwiched between West Janbazan St. in the south, Kerman St. in the west and Imam Ali Hwy. in the east.



A photo collection depicts some giant models of Iranian UNESCO World Heritage sites in Tehran's Miniature Garden Museum.

Safavid-era palace undergoes restoration

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Several schemes of restoration work have recently been started on Hasht Behesht Palace, an exquisite Safavid-era (1501-1736) structure in Isfahan, central Iran, CHTN reported on Sunday.

The restoration project includes missions to buttress the main hall and eastern iwan (portico) of the palace and it also touches upon delicate frescos, plasterwork and wooden embellishments in the interior, said Fereyduun Allahyari who presides over Isfahan province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department.

"Due to the vulnerability of the frescos of this palace, all of which will be protected against [potential] physical damages by installing glass shields in all



A view of the historical Hasht Behesht Palace in Isfahan.

rooms and the main hall once the emergency restoration is completed," the official explained.

The mural paintings have been damaged during history, the Qajar era (1785 to 1925) in particular, Allahyari added.

Hasht Behesht, meaning "Eight Paradises", was completed in 1669 as one of forty-some mansions which erected in Isfahan during the rule of Safavids.

The palace bears intricate plasterwork, woodwork and gorgeous murals even on the ceilings yet retains a domestic simplicity, most of its rooms and chambers are in octagonal patterns. The exterior tilework on the other hand is a source of charm for having a naturalistic style, depicting peacocks, trees, angels alongside other creatures.

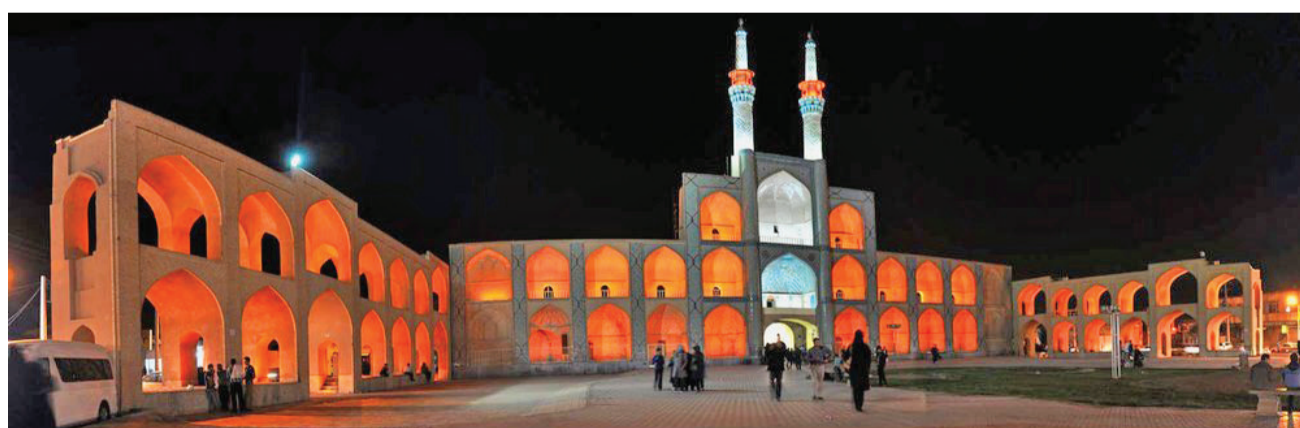
Milad Tower hosting Yazd's cultural days

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Yazd's cultural days opened at the foot of Milad Tower in Tehran on Monday to put the spotlight on rich traditions and attractions of the ancient Iranian city which has recently been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Organized under the auspices of Yazd province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, the 3-day event hosts various crafts workshops as well as sales exhibits of indigenous souvenirs and handicrafts.

Back in June, the historical structure of Yazd with a collection of public-religious architecture was made a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The oasis city of Yazd is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain



A file photo shows people visiting the three-story Amir Chakhmaq Complex in Yazd, central Iran.

ringed by mountains. Its historical structure enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras, they include forests of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses and atmospheric alleyways.

Little-known budget airline announces plans for £150 fares from UK to India

The low-cost long-haul revolution is expected to touch down in India next year with no-frills carrier Scoot aiming to launch non-stop flights from Europe to cities including Mumbai and Delhi for around £150.

The budget subsidiary of Singapore Airlines says it hopes to start flights between India and Europe using its so-called "fifth freedom" privilege, which allows airlines to carry passengers between two foreign countries as a part of services that connect with their home country.

"Since we have fifth freedom, we can operate direct flights from Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Kolkata to destinations like Copenhagen, Vienna, Cairo and Manchester," Bharath Mahadevan, head of the airline's operations in the country, told the



Times Of India.

"A return trip to Europe would cost around Rs 26,000,"

he added.

That equates to just over £310 — a significant saving on the best fare currently available. According to the flight comparison website Skyscanner, the cheapest return flight from Britain to Mumbai during October with set you back a shade less than £400. Scoot's proposed prices look even better value when you consider that they will include a 20kg checked bag and a meal.

The airline's operations are currently focused in the Far East and Australia, while its route map features Sydney, Melbourne, Manila, Bangkok and Hong Kong. It does, however, offer direct flights from Singapore to Athens, with prices from around £350 return.

(Source: The Telegraph)

Ancient global warming event linked to volcanic CO2

We're currently breaking climate record after climate record, and it appears that we might be on track to topple a record that's held strong for about 56 million years. The Palaeocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM) was the most rapid and extreme example of global warming since the dinosaurs were wiped out, and a new study has found evidence that intense volcanic eruptions were to blame, pumping mind-boggling amounts of carbon into the oceans and atmosphere.

About 10 million years into the current period, the Cenozoic Era, the Earth went through a relatively rapid warming phase, which lasted for about 150,000 years and spiked global temperatures by an extra 5° C (9° F). Evidence in the geological record points the finger at excess carbon as the cause of the PETM — that much has been known for a while, but debate has raged regarding just where all that carbon initially came from and how much was added to the oceans and atmosphere.

Flood basalts

The formation of flood basalts, huge swathes of the seafloor in the North Atlantic that were covered in lava, was an almost literal smoking gun. These formed suspiciously close in time to the PETM climate event, but direct evidence linking the two hadn't been detected.

To try to uncover that evidence, a new study led by researchers at the University of Southampton first looked at fossilized plankton called foraminifera.

The chemical makeup of the shells of these organisms acts like a time capsule of the environmental conditions they lived in, as changes in the isotopes in their shells paints a picture of the changing pH levels of the ocean.

Carbon absorbed by seawater

"Ocean pH tells us about the amount of carbon absorbed by ancient seawater, but we can get even more information by also considering changes in the isotopes of carbon, as these provide an indication of its source," says Andy Ridgwell, co-author of the study. "When we force a numerical global climate model to take into account both sets of changes, the results point to the large-scale volcanism associated with the



The chemical makeup of the shells of these organisms acts like a time capsule of the environmental conditions they lived in, as changes in the isotopes in their shells paints a picture of the changing pH levels of the ocean.

opening of the North Atlantic as the primary driver of the PETM."

As it turns out, an absolutely massive 10,000 petagrams (1 petagram is a trillion kilograms) of carbon was released at that time. For reference, this is about 30 times more carbon than all fossil fuels humanity has ever burned to date, and according to the researchers, it

increased the atmospheric CO2 concentration from 800 parts per million to more than 2,000 ppm.

For reference, our current CO2 concentration sits at just over 400 ppm, but as humanity tends to do, we're currently full steam ahead towards surpassing 2,000 ppm in the next few centuries.

(Source: New Atlas)

Researchers find microbes key to reef survival

In a paper published in the September 2017 issue of the journal Nature Climate Change, a consortium of marine biology researchers outline the mechanisms that might underlie adaptation to climate change in reef corals. Predicting the ability of coral reefs to survive changes in climate requires understanding coral animals -- the foundation species of these ecosystems -- and how parental provisioning, genetic and epigenetic mechanisms, and changes in the microbiome contribute to their adaptive response.

The marine biology researchers, from 11 institutions in five different countries, gathered at a recent workshop to assess the fate of coral reefs in the face of climate change. Participants at the conference included Gergely Torda and Philip Munday from the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, and Manuel Aranda, Michael Berumen, Timothy Ravasi and Christian Woolstra from King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST).

The "clock is ticking. If we look at the Great Barrier Reef, more than 30% of the corals may already be dead. Understanding these mechanisms is becoming increasingly important if we want to help these ecosystems. If not now, then when?" asked Aranda.



ingly important if we want to help these ecosystems. If not now, then when?" asked Aranda.

Coral reefs

The health of the world's coral reefs is of particular concern because of their high social, ecological and economic value, as well as their sensitivity to environmental change. "Climate change is happening; oceans are warming and ocean chemistry is changing with detrimental effects on coral reefs," said Ravasi.

"All animals and plants associate with

microbes and form so-called metaorganisms. In particular, coral metaorganisms rely on their microbial partners for survival. These microbes hold the promise to contribute to host physiology and can quickly adjust under changing environmental conditions, thereby helping the coral to adapt," said Woolstra.

The team focused on stony, reef-building corals, calling them "ecosystem engineers," because they form the framework of the reef, providing shelter, food and habitat for countless other living things.

Loss of reef-building corals therefore leads to declines in the diversity and abundance of other reef organisms and ultimately the collapse of the entire ecosystem.

In their paper the team identified eight potential research directions that could help clarify how coral reefs might adapt or acclimate to environmental change.

The team advised researchers to explore different forms of plasticity in corals and other reef organisms using well-designed, strictly controlled experiments. They also stressed the importance of demonstrating how epigenetic mechanisms and marks -- the ability of the parent's environment to alter the gene expression of the offspring -- relate to phenotypes in corals. They also emphasized the importance of understanding the relative contribution of parental provisioning, genetic and epigenetic mechanisms and changes in the microbiome to adaptive responses in corals.

The other directions placed importance on developing model organisms, understanding the flexibility of coral-microbial associations, improving models of mechanism interaction, and determining the pace of genetic adaptation. (Source: EurekAlert)

AYANDEH BANK Inaugurates 2nd School in Birjand

AYANDEH BANK opened its second school "Omid-e Ayandeh (Hope of Future)" in Shahrak-e Mehrshahr of Birjand during auspicious feasts of Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Ghadir Khumm, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Equipped with six classrooms, the

aforementioned school was put into operation in the presence of local and provincial officials, senior managers and directors of the bank and also a great number of noble people of the region with the aim of providing equal educational facilities for future makers of this

land and territory in different parts of the country. It should be noted that construction and inauguration of a number of eight schools in disadvantaged and deprived regions of the country is one of the most durable good practices of the bank in

line with materializing objectives of social responsibility of the organization.

Accordingly, two schools will also be inaugurated by the bank on Sept. 4 concurrently in Asavaleh Village of Sanandaj and the other one in Zahendan city, the Public Relations Dept. ended.

IMIDRO Chief Urges Government to Publish Rials and Currency Participation Bonds

Instead of compensating claims, Mehdi Karbasian Chief Executive of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) requested the government to publish rials and currency-based participation bonds, Public Relations Dept. of IMIDRO reported.

Speaking in the Ordinary Annual General Assembly meeting of IMIDRO, he reiterated: "Under the law, 70 percent



of revenues caused by the divestiture of companies, as subsidiary to IMIDRO, should be returned to the Organization."

With considering companies delegated by IMIDRO, the rate will hit 3,500 billion tomans, he said, adding: "57 billion tomans was paid to IMIDRO in 2015, 20 billion tomans of which was returned to the treasury."

IMIDRO is facing financial restrictions for the development of mining and

mineral sector coupled with foreign investment, he said, adding: "We expect the respected government to support us deservedly and allows us to publish participation bonds instead of compensating our claims we owe from the government."

In the end, senior official of IMIDRO put the volume of Letter of Credit opened for financing projects at two billion euro.

Completion of Construction Operation of Rasht Water-Supply Ring, Costing over 34b Rials

Construction operation of Rasht Water-Supply Ring will be completed, costing over 35 billion rials, concurrent with the implementation of emergency plan on wastewater collection network, Public Relations and Education Department of Gilan Province Water and Wastewater Company reported.

For his part, Seyyed Mohsen Hosseini Chairman of the Board of Directors and Managing Director of Gilan Province Water and wastewater Company pointed to the completion of construction operation of Rasht Water-Supply Project and said: "Construction operation of this project was put atop agenda of the company in proportion to the credits allocated on this

project." Given the above issue, Rasht Water-Supply Ring includes pipe-laying operation with cast ductile tubes with the diameter from 315 to 700 mm, as long as 3,500 meters, which will be put into operation, costing over 35 billion rials.

Once this giant project is put into operation, it will supply quality water with high pressure in various districts of the city, he maintained.

While emphasizing on the necessity of implementation of this project, he added: "As home to 165,000 people located in the vicinity of Goharroud River, this giant project will be put into operation in Rasht with

the aim of preventing entry of wastewater (150 lit./sec.) to this river and its transfer to the main wastewater treatment plant of the city, the managing director observed.

In the end, Seyyed Mohsen Hosseini Chairman of the Board of Directors and Managing Director of Gilan Province Water and wastewater Company expressed his special thanks to the unflinching cooperation and coordination of the noble people of Rasht, Gilan Province Governor-Generalship, Municipality of Rasht, Traffic Police Chief, Gilan Province Crisis Management Headquarters and those officials who cooperated the company to materialize its objectives.

Neanderthals were distilling tar 200 thousand years ago in Europe

Despite many recent discoveries that show Neanderthals were technologically and socially sophisticated, there's still a popular idea that these heavy-browed, pale-skinned early humans were mentally inferior to modern Homo sapiens. Now we have even more corroboration that they were pretty sharp.

A fascinating new study reveals that Neanderthals were distilling tar for tool-making 200 thousand years ago — long before evidence of tar-making among Homo sapiens. And an experimental anthropologist has some good hypotheses for how they did it, too.

One of humanity's earliest technological breakthroughs was learning to distill tar from tree bark. It was key to making compound tools with two or more parts; adhesives could keep a stone blade nicely fitted into a wooden handle for use as a hoe, an axe, or even a spear. Scientists have discovered ancient beads of tar in Italy, Germany, and several other European sites dating back as much as 200 thousand years, which is about 150 thousand years before modern Homo sapiens arrived in Western Europe. That means the people who distilled that tar had to be Neanderthals.

The question that Leiden University archaeologist Paul Kozowyk and his colleagues wanted to answer was how sophisticated the Neanderthals had to be to do it. Modern-day tar is distilled between 340 °C and 370 °C, and the process requires a ceramic vessel. Maintaining a temperature in that narrow band is very difficult without specialized tools.

Still, the evidence is indisputable: humans manufactured beads of tar much earlier. Kozowyk and his fellow researchers decided to figure out how by engaging in a little experimental archaeology, so they set about trying to make tar using only the tools Neanderthals had available. These included fire, ash, birch bark, sharp stones, and mesh woven from sticks.

(Source: Ars Technica)

Cassini's final Saturn plunge approaches

On September 15 NASA's Cassini spacecraft will finally end its historic mission to the ringed world of Saturn and its many moons. During its 13 years of ground-breaking observations, Cassini has provided enough data to fill more than 4000 scientific papers.

Cassini is now undertaking its final series of 22 so-called 'grand finale' orbits, designed to bring it ever closer to its ultimate demise. These orbits take the 2150-kilogram, mini-bus sized probe through the gap between Saturn's inner rings and the planet's swirling cloud tops.



Cassini's final orbit on September 9 will send it through the outermost fringes of Saturn's atmosphere, passing just 1680 kilometers above the clouds.

Two days later, Cassini will make a final 119,049-kilometre flyby of Saturn's largest moon, Titan. The gravitational perturbations caused by the Titan flyby will slow the spacecraft down and re-position it for a final descent into Saturn's atmosphere.

Cassini will take its final images of Saturn on September 14, sending back its last look at the moons Titan and Enceladus, as well as the hexagon-shaped vortex around the planet's north pole and weird "propeller pattern" features in the rings.

The spacecraft will then turn its antenna towards Earth, and begin a communications link that will continue until the end of the mission.

Cassini will also use these final hours to undertake detailed, high-resolution observations of Saturn's auroras and temperatures, before being configured for entry into Saturn's thick atmosphere.

Finally, in the early hours of September 15, Cassini's suicidal death plunge will send it into Saturn at a speed of more than 120,000 kilometers per hour. (Source: Cosmos Magazine)

Could a videogame strengthen your aging brain?

A sheen is starting to appear on Rocky Blumhagen's forehead, just below his gray hair. He's marching in place in a starkly lit room decked out with two large flatscreens. On both of the TVs, a volcano lets off steam through wide cracks glowing with lava, their roar muffling the Andean percussion and flutes on the soundtrack. Golden coins slide across the screen.

"I don't know if I can do it," he says to a guy named Josh sitting nearby in a felt-covered lounge chair. He looks up from his iPad, watching Rocky, age 66, grab, jog, kick, and reach his way through the videogame. "Keep it up," Josh says as the heart monitor in the corner of the screen reads 129.

Rocky and research assistant Josh Volponi are technically in a lab clinic at the University of California, San Francisco, but aside from the mannequin heads studded with electrodes, the room looks more like a man cave.

This is Rocky's 18th training session at Neuroscape, founded by neuroscientist Adam Gazzaley. Rocky is fit for his age — he works as a substitute yoga instructor, after retiring from careers producing radio and performing Cole Porter songs — but as he makes it to the end of the level, he looks exhausted.

This round wasn't his best. "I haven't been here for a week," he says. Volponi asks him to rate his physical exertion level. Rocky gives it a 15 out of 20; Volponi marks it on the iPad. "I feel rusty," he says, wiping his hands on his orange exercise shorts.

But there's a problem. It's really difficult to design an experiment to convincingly show that brain training works. (Source: Wired)

Ronaldo wants Gareth Bale axed from Real Madrid first team

CRISTIANO RONALDO wants Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane to axe Gareth Bale from the 1st XI.

Bale has established himself as an integral first-team star following his move from Tottenham in 2013.

However, he struggled form and fitness last term and found himself on the bench for Real's Champions League showpiece with Juventus.

And, according to Spanish news outlet Don Balon, Ronaldo reckons Bale shouldn't be a guaranteed starter.

The Portuguese is reportedly a huge admirer of Isco and Marcos Asensio.

Isco regularly deputised for Bale last term and acquitted himself well.

Meanwhile Asensio, 21, is regarded as one of the hottest prospects in European football following a series of dazzling displays.

He grabbed a late goal in the Champions League final and bagged a two wonder strikes in Real's last league fixture against Valencia.

Don Balon say Ronaldo also wants Zidane to consider leaving Karim Benzema out.

It's suggested this season could see the end of Real's famous Bale, Benzema and Ronaldo attacking trio.

Instead, Real's attack might be spearheaded by Ronaldo, Isco and Asensio.

(Source: Daily Star)

Barcelona chief Josep Maria Bartomeu is embarrassed

Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu admitted he felt 'embarrassed' by the club's pursuit of midfielder Jean-Michael Seri, according to his Nice counterpart.

Jean-Pierre Rivere says he received a phone call from Bartomeu following the closure of the summer transfer window in which the Barca chief issued an apology for the manner in which business had been conducted.

The La Liga giants pulled out of a move for Seri, after the Ivory Coast international had looked set for a €40million (£36.8m) move to the Nou Camp.

Seri initially blamed Nice for the proposed transfer collapsing, but Rivere revealed that Barcelona pulled the plug on the deal, leaving the club's chief embarrassed by the saga.

Julien Fournier, the general manager of [Nice], called me early on Wednesday [August 23], at about 9am and said: "Jean-Pierre, I do not understand, I received a call from Barcelona and they told me to stop the Seri transfer", Rivere recalled on Canal+.

"In the afternoon, Bartomeu called me, a little embarrassed, and said to me: "This is the first time that it has happened to us. Our staff have decided not to sign Seri, but it is not a financial issue".

Rivere added: "I put myself in his [Seri's] shoes; it was his dream to go to Barcelona and then it was broken. It was all up in the air.

(source: Daily Mail)

Lionel Messi 'blocked' Mesut Ozil move to Barcelona

Following the disappointment of a transfer window in which their club lost Neymar to PSG, failed to land many of the big-name transfer targets they were actively pursuing and were caught being decidedly "economical with the truth" regarding Lionel Messi's future, Barcelona fans must now resign themselves to further months of speculation about their star player's next move.

Messi is reported to be irritated with his club's various embarrassments during the January window and may very well up sticks and head for Manchester City when his contract expires next summer. An intriguing report from Spanish news outlet Don Balon suggests that it was the Argentinian who blocked an approach from Barcelona for Arsenal's midfielder Mesut Ozil, as he did not think a move for the former Real Madrid player would be a shrewd one.

(Source: Guardian)

Arsenal legend slams 'laughable' Mesut Ozil: Why haven't you signed yet?

Arsenal icon Ian Wright has hit back at Mesut Ozil, branding the playmaker "laughable" after he slammed former players for their negative reviews of the Gunners.

The Germany international, who has faced criticism after Arsenal lost two of their first three matches to open the new Premier League season, took to social media last week to call on prominent ex-players to "stop talking and start supporting" and start to "behave like legends".

Ozil has under a year left on his contract at Emirates Stadium and Wright feels he should sign a renewal if he cares so strongly about the club. Wright suggested Ozil was letting Alexis Sanchez's contract situation deflect attention away from his own, going as far as accusing the 28-year-old of hiding behind his team-mate, who saw a potential move to Manchester City break down on deadline day.

"Sign a contract, if you feel that strongly about people criticizing the team because you're somebody who is integral to Arsenal's success," Wright said to BBC Radio 5.

"You're not signing a deal and you're probably going to continue to hide behind the fact that [Alexis] Sanchez is the one that everybody's going to say, 'Is he going to go?'"

"Why haven't you signed yet? That's what I would say to you. If you feel that strongly, why haven't you signed yet?"

"A player that is not actually performing on the pitch is coming out, calling people out and he's not signing a contract. It's laughable." (Source: Independent)

Maria Sharapova keen to keep living through grand slam 'moments'

It hasn't been the smoothest of grand slam returns for Maria Sharapova but the Russian says she is just happy to be back playing on the sport's biggest stages.

Sharapova's run at the US Open, her first grand slam following a 15-month doping ban, was ended by Anastasija Sevastova Sunday after the Latvian won their fourth round match 5-7 6-4 6

"It's been a really great ride in the last week," the 30-year-old Sharapova told reporters.

"Ultimately I can take a lot from this week. It's great to get that major out of the way. It was an incredible opportunity. I'm very thankful for it. I did my best. I can be proud of that."

Over the last week, Sharapova had to endure some barbed comments from some of her fellow players, notably Caroline Wozniacki's criticism that the Russian had received preferential treatment over court scheduling for her matches.

"I feel like I'm really beyond that," said Sharapova, who had needed a wild card to compete in the last grand slam of the season.

"I think there's only a way to show it on the court, because that's what really matters to me."

"I have so many things in my life but there's a desire to keep going for more and to keep living through these moments out on these courts."

"That's special and that's meaningful. As long as I have that desire, I'll be there. That's what's important to me."

Sevastova was diplomatic when asked about Sharapova's return to grand slam events.

"I think some players have that. I don't have that. I have great respect for her," said the 26-year-old Latvian.

■ 'Great ride'

Sharapova's next task in the remaining tournaments of this season is to boost her ranking to ensure she isn't looking for a wild card at Australian Open in 2018.

The Russian will be 31 in April, but she believes she has plenty left to offer.

"When I was in my middle 20s, I didn't think that my body would be ready to compete at such a level but I just got a completely new appreciation of what the body can do at 30 or past 30," she said.

"I can take a lot of examples from champions that are still playing, competing, and doing incredibly well, and that's inspiring."

Meanwhile two-time major winner Petra Kvitova, whose career was jeopardized by a knife attack in December, knocked out reigning Wimbledon champion Garbine Muguruza 7-6 (7-3), 6-3 to set up a quarterfinal match with seven-time grand slam winner Venus Williams.

(Source: CNN)



Belgium show 'character' in securing World Cup place

Belgium delivered a performance of character and proved they were building "a winning team", coach Roberto Martinez said after they became the first country to qualify from the European preliminaries for next year's World Cup finals in Russia.

A 2-1 away win against Greece on Sunday ensured top place in Group H for the Belgians and a second successive World Cup finals appearance after a quarter-final finish in Brazil in 2014.

Sunday's result also extended their unbeaten run to 11 games, tying the country's previous best.

"We must be proud about being the first from Europe to qualify and now look to work harder to become better," said Martinez after the Belgians advanced to an unassailable 22 points, eight ahead of second placed Bosnia with two rounds left to play.

"It was clear that we didn't play well, we weren't ourselves. But the game was only about winning, it was like a cup final. It was not about playing good foot-

ball. We had to win, in whatever manner we could. The first half of the game was probably the worst football we've played in this campaign."

Goals after half-time from Jan Vertonghen and Romelu Lukaku ensured the victory.

"I was really proud with the way the players fought. There were a few that really stood up - (Thibaut) Courtois, (Kevin) de Bruyne, Vertonghen, (Marouane) Fellaini. It is a real team and I can only but be proud of them," the coach added.

"The players were not pleased at half-time and from their reaction you can see we are creating a winning team."

Sunday's win meant Belgium have won seven of their eight group games with a home draw against the Greeks in March the only blemish.

Belgium's 35-goal haul in eight matches is the most by any team in the 2018 European qualifiers.

(Source: Reuters)



La Liga want Man City investigated by UEFA after concerns over Financial Fair Play

La Liga are pushing for Manchester City to be investigated by UEFA concerning breaches of their Financial Fair Play rules.

The European governing body have already announced they are looking into Paris Saint-Germain following their mega deals for Neymar and Kylian Mbappe.

La Liga president Javier Tebas has spoken of concerns regarding "funding by state-aid" with his belief that it "distorts European competitions and creates an inflationary spiral that is irreparably harming the football industry."

Pep Guardiola's side have spent lavishly this summer, forking out £220m to overhaul their squad to his liking, the largest spending spree of all time in a single window.

A statement from the body released on Monday confirmed two letters were sent to UEFA on August 22, urging them to investigate both PSG and City.

It read: "Both PSG and Man City benefit from sponsorships that make no economic sense and lack any fair value."

"La Liga calls on Uefa to proceed with

its investigation, taking into account the full history of PSG's actions. Additionally, La Liga calls on Uefa to open a similar investigation into Man City."

PSG are owned by the state of Qatar, while City benefit from The Abu Dhabi United Group's investment.

La Liga are thought to be angered after PSG triggered Neymar's release clause, refusing the initial payment.

After opening proceedings concerning PSG meeting the regulations, a UEFA statement read: "The investigation will focus on the compliance of the club with the break-even requirement, particularly in light of its recent transfer activity."

The news leaves La Liga open to accusations of hypocrisy after Spanish football clubs were forced to repay tens of millions in illegal state subsidies last year.

Real Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Atletico Bilbao, Osasuna, Hercules and Elche were all forced to repay sums ranging from €3.7m to €18.4m.

(Source: Mirror)



Lewis Hamilton feeling empowered by Formula One title lead

Lewis Hamilton has described the feeling of leading the Formula One world championship for the first time this season as "empowering", following his dominant victory at the Italian Grand Prix.

Hamilton led every lap bar one en route to claiming his sixth victory of the campaign at Monza, as he became the first back-to-back winner of 2017, having added to his Belgian Grand Prix triumph from the previous weekend.

The result has seen the Mercedes driver move into a three-point lead over chief title rival Sebastian Vettel — who recovered to finish third at Ferrari's home race — with seven rounds remaining.

"It's an empowering feeling for sure," Hamilton said when asked how it felt to be leading the championship. "It's been a real constant search and battle for perfection, which is what's been needed to overhaul the Ferrari — because they've been exceptional all year long."

"You come into a season and there's certain decisions you make in your life on the way and not neces-



sarily knowing how they are going to impact on your future or how you perform, but all with the goal of performing as I have been. To come to these last few races, which have been real solid races, I definitely feel like I've found more heart and passion within myself in

the last three or four races."

Hamilton says he has felt rejuvenated ever since his commanding win at the British Grand Prix, which spurred him on to claim victories in two of the next three races. However, the Briton insists he is in no position to start feeling complacent given how closely fought the battle with Ferrari has been so far this year.

"I think Silverstone was a real empowering weekend and kind of from then it's sparked a forest fire within me and I think that's hopefully reflecting on my driving and when I'm working with my guys. So to be leading, while it's only by a couple of points, I'm grateful for it and by no means do I feel comfortable."

"I'm going to apply myself the same as I have these past three or four races and hope that I can revert the picture, because earlier on in the year it was obviously 20 points or whatever, the gap between myself and him [Vettel]. I want to see if he can have that feeling for a while."

(Source: ESPN)

Russia 2018 Asian Qualifiers: IR Iran vs Syria preview

Syria will look for the perfect ending to their fairytale run in the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualification campaign with a win over Group A winners Islamic Republic of Iran at Azadi Stadium on Tuesday to guarantee at least a play-off berth for the Qasbioun Eagles.

Syria sit two points behind second-placed Korea Republic and above fourth-placed Uzbekistan on goal difference with the Koreans and the Uzbeks facing off in Tashkent in a simultaneous kick-off, meaning a win could even see the visitors claim second spot and a historic first-ever FIFA World Cup appearance.

But the Syrians will be aware of the difficulty of the task as their opponents are unbeaten so far and have yet to concede a single goal in this campaign — something that has provided Iran with huge motivation even after wrapping up their qualification with a win over Uzbekistan in June.

A scoreless draw with Korea Republic on Thursday saw Iran move to just one game away from finishing the group stage with their record still intact, although Saeid Ezatollahi's dismissal means the midfielder is suspended for Tuesday's encounter.

Syria's 3-1 win over Qatar saw them leapfrog the Uzbeks into third and leaves them with a very realistic chance of finishing in the top three. With Omar Khribin and the recently recalled Omar Al Soma leading the frontline, Ayman Hakeem's side have the firepower to trouble the stubborn Iranian defence.

(Source: the-AFC)



Iran beach soccer climb to world rankings No.2

S P O R T S Asian champions Iran climbed to second place in the world rankings during August.

Asian champions Iran are Movers of the Month for August, replacing Portugal as the world's second best beach soccer nation, beachsoccer.com wrote.

Iran - again under the tutelage of Brazilian coach Marco Octavio - were not in action last month but climb to second spot as a result of Portugal losing points.

Elsewhere in the top five, Tahiti climb above Russia to fourth while Paraguay swap places with Japan to move to eighth in the world.

El Salvador are among the biggest climbers in the upper echelons of the rankings as they jump three places to 14th while Ukraine and Spain both slip despite impressive recent performances in the Euro Beach Soccer League.

Results from the league's normal stages do not count towards ranking points although this month's Superfinal and Promotion Final will bring about a number of changes over the coming weeks as Europe's best sides battle it out for either the continental title or for promotion to the top tier.

We want to make history against Syria: Carlos Queiroz



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national football team head coach Carlos Queiroz says that they want to make history in the match against Syria.

Already-qualified Team Melli will host Syria in Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Tuesday in the 2018 World Cup qualification Matchday 10.

"Without a doubt, we have a very important match against Syria. Nobody thought Syria could be a candidate for qualifying for the World Cup but now

the Syrian team are on the verge of winning the World Cup place," Queiroz said in the pre-match news conference.

"We have respect for Syria as we respected our other rivals in the group. We will try to continue our improvement in the match against Syria," the former Real Madrid coach added.

"We want to make history and we know that they want to make history too. Team Melli are going to finish the qualification campaign with a win," Queiroz concluded.

We are determined to advance to World Cup: Ayman Hakeem



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Syria national team head coach Ayman Hakeem says that they are determined to beat Iran to increase their chance of qualifying for the 2018 World Cup.

Syria need to beat Iran and hope South Korea lose to Uzbekistan to ensure their place at the 2018 World Cup.

The Syrian team will play Iran in Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Tuesday.

"We knew that Iran would qualify

for the 2018 World Cup and now we want to advance to the World Cup too. We've really been working so hard for advancing to the 2018 World Cup and we want to beat Iran," Hakeem said in the pre-match news conference.

"We know that Iran have not conceded a goal in the World Cup qualification but our strikers are on good form and can break Iran's deadlock. We are well-prepared in every aspects and are ready to defeat Iran," he added.

Abusive chants and Nazi slogans at Germany games - who, what and why?

German national team coach Joachim Löw has addressed the unsavory incidents that overshadowed his team's 2-1 win over the Czech Republic in Prague on Friday.

Traveling German supporters disrupted a minute's silence, sang derogatory songs about striker Timo Werner and chanted Nazi slogans in the Eden Arena. After the final whistle, the German players refused to approach their fans, instead disappearing straight down the tunnel.

After initially claiming not to have heard the chants in his post-match press conference in Prague on Friday, speaking to reporters in Stuttgart, Löw explicitly condemned them.

The incidents in Prague were linked to a number of social and political issues in German football, including perceived over-commercialization and right-wing extremism.

■ Anti-DFB chants

Ahead of kick-off, a minute's silence for two deceased former Czech players was disrupted by German supporters chanting "Scheiß DFB" — a continuation of current nationwide fan protests against the German football association (DFB).

This was the first time that such chants had been heard from fans at a national team game, matches that are rarely attended by ultras who often have little interest in international football.

■ Derogatory chants aimed at Timo Werner

RasenBallsport Leipzig striker Timo Werner has been the subject of abusive chants from some supporters since diving to win a penalty in a Bundesliga match



against Schalke last season.

But Werner wasn't just any striker falling to ground to win a penalty for any team — he dove for RB Leipzig, the Red Bull-backed franchise club considered by many fans to embody the over-commercialization of the sport. For those fans opposed to Red Bull, Werner has become something of a target figure.

■ Nazi chants

While the chants aimed at the DFB and Werner are rooted in ongoing protests and current sentiment, other chants have caused outrage for a different reason.

The German national team's traveling support has long contained a small number of right-wing football hooligans and neo-Nazis. Although generally banned from attending domestic matches, they like to use the bigger stage offered by the national team as a platform to air their views.

At the World Cup in France in 1998, French police officer Daniel Nivel was beaten into a coma by German

hooligans in Lens. Last summer, a group of right-wing German hooligans traveled to the European championship in France where they attacked Ukrainian fans in Lille and posed with a Reichskriegsflagge — the flag of the Imperial German armed forces until 1921.

On Friday night in Prague, as the final whistle approached, the traditional chants of "Sieg!" (victory) from the German supporters were accompanied by an echoed "heill!" from around 200 neo-Nazis.

Given the geography, Germany's away matches in eastern Europe are particularly problematic due to the proximity to eastern Germany — where right-wing political parties such as the AfD enjoy significant support and right-wing extremism is more pronounced.

"You know what's not far from Prague, so you can do the math yourself," Werner said after the match, referring to Saxon cities such as Dresden, Chemnitz and Zwickau which are only 100 kilometers (60 miles) away from the Czech capital. According to Focus, Bild and Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, the hooligans did indeed belong to groups associated with second-division side Dynamo Dresden and third-division FSV Zwickau.

■ How did they get tickets?

The 200 hooligans didn't acquire tickets in the away end and weren't among the 1,200 fans officially ticketed by the DFB. But since the match wasn't sold out, they were able to purchase tickets in the neighboring blocks at the stadium ticket office. Czech media also report that 30-40 hooligans violently forced their way into the stadium.

(Source : Deutsche Welle)

United World Wrestling accepts Islamic dress code for women

The United World Wrestling (UWW) accepted Islamic dress code for women to participate in international competitions.

In the wake of Iran Wrestling Federation follow-up and after being accepted by Traditional Wrestling Committee and UWW executive committee, UWW put female wrestling case and its regulations on the agenda.



Head of Traditional Wrestling Committee together with heads of Africa, Asia, Oceania and Europe confederations approved the plan.

Based on the newly-approved regulations, female fighters also would be able to attend international events by presenting annual plans.

According to UWW, Iran is now able to hold female competitions.

(Source: Irna)

Iran's boating squad departs for Italy

Head of Bushehr Boating Athletes Team Mehdi Zarei said on Sunday that the Iranian boating team departed for Italy to attend world clubs cup competition in the field of Dragon Boat.

He told IRNA that 10 teams from Asia are participating in the competition hosted by Venice, Italy.

The official said the Iranian team included 40 persons, among them 2 women from Bushehr.

He said totally six athletes, male and female, from Bushehr province, are in the team.

(Source: Irna)

David De Gea: 'It's a dream to be at a team like Manchester United'

David De Gea has described playing for Manchester United as "a dream."

De Gea, 26, was again linked with a move to Real Madrid in the summer but the transfer deadline passed on Thursday with the goalkeeper still at Old Trafford.

The Spain international, who almost moved to the Bernabeu in 2015, is under contract until 2019 with the option of another year.

United are expected to begin talks with De Gea next year over an extended deal in the hope of warding off further interest from Madrid.

He told MUTV: "When you get older, you start to dream about being there, about being at a top team, so of course it's a dream to be at a team like Manchester United."

De Gea is yet to concede this season as United have started the season with three consecutive wins.

After the international break, Jose Mourinho's team travel to the bet365 Stadium on Saturday to face Stoke.

De Gea added: "It's really good, but I like to keep my focus, keep working hard and doing my best."

(Source: Soccerbet)

Manchester United sign midfielder Arnau Puigmal from Espanyol

Manchester United have completed the signing of Spain youth international Arnau Puigmal.

The midfielder, 16, described his move to Old Trafford as "a dream come true" after leaving Espanyol.

The transfer is yet to be confirmed by United, but Puigmal is expected to join Kieran McKenna's under-18s.

After signing his contract alongside McKenna and former United striker Andy Cole, Puigmal wrote on Instagram: "Very happy and proud to announce that I am a new Manchester United player, a dream come true. It's time to work."

The Spain U18 international will join fellow signings Ethan Galbraith, Lergie Ramazani, Di'Shon Bernard and Aliou Traore.

McKenna's side have started the season with a 4-2 defeat to West Brom and a 2-1 win over Stoke.

Academy chief Nicky Butt sat on the bench for the final game of last season to watch a team that included youngsters Joel Pereira, Demetri Mitchell, Scott McTominay, Josh Harrop and Angel Gomes beat Crystal Palace 2-0.

And Butt said United offer young players like Puigmal a viable path into the first team.

(Source: ESPN)

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NEWS IN BRIEF

New Delhi center reviewing Iranian cinema

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian cinema is being reviewed in a program that opened at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi on Sunday.

IRANIAN FILM FESTIVAL



Five movies have been selected for the program, which began with a screening of Ebrahim Hatamikia's acclaimed political drama "Bodyguard".

"Sweet Taste of Imagination" by Kamal Tabrizi, "Mazar-i-Sharif" by Hassan Barzideh, "Crazy Castle" by Abolhassan Davudi and "Where Are My Shoes" by Kiumars Purahmad are other film picked for the program, which will run until September 12.

The event is organized in collaboration with Iran's cultural attaché's office in New Delhi.

Italy honors Ali Jenaban with Mutti Prize

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian filmmaker Ali Jenaban has been honored with the Mutti Prize-AMM, which is awarded annually to immigrant filmmakers residing in Italy.

He received the prize for his 2016 documentary "Salmon" at the Excelsior Hotel in Venice on Saturday, the Iranian Youth Cinema Society (IYCS) announced on Monday.

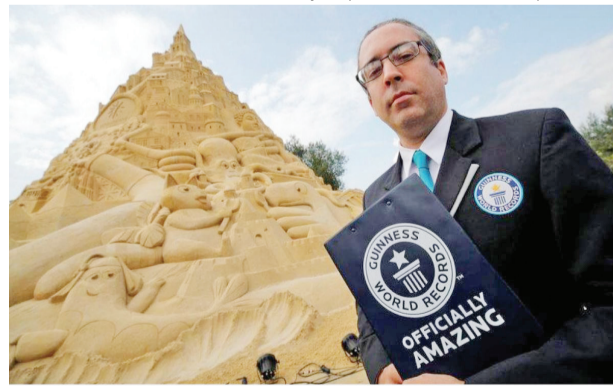
The Mutti Prize - Archivio delle Memorie Migranti (AMM) was established by the Cinema of Bologna in 2008.



Sculptors build 55feet sandcastle in Germany to claim world record

DUISBURG, Germany (Reuters) — Using almost 4,000 metric tonnes of sand, 19 sculptors have built a 55ft tower featuring a number of famous landmarks to claim the world record for tallest sandcastle.

The team spent more than three weeks in the western German city of Duisburg working on the 16.68 meter (54.72 feet) artwork, which included a sandy replica of the Great Sphinx of



Jack Brockbank, the official judge of Guinness World Records stands next to the world's highest sandcastle (16.68 meters) in Duisburg, western Germany, September 1, 2017.

(Reuters/Wolfgang Rattay)

Giza, Venice's Rialto Bridge and the graveside of Elvis Presley.

A Guinness World Record official was on hand on Friday to approve the new mark for the German sculpture, which eclipsed the previous tallest sandcastle, a 14.84 meter world peace monument built in India in February.

The team of international sculptors failed with a world record attempt last year and decided to use a different sand, mainly very fine quartz which is less than one millimeter in grain size.

"It did not collapse because the quality of the sand was better than previous attempts, the weather was good and very good planning," Ukrainian Eugenia Kolot told Reuters.

Parviz Tanvoli vows to publicize Tehran Peace Museum

A R T TEHRAN — Veteran artist Parviz Tanvoli who is mostly known for his sculptures has said that he will ask his students to visit the Tehran Peace Museum.

The 80-year-old Tanvoli made the remarks in a visit to the museum on Sunday while his daughter, Tandis, and a number of war veterans who were wounded by Iraqi chemical weapons during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war accompanied him during the visit, the museum announced in a press release.

"Today, looking at these amazing artifacts in the museum lifted my spirit for life and working," said Tanvoli and expressed his hope that the museum with its unique objects could be sources of inspiration for many artists.

Addressing the executive director of the museum, Mohammadreza Taqipur, who is himself a war veteran, Tanavoli said, "As a debt of gratitude to you, I promise to familiarize my students and younger artists with your museum and encourage them to visit this humanistic venue in order to learn lessons about life and diligence."

He said that he had previously been advised by the late filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami to visit the museum, which was established in 2005 to promote the culture of peace by displaying the grief of the victims of Iraqi chemical attacks during the war.

"This visit occurred today when he is not among us," Tanavoli sighed.

"The most significant thing that makes visitors involve themselves is the fact that the real victims of the war are themselves the direct narrators of the events," he added.

He praised the war veterans and said, "Your merciful spirits are deeply inspiring for everybody."



Tehran Peace Museum Mohammadreza Taqipur (L) talks to sculptor Parviz Tanvoli and his daughter, Tandis, during their visit to the museum on September 3, 2017. (Photo by Tehran Peace Museum)

Kiarostami paid a visit to the museum in December 2014. "Visiting the museum inspires me and everybody to do whatever we can for the war veterans," he stated during the visit.

Art expert says Iranian galleries sluggish at intl. events



Aria Gallery owner Aria Eqbal

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian art expert Aria Eqbal who is also the owner of Aria Gallery in Tehran has said that Iranian galleries have been sluggish at the various international art events.

"Lack of funds and some other factors to participate in such art events are the main reasons for the lack of activity," she said in a press release on Sunday.

She said that managing a gallery is a hard job and added, "Galleries do not earn much income for their owners in

Iran while the jobs such as taking part in auctions and art expos in the galleries are carried out at great expense."

Most of the galleries fail to cover their expenses, Eqbal lamented. Aria Gallery took part in Art Dubai, a leading international fair for art from the Middle East and North Africa, this year in March.

The gallery selected works by Sonia Balassanian and Garnik Der Hacopian to showcase in the modern art category of the fair.

Shorts from Iran line up for Serbian festival



A scene from "Mother's Embrace" by Sina Ayyubi, which will be screened in the Mini Film Section of the 4th International Short Film Festival-Short Form in Gornji Milanovac, Serbia

A R T TEHRAN — Seven Iranian films will go on screen in the various sections of the 4th International Short Film Festival-Short Form, which will be held in Gornji Milanovac, Serbia from September 26 to October 1.

"Kite" by Iraj Afkar, "Full Color" by Ario Saffarzadegan, "1-0" by Saman Hosseinpur and "Soccer Shoes" by Saeid

Arabtaheri will compete in the Micro Film Section.

"Class" by Reza Golchin and "Mother's Embrace" by Sina Ayyubi will go on screen in the Mini Film Section while "Light Sight" by Seyyed Moslem Tabatabaai has been selected for the Short Film Section.

Over 185 short films from across the world will be screened at the event.

Walter Becker, Steely Dan's jazz-loving co-founder, dead at 67

LOS ANGELES(Reuters) — Walter Becker, co-founder of the influential jazz-rock band Steely Dan, died on Sunday at age 67, according to his website, which did not disclose the cause of death.

Becker, who played lead guitar, formed Steely Dan with Donald Fagen, its keyboardist and lead vocalist. In its heyday in the 1970s, the band scored hits with "Reelin' in the Years," "Do It Again," "Rikki Don't Lose That Number" and "Deacon Blues."

Born in New York City in 1950, Becker grew up revering the jazz giants Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington and John Coltrane. He and Fagen would bond over their love of this music after meeting as students at Bard College in New York in 1967.

"We started writing nutty little tunes on an upright piano in a small sitting room in the lobby of Ward Manor, a moldering old mansion on the Hudson River that the college used as a dorm," Fagen said in a statement on Sunday published by Variety.



Steely Dan members Walter Becker (L) and Donald Fagan (R) won Best Pop Vocal Album for "Two Against Nature" at the 43rd annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on February 21, 2001.

After working as touring musicians the first Steely Dan album in 1972, they moved to Los Angeles, releasing "Can't Buy a Thrill."

The band was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland in 2001, where their official biography describes their 1970s albums as "wry, nuanced and hyper-literate" that are "highly regarded by connoisseurs of pop hooks, jazz harmony and desiccating wit."

Fagen described his bandmate on Sunday as "cynical about human nature, including his own, and hysterically funny."

"Like a lot of kids from fractured families, he had the knack of creative mimicry, reading people's hidden psychology and transforming what he saw into bubbly, incisive art," Fagen's statement said.

After a long hiatus, the band reunited in the late 1990s to record its first studio album in 20 years, according to the Steely Dan website. That album, "Two Against Nature," would go on to win Album of the Year in 2000 at the Grammy Awards.

Becker missed concerts earlier in the year as he recovered from an unspecified medical procedure, Fagen told Billboard.

Prize-winning U.S. poet John Ashbery dies at 90

NEW YORK(Reuters) — Pulitzer Prize-winning American poet John Ashbery, who published more than 20 books of poetry and was known for the complexity of his style, has died at age 90, U.S. media reports said.

Ashbery died at his home in Hudson, New York, the New York Times and ABC News reported. The cause of death was not disclosed.

Ashbery, who was first associated with the New York school of poetry in the 1950s and 1960s, won

the Pulitzer Prize for "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror" in 1976. The collection won the National Book Award and the National Book Circle Critics Award the same year.

Ashbery was deeply influenced by abstract expressionist art and early in his career was an art critic. He tried to capture the experience of disorder in his poems, with experience slipping away from the process of understanding.

"I would like to please the reader, and I think that

surprise has to be an element of this, and that may necessitate a certain amount of teasing," he said in a 1983 Paris Review interview.

Ashbery was born in Rochester, New York, the son of a biology teacher and a farmer, and wrote his first poem at 8. He graduated from Harvard University and went to France as a Fulbright Scholar in the 1950s.

He was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2011 by President Barack Obama, who praised him for profoundly influencing generations of writers.