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Huge Kabul blast shows failure to counter terror, Iran regrets

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian desk Foreign Ministry on Wednesday strongly condemned a huge bomb blast in the Afghan capital Kabul, saying failure to counter terrorism and cut support for the extremists have led to increase in number of terrorist attacks.

The huge explosion in Kabul, which struck near the Afghan presidential palace on Wednesday morning, killed at least 80 people and injured 300 others. According to reports, the Chinese, Turkish, French, Iranian and Japanese embassies suffered damages.

There was no immediate claim of

responsibility for the blast, with the Taliban saying it had "nothing to do" with the explosion.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi described the terrorist explosion as a "warning" to the international community about the dangers of terrorism.

Qassemi went to say that Iran will always stand beside the Afghan government and people in difficult times.

He renewed Tehran's call for "political initiatives" and "dialogues" among the Afghan groups without foreign intervention to establish security and stability in the country. **→2**

Trump decides to exit from Paris Climate deal despite EU's objections

U.S. President Donald Trump has decided to withdraw the country from the 2015 Paris agreement aimed at curbing climate change, Axios reported.

According to the Axios portal citing two sources with direct knowledge of the decision, details on the issue will be elaborated by a small team which is to include Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt.

This team will decide on either fully withdrawing from the deal, which may take three years, or exiting the UN climate change treaty. The latter,

according to the media outlet, would be faster but more extreme.

If confirmed, Trump's decision would continue his administration's attempts to reduce former U.S. President Barack Obama's legacy to nothing following the moves to withdraw from the TPP free trade deal, as well as to review several environmental initiatives of the previous administration.

During last week's NATO summit, several EU countries' leaders and top officials discussed the Paris climate deal with Trump, who has repeatedly criticized the agreement. **→13**

CAO: Treasury Secretary's remarks worried U.S., European firms

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin's recent remarks had worried Airbus and Boeing companies more than Iran as it had affected international equities of the US and European firms, Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) spokesman said Wednesday.

Everybody acknowledges that following the nuclear deal, the sale permission for Boeing and Airbus was issued by US Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets, Reza Jafarzadeh said.

Any curb on selling planes to Iran would be tantamount to the nuclear agreement violation on the American side, which would neither be accepted nor allowed by European states, as it would be against their companies' interests.

The US treasury secretary said last week that the Department was reviewing licenses for Boeing and Airbus to deal with Iran, while threatening that new sanctions would be imposed on Tehran.

Boeing and its French rival, Airbus, signed contracts in 2016 to sell a total of 180 commercial aircrafts to Iran. The deals were inked after the international sanctions against Iran were relieved as a result of the implementation of the nuclear agreement.

CAO spokesman also pointed out that due to Iran's market attraction for the airplane companies, and Iranian authorities' seriousness in meeting the country's need, certainly they would not suffice to the contracts (Boeing and Airbus) and would negotiate with other companies to renovate the fleet.

(Source: IRNA)

Iranian official urges UN action to end violation of human rights in Bahrain

A senior Iranian human rights official called on the United Nations to take measures to bring a halt to the organized violation of human rights by the Bahraini regime and force Manama to stop suppression of religious freedom.

Chief of the Iranian Judiciary's Human Rights Council Mohammad Javad Larijani in separate letters to UN Secretary General António Guterres and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini called for action for a peaceful settlement of the situation in Bahrain.

The international community is expected to fulfil its duties under the UN Charter and international conventions to gain a correct understanding of the crisis in Bahrain and stop the continuous violation of human rights

and suppression of religious and sectarian freedom in the Arab country, he added.

Criticizing the Manama regime for attributing popular civil demands to religious motivations since the beginning of unrest in 2011, Larijani listed some of the most blatant illegal measures the Al Khalifa regime has taken against the people of Bahrain, including demolition of mosques, prohibition of religious rites, serving summons on clerics and preachers, imprisoning political and religious leaders, and stripping popular Shiite cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim of his nationality.

The Manama regime's insistence on policing and security approaches has only complicated the situation in Bahrain, he deplored.

The Iranian official further asked the UN

officials to employ international human rights mechanisms to overturn unjust verdicts against Sheikh Qassim, guarantee the freedom of the cleric, his family and supporters, and have the Al Khalifa government release Bahraini prisoners who have been arrested for demanding their rights.

Bahrain, a close ally of the US in the Persian Gulf region, has been witnessing almost daily protests against the ruling Al Khalifa dynasty since early 2011, with Manama using heavy-handed measures in an attempt to crush the demonstrations.

Scores of Bahrainis have been killed and hundreds of others injured and arrested in the ongoing crackdown on the peaceful demonstrations.

UN chief takes veiled swipe at Trump on climate abdication

Facing the prospect that the United States will soon pull out of a landmark climate pact it helped negotiate, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday delivered an urgent appeal to the world to stay the course and implement the Paris Agreement, under which countries pledge to voluntarily curtail their emissions of greenhouse gases.

Addressing an audience of scientists, investors, and students at the New York University Stern School of Business, Guterres painted a disturbing portrait of world beset by climate-induced storms, heat waves, and rising sea levels that threaten island nations and coastal cities.

Military strategists, he noted, increasingly recognize that climate change threatens global peace and security, fueling competition for scarcer natural resources and driving the mass movement of refugees.

"Climate change is an unprecedented and growing threat," he warned, announcing that he would host a UN climate summit in 2019 to promote international support for the Paris Agreement. "The arguments for action are clear."

Droughts from California to the Sahel are lasting longer than they have in the past, he said.

"Allow me to be blunt. Our world is a mess," Guterres said. "Soon the famous snows of Kilimanjaro will exist only in sto-

ries."

His appeal underscores the growing isolation of the Trump administration on an issue that unites both America's closest allies and big rivals and fellow industrial powers like China, who have committed to implement the agreement.

Last week, at a meeting of the Group of Seven industrial powers in Sicily, the Trump administration blocked the adoption of an endorsement of the Paris agreement. More than four months into his term, he argued that his administration had not had enough time to review the pact.

(Source: Chicago Tribune)

Yemen health system mangled as cholera bites: UN envoy

The United Nations' Yemen envoy says more than seven million people are facing the risk of famine in the impoverished country, which has been under incessant Saudi regime attacks for more than two years.

Speaking at an open session of the UN Security Council on Tuesday, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed warned against the prolongation of the conflict in Yemen and said, "At the begging of the holy [fasting] month of Ramadan, we have to remember that seven million Yemenis are at risk of famine unless this conflict ends."

"The humanitarian crisis and the threat of famine [are] entirely man-made. If the conflict stops, Yemenis and their partners in the international community have the capacity and the will to rebuild the country," he said.

He said only "less than 45 percent" of medical facilities in the country are functioning as a cholera epidemic takes its toll on the war-weary nation.

The disease has led to more than 500 deaths, while there are over 60,000 suspected cases in 19 provinces, said Ahmed, adding, "The rapid spread of the disease has been worsened by the inadequate healthcare system."

"Medicines for diabetes, hypertension, cancer and other chronic diseases are in short supply," the envoy said.

In March 2015, the House of Saud regime and its allies, backed by the United States, began a military campaign against Yemen to reinstall its former government. The war has killed over 12,000 civilians since then.

Ahmed further pointed to the Saudi regime airstrikes against civilian targets in Yemen and said, "On 29 March, an airstrike in Sa'ada governorate reportedly killed 12 civilians, including several children."

He said the potential outbreak of violence in al-Hudaydah will critically hamper the already-ponderous flow of foodstuff and medicine into the country.

"I have proposed an agreement to avoid military clashes in Hudaydah," Ahmed said. "My proposal, which includes security, economic and humanitarian elements, would allow for the continued flow of commercial and humanitarian supplies." **→13**

TEHRAN TIMES
Iran's Leading International Daily

Advertising Dept
Tel: 021 - 430 51 450
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Seminary students protest in support of Sheikh Isa Qassim

Iranian seminary school students protest House of Khalifah regime's sentence on the spiritual leader of Bahrain's Shia majority, Sheikh Isa Qassim, in the Iranian holy city of Qom south of the capital Tehran. The House of Khalifah regime also stripped Sheikh Qassim of his nationality.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Arak reactor to become operational in 3-4 years: nuclear official

POLITICS TEHRAN — The work on redesigning the Arak nuclear reactor is being carried out according to the plans and the reactor will be inaugurated in the next three to four years, the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran said on Wednesday.

"We also seriously try to increase our yellow cake reserves," Behrouz Kamalvandi said, ILNA reported.

On negotiations with Kazakhstan to buy uranium ore, he said Iran is serious about acquiring the substance.



Interior minister: Not a single vote displaced

POLITICS TEHRAN — Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli stressed on Wednesday that "not a single vote" was displaced in the May 19 election, IRNA reported.

However, he told reporters, "some violations" have been reported "which should be addressed by the Judiciary."

Rahmani Fazli's remarks came a few days after the Guardian Council officially approved of the election results which reinstated President Hassan Rouhani for a second term in office.



Person in presidential advisor office arrested on spy charges: Judiciary

POLITICS TEHRAN — A person who used to work in the office of Hesamoddin Ashna, the cultural advisor to President Hassan Rouhani, has been arrested on espionage charges, Mehr quoted Judiciary spokesman as saying on Wednesday.

Qolamhossein Mohseni Ejei dissociated the arrested person from the office, saying, "One may be arrested at work but have nothing to do with the person at his adjacent desk."

Ejei also said a nuclear spy has received his preliminary sentence. He did not give any further details.



MPs warn Rouhani of impeachment over UNESCO 2030 agenda

POLITICS TEHRAN — 12 MPs on Wednesday wrote a cautionary letter to President Hassan Rouhani and asked him to desist from following UNESCO 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The lawmakers warned that they would put on agenda the impeachment of Rouhani if he does not back off, Fars reported.

The signatories chastised the president for insisting on implementing the agenda instead of apologizing to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for having initiated its implementation in the first place.



Zarif calls new U.S. sanctions 'destructive' and 'obstructive'

POLITICS TEHRAN — The new U.S. sanctions against Iran are "destructive" and will be "obstructive", Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters on Wednesday.

He said Iran has objected to the introduction of new sanctions in a protest to the 5+1 group, ILNA reported.

Zarif also confirmed that a Saudi aircraft had entered the Iranian airspace.

He added the captain decided to head back to Saudi Arabia after Iran's air defense dismissed his reroute request.



Tehran-Moscow ties a proper response to Trump: CIS official

POLITICS TEHRAN — The deputy chief of the Institute of the Commonwealth of Independent States believes a strong relationship between Tehran and Moscow would be the most proper response to U.S. President Donald Trump.

"The U.S. tries to weaken ties between Iran and Russia, but comprehensive improvement of ties in all areas would be the best response," Vladimir Yevsiyev told IRNA on Wednesday.

He added Tehran and Moscow should boost cooperation especially over issues of concern in Syria, Afghanistan, Karabakh, and Tajikistan.

Conservative Larijani reelected Majlis speaker

Masoud Pezeshkian and Ali Motahari were re-elected as first and second ranking parliamentary lawmakers, respectively

By Negar Asadi

TEHRAN — Having the distinction of being the only candidate, the leading conservative lawmaker Ali Larijani was re-elected speaker of Iran's parliament on Wednesday, the tenth in a row lawmakers overwhelmingly voted to keep him in the position.

Incumbent Larijani won 204 out of 268 votes, as compared to 237 votes of 276 lawmakers present in the 290-seat house last year.

The re-election makes Larijani the longest serving parliament speaker since the victory of the Islamic revolution in 1979, superseding Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who held the position for nine years.

"For us (the newly elected presiding board), your trust is an immense responsibility," Larijani spoke to lawmakers after the re-election.

"Considering the heavy responsibility you vested in me, I hope I can steer the body in such a way to materialize the will of nation to solve the country's problems."

Also, Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist and former health minister representing Tabriz, and Ali Motahari, a moderate conservative representing Tehran, were re-elected first and second deputy heads of the body, respectively, each garnering 179 and 163 votes in a total of 253 votes.



Hope parliamentary leader Mohammadreza Aref seen congratulating Larijani on his reelection as parliament chief.

The two were backed for the posts by the pro-reform Hope faction.

Hamidreza Hajibabayee, a principlist MP representing Hamadan, and Hadi Qavami, another principlist representing Esfarayen from North Khorasan province, competed with Pezeshkian and Motahari for the posts.

Who is Ali Larijani

Prior to taking on the role of speaker in 2008, Larijani served as culture min-

ister from 1992 until he was appointed as head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting in 1994, a position he held for 10 years.

Throughout his political life as parliament speaker, Larijani, 58, has demonstrated leadership qualities, political savviness, pragmatism, moderation, and a considerable power of persuasion.

He led the nuclear negotiations with

the West for a period before being ousted from the role by President Ahmadinejad in 2007.

In 2010, under his leadership Majlis passed the hotly debated, controversial subsidy reform plan introduced by the Ahmadinejad administration.

He seemed unruffled during a parliamentary session in 2012 when Ahmadinejad played a video clip of a conversation in which one of Larijani's brothers, Fazel, appeared to discuss the purchase of a state company under favorable terms.

Additionally, Larijani, who has a PhD in Western Philosophy, stigmatized storming of Saudi Arabia's embassy in Tehran and consulate in Mashhad in January 2016.

Larijani has supported in recent years the government of President Hassan Rouhani, lobbying for the passage of a bill to approve the 2015 international nuclear deal with world powers, which proved a victory for the government over opponents who worried the accord opens a door to wider rapprochement with the West.

The moderate conservative also voiced implicit support for reelection of Rouhani, challenging populist slogans by rivals.

Larijani was unofficially said to have been shortlisted to replace the late Rafsanjani, known in the Iranian society for his political dynamism.

Zarif calls on former firebrand MP to officially apologize for false claims

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has called on a former parliamentarian to officially apologize for his latest comments which he said were "shameful".

Mahmoud Nabavian, a former member of the parliament, said recently that Zarif had agreed to hand over the commander of Quds Forces of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major-General Qasem Soleimani to Washington in exchange for establishing banking relationships with Tehran.

"America had said that the banking relationships would be established only if you hand over Qasem

Soleimani completely handcuffed," Nabavian claimed, adding that the Iranian side has agreed to the deal.

Zarif, furious at the comments, told reporters on Wednesday that he will sue Nabavian unless he officially apologizes.

"Given my deep affection for Major-General Soleimani, I will pursue this issue through legal channels because my colleagues and I were badly hurt... unless he personally apologizes and more importantly repents."

The former lawmaker later tried to explain away his incendiary remarks, saying the agreement between

the current administration and the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) is what would lead to the handing over of Soleimani among many others.

Nabavian, a 52-year-old cleric, has also been very vocal in his criticism of the nuclear deal, or the JCPOA, which the Rouhani administration clinched with six world powers including France, Britain, Russia, China, the U.S. and Germany.

It's been about a year and a half since the implementation of the nuclear deal but no banking relationship has been established, he says.

Iranian embassy suffers damage in Kabul terrorist attack

Iranian embassy suffers damage in Kabul terrorist attack

TEHRAN — Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish said initial findings showed it had been a truck bomb.

The attack, which appeared to be one of the bloodiest of the long Afghan war, shattered windows as far as a mile away, causing panic in much of central Kabul.

Kabul's police chief, Gen. Hassan Shah Frogh, said the bomb was detonated near the square just as the street turns

toward the German embassy. "The blast was so huge that it dug a big crater as deep as four meters," he said.

Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani called the attack "a crime against humanity."

His office issued a statement, saying: "The terrorists, even in the holy month of Ramadan, the month of goodness, blessing and prayer, are not stopping the killing of our innocent people."

Foreign Ministry says Iran will always stand beside the Afghan government and people in difficult times.

Guardian Council confirms result of presidential election



POLITICS TEHRAN — The Guardian Council has confirmed the result of the presidential election which was held on May 19, the Iranian Interior Ministry announced on Tuesday night.

"Minutes ago, the Guardian Council's letter confirming the validity of the 12th presidential election was received," Interior Ministry spokesman Salman Samani was quoted by Press TV as saying.

In the letter, the Secretary of the Guardian Council Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati verified the polls despite reports and complaints about the election process, Samani noted.

He added that some of the received complaints of irregularities in the electoral process before and on the day of

voting had been sent to the judiciary for further investigation.

According to final results, 41,220,131 voted from a registered electorate of 56,410,234.

Hassan Rouhani, the incumbent president, was re-elected in a landslide, with 23,549,616 votes or 57 percent of the total ballots.

Rouhani's main rival, principlist candidate Ebrahim Raeisi, secured 15,786,449 votes or 38.5 percent of the ballots.

Six candidates had been approved to run for president after they were vetted by the Guardian Council — a 12-member body responsible for overseeing elections and confirming their results in addition to vetting candidates.

Iran calls Gen. Mattis' accusations 'fabricated'



POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Tuesday that accusations made by U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis against Iran are "unfounded" and "fabricated".

In a televised interview with CBS's Face the Nation on Saturday, Mattis claimed that Iran is at the center of dysfunction in the Middle East.

Mattis also accused Iran of being involved in an attempt to assassinate Saudi Arabian diplomat Adel al-Jubier in Washington in 2011.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said it is Washington's "strategic objective to fabricate fake threats in order to plunder the regional people's assets."

Qassemi added, "The U.S. defense secretary's accusations about assassi-

nating a Saudi Arabian ambassador in Washington by Iran is a fabricated and unfounded scenario whose Hollywood nature has been revealed for the public opinion after these years."

The spokesman said Iran pays no heed to such claims by the U.S. and its ally Saudi Arabia.

Qassemi said leveling such accusations just days after U.S. President Donald Trump's trip to Saudi Arabia is not surprising.

U.S. President Donald Trump visited Riyadh on May 20-21. During the visit the U.S. and Saudi Arabia signed 110 billion dollars arms deal, one of the greatest arms deal in history. While in Riyadh both Trump and King Salam claimed that Iran is supporting violent extremism.

Russia fires cruise missiles at ISIL targets in Syria

Two Russian warships fired several cruise missiles at the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group targets in Syria from the eastern Mediterranean Sea, the Kremlin said on Wednesday, the first such strikes announced in months.

The frigate Admiral Essen and submarine Krasnodar carried out four strikes against ISIL targets near the city of Palmyra (Tadmor), the Russian military said in a statement.

The missiles were intended to eliminate a stockpile of artillery that had been moved from Raqqa, ISIL's de facto capital in Syria, the statement said.

"All the targets were hit," the statement said, without specifying when the strikes occurred.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was briefed on the successful strikes by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, the Kremlin said.

Al Jazeera's Rory Challands, reporting from Russia's capital, Moscow, said the strikes, which came a day after the United States conducted what it said was a successful shooting down of a mock intercontinental ballistic missile, could be seen as a show of force by the Russian army.

Moscow said that the U.S., Turkish and Israeli military "were informed in a timely manner of the missile launches through existing communication channels".

Russia has been conducting a bombing campaign since 2015 in support of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and has a naval contingent deployed to the eastern Mediterranean to bolster its firepower.

Moscow has, however, not announced any strikes from the sea in recent months as it focuses on pushing a fragile truce between the government and rebels.

The ceasefire does not include United Nations-designated terrorist groups, including ISIL.

U.S. begins sending weapons to Kurdish YPG in Syria

Meantime, the U.S. has begun sending small arms to Kurdish fighters battling the ISIL in northern Syria, despite concerns from NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)-ally Turkey.

The Pentagon said on Tuesday that the



weapons shipments began ahead of an upcoming offensive to recapture Raqqa, the de facto capital of ISIL in northern Syria.

"We have begun to transfer small arms and vehicles to the Kurdish elements" of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Pentagon spokesman Major Adrian Rankine-Galloway said.

The weapons sent to the SDF's Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG/Yekîneyên Parastina Gel?) include AK-47s and small-caliber machine guns, Rankine-Galloway added.

U.S. President Donald Trump earlier this month approved arming the YPG fighters, angering Turkey.

The Pentagon said then that the YPG are "the only force on the ground that can successfully seize Raqqa in the near future".

There was no immediate reaction from Turkey regarding the start of the weapons transfer.

Turkish officials have previously warned the U.S. that its decision to arm Kurdish forces fighting ISIL in Syria could end up

hurting Washington.

Ankara says YPG fighters are linked to Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) separatists inside Turkey, who have waged an armed campaign since 1984 that has killed more than 40,000 people.

Turkey considers the Kurdish forces to be "terrorists" and fears any weapons sent to the YPG could end up in the hands of the PKK. In August 2016, Ankara launched its own military operation inside Syria, targeting ISIL and Kurdish groups, called Euphrates Shield.

Speaking to Al Jazeera last month, Erdogan criticized Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, over an agreement between the two to fight what he described as "terrorist groups" operating in Turkey.

"With President Obama, we had a mutual agreement about the PKK - but Obama deceived us. I don't believe the Trump administration will do the same," Erdogan said.

"The YPG is an arm of the PKK. We must put an end to this," he added.

"We can't destroy one terrorist group

with another one. We are strategic partners with the U.S."

Washington has sought to placate Ankara by saying the weapons will be handed out judiciously, and that it will monitor these to make sure they do not go into Turkey.

The SDF has been encircling Raqqa since November.

The U.S.-backed group has now advanced to within a few miles of the ISIL stronghold on several fronts, and this month captured the strategic town of Tabqa and the adjacent dam.

Following the capture of Tabqa, the SDF said it will soon begin a final attack to capture Raqqa. At the time, a SDF commander said forces would begin "entering and storming the city ... at the start of the summer".

On Monday, Britain-based so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 13 people have been killed in suspected U.S.-led coalition air strikes on Raqqa and suspected rocket attacks fired by the Kurdish Ghadab al-Furat group. (Source: agencies)

S. Korea defense ministry 'intentionally dropped' THAAD units in report: Blue House

South Korea's Defense Ministry "intentionally dropped" mentioning that four more launchers had been deployed for the controversial United States THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) anti-missile system in a report to President Moon Jae-in's top aides, his office said on Wednesday.

Moon has ordered a probe at the defense ministry, saying it was "very shocking" the launchers had been brought in without being reported to the new government or to the public, presidential Blue House spokesman Yoon Young-chan said.

The Defense Ministry intentionally omitted details about the THAAD system battery in a report last week, when the new government was preparing for Moon's summit with U.S. President Donald Trump next month, Yoon told a briefing.

"The Blue House has confirmed that the Defense Ministry has intentionally dropped the introduction of four more launchers in its report," Yoon said.

Moon took office on May 10 without a transition period because a snap presidential election was held just two months after his predecessor, Park Geun-hye, was ousted in a corruption scandal. Moon inherited his defense minister along with the rest of his cabinet from the previous administration.

The THAAD battery was initially deployed in March in the southeastern region of Seongju with just two of its maximum load of six launchers to counter a growing North



Korean missile threat.

An earlier version of the defense ministry report specified the total number of launchers being prepared for deployment and the name of the U.S. military base where the four were being kept, but the reference was removed in the final version delivered to the Blue House, Yoon said.

The Pentagon said it had been "very transparent" with South Korea's government about THAAD deployment.

U.S. missile defense test

During his successful presidential campaign, Moon called for a parliamentary review of the THAAD system, the de-

ployment of which has infuriated China, North Korea's lone major ally. Moon had also called for more engagement and dialogue with Pyongyang.

Asked about South Korea's Defense Ministry dropping mention of the four additional launchers, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying expressed "serious concern", and reiterated a call for THAAD to be withdrawn.

North Korea has conducted three ballistic missile tests since Moon took office, maintaining its accelerated pace of missile and nuclear-related activities since the beginning of last year in defiance of United Nations sanctions.

In Washington, the U.S. military said on Tuesday it had staged a successful, first-ever missile defense test involving a simulated attack by an intercontinental ballistic missile.

"The intercept of a complex, threat-representative ICBM target is an incredible accomplishment ... a critical milestone for this program," Vice Admiral Jim Syring, the director of the Missile Defense Agency, said in a statement.

Moon's order of a probe over the THAAD deployment came amid signs of easing tensions between South Korea and China, a major trading partner.

China had been incensed over the THAAD deployment, saying it would do little to deter the missile threat from North Korea while allowing the U.S. military to use its radar to look deep into its territory and at its own missile systems.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told China's top diplomat on Wednesday that he would like to work with China to try to rein in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

Beijing is also troubled by the possibility the THAAD system would open the door to a wider deployment the U.S. missile defense systems, possibly in Japan and elsewhere, military analysts say.

South Korean companies have faced product boycotts and bans on Chinese tourists visiting South Korea, although China has denied discriminating against them. (Source: Reuters)

Amnesty, Norway slam Qatar for deporting rights activist to Saudi Arabia

Amnesty International and Norway slam Qatar for deporting a Saudi human rights activist amid concerns that the campaigner may be subjected to torture and unfair trial.

Mohammad al-Otaibi fled to Qatar in March facing charges in Saudi Arabia for setting up an independent organization without authorization and sending tweets deemed "offensive" to the kingdom.

The 49-year-old activist was later granted refugee status by Norway.

Otaibi was arrested at Doha airport en route to Norway on May 24 and sent back to Saudi Arabia early on May 25.

Qatar's state-run news agency quoted a Foreign Ministry source as saying that "the extradition was ... based on legal procedures and regional and international

agreements relating to the extradition of accused persons and criminals."

Both Amnesty International and Norway denounced Otaibi's deportation.

Director of Research at Amnesty International in the Middle East Lynn Maalouf said on Tuesday that the Saudi national was not a "criminal," but rather "a prisoner of conscience" and a "peaceful" activist.

"Forcibly returning ... Otaibi to Saudi Arabia under the guise of judicial cooperation, where he risks torture and an unfair trial, is a shameful and inhuman act on the part of the Qatari authorities and a blatant violation of international law," Maalouf said.

She further called on Saudi rulers to release the activist "immediately and unconditionally and put an end to their relentless crackdown on human rights defenders."

"Now that Mohammad al-Otaibi's fate has been all but sealed, the Norwegian government must do everything within their power to pressure the Saudi Arabian authorities to release him and allow him to travel to Norway as planned," she added.

Additionally, Norway condemned Qatar's expulsion of the Saudi rights activist as "regrettable."

Norwegian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Ane Haavardsdatter Lundtold AFP in an email statement, "We are concerned by the situation and we will continue to monitor the developments for this person through a dialogue with relevant organizations and countries."

The human rights situation is absolutely dire in Saudi Arabia, where the House of Saud regime has deprived people of their basic freedoms and rights. (Source: Press TV)

50 years on, Israel occupation ruining Palestinian lives: UN report

Netanyahu: Israel must keep W. Bank military control under any deal

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has condemned Israel's oppressive occupation and its damaging effects on Palestinians' everyday lives, expressing concerns about the regime forces' use of lethal force against Palestinians.

In its 2016 annual report released on Wednesday, OCHA estimated that some 4.8 million Palestinians were affected by the Israeli occupation, two million of them "in need of humanitarian assistance and protection."

"The prolonged occupation, with no end in sight, cultivates a sense of hopelessness and frustration that drives continued conflict" in the region, the report said.

"The occupation denies Palestinians control over basic aspects of daily life.... Their ability to move unimpeded within their own country, to exit and return, to develop large parts of their territory, build on their own land, access natural resources or develop their economy is largely determined by the Israeli military," it added.

The report came days ahead of the 50th anniversary of the Tel Aviv regime's occupation of the West Bank and East al-Quds (Jerusalem) during the 1967 war.

Last week, thousands of Israelis staged a protest rally in Tel Aviv to voice their support for an independent Palestinian state and call for an end to the Israeli occupation.

Elsewhere in its report, OCHA said the number of casualties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had dropped in 2016 compared to 2015.

However, Palestinian civilians are still "subjected to threats to their lives, physical safety and liberty from conflict-related violence, and from policies and practices related to the Israeli occupation," it added.

The report also raised alarm over "possible excessive use of force and extrajudicial executions by Israeli forces" against the Palestinians.

OCHA further recorded the demolition or confiscation of 300 structures donated by aid organizations to the Palestinian people, up three times from 2015.

Thousands more Palestinians are vulnerable to forcible transfer policies "due to a coercive environment generated by Israeli policies and practices, which create pressure on residents to leave their communities," the report went on to say.



It also referred to the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, saying the long siege, among other factors, has left the coastal enclave "especially vulnerable."

Israel must keep West Bank military control under any deal: Netanyahu

Meantime, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the Tel Aviv regime should maintain its military occupation of the West Bank under any agreement to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians.

"The idea that we can give up territory and achieve peace is not right. In order to assure our existence, we need to have military and security control over all of the territory west of the Jordan [River]," Netanyahu told Israel's Army Radio on Tuesday.

Israel occupied the West Bank and East al-Quds (Jerusalem) during the Six Day War in 1967. It later annexed East al-Quds in a move not recognized by the international community.

In November 1967, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 242, under which Israel is required to withdraw from all territories seized in the war.

Palestinian officials have repeatedly said that they want the resolution of the decades-long conflict with Israel based on the so-called two-state solution along pre-1967 boundaries.

Elsewhere in his comments, Netanyahu claimed that the root cause of the conflict with the Palestinians lies not in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, but rather the "continued refusal by the Palestinians to recognize Israel."

He further noted that the Palestinians are stuck in their attitude of "not setting up a state but rather negating the existence of" Israel.

However, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said recently that the Palestinians had problem "with the occupation and settlements and the failure of Israel to recognize the state of Palestine ... The problem is not between us and Judaism, it is between us and occupation."

Earlier this week, United States President Donald Trump traveled to the occupied territories and met with Netanyahu and Abbas amid Washington's recent move to drop the US commitment to the two-state solution.

Trump said both Netanyahu and Abbas had "assured" him of their willingness to "reach for peace."

Meanwhile, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley is set to make a visit to the occupied territories between June 7 and June 9, where she is expected to hold meeting with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Palestinians are seeking to create an independent state in the territories of the West Bank, East al-Quds (Jerusalem), and the Gaza Strip, with East al-Quds as its capital.

However, Israel's expansion of settlements in occupied lands has dealt a serious blow to Palestinian hopes to establish an independent state.

The occupied lands have witnessed tensions ever since Israeli forces imposed restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshippers into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East al-Quds in August 2015. Over 300 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli forces since October 2015, when the tensions intensified. (Source: Press TV)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Stock exchange deals value up 121% in a month

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The value of deals in Iranian stock exchange market rose 121 percent in the second Iranian calendar month, Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21), compared to its previous month, Farvardin, Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday.

As reported, the value of deals in Ordibehesht stood at 83.012 trillion rials (about \$2.225 billion) rising from 37.538 trillion rials (about \$1.006 billion), in Farvardin.



Govt. ratifies issuance of \$2.6b of securities

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian cabinet, in their Wednesday morning meeting, approved issuance of 100 trillion rials (about \$2.6 billion) of securities to finance domestic governmental projects, IRNA reported. During the meeting, led by the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, the minister approved that the ratified securities and Sukuk Islamic bonds will be issued to finance various projects implemented by different Iranian ministries and their affiliated companies.



Import of containerized goods to Iranian ports up 40% in 2 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Imports of containerized goods to Iranian ports increased by 40 percent in the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21- May 21, 2017) compared to the same period last year, IRNA quoted an official as saying.

According to Mohammad Saiednejad, the managing director of Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran, the rise in this figure is an indication that the country's terminals are going back to their pre-sanctions era.

Canada's economy grows 3.7% on domestic demand

Canada's economy accelerated in the first quarter to a 3.7 percent annualized pace behind what is one of the most broad-based quarterly expansions since the recession, though inventories were responsible for the biggest part of the gain and trade disappointed enough to bring growth below analyst forecasts.

Statistics Canada also raised its growth estimates for the two previous quarters to 2.7 percent and 4.2 percent, confirming the country is in one of its strongest periods of expansion since the recession.

Canada's economy grew at a more-than-expected 0.5 percent pace in March, on the back of higher manufacturing.

Economists were projecting a 4.2 percent first-quarter annualized pace and 0.2 percent gain in March.

• Canada's consumers, benefiting from a buoyant jobs market and rising home values, seem to be indefatigable. Household final consumption expenditure rose at an annualized 4.3 percent annualized pace in the first quarter. That's the fastest since 2010.

• The housing booms in Toronto and Vancouver are fueling residential investment, which was up 15.7 percent on an annualized basis in the first quarter. That's the biggest gain since the first quarter of 2012.

• Business investment made a comeback in the first quarter. Investment in non-residential structures, along with machinery and equipment, posted only its second quarterly gain since 2014, growing an annualized 10.3 percent. *The increase was the largest since 2012.

All major components of domestic demand increased in the first quarter -- a rare occurrence. (Source: Bloomberg)

Italian business retained trust in Russia in most difficult times

ST. PETERSBURG (Sputnik) — Italian business has retained trust in Russia, even in the most difficult periods in the recent years, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Italy to Russia Cesare Maria Ragalini told Sputnik Wednesday, expressing hope the upcoming St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) would lay the grounds for further partnership between the states.

"This year a rather large number of our business representatives will attend the St. Petersburg Economic Forum. Among them there will be the representatives of large, small and medium enterprises. It shows the trust of the Italian business to Russia in general, trust that our side always had and retained it even in the most difficult times in recent years," Ragalini said on the eve of the SPIEF 2017 forum.

The official stressed that the forum became a very prestigious and attractive event for entrepreneurs from all over the world, adding that Italy was participating in the forum even when other countries ignored it.

So my main expectation from the forum is the hope that in the coming days we will lay ground for further partnership," Ragalini said.

Italian companies are showing a particular interest in the oil and gas sector, as well as chemical and mechanical engineering industries in Russia, Italian Ambassador Italy to Russia Cesare Maria Ragalini told Sputnik Wednesday.

"Our companies have technologies that can be applied in almost all industries. We could hardly find any sector where Italian companies will not be able to participate. At the moment we are seeing special interest of our companies in the oil and gas sector, mechanical engineering, agriculture, chemical industry, nanotechnology, production of furniture. We are also developing bilateral partnership in the health sector," the ambassador said on the eve of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) forum.

Mapna Group builds 25MW mobile power plant

ENERGY TEHRAN — A 25-megawatt mobile power plant constructed by Iran's Mapna Group was connected to the country's electricity grid on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

According to the report, this 25MW power plant is designed to be prepared, installed and to go online in a short time in order to provide electricity for less than three months periods.

This mobile plant goes online in less than 25 minutes and functions on both gas and diesel fuels.

Mobile electric power plants are used where the need for electric power is temporary. Such power plants serve as primary power sources in locations far away from power transmission lines. They may also serve as standby sources where other power is ordinarily available.

The power equipment of a mobile electric power plant is usually installed in a truck of tracked vehicle, on one or more trailers, on a self-propelled chassis, or on a railroad flatcar.

MAPNA Group is an Iranian enterprise which operates in the area of construction and development of thermal power plants under EPC scheme, independent power plants (IPP), oil and gas as well as rail traction projects.



French inflation undershoots forecasts, joining Euro-area trend

Inflation in France slowed in May as it became the third major euro-area economy to record weaker-than-forecast price growth.

The rate declined to 0.9 percent from 1.4 percent, undershooting the median estimate of 1.1 percent in a Bloomberg

survey. Spain and Germany also posted readings this week that fell short of predictions.

Inflation in the 19-nation euro region, due later on Wednesday, is forecast to have cooled to 1.5 percent this month, though that's based on a survey that was

completed before the weak national data. Core inflation, key to the European Central Bank's debate on the future of its policy, also probably slowed.

The euro-zone inflation numbers are among the last major data to be released before the ECB's Governing Council gath-

ers next week for its policy meeting. With the economic recovery showing ongoing strength, but sustainable inflation not yet in place, officials have been debating how to manage their route toward an eventual stimulus exit without spooking markets.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Investors cash in as profitable month of May ends, sterling slides

Stocks flatlined on Wednesday as investors used the last day of May to protect gains built up in what has been yet another lucrative month, while sterling fell after an opinion poll suggested the ruling Conservatives could lose seats in next week's UK general election.

World stocks are poised to end May up nearly 2 percent, marking the seventh straight monthly increase and the longest monthly winning streak in over a decade.

MSCI's global equity index .MWD-

00000PUS held steady on Wednesday, while European stocks edged down 0.1 percent in early trade .FTEU3 following Wall Street's dip on Tuesday .SPX .DJI.

Asian shares drew some support from data that showed activity in China's manufacturing sector grew at the same pace in May as in April, although a sturdy performance from the Japanese yen helped push the Nikkei into the red .N225.

The biggest mover in currencies was ster-

ling, which shed 0.3 percent after a YouGov poll showed the ruling Conservative Party might lose 20 of the 330 seats it holds while the opposition Labour Party could gain nearly 30 seats.

"The return of U.S. and UK markets yesterday (after holidays) saw a little bit of weakness creep in as we head into month end and what has been a positive month for markets, with records broken on an almost daily basis," said Michael Hewson, chief markets analyst at

CMC Markets.

"This soft tone looks set to be carried over this morning," he said.

The main pan-European indexes were slightly lower early on Wednesday, Germany's DAX .GDAXI was flat and sterling's weakness helped lift Britain's FTSE 100 .FTSE by 0.2 percent.

U.S. futures pointed to a rise of 0.1 percent on Wall Street Esc1. DJIc1.

(Source: Reuters)

Venezuelan opposition condemns Goldman for \$2.8b bond deal

Goldman Sachs Group Inc's statement that it never transacted directly with the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro when it bought \$2.8 billion of bonds for pennies on the dollar was dismissed by the country's opposition on Tuesday as an effort to "put lipstick on this pig."

Goldman, in a statement late Monday confirming the purchase, said its asset-management arm acquired the bonds "on the secondary market from a broker and did not interact with the Venezuelan government."

The New York-based investment bank came under fire from Venezuelan politicians and protesters in New York opposed to Maduro, who said the deal provided the cash-strapped government hundreds of millions of dollars in badly-needed hard currency. The deal, first reported by the Wall Street Journal, made Goldman complicit in alleged human rights abuses under the government, they said.

"As hard as it may try, Goldman Sachs ... cannot put lipstick on this pig of a deal for Venezuelans," the head of the opposition-led congress Julio Borges said.



Goldman Sachs did not respond to an email requesting comment on Borges' statement. In its original statement, Goldman had said: "We recognize that the situation is complex and evolving and that Venezuela is in crisis. We agree that life there has to get better, and we made the

investment in part because we believe it will."

The opposition-led National Assembly later on Tuesday voted to ask the U.S. Congress to investigate the deal, which they called immoral, opaque, and hypocritical given the socialist government's anti-Wall Street rhetoric.

Goldman shares fell nearly 2 percent on Tuesday and were the biggest drag on the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which fell 0.24 percent.

With Venezuela's inefficient state-led economic model struggling under lower oil prices, Maduro's unpopular government has become ever more dependent on financial deals or asset sales to bring in coveted foreign exchange. Venezuela's international reserves rose by \$749 million on Thursday and Friday, reaching around \$10.86 billion, according to the central bank.

The broker said he did not expect the bonds to trade unless Goldman chose to sell them. At \$2.8 billion of face value, the firm now owns the vast majority of that series of bonds originally issued by PDVSA, which totaled around \$3 billion.

(Source: Reuters)

UK mortgage approvals slide to seven-month low as housing market softens

The number of mortgages approved by British lenders slid to a seven-month low in April, adding to evidence that the housing market is slowing, Bank of England data showed on Wednesday.

Banks and building societies approved 64,645 mortgages last month, slipping from a downwardly revised 66,043 in March and well below average forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists.

With Britons just over a week away from voting in a national election, the BoE figures added to signs that they are reining in spending the face of higher inflation since last year's Brexit vote.

Net mortgage lending slowed to its weakest in a year and unsecured lending to consumers also grew by a smaller amount than in March, the BoE said.

Britain's housing market has slowed markedly - especially in London - since last June's vote to leave the European Union, although to date there have not been widespread falls in house prices that some commentators had predicted.

The BoE said net mortgage lending, which lags approvals, rose by 2.731 billion pounds in April, short of the poll consensus for an increase of 2.95 billion pounds. That was the smallest rise in a year.

Borrowing by consumers also slowed. Consumer credit in April rose by 1.525 billion pounds, in line with the poll forecast and down from an increase of 1.613 billion pounds in March.

Spending by households helped Brit-

ain's economy to grow strongly last year, despite the shock of the vote in June to leave the European Union.

But there have been growing signs of caution among consumers since the start of 2017, although concerns about the slowdown of the economy are not a major theme in campaigning for next week's national election. Prime Minister Theresa May wants to strengthen her brand in Britain's talks to leave the EU.

A survey published earlier on Wednesday showed British consumers were slightly more upbeat about their finances over the next 12 months while they remained gloomy about the economy.

The annual growth rate in consumer borrowing was little changed at 10.3 percent, marginally higher than in March and not far off its 11-year peak of 10.9 percent seen in November 2016.

Net credit card borrowing hit a more than one-year high of 606 billion pounds, up from 517 million in March.

The BoE expects economic growth to slow in 2017 as rising inflation, triggered by the post-Brexit vote fall in the value of the pound, eats into the spending power of consumers.

The BoE also said foreign investors were net buyers of British government bonds. Net purchases totalled 1.947 billion pounds in April, the highest amount since November 2016, and up from purchases of 218 million the previous month.

(Source: Reuters)

EU watchdog issues licensing guide for Brexit rush of financial firms

The European Union's securities watchdog has published guidance to stop national supervisors from competing unfairly with each other to woo financial firms in a post-Brexit rush from Britain.

Dublin complained to Brussels that rival financial centers were offering a "back door" to the EU's single market through lax rules.

In response to such concerns, the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) said on Wednesday that national regulators need to prepare for greater demand for licenses as financial firms in Britain seek to relocate to an EU of 27 countries after Britain's departure in 2019.

Britain is the EU's biggest financial market and firms there may need to shift operations to continue serving customers within the bloc.

"The EU27 have a shared interest in building a common approach to dealing with relocating firms that wish to continue to benefit from access to EU financial markets," ESMA Chairman Steven Maijor said in a statement.

"Firms need to be subject to the same standards of authorization and ongoing supervision across the EU27 to avoid competition on regulatory and supervisory practices between member states."

The guidance is non-binding but has the backing of ESMA's board, making it harder for a member state's regulator to ignore. Securities regulators authorize mu-

tual funds, hedge funds, investment firms and trading operations.

The guidance sets out nine principles that tell regulators to start from scratch when asked for a license by a British financial firm.

There should be "no automatic" recognition of authorizations granted by UK regulators, ESMA said.

This contrasts with the European Central Bank (ECB), which will accept UK authorizations for parts of a bank for a certain period to speed up licensing.

Strict conditions

ESMA said that regulators should not authorize "letter box" entities that have few staff or operations. Outsourcing or delegation of operations to Britain should be allowed only "under strict conditions," it said, taking a similar stance to the ECB.

"Market participants wishing to engage in outsourcing or delegation remain fully responsible for the tasks or functions that are outsourced or delegated," ESMA said.

London-based Aquis Exchange, a share-trading platform looking to open an EU subsidiary after Brexit, is being wooed by several national regulators, CEO Alasdair Haynes said.

"I do think there are potential deals people are offering and there is nothing in the ESMA principles that would prevent anything going forward based on proper regulation and good governance," Haynes told Reuters.

(Source: Reuters)

Japan's Inpex considers bidding for Iran's Azadegan oil field

Japan's largest upstream company, Inpex, will consider bidding to develop the Azadegan oil field in Iran when the tender is finally issued, a company spokesman said Tuesday.

"Inpex is in the process of gathering information and conducting updates as necessary. Inpex will consider its response once the tender is published and the terms and conditions pertaining to the tender and oil contract are clarified," a company spokesman said.

National Iranian Oil Co. CEO Ali Kardor said Sunday that Iran would issue the tender for the development of the Azadegan oil field by June 2, with 29 international oil companies invited to participate.

Oil minister Bijan Zanganeh said last week that his ministry was finalizing a single tender for the development of the entire field, which would be the first to be launched under Iran's much-delayed new model contract.

The tender will cover both the North and South segments of the field.

Discovered in 1999 in the southern province of Khuzestan province near the border with Iraq, the field is estimated to hold between 33 billion and 42 billion barrels of oil in place, making it Iran's largest onshore field.

Inpex had been the operator of the South Azadegan field from 2004 with a 75 percent stake in the development. It cut its stake to 10 percent in 2006 under pressure from tighter U.S. sanctions on Iran, transferring the operatorship to Naftiran Intertrade, an NIOC subsidiary.

In 2010, the company withdrew completely, following the Japanese government's decision to impose additional



sanctions on Iran.

But it was one of five companies which signed an agreement with NIOC for studies on the South Azadegan field last June.

The northern portion of the field was being operated

by China National Petroleum Corp. under Iran's old buyback contract model until 2014. The new Iran Petroleum Contract model, which is yet to be published, will replace the buyback contract.

(Source: Platts)

Oil falls on potential undermining of OPEC-led deal

Oil prices fell by 1 percent on Wednesday as rising Libyan production fueled concerns that OPEC-led output cuts are being undermined by several countries that are excluded from the deal.

Global benchmark Brent crude futures dropped 52 cents to \$51.32 a barrel by 0838 GMT and U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures traded at \$49.14, also down 52 cents.

"It's the sum of all the negatives that have emerged since last week's OPEC meeting," said Ole Hansen, head of commodities strategy at Saxo Bank.

"Traders covered short positions ahead of OPEC and some of these have

now been re-established."

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers including Russia agreed last week to extend a deal to cut production by around 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) until the end of the first quarter of 2018.

Certain OPEC members, such as Libya and Nigeria, and shale oil producer the United States are not part of the agreement, leaving room for further production growth from these exporters.

Libya's oil production is expected to rise to 800,000 bpd this week, state-run National Oil Corporation said on Monday, which is likely to boost the country's

exports.

Shipping data on Thomson Reuters Eikon shows that, excluding pipeline exports, Libya has sent out an average of 500,000 bpd of crude oil so far this year, compared with only 300,000 bpd shipped on average in 2016.

Libya's rising production and exports add to soaring U.S. output, which is largely because of a more than 10 percent jump in shale oil drilling since the middle of last year to more than 9.3 million bpd, close to top producers Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Official government data showing weekly U.S. crude inventories will be pub-

lished on Thursday.

Meanwhile compliance with the OPEC-led deal remained high among the group's members, with industry sources saying that Russian figures for May also show output in line with its pledge.

Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister and his Russian counterpart said on Wednesday that cooperation between OPEC and non-OPEC producers is seen lasting beyond next March, when the current output deal expires.

"We want to institutionalize cooperation between OPEC and non-OPEC producers," Falih said.

(Source: Reuters)

India to be first in world to run all government ports on green energy

All 12 major domestic ports will soon switch to renewable energy to meet their entire power requirements, making India the first country to have all government-owned ports running on solar and wind energy. The government plans to install almost 200 megawatt solar and wind power generation capacity at the ports by 2019, officials said.

Almost 150 mw of this will be solar power and 50 mw wind power generation capacity. The capacity could be ramped up to 500 mw in the next few years.

On Tuesday, a high-level conference attended by shipping minister Nitin Gadkari, top officials and chair-



men of several port trusts was held at JNPT in Mumbai to discuss the road map of implementing the green ports project.

These renewable energy projects will help in reduction of carbon emission and lead to improvement of environment around the ports," said a senior government official, who did not wish to be identified.

The government has also decided to meet the power requirements of smart port industrial cities coming up at Kandla Port and Paradip Port to be met through green renewable power sources.

(Source: Economic Times)

4 wildly different oil price scenarios for 2020

After the nine-month extension of the OPEC deal, there is a growing consensus that oil might bounce around in the \$50s and \$60s for the rest of the year. But as we move into 2018 and beyond, there is a great deal of disagreement among analysts about what happens to oil prices.

One school of thought is that the severe cuts to upstream spending that have stretched into a third year are sowing the seeds of a supply shortage around 2020. The IEA is probably the most recognizable forecaster that falls into this camp. The agency has repeatedly pointed to the fact that new oil discoveries are at their lowest level in 70 years. "There were no discoveries because there is no money for exploration. You find something if you look for it," the IEA's executive director Fatih Birol said earlier this year.

The IEA says the industry must step up spending if they are to avoid a supply crunch in a few years' time. "[W]e are emphasizing an important message: more investment is needed in oil production capacity to avoid the risk of a sharp increase in oil prices" by the early 2020s, the IEA wrote in a March report.

Alan Bannister of S&P Global Platts echoed that warning more recently, pointing to natural depletion from conventional oil production - which still makes up the vast majority of global supply - on the order of 3 to 4 percent per year. "We've not really seen the effect of that yet, because all the projects that were put in place three years ago when prices were high are still being completed - we're still seeing extra volume coming on," Bannister told CNBC in an interview. But because the sharp cutbacks in upstream spending means that there will be many fewer barrels coming online to replace depleting fields, "it does sow the seeds for a potential super bull run...It could go well over \$80 in the next two to three years," he added.

But other analysts have an entirely different view, expecting oil prices to remain low for the foreseeable future, although for varying reasons. Some focus on peak demand, which mainly comes down to alternatives to oil. The most fervent believers in both electric vehicles and autonomous vehicles argue that oil demand is nearing a peak, so there is little chance of another major bull run. Tony Seba, co-founder of tech-focused think tank

Rethinkx, says that demand will peak by 2020-2021 and will plummet thereafter, forcing oil prices down to \$25 per barrel by 2030. "At \$25 a barrel, that means deep-water, sands, shell oil, fields, most are going to be stranded, and also all the refineries and pipelines associated with these expensive oils are also going to be stranded," Seba told CNBC.

Even if more mainstream oil forecasters don't see such a dramatic scenario on the horizon, they do see some supply-side forces that prevent an oil price spike. Namely, improving technology and falling breakeven prices for shale production could put a ceiling on the price of crude for the next few years. For example, Morgan Stanley just downgraded its forecast for Brent in 2020 from \$70-\$75 to just \$60 per barrel. The investment bank said that about 1.5 million barrels per day of new supply that it had expected would be needed in 2020 will no longer be needed because of much better results from shale.

Goldman Sachs agreed with that sentiment a few weeks ago, stating that they are growing more confident that longer-term oil price range is "drifting lower." Goldman says it sees lower prices over the next five years because of the "growing visibility on the sources of future supply." And they also pointed to the resilience of U.S. shale as a principle reason for oil prices remaining low not just for the near-term but into the 2020s. Goldman cites the surprise profitability of shale companies today even though oil prices have bounced around at \$50 per barrel, their ability to ramp up supply, and the abundant capital that Wall Street is willing to shower on shale drillers.

So, we have dramatically different visions for what might play out over the next five years. On the one hand, there are those worried that the depth and length of the current downturn will merely create a stronger bull run in five years. Today's cutbacks create tomorrow's shortage.

On the other hand, there are those that think the oil market is fundamentally different than in the past. Shale has truly altered the supply picture, and the downturn in prices has been met with steady innovation, leading to the cost of the marginal barrel to structurally fall. As a result, oil prices could remain low for years, if not forever.

For 2017, analysts are converging on a consensus for oil prices, but the forecasts for what happens after 2020 are diverging. (Source: oilprice.com)

Armenia can become transit country for supply of electricity from Iran

Armenia can become a transit country for supply of electricity from Iran to Georgia and from Georgia to Russia, Deputy Minister of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources Hayk Harutyunyan told the special correspondent of Armenian News - NEWS.am within the framework of International Energy Charter Forum, held in Ashgabat.

According to him, the corridor between Iran, Georgia, Armenia and Russia includes different power lines and gas pipelines.

"The possibility of energy exchange in Armenia makes about 350 - 360MW now. If we build the third power line, this index will raise to 3000 MW. We will have an opportunity to increase power exchange up to 7 times and thereby become a serious transit country. That is, we will not only export or import electricity, but this infrastructure can serve for transit of electricity from Iran to Georgia, and from Georgia to Russia," Harutyunyan said.

According to the Armenian official, it is difficult to talk about gas transit within the framework of this corridor, since the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline is not reaching Georgian border.

"Now there are no active discussions on this issue," Hayk Harutyunyan explained. (Source: News.am)

Shadow of solar panels trade war looms over WTO

The U.S. has informed the World Trade Organization (WTO) it is considering emergency "safeguard" tariffs on solar cells, after a leading manufacturer filed for bankruptcy citing unfair competition from China and India.



Accusing international competitors of causing irreparable harm to U.S.-based Suniva and SolarWorld Americas, the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) notified the WTO's 163 members that it could levy "safeguard" tariffs.

Under the WTO's rules, emergency tariffs can be placed on particular products that have caused or threatened to cause "significant injury" to domestic industries.

Suniva filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in April, as has SolarWorld America's parent company in Germany. The U.S. subsidiary has filed papers informing the workers it could shut down its manufacturing facility in Oregon within the next month or two.

The ITC said it had accepted a petition from Suniva for global safeguard relief from imports of crystalline silicon (c-Si) solar cells. The commission will make a determination of injury by September 22 and report to President Donald Trump by November 13. (Source: RT)

IN THE NAME OF GOD



INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER

No. 370003

KHOUSTAN STEEL COMPANY INTENDS TO PURCHASE 2,000 MT MEDIUM CARBON FERRO MANGANESE

WITH THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATIONS:

Mn	78%	Min
SI	1.2%	Max
C	1.5%	Max
P	0.3%	Max
S	0.02%	Max
Fe	Rest	
Size of Pieces	20-60 mm	Min 90%
	<20 mm	Max 10%
Packing	BULK OR 1MT BIG BAG IN THE 20' CONTAINER	
Delivery Date	July - August	(1000MT) (1000MT)

INTERESTED BIDDERS MAY OBTAIN SET OF DOCUMENTS, CONTAINING THE RELEVANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS BY SUBMISSION OF A WRITTEN APPLICATION AND PAYMENT OF A NON-REFUNDABLE FEE OF:

EUR 50 "FIFTY EURO" TO ONE OF BELOW ACCOUNT NO.:

1) ACCOUNT No. 0100013543943 at "EXPORT DEVELOPMENT BANK OF IRAN, AHVAZ CENTRAL BRANCH"
2) Account No.: 1902-750-4019644-1 AT "EGHTESAD NOVIN BANK- OF IRAN, AHVAZ SHARIATI BRANCH" OR RIALS 2,000,000, "(TWO MILLION RIALS)" TO THE ONE OF BELOW ACCOUNT NO.:

1) ACCOUNT No. 0102513186002 AT "MELLI BANK OF IRAN AHVAZ KSC BRANCH"

2) Account No. 0100304453001 AT "SADERAT BANK OF IRAN AHVAZ KSC BRANCH"

AND PRESENT THE PAYMENT RECEIPT TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

RAW MATERIAL & ENERGY PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

KHOUSTAN STEEL COMPANY (KSC)

KM 10, AHVAZ - BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI ROAD

P.O. BOX: 1378

POST CODE: 61397 - 31398

AHVAZ - IRAN

Note 1: BIDDER SHALL SUBMIT WITH TENDER A BID BOND ISSUED BY AN IRANIAN BANK OR BY A EUROPEAN FIRST CLASS BANK, IN THE AMOUNT OF 90,000 EUR OR 4,000,000,000 RIAL FOR 2,000 MT MEDIUM CARBON FERRO MANGANESE AND MAY REDUCE IN PROPORTION WITH THE QUANTITY OF BIDDERS OFFER.

Note 2: ALL BIDS MUST BE INFORMED US WHICH PARTICIPATE IN OUR TENDER UP TO 03rd Jun. 2017. WHEN YOUR COMPANY IS CONFIRMED AND THE TENDER DOCUMENT IS SENT TO YOU, YOU MUST BE DELIVERED TO THE AFORESAID ADDRESS ON OR BEFORE THE CLOSING DATE 17th Jun. 2017. THE OPENING DATE OF ENVELOPES WILL BE AT 10 AM ON THE 18th JUN. 2017 IN THE BUYER'S CONFERENCE ROOM LOCATED AT THE HEAD OFFICE OF KSC AHVAZ- IRAN AND THE BIDDERS OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES CAN ATTEND THE MEETING OF THE TENDER.

NOTE 3: FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT WITH FOLLOWING DETAILS:

Tel No. : +98 61 32908114 Fax No. : +98 61 32908115

EMAIL : F.NOORI@KSC.IR/H.MOHAMMADNEJAD@KSC.IR OR VISIT: <http://WWW.KSC.IR>

Democracy trumps terrorism

By: Chris Patten

As I strolled through Paris the other day, the air was warm, the sky was blue, and I felt like I was in the best of all possible worlds. As always, Paris looked elegant and exuded confidence and cheerfulness. France had just elected a clever, young, handsome, and brave new president, who seemed to match the city's ambience. Without much bad news to darken the day, I had every reason to walk with a spring in my step.



Of course, things could have been very different. It was just 18 months ago that a terrorist attack in Paris left 130 people dead and hundreds more injured. Last July in Nice, an attacker drove a truck through a Bastille Day crowd on the city's seafont promenade, killing 86. Not long after that, an assailant slit an elderly priest's throat at a church in Normandy. And last month, just before the second round of the French presidential election, a policeman was gunned down on the Champs-Élysées.

These wicked acts, stemming from a distorted interpretation of a great religion, did not stop French voters from electing Emmanuel Macron, a man who knows that vigilance requires us to respect all members of our community. To fight evil, we must reject exclusion and hate, and we must not blacken the reputation of a large segment of our society.

I was reminded of this lesson recently, on a taxi ride from central Paris to the Gare du Nord. The driver, after complaining about the competition from Uber (a familiar refrain from London taxi drivers, too), went on to denounce the world and everything in it. He claimed that globalization and mass immigration are destroying jobs, overwhelming public services, compromising French national identity, and breeding terrorists.

Needless to say, the driver had voted for Marine Le Pen — although he did not look like what the National Front would call a "pureblooded" Frenchman. Of course, most of France voted the other way. And while the driver's grievances still have wide currency, they do not represent a coherent, fact-based approach to today's problems.

Britain faces its own terrorist threats, as we have seen yet again with the horrendous attack in Manchester, the northwestern city where my grandparents were head teachers, and where my father was born. So far, the death toll stands at 22, many of them children, making the attack on the Manchester Arena Britain's worst encounter with terrorism since the London Underground bombings in July 2005, which killed 52. There have been similar but smaller-scale incidents since then. And, in previous decades, London and other cities (including Manchester in 1996) withstood attacks by Irish nationalist militants.

And yet Britons, like the French, have not panicked or responded in a knee-jerk fashion. We continue to prefer living in free and open societies, so we have always reacted with calm and measured resolve.

■ The strengths of democracy.

That resolve is one of the strengths of democracy. We will never hand the political agenda over to those who offer only simplistic slogans, crude arguments, and extreme policies. Those who want to pin their problems on "the other" — as defined by race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality — will always be in the minority. Their goal is to close hearts and minds. They have no interest in understanding the causes of violence, or in developing effective ways to address them.

The good sense of democracies is based, in part, on the understanding that country matters more than party. In democracies, effective policymaking rests on compromise and reason. Those of us who live in democracies will not be terrorized into discarding our sense of balance and moderation, because we understand something profound about most societies: life always wins over death.

Although there is such a thing as original sin — the wickedness that simmers, blows up, and scars young children and their family and friends — there is also original virtue, which is always present after terrorist atrocities. It is manifested in the passers-by who stop to help; in the nurses and doctors who attend to the injured; and in those who search for the lost, offer families a bed for the night, or escort people home from the scene of a mass murder.

The people who plan and commit terrorist acts will probably never learn that theirs is a lost cause. Open societies will undoubtedly have to withstand further assaults in the future. But if one thing is clear, it is that terrorists cannot defeat democracy.

In France, voters just elected a new president out of hope, not despair; and in the UK, we will soon hold another free and fair election in June. Democracy will withstand attacks like the one in Manchester; and democratic citizens will respond with courage and generosity.

(Source: project-syndicate.org)

Trump makes no promises during Bethlehem whistle-stop



"You lied to me in Washington when you talked about commitment to peace," Trump yelled at Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in his Bethlehem residence.

The extravagant reception that U.S. President Donald Trump found in Saudi Arabia and the gigantic military and trade deals signed there have left many observers confused as to how the trip will affect the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

By all measures, Trump has hit most of the right notes. He met with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, visited the Palestinian city of Bethlehem and spoke repeatedly about peace.

Many Palestinians felt that the May 20 reception in Riyadh will not likely translate into an effective U.S. push toward peace. One senior Palestinian official who asked not to be named called it nothing more than a Hollywood-style production. "It is obvious that so much effort has gone into the production aspects of the visit as to render both inconvenient and untimely any serious discussion on the question of Palestine," the official told Al-Monitor.

A veteran Palestinian editor working in the Persian Gulf also fails to see any direct connection between Trump's visit and solving the Palestinian problem.

■ Arab Peace Initiative

Khatib, however, does believe that these considerations will also strengthen the U.S.-Saudi relations, especially with the current administration. "The Trump administration is becoming more than ever interested in trying to address the

resolution of the Palestinian issue based on the Arab Peace Initiative. And if so, this can indirectly contribute to the Palestinian cause."

While politicians and analysts are skeptical about the chances of the United States getting seriously involved, some worry that the situation could worsen, as the security and military actors on all sides appear to be holding all the cards.

Oraib Rantawi, the director of the Amman-based Al Quds Center for Political Studies, is concerned that the U.S. president might set the region and the Palestinian cause back. Writing in the daily Ad-Dustour, Rantawi argues that Trump's tour has taken us back to the Dayton/Blair era and the twin tracks of security and economy. "Security, with all its requirements, is what the Palestinian side must provide, going so far as to cease paying salaries to the families of martyrs and prisoners. And the economy is meant as compensation for the Palestinians' inalienable and fixed national rights, or to buy the Palestinians' silence and calm at least, so as to allow Israel to complete its gradual but

increasingly rapid gnawing at Palestinian lands, rights and holy sites," he said in an analysis published May 24.

Rantawi added that what Palestinians want from a peace process is not on Trump's agenda. "An end to occupation, recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination and building their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, as well as a solution to the refugee problem — this is not on the agenda of businessman Donald Trump, who is not concerned with such matters."

■ Trump's agenda

Perhaps the best sign that the Palestinian issue is not high on Trump's agenda came during the U.S. president's visit to Bethlehem May 23. What was to be a half-day visit was reduced to two hours, including a quick stop at the Church of the Nativity and a meeting with President Mahmoud Abbas in his Bethlehem residence. Even this meeting was reduced to one hour and the visit to the church was scrapped, allegedly for fear that families of the hunger-striking prisoners would have tried to confront him. The hunger strike ended

the morning of May 27.

What has emerged from the meeting is also telling. Israeli media outlets claimed that Trump expressed anger at Abbas regarding the issue of incitement to violence. Israel's Channel 2 reported May 28 that Trump yelled at Abbas: "You lied to me in Washington when you talked about commitment to peace, but the Israelis showed me you were personally responsible for incitement."

The TV report published in The Times of Israel said that Palestinian sources contradict the report, telling Channel 2 the meeting between the two leaders was calm.

Khatib said he doesn't believe that a serious resolution of the Palestinian conflict is realistic. "But it is good to have a more positive political position by the U.S. administration toward the resolution of the conflict," he concluded.

For Palestine to be part of the discussion, inclusion in the first foreign tour of a new U.S. president is important. The real question is whether this president is willing to spend the time and political capital not only to bring the sides back to the talks, but to ensure that a resolution is reached and implemented. The present right-wing Israeli government and the makeup of Trump's team don't bode well for that.

(Source: Al Monitor)

Even Merkel's political rivals are on her side against Trump

By Adam Taylor

As they campaign against each other ahead of national elections in September, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and her chief political rival, Martin Schulz, find themselves united in opposition to President Trump.

Speaking at a beer hall rally in Munich on Sunday, Merkel suggested that the era when Europe could rely on the United States may be coming to an end and that the continent "really must take our fate into our own hands."

The dramatic announcement came after contentious meetings with Trump, who had used his first official trip to Europe to criticize German trade, scold world leaders about their NATO spending and refuse to commit to the Paris agreement on combating climate change.

Schulz, a former president of the European Parliament, is the head of the center-left Social Democrats. He is easily the most convincing challenger to Merkel's 11-year reign as chancellor and a charismatic leader in his own right. Yet rather than criticize his rival or her Christian Democratic Union-led government for the strained relationship with Trump, Schulz has passionately offered support.

In video published by German broadcaster Deutsche Welle on Monday, a visibly angry Schulz can be seen railing against Trump, who he said "believed he could inflict humiliation in Brussels."

The Social Democrat leader then said it did not matter that Merkel and he were in the middle of an election campaign, as "the chancellor represents all of us at summits like these, and I reject with outrage the way this man takes it upon himself to treat the head of our country's government."

"That is unacceptable," Schulz said.

■ A stronger Europe

He had made a similar comment on Sunday shortly after Merkel's remarks. "A stronger cooperation of European countries on all levels is the answer to Donald Trump," Schulz told the public broadcaster ARD. On Monday, he tweeted in German, English and French that the "best response to Donald Trump is a stronger Europe."

Such comments suggest that Trump's reputation in Europe may end up influencing the continent's politics in unexpected ways. Although the possibility of a Schulz chancellorship has become less and less likely after poor showings by the Social Democrats in recent



Martin Schulz

"A stronger cooperation of European countries on all levels is the answer to Donald Trump," Schulz told the public broadcaster ARD.

regional elections, the center-left's animosity toward Trump is broadly shared by many German voters.

And Trump doubled down on his criticism Tuesday, calling out Germany's trade and defense policies as "very bad" for the United States. "We have a massive trade deficit with Germany, plus they pay far less than they should on NATO & military," Trump wrote in a Twitter post. "Very bad for U.S. This will change."

In a poll conducted in February, 78 percent of Germans said they were "very concerned" about Trump's policies — almost 20 percent more than those who were worried about the politics of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Characteristically, Schulz has taken a more direct tone in his criticism than the soft-spoken Merkel, calling Trump's policies "un-American" in late January. Notably, he has pushed back on long-standing U.S. demands for Germany to spend 2 percent of its gross domestic

product on defense — something Trump pushed during last week's meeting of the leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

However, while the Christian Democrats were beneficiaries of a short-lived "Trump bump" after the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Merkel also may have found ways to use Germans' animosity toward Trump to her advantage. Thanks to a quirk of scheduling, before she met Trump in Brussels last week, she spent a morning with former U.S. president Barack Obama, who is still broadly admired in Germany.

After Merkel's comments about Trump at the beer hall, she received applause for a whole minute. The next day, her spokesman reiterated her intent. "The chancellor's words stand on their own," Steffen Seibert said during a news conference Monday. "They were clear and comprehensible."

(Source: The Washington Post)

Trump's Saudi Soliloquy

By Richard Silverstein

Donald Trump just made one of the most hypocritical speeches in American political history: and that's saying something. The same person who told the American electorate that Islam was a religion of violence and evil, and that America must close its doors to all Muslims because, as far as he was concerned, they were all likely terrorists – this same guy fawned and curtsied before the Saudi monarch who's the protector (not a very good one, I might add) of the Muslim holy sites.

This speech and his attendant business deals signed while in the Kingdom, are a triumph of commerce over values. Jobs and lucre and the only things this President cares about. If he can hawk THADD missile systems to the Devil himself, he'll descend into Hell to do it.

As I've written here in the past week, the speech is the capstone to a major U.S. pivot away from rapprochement with Shia Iran and towards the Sunni kingdoms. In doing so, Trump will be forced to embrace all the vices of his new allies: their homophobia, misogyny, corruption, nepotism, intolerance, and brutality. He will also be forced to acknowledge something he's conveniently avoided in this speech: that his new pals themselves have been the greatest supporters of terrorism in the region. Who founded al Qaeda? Whose money, recruits and leadership created it? Who funds the most vicious Takfiri rebels of ISIS and al Qaeda in Syria? Yep, your pals in the glittering palaces of Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

You think because you've called these Takfiris bad boys that their patrons will immediately abandon them? Nah. It would be one thing if you called out the Saudis, told them to stop funding ISIS in Syria, and advanced a plan for peace there that would involve negotiations among the different players. But no, you didn't do that. You merely denounced ISIS as if it was a separate, independent entity, and not dependent on the funding and weapons of its patrons in the very Kingdom in which he spoke.

The speech was not just ahistorical, it was bereft of the least understanding of the nature of terror in the Muslim-Arab world. Here's a choice example:

"This is not a battle between different faiths, different sects, or different civilizations."

"This is a battle between barbaric criminals who seek to obliterate human life, and decent people of all religions who seek to protect it."

"This is a battle between Good and Evil."

Of course it is a battle between different civilizations and faiths. Or at least a battle between extremists who embrace one religion and who have declared war on another. The juxtaposition of the "us" who is "good" and "them" who is "evil" is not just useless as a tool for understanding this conflict – it is profoundly dangerous. It lulls us into the false faith that we are good and all



Trump's speech and his attendant business deals signed while in the Kingdom, are a triumph of commerce over values.

we do must be good, because we are fighting an enemy who is wholly evil. You can see where this sort of thinking leads: to My Lai and Abu Ghraib. And don't worry, Trump will take us there if we give him enough time.

One of the most pitiable passages in Trump's address is this:

"Our partnerships will advance security through stability, not through radical disruption. We will make decisions based on real-world outcomes — not inflexible ideology. We will be guided by the lessons of experience, not the confines of rigid thinking. And, wherever possible, we will seek gradual reforms — not sudden intervention."

"We must seek partners, not perfection..."

Here read "stability" as brutal strongman rule and "radical disruption" as populist yearning for democracy. Trump derides the "pointy-headed" concepts of human rights as the "inflexible ideology" of Pres. Obama. But in reality, of course, it is Trump's Islamophobia that constitutes one of the most rigid of ideologies. And as for "gradual reforms," that term is meaningless. It really means the stultifying, suffocating status quo. What Trump has endorsed here is a U.S. policy of crony capitalism: we give you all the weapons you need to kill each other. You give us your oil wealth and fund our military-industrial machine. Beyond that, we could care less what you do or how you do it.

You want to kill 10,000 Houthis? Go right ahead. Go to war with Iran? No problem.

"Above all, America seeks peace — not war."

What a joke. Says the president who just signed a \$300-billion deal to send Saudi Arabia our most advanced weap-

ons systems over the next decade. What does he think those missiles will be used for? Building schools and hospitals?

Amidst all of Trump's fulminations against "Takfiri terrorism" ("That means honestly confronting the crisis of Takfiri extremism and the Takfiri terror groups it inspires"), there was nary a word about western terrorism. We too have our own homegrown terrorists: white supremacists and the alt-right. They have killed almost as many westerners as Takfiri militants have. Yet why not a word of denunciation concerning them? Why not admit that we have our own brand of terror to fight, just as Muslims do? You know the answer without my telling you.

Here Trump rhapsodizes about refugees, calling them "human capital" for a "brighter future." Of course, while ignoring the massive suffering they endure in the god-awful present. In the process he makes one of the most hypocritical statements in the entire address:

"I also applaud Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon for their role in hosting refugees. The surge of migrants and refugees leaving the Middle East depletes the human capital needed to build stable societies and economies. Instead of depriving this region of so much human potential, Middle Eastern countries can give young people hope for a brighter future in their home nations and regions."

Well of course they can. If Trump's own allies hadn't turned Syria into a killing field and charnel house. But if you're going to applaud Middle Eastern nations for accepting refugees, why not your own country? Is the Middle East the only part of the world responsible for refugees generated there? If there's one thing we learn from civil

What Trump has endorsed is a U.S. policy of crony capitalism: we give you all the weapons you need to kill each other. You give us your oil wealth and fund our military-industrial machine.

wars wherever they happen: they are global phenomena. You cannot build a wall around a failing state and isolate the suffering it generates to a small bit of territory. All that suffering radiates outward and afflicts the entire world. That's why Trump's view is myopic and ahistorical.

The truly worst portion of the speech was reserved for Iran. As you can see above, his rhetoric matched the false rhetoric of George Bush père et fils: the former called Saddam Hussein "the new Hitler."

His rant begins thus:
"For decades, Iran has fueled the fires of sectarian conflict and terror."

"It is a government that speaks openly of mass murder, vowing the destruction of Israel, death to America, and ruin for many leaders and nations in this room."

Actually, none of the above statements are true. I have no idea what Trump refers to as Iranian advocacy of "mass murder." Nor has Iran ever vowed to destroy Israel. As for Iran's supposed vow to "ruin" Sunni nations – that compliment has been returned many-fold by all those leaders listening to his speech. This is a Sunni-Shia religious conflict as well as a conflict for regional dominance. To divorce this rivalry from its historical-religious context is an offense against reality. And it will perpetuate the noxious policies and rain of death which afflicts the region today. Conflict may be mediated through discussion and negotiation. But if you demonize your rival, then only war and death is possible. That is the path the Sunni states have chosen and which Trump has ratified. Remember it is Iran which called for talks with Saudi Arabia over their differences; and the Saudis who rejected the offer.

Here's another bit of false history akin to Trump's painting of America's minority communities as "ghettos" and "war zones" characterized by nothing but suffering and poverty:

"...The people of Iran have endured hardship and despair under their leaders' reckless pursuit of conflict and terror."

If Iranians have endured hardship it is largely of the making of Trump and his western allies who've put the country under lockdown economically, financially and commercially. And as for pursuit of conflict: Iran is not the only party pursuing conflict. We have certainly done our share as has Israel and all those Sunni allies he was celebrating. The failure to recognize blame as two-sided is yet another severe weakness of the Trump world-view.

Oh the irony of Trump calling for regime change in Iran, when it is one of the few democracies in the region:

"...Pray for the day when the Iranian people have the just and righteous government they deserve."

Well, in fact Iran has the government it deserves. The people just elected that government. Something which has never happened in his host country, Saudi Arabia. Trump's arrogance and ignorance is unbounding.

EU not to abide by Trump's attempts at limiting trade with Iran

INTERVIEW

By Mohammad Mazhari

US President Donald Trump's latest trip to Brussels for NATO meeting attracted attentions while it is expected to have important consequences on U.S.-EU ties.

Germany's foreign minister has criticized Trump's attitude toward EU, claiming the U.S. President's actions have "weakened" the West and accusing the American government of standing "against the interests of the European Union", which means that Europe could no longer completely rely on traditional allies such as the U.S.

It seems that Trump's commercial approach toward politics will change the political map of U.S. traditional influence, while the new administration in U.S. does not have a clear strategy for global issues which can prove to be very problematic for U.S. foreign policy. In this context, we conducted an interview with German-British economist and industrialist Robert (Bob) Bischof – well-known for his outspoken comments on economic, political and industrial issues concerning Britain and Germany – to shed more light on the issue.

Donald Trump believes that the United States must be paid more for the powerful, and very expensive, defense it provides to Germany. How will Germany and EU react to Trump's demands?

Germany will increase its defense budget to 2% but will include certain so-called preventive action costs in it like aid to displaced people in North Africa, etc. – The EU will follow Germany's example.

Do you think that U.S. policies during Trump's presidency have a monetary basis? Or the American administration is interested in expanding its ideological influence in Europe and Asia?

Trump must not be taken too seriously. He is streetwise and a bully but has no political or ideological concepts. He is a prisoner of all the dumb things he said and promised in his campaign and is desperately trying to hang on to some of them.

How can EU confront Trump's attempts to limit commercial transaction with Iran after the nuclear deal?

EU does not adhere to them. Germany and the EU believe that Brexit and Trump are a positive stimulus for European unity and they will act together – just take a look at Die Welt headlines.

It is clear to all that Trump visited Saudi Arabia to gain more money while there are no common values between U.S. and Saudis. Can Trump solve U.S. economic problems through these kinds of policies? Isn't there a kind of double standard in supporting countries such as the Saudi Kingdom and still having a claim on defending human rights?

As I said above, Trump must deliver on his pre-election promises and selling arms to the Saudis is an easy win for his pretensions of bringing jobs to America.

He has no idea of how to solve America's long term problems other than through more public debt. The U.S. has the same problems as UK – a poorly trained workforce and a shrinking manufacturing base – typically nobody wants to buy American cars as they are gas guzzling technical dinosaurs; so, he blames the Germans for selling too many cars in the U.S. As for standards, Trump has no standards apart from making money, so how could he have double standards?

Trump has said before that "I believe others will leave EU. I do think keeping it together is not gonna be as easy as a lot of people think." What is your commentary on this?

With Brexit and Trump populism peaked. It was defeated in Austria, the Netherlands and France and has no chance in the German election. No country is going to leave the EU particularly when they realize what a disaster Brexit is going to be for the Brits – the opposite is actually happening: Countries are queuing up to join.

Notice

Following the Tehran Times' interview with the Pakistan ambassador to Tehran, published on Tuesday, the Indian embassy sent a letter to the newspaper which its text is given below:

Dear Sir,

This refers to the interview of Mr. Asif Durrani, Ambassador of Pakistan which appeared in your newspaper on 31 May, 2017.

2. The Embassy categorically rejects the assertions in the said interview pertaining to India and the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir.

3. Pakistan Ambassador's remarks in this connection are part of propaganda to obfuscate the main issue of his country's support to cross-border terrorism against neighbours. That Pakistan is the fountainhead of terrorism and terrorist ideology is no secret.

4. The State of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. Pakistan's territorial design in Jammu and Kashmir is well-known as is its use of terrorism to achieve its objective.

Yours sincerely,

(O.D. Tyagi)
Second Secretary
(Press & Information)

Contradictory statements of NATO on joining the international coalition

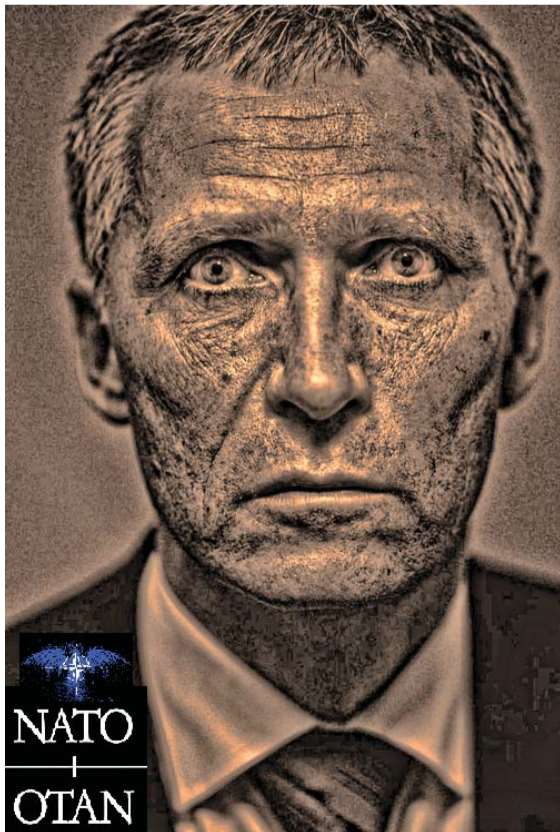
By Sophie mangal

During a press conference on May 24, NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, said that NATO does not intend to take part in military operations against the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria. Instead, the alliance plans to concentrate on training certain 'local forces'.

Actually, Jens Stoltenberg still could not hide the fact that NATO leadership, first of all, solves the serious issue of deploying its units in Syria and Iraq. In fact, such plans as "training local forces" and 'large-scale military operation' are very close to each other in their essence.

It is easy to imagine how the events will develop. First, a decision is made to train local forces, which are the Syrian opposition in fact. In the framework of this step, dozens, and then hundreds of NATO 'experts' are deployed in the country. Then the next stage to be implemented, the military is transferred closer to the war

It turns out that the citizens of the European Union are so much afraid of all these Middle Eastern troubles that they will agree with everything that NATO would offer them, up to participation in full-fledged military operations, just not to let bombs explode in Europe.



zone.

The latest events are the following: during a full-scale campaign in the media started immediately, the fabri-

cated information about the death of several NATO representatives (who were illegally engaged in training the opposition representatives on the Syrian soil) is spread.

It cannot be ruled out that something like that may happen somewhere in Idlib, where Western-controlled radical groups are located. Some human rights organizations accuse then government troops of using chemical weapons, bombing hospitals, maternity homes and schools, and of other atrocities and mass murders.

Thus, under the specious pretext of combating ISIL, the Allied Forces of NATO countries may enter Syria and begin a large-scale campaign against Bashar Assad. Such a scenario can be easily carried out if they wish. In connection with the growing number of terrorist attacks in Europe, Western society is extremely frightened. Continuous flows of refugees also threaten the EU. It turns out that the citizens of the European Union are so much afraid of all these Middle Eastern troubles that they will agree with everything that NATO would offer them, up to participation in full-fledged military operations, just not to let bombs explode in Europe.

Syrian experts, in their turn, were skeptical of the contradictory statements of Stoltenberg. In their opinion, the coalition already includes 12 member countries of NATO. It is their combat aircraft that daily participate in military operations in Syria and Iraq and regularly carry out deadly air strikes. In particular, recently, the coalition strikes in Syrian Raqqah killed at least 16 civilians.

Obviously, the actions of the coalition forces in Syria and Iraq, one way or another, are coordinated with the command of NATO. Apparently, Washington is again trying to lull the vigilance of the international community and is developing new plans to overthrow the Syrian government by force.

Donald Trump's insult to history

The tectonic plates of Europe are shifting, and President Trump is at the heart of this upheaval. Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany bluntly made that point on Sunday when she said, the "times in which we could rely fully on others — they are somewhat over," and the result is that "we Europeans must really take our fate into our own hands."

With that line, it became clear that the United States is no longer the reliable partner her country and the rest of Europe have long depended on. Since World War II, the United States led the way in building a new international order rooted in NATO and the European Union as well as a belief in democracy and free markets. Britain, France and Germany were central to that effort, which for 70 years kept the peace and delivered prosperity to millions of people while standing firm against the Soviet threat, helping end the Bosnian War and combating extremism in Afghanistan.

This transatlantic partnership is still vital. But how, and how well, it will function as American leadership recedes is unclear. So far, no one is talking about dissolving NATO; Europe still depends for its security on America's nuclear and conventional arsenals. But Ms. Merkel's remarks underscored profound divisions between Europe and the United States that have one clear beneficiary, President Vladimir Putin of Russia, who has longed for the alliance, Moscow's

Cold War adversary, to unravel.

Critical issues

Before Mr. Trump attended his first meetings of NATO and the Group of 7 last week, European leaders hoped they could bring him around on critical issues. That now seems like a pipe dream. Mr. Trump doubled-down on his most destructive campaign impulses by hectoring the other members at length for what he called their insufficient levels of military spending, and by refusing to reaffirm NATO's bedrock mutual defense commitment. He also broke with the allies on other issues. He offered a more conciliatory line on Russia and refused, despite their entreaties, to endorse the Paris agreement on climate change.

When he returned home, Mr. Trump stoked the fires more, complaining in a tweet that Germany pays "far less than they should on NATO & military. Very bad for U.S. This will change." His remarks showed no appreciation for how NATO works, how Ms. Merkel is in fact pushing her country to spend more on defense — and, more generally, how comments like this insult a trusted ally.

Europe's dismay could only have deepened when Congress seemed to cheer Mr. Trump on. Republicans, who once prided themselves as stewards of national security, have shown little concern about the way Mr. Trump treated

NATO members or the links between Mr. Trump's aides and Russia. In a statement, Senator Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, gushed over Mr. Trump's trip to Europe and the Middle East, saying it was "executed to near perfection."

These new stresses in the alliance come at a bad time. Europe has been battered by the Greek financial crisis; the rise of authoritarianism in Turkey, Hungary and Poland; Britain's decision to withdraw from the European Union; and the flow of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa.

Exploiting every weakness

Meanwhile, Mr. Putin, always eager to expand Russian influence, has exploited every weakness and crisis, along with instigating a few of his own. Russia invaded Ukraine and has interfered in electoral campaigns in the United States, France and Germany.

Mr. Putin has meddled in the Baltic States, cultivated far-right-wing allies in Hungary and wooed President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey on NATO's eastern flank. He is now courting Italy with a savvy ambassador to Rome and financing for anti-establishment parties.

There are some bright spots. One is that Ms. Merkel seems committed to playing a lead role as the United States pulls back; another is France's election of President Emma-

nuel Macron, who has demonstrated a willingness to work in partnership with Ms. Merkel. The two won't always see eye-to-eye, but Germany needs France and Mr. Macron is a good fit.

Mr. Macron's first foreign visit was to Berlin. And just days later, he has shown that he is not afraid of taking charge. After greeting Mr. Trump, Mr. Macron acknowledged deliberately keeping their handshake going to make a political point: I'm not your patsy. He made an equally strong point when he met in Versailles with Mr. Putin, who had probably worked to aid his rival, the far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen.

Mr. Macron gave Mr. Putin full honors but did not mince words on Russia's role in the Syrian conflict, in Ukraine and in its dissemination of fake news. The message was one Europe should stick to in the future: No major issue can be resolved without talking to Russia, but differences with Moscow should not be swept under the rug.

For now, it looks as if it is up to Ms. Merkel and Mr. Macron to keep the alliance alive and relevant, at least until Mr. Trump wakes up to the need for American leadership or until another, wiser president replaces him.

(Source: The NYT)

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

Apartment

New Apt in Farmanieh
4th floor, 90 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., luxury
New furn, Spj, cozy & quit,
diplomatic **\$2500**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Penthouse in Zafaranieh
700 sq.m, 6 Bdrs., completely
renovated, nice view, semi furn,
Spj, **\$15000 Suitable for
Embassy & Diplomatic**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Velenjak
1st floor, 270 sq.m, 3Bdrs., fully
furn, diplomatic, nice and cozy, **\$3000**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Beautiful Apt in Zafaranieh
5th floor, 350 sq.m, 4 Bdrs., nice
furn, unbelievable view, Balcony
with flower boxes, Spj, diplomatic
\$7000
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Jordan
85 sq.m, 1 Bdr., fully furn, clean &
quit, **\$1000**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Elahieh
180 sq.m, 3 Bdrs flat, full furn, Spj
& Pkg, good access, only **\$3800**
Ms.Sara 09128103207

Villa

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Learn how to quit smoking (and make it stick)

By Terry Martin

Most seasoned smokers spend part of each and every day hating the fact that they smoke. On the flip side, they relish lighting up with that first cup of coffee or after every meal, as well. The mental tug-of-war this causes creates a state of anxiety for many smokers.

Does your mind bounce back and forth on the issue of smoking cessation? Or do you quit only to find yourself smoking again within days, or at most, a few weeks?

Does smoking make you feel weak and powerless? Do you wonder if you'll ever find a way to quit smoking for good?

Statistics tell us that approximately 70 percent of America's 40 million smokers want to quit. We also know that 40 percent of ex-smokers have more than one quit attempt under their belts before stopping permanently.

Nicotine addiction is powerful and smoking cessation involves a lot of work for most people—it's not handed to us on a silver platter.

You can, however, quit smoking successfully. And the good news is that thousands of people do just that every year. They've found their way out and enjoy a comfortable life free of thoughts of smoking. Most of them believed at one time, just as you probably do, that they couldn't quit.

How did they do it? While there is no magic bullet that makes smoking cessation easy and pain-free, there are steps you can take to develop the commitment necessary to quit smoking in a way that will bring you lasting success.

Top 5 things to know

- You are addicted to a drug. Nicotine is a powerfully addictive drug that affects brain chemistry. Smokers sometimes think of smoking as a bad habit that they can stop whenever they choose and are surprised to find that this is not the case when they try to quit.

- It's never too late to quit. Years of smoking and the health problems that come with it can lead us to believe that smoking cessation won't be of any benefit—that the harm is already done. This is not true. Once you stop smoking, your body begins to heal itself. While not all smoking damage can be undone, much of it can be improved or arrested.

- "Junkie thinking" is normal and to be expected. Thoughts of smoking and feelings of loss and sadness are normal when you stop smoking. Every nicotine addict will experience these symptoms of nicotine withdrawal to some extent, and they will pass eventually, as long as you don't smoke and start the whole cycle over.

- Your quit program should include online support. You might not be the kind of person who enjoys chatting in an online forum atmosphere, but you should still think of online support as a mandatory tool in your quit smoking toolbox. You do not have to actively participate to benefit from the experience and support of ex-smokers who are working together. Stop in at our support forum and do some reading. An added bonus is that the light is on 24/7 with people visiting from around the world. So if you're craving a cigarette at 1am, chances



We thought of smoking as a solution rather than a problem and unconsciously adopted unhealthy and inaccurate beliefs as facts of life, instead of seeing smoking for what it really was—a need to feed an addiction.

are you'll be able to connect with someone right away.

5. You won't miss smoking forever. Nicotine addiction has a way of holding us hostage. And when we try to quit, it can be overwhelming to imagine not smoking ever again let alone living a life that is free of thoughts of smoking. With education and the willingness to change the relationship you have with cigarettes however, true release from the desire to smoke is possible...and well worth the work it takes to achieve.

Quit aids vs. cold turkey

Cold turkey is a term used to describe quitting smoking without the help of a quit aid. It is the most difficult quit method, initially, in terms of nicotine withdrawal. And the rate of success for cold turkey quitters is low. However, for some people it works. If you think you fall into that category, use the tips in the section below to prepare for the ups and downs that will come during the first few weeks of cessation.

That said, there are a variety of quit aids available today that allow new ex-smokers to minimize the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal or avoid them altogether.

There is no shame in using an aid to help you stop smoking and, in fact, doctors today often recommend a combination of quit aids and counseling as the best approach to stop smoking.

Choosing the quit aid you'd like to use is largely a matter of choice, barring a medical condition that might make one or another a better fit for you. Have a discussion with your doctor or other healthcare professional about quit aids before you make a decision.

Preparing to quit

If you haven't done it yet, pick your quit date. Don't make it too far in the future because chances are you'll lose motivation before the date arrives. A good rule of thumb is to pick a date within two weeks of deciding to quit. Once you have your date, start gathering supplies to have on hand for your quit and remove all smoking paraphernalia from around the house and car.

Lastly, start a quit journal and make your first entry the reasons why you want to quit smoking. Copy this list onto a single sheet of paper that you can fold and tuck into your purse or wallet to review when craving a cigarette.

Add to your list as time goes by—think of it as a way to keep your memory green about how much smoking negatively impacted your life before you quit.

What to expect after you quit

- Nicotine withdrawal will be your first challenge. Learn what to expect from it and how to manage the discomforts. Knowledge is key to overcoming this short but intense phase of smoking cessation.

- Junkie thinking comes with nicotine withdrawal and can (and usually does) extend beyond it. It is a product of addiction that is common to all recovering addicts. Develop a conscious attention to what your mind is saying and the ability to change negative, self-defeating thoughts to ones that help you. Junkie thoughts will fade to nothing in time if you do this.

- Learn the art of distraction. Recovery from nicotine addiction is in large part an exercise in reprogramming our minds to expect something other

than a cigarette to fill a gap. This takes work initially, but the mind listens and adapts quickly. You'll be surprised at how natural it becomes to not smoke once you get some practice at it.

- Be patient and let time help you. Healing from nicotine addiction takes the better part of a year to achieve. This doesn't mean you'll be uncomfortable for a year, but it does take that long to reprogram the majority of associations we have with smoking. Relax and let time help you. Every smoke-free day you complete is a step closer to the long-term success you're looking for.

Change your mind, change your life

True freedom is a state of mind. We all know people who quit smoking years ago and still lament that they miss cigarettes. This is a scary concept for any smoker trying to quit, but you needn't worry. The key to truly breaking the ties to smoking in a permanent way lie in changing our relationship with smoking—something that these people didn't do.

Over the course of our years of smoking, we turned to cigarettes for comfort, companionship, stress relief, and more, learning to relate all of the events in our lives to smoking. We thought of it as a solution rather than a problem and unconsciously adopted unhealthy and inaccurate beliefs as facts of life, instead of seeing smoking for what it really was—a need to feed an addiction.

Unraveling all of those false associations and replacing them with healthy ways of dealing with our lives will start the ball rolling on changing the relationship you have with smoking.

(Source: [verywell.com](#))

Researchers amplify antibiotic of last resort hoping to halt superbugs

By Elizabeth Roberts

Scientists in the United States have developed a vital tool in the battle against superbugs by re-engineering a decades-old antibiotic.

A modified version of the antibiotic vancomycin is believed to be much more effective at fighting Enterococci bacteria, which is found in hospitals and can cause dangerous wound and blood infections. The drug, which has been used for 60 years, is described as an antibiotic of last resort, used only after treatment with other antibiotics has failed. But some infections have become resistant even to vancomycin in its current form.

The research team, from The Scripps Research Institute in San Diego, California, described the new drug as "magical" in its strength, the UK Press Association reported.

It could be years, however, before the completion of clinical trials needed to turn the lab discovery into a mass-produced medicine. Dr. Andrew Edwards, a lecturer in molecular microbiology at Imperial College, London, told CNN.

Triple threat to tough infections

The study, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, says the modification gives vancomycin a 1,000-fold increase in activity, so doctors could use less of it to fight infection.

It works on bacteria in three ways to make it harder for them to develop resistance.



A modified version of the antibiotic vancomycin is believed to be much more effective at fighting Enterococci bacteria, which is found in hospitals and can cause dangerous wound and blood infections.

"This increases the durability of this antibiotic," said Dale Boger, who led the research and is co-chair of The Scripps Research Institute's chemistry department.

"Organisms just can't simultaneously work to find a

way around three independent mechanisms of action," he said. "Even if they found a solution to one of those, the organisms would still be killed by the other two."

Antibiotic resistance is rising to dangerously high levels around the world, threatening the ability to treat common infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, blood poisoning and gonorrhea, the World Health Organization warns.

"This is a relatively simple modification that's made a much better drug," Edwards told CNN.

He described it as a "very significant" development, explaining: "Hopefully what this means is there will be another option for treating really serious invasive infections. It's almost like having a new antibiotic."

Still, Edwards said, the need for more testing means its availability is likely years away.

Thousands die each year

And while promising, the re-engineered drug is not effective against all types of resistant bacteria, Colin Garner, CEO of the charity Antibiotic Research UK, told CNN.

"It is good, interesting science, but it is not going to cure antibiotic resistance," he said.

"This is going to be one small step on a long road to trying to tackle antibiotic resistance," Garner said. "In the UK, at least 12,000 people a year are dying from antibiotic-resistant infections. That's about the same number as breast cancer."

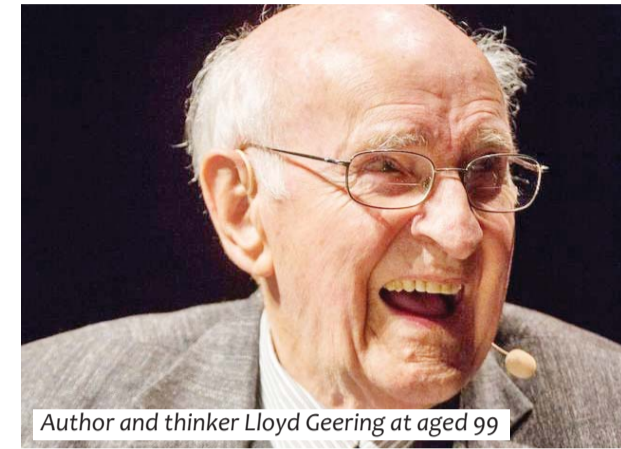
(Source: [CNN](#))

What's the best age to be?

True stories of centenarians who excel, give us hope.

Mark Twain wrote 'Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.'

A wise saying but not always easy to laugh about as the body becomes wearier sooner and the memory for the names of those folk you know disappears just as you are in the middle of introducing them to another friend (whose name you have also forgotten!) So any research that suggests age not only doesn't matter but may even be advantageous is always welcome.



Author and thinker Lloyd Geering at aged 99

No doubt at all that today many people in their fifties look forty, in their sixties look fifty, and in their nineties look seventy-five. Recently in Auckland, here in little New Zealand at the bottom of the world (or the top, depending on your point-of-view), there have been two large festivals that cheer for older people: The World Masters Games and the Auckland Writers' Festival.

In both these festivals age is a moving feast. The World Masters Games is a global multi-sport event that follows the Olympics model; they are held every four years in different world venues, and include a summer and winter games. But the Masters' Games have many a difference, one being that they are for athletes of 'masters' age, and that age varies with the sport. For example, you're a master at age 25 in swimming, and generally a master in most sports by the age of 35. The other important difference is that one does not have to be an elite athlete to compete, and in most sports, you don't need to qualify. Anyone can register for the Games – and you register on your own behalf, not as the representative of a country. Twenty-eight different sports were included in the Auckland games, and 28,000 athletes from over 100 countries registered. They participated for many reasons: to win a medal, to have fun, to meet new friends and renew old friendships, to beat a personal best or to travel to a new place in the world.

In Auckland the athlete who received the most media attention and won the most hearts was Man Kaur, a 101-year-old Indian athlete who won four Golds, taking her tally of Golds since she began her athletics career at 93 to twenty. Sure, she is often the only competitor in the over-100-age-class, but that's not her problem; it's because the other centenarians are sitting at home watching on the tele. In Auckland she won the 100m sprint (1minute 14 secs), the 200 meters (2minutes 58 seconds), the shot put (2.1 meters), and the javelin throw (5.12 meters).

Yes, she's exceptional, but the research also has some positive things to say about aging and sport. Generally older athletes perform much better in ultra-endurance events such as the 100km and 1000km(!) marathons. Of interest, generally it has been found that in activities that require sudden bursts of energy, (including the four events Man Kaur won Gold in!) the peak is before the mid-twenties. Imagine if Man Kaur had decided to take up athletics before she was 93!

The Auckland Writers' Festival hosts writers from many countries and is considered to be one of the best such festivals in the world. This year 72,000 tickets were sold to the hundreds of sessions, and as I sat listening to 26 of them (each 50– 90 minutes long) it occurred to me, as it does every year, that some of the best writers and communicators are people in their sixties and older. Of course there are also many wonderful young and middle-aged writers, but those old ones have the advantage of years more experience and years more practice at writing and speaking eloquently about their ideas and values. One of the greatest sessions at the festival was an interview with Lloyd Geering, a New Zealander and thinker and writer who is 99. He was talking about his latest, recently published book, *Portholes to the Past*, as well as his childhood, a childhood he recalled with clarity, insight and humour. I recall going to his one-hour talk when he was 95, and timing the standing ovation by the 2250 people in the theatre. It continued for five minutes. He commented at this latest session that he is writing another book but he didn't know if he'd finish it! I'm guessing he will, but whether or not he does, I have no doubt that he'll go out content with the life he has had.

Back to the research—within the general population reading comprehension and arithmetic skills get better as we age at least until our fifties, and then the decline is only gradual. Social reasoning—the ability to form and retain good relationships—peaks at an even older age. The cognitive skills that decline at a much younger age are those memory skills and skills that require quick thinking. Creative thinking too probably peaks before 40; most Nobel Prize winners have made their best discoveries by that age.

Yet there are always exceptions. How we all love to celebrate these incredible people, and most of all we love to celebrate them when they are not only still superb at what they do, but still love doing it. Their stories lift us above the mess of everyday life and give us all, whatever age we are, hope.

The message is clear, really. Perhaps another version of Mark Twain's saying could be 'Age is an issue of love-of-life over matter. If you enjoy life, it doesn't matter.'

(Source: [psychologytoday.com](#))

Anzali Free Zone on way to be a tourist hotspot

TOURISM TEHRAN — Soaring numbers of travelers to the Anzali Free Zone along with ongoing efforts to boost its tourism infrastructure are sure signs that it is on track to become a bustling tourist hub in northern Iran.

The number of domestic and foreign tourists visiting the coastal region rose to 3.107 million in the previous Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017) in comparison to 2.3 million the year earlier, witnessing 35 percent growth, said Anzali Free Zone Organization's Deputy Director Majid Fatehi on Tuesday.



A general view of Anzali Free Zone in northern Iran.

The figure also jumped by 35 percent during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 20) in comparison to the same period last year, Fatehi added in an address to a meeting on tourism investment opportunities.

The free zone embraces 14 hotels, motels and residential complexes with a capacity of 5800 beds, all enjoy quality standards, he said.

A recreational pier named "Marina" is currently under construction as a pilot project for enhancing marine tourism in the region and it would be first of its kind in the south-Caspian region, ISNA quoted the official as saying.

The docking station has a capacity for accommodating some 350 vessels and it will be operational by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2018), he estimated.

Located in Gilan province, Anzali Free Zone is the sole free zone in the southern part of the Caspian Sea with an area of 9,400 hectares and 40 kilometers shoreline.

The economic hub, launched in 2005, has special advantages such as strategic transportation and transit position by being in the International North-South Transport Corridor. In addition, the free zone enjoys tax exemption for 20 years as well as customs duties and value-added tax exemptions.

Interest in Japanese hospitality is growing

"Omotenashi" is a Japanese term signifying the traditionally correct way to treat a guest, and it's the guiding principle for much of the country's hospitality industry.

That sector has seen increased interest in recent years among domestic and international investors, according to a 2016 report by real estate firm CBRE, and new hotel developments are accelerating against the growing number of inbound tourists.

For one hospitality provider, Hoshino Resorts, the traditional Omotenashi ethic is still an important part of the experience. The company — a family business that has been around for more than 100 years and runs a total of 35 resorts in Japan — operates brands Hoshinoya, Kai and Risonaire, and it stands out for requiring all employees to be versed in each facet of hospitality.

(Source: CNBC)

ROUND THE GLOBE Mistaken Point

Mistaken Point is a globally significant Ediacaran fossil site almost entirely located within Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve on the south-eastern tip of the island of Newfoundland in eastern Canada.

The 146-hectare property consists of a narrow, 17-kilometre-long strip of rugged naturally-eroding coastal cliffs, with an additional 74 hectares adjoining its landward margin designated as a buffer zone.

The superbly exposed, 2-kilometre-thick rock sequence of deep marine origin at Mistaken Point dates to the middle Ediacaran Period (580 to 560 million years ago) and contains exquisitely preserved assemblages of the oldest abundant and diverse, large fossils known anywhere.



The Jesuit reduction of Sao Miguel das Missoes in Brazil

More than 10,000 fossil impressions, ranging from a few centimeters to nearly 2 meters in length, are readily visible for scientific study and supervised viewing along the coastline of Mistaken Point.

Modern erosion has exhumed more than 100 fossil sea-floor surfaces, ranging from small beds with single fossils to larger surfaces adorned with up to 4,500 megafossils. The animals died where they lived, and their resultant fossil assemblages preserve both the morphology of extinct groups of ancestral animals and the ecological structure of their ancient communities.

Radiometric dating of the volcanic ash beds that directly overlie the fossil-bearing surfaces is providing a detailed chronology for 20 million years in the early evolution of complex life.

(Source: UNESCO)

Beat the heat: Tehran adjacent to myriad natural destinations

TOURISM TEHRAN — Though Tehran inspires many travelers with its art, history and majesty, the summer is the right time for its residents who have been fancying to escape from its scorching temperature to a wealth of cool tourist spots dotted nearby the bustling metropolis.

With gorgeous natural landscapes including lush gardens, villages, meandering rivers, snow-capped mountains, Tehran environs seems to offer it all.

There are plenty of reasons to beat the heat in search of cooler weather and a change of scenery for a population of about 12 million as the city becomes fairly hot in summertime. People could take the advantage of a three-month school break as well.

Tehran province boasts variety of traveler attractions and natural sceneries in all seasons, which can make memorable days for families.

On its northeast lies townships and villages of Oushan, Fasham, Damavand, Shekarab, Ahar, Zaigoun, Maignoun, and Garmabdareh to name a few. Most of which are teeming with natural beauties, fresh air, abundant fruit gardens, recreational centers, and restaurants.

The Shahandasht waterfall is another eastward destination located nearby a village of the same name off the Haraz road that connects Tehran to the Caspian Sea in the north. The 50-meter cascade is also adjacent to Malek Bahman stronghold that dates back to the Sassanid era (224 CE to 651).

In northeastern Tehran is also situated Tangeh Vashi, a popular mountainous resort that bears a bas-relief of Fath Ali Shah, a Qajar king. People mainly opt for walking through a cold river that dominates the area.

The riverside Kan and Sulqan rural districts along with colorful valleys



Travelers walk through a shallow river at Tangeh Vashi, a popular mountainous tourist resort in north-east of Tehran province. A Qajar-era bas-relief is seen in the picture as well.

across the Chalous road westwards host thousands of visitors during the summertime with hectic rows of coffee shops and restaurants.

Darbard and Darakeh villages on the north are Tehran's most pleasant urban escapes. Darakeh, at 1700m elevation, boasts a cluster of riverside restaurants. Paths going up through the village and connect with hiking trails across and up the mountainside. It's possible to hike from there to Tochal cable car and beyond.

Attached to Tajrish Sq., northern Tehran, a path winding up a narrow rocky valley with water cascading down the slope ushers visitors to Darband. The trail ascend into the hills past a picturesque succession of teahouses, restaurants and fruit-preserve stalls: it's one of the most relaxing places in Tehran.

In recent years, some tourist agencies in Tehran attempt to organize tours to the aforementioned neighboring resorts that adds to their fame.

Summers have been always synonymous with adventure and relaxation and Tehran with its ample indoor and outdoor attractions will not disappoint.

For those who can appreciate dry heat during summer's almost 14 hours of sunlight, Tehran offers unparalleled parks. An offer is to walk on the award-winning Nature Bridge (Pol-e Tabiyat) that connects Ab-o-Atash Park to Taleghani Park. People may savor the Tehran skyline while walking uphill on Bam-e Tehran, a northwestern district.



Citizens cross the picturesque Pol-e Tabiyat (Nature Bridge) that links Ab-o-Atash Park to Taleghani Park in Tehran.

Tourism group warns of Brexit hit if Border returns

Any return to a border, hard or soft between Northern Ireland and the Republic could hurt the North's economy, a hospitality lobby group has warned.

Industry lobby group Hospitality Ulster said any perception of a border between Northern Ireland and the Republic post-Brexit could make thousands of tourists think twice about visiting the North and potentially cost the economy millions of pounds.

Colin Neill, chief executive of Hospitality Ulster, said it is vitally important for the North's tourism industry to make it as 'easy as possible' to visit Northern Ireland.

Mr. Neill said this is one of the reasons why it is imperative that the current Common Travel Area arrangement is protected in the future as it facilitates the unhindered movement of people on the island.

(Source: The Irish Times)



A riverside restaurant in Darband village, northern Tehran

Tourists are finally coming back to Turkey

The number of foreign visitors to Turkey rose for the first time since a row with Russia deepened a crisis in the nation's tourism industry.

Tourist arrivals rose 18 percent from a year ago to just over 2 million in April, ending a losing streak that began in August 2015 and worsened after Turkey shot down a Russian jet near its border with Syria -- bringing ties with Moscow to a near-collapse. Russia,

then the second-biggest source of visitors, responded by banning travel to Turkey for tourism.

A tourism recovery is crucial for Turkey, which relies on the foreign-exchange revenue to plug part of a current-account gap predicted to reach 4.7 percent of gross domestic product this year, according to estimates compiled by Bloomberg.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Want family travel to really count? Make a plan

When the first of her three children neared age 8, and school events and sports increasingly demanded the family's time, Tracy Krechevsky, 52, a teacher in Wellesley, Mass., decided they needed a plan to make the most of their vacations.

"We knew the opportunity for traveling together was going to become less and less as they got older, so we started to map out where we wanted to go and putting aside money," said Ms. Krechevsky, who in the past 15 years has visited several national parks, a Wyoming dude ranch, the Caribbean and South Africa, among other places.

The Krechevskys' approach embodies the latest trend promoted by the travel industry: family vacation planning. The idea behind it is to encourage families to take the time and save the money so that they can meet all of their travel goals.

"Families are saying we want to map out the next five years of our vacation," said Martha King, an independent adviser with Brownell Travel in Chattanooga, Tenn., adding, "It's about making sure they see and do these things, and they like to have it to look forward to and to budget for."

Future-minded travelers are not just super-organized; they may be onto something: A plan helps them save for the trips so that they don't forfeit their travel budget to domestic emergencies such as roof repair.

Planning ahead can also help lower costs; last-minute

airfares, for example, are almost always the highest possible price. And many places, particularly national parks like Yellowstone or Yosemite, require planning up to a year in advance for some visits during the high season.

■ Ages 6 and under

Junior might not remember the Eiffel Tower or the Hubbard Glacier in Alaska, but at an early age, children can be exposed to the practice and stimulation of travel that may pay off later.

"Once kids are exposed to any kind of travel experience, particularly at a young age, they'll be a better traveler as time goes on," said Mr. Jense of the Family Travel Association. "One mistake is to hold off too long, and then they're teenagers and not interested. Teens are very distracted anyway because of school and social pressure. It's important to expose them early in life."

■ Ages 7 to 10

School-age children may develop an appetite for history based on their studies, which places like Boston, Philadelphia and Washington bring to life.

For trips that focus on nature and the environment, Will Bolsover, founder and managing director of Natural World Safaris, recommends the Galápagos Islands rather than Africa for a wildlife experience that is easy, up close, engaging and

fun. "You're not putting young kids in front of lions," he said.

■ Ages 11 to 13

Tween children can do a lot physically that they couldn't do when they were younger. Growing stamina makes longer hikes and ski runs possible. They've also reached a great age to learn a skill, such as surfing or cooking, with their parents. The Professional Association of Diving Instructors offers a certification course for children as young as 10 years old.

Many safari operators will take children as young as 8, though specialists suggest waiting until they're ready to sit still for long drives that can be very sedentary, often for safety.

■ Teenagers and young adults

Although it may be harder to persuade a teenager, especially one committed to a busy school and extracurricular schedule, to travel than it is to figure out where to go, they are ready to handle the complexities of places like China and India.

Once people reach their late teens or early 20s, Mr. Bolsover of Natural World Safaris suggests more adventurous trips to keep them engaged, such as a self-driving safari in Namibia with overnights at rugged desert camps.

"When they're 18, 20 or 21, they'll think that still sounds cool: going on safari with Mom and Dad rather than going to a luxury lodge and living on a schedule," he said. "It's young and fun and more of an adventure." (Source: The New York Times)

U.S. coral reefs could disappear within decades, scientists warn

Global warming is taking its toll on coral reefs in U.S. waters, and many of the marine sanctuaries near Hawaii, Florida and the Caribbean are expected to disappear within a few decades, according to scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Despite strict conservation efforts in various protected areas in American seas, in a Tuesday report, NOAA reef experts told The Guardian that many reefs off Hawaii and Florida will start to see impacts from rising ocean temperatures as soon as this summer.

Some 70 percent of coral reefs across the globe have been affected by bleaching — which NOAA said is the most obvious visual indication of climate change in the marine environment. Coral reefs are typically vibrantly colored by photosynthetic algae called zooxanthellae — which provides the reef with food and oxygen. But exposure to carbon dioxide is causing water temperatures to rise, and algae cannot survive in these warmer waters.

Corals losing color

As they die off, the coral deteriorate and lose their color, a phenomenon known as bleaching. The widespread occurrence of bleaching throughout much of the world is alarming not only because it could be the result of human-caused climate change but also because it precedes the disappearance of the reefs — and the life they support — altogether.



Peter Gash, owner and manager of the Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort, snorkels with Oliver Lanyon and Lewis Marshall, senior rangers in the Great Barrier Reef region for the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, during an inspection of the reef's condition in an area called the 'Coral Gardens' located at Lady Elliot Is-

The widespread occurrence of bleaching throughout much of the world is alarming not only because it could be the result of human-caused climate change but also because it precedes the disappearance of the reefs — and the life they support — altogether.

land located north-east from the town of Bundaberg in Queensland, Australia, on June 10, 2015. NOAA report released on May 30 says coral reefs could disappear within a few decades.

Degradation of reefs

"I'm concerned because we could very well see bleaching return to Florida, parts of the Caribbean and Hawaii," Mark Eakin, a coral reef specialist at NOAA, told The Guardian. "It won't be as severe as 2015, but we've now moved into a general pattern where warmer than normal temperatures are the new normal. U.S. reefs have taken a severe beating. We are looking at the loss or at least severe degradation of most reefs in the coming decades."

Australia's Great Barrier Reef has garnered the most attention after two-thirds of the 1,400-mile reef suffered from bleaching in 2016. "As of May 2017, the ongoing global coral bleaching event continues to be the longest, most widespread, and most damaging on record."

In 2014 and 2015, some 90 percent of coral reefs in Hawaii alone were suffering from bleaching. Even after the state established strict no-fishing zones and environmental protections, 47 percent of corals near Oahu were found to be affected by bleaching and almost 10 percent were nearly dead, according to a Hanauma Bay nature preserve survey.

(Source: Newsweek)

Faceless fish among weird deep sea Australian finds

The scientists came across an unusual faceless fish, which has only been recorded once before by the pioneering crew of HMS Challenger off Papua New Guinea in 1873.

Faceless fish and other weird and wonderful creatures, many of them new species, have been hauled up from the deep waters off Australia during a scientific voyage studying parts of the ocean never explored before.

The month-long journey off the country's eastern seaboard has been surveying life lurking in a dark and cold abyss that plunges four kilometers (2.5 miles) below the surface, using nets, sonar and deep-sea cameras.

Chief scientist on board "The Investigator" Tim O'Hara from Museums Victoria told AFP Wednesday the search area was the "most unexplored environment on earth".

Bright red spiky rock crabs, puffed-up coffinfish, blind sea spiders and deep sea eels have been collected since the scientists began their voyage—from Launceston in Tasmania north towards the Coral Sea—on May 15.

They also came across an unusual faceless fish, which has only been recorded once before by the pioneering scientific crew of HMS Challenger off Papua New Guinea in 1873.

"It hasn't got any eyes or a visible nose and its mouth is underneath," O'Hara said from the ship.

At such huge depths, it is so dark that creatures often

have no eyes or produce their own light through bioluminescence, he added.

Carnivorous sponges

Another find was carnivorous sponges that wield lethal spicules made of silicon, effectively glass. They get small crustaceans hooked on their Velcro-like spines, to be slowly digested in-situ.

This technique differs from most deep-sea sponges, which feed on bacteria and other single-celled organisms filtered from passing currents.

"We've got 27 scientists on board who are leaders in their fields and they tell me that around one-third of what we've found are new species," said O'Hara, with several thousand specimens so far retrieved and two weeks of the trip still to go.

Life at such depths is one of crushing pressures, no light, little food and freezing temperatures, with animals that call it home evolving unique ways to survive.

As food is scarce, they are usually small and move slowly. Many are jelly-like and spend their lives floating about, while others have ferocious spines and fangs and lie in wait until food comes to them.

Working in such an environment was challenging, O'Hara admitted, with each fishing expedition taking up



to seven hours to deploy and retrieve the equipment and its eight kilometers of cable from the sea floor, given it is so far down.

But the data gathered was helping to improve the understanding of Australia's deep-sea habitats, their biodiversity and the ecological processes that sustain them, O'Hara said.

(Source: phys.org)

Stunning photos show clouds high in gas giant's skies

Spectacular new images captured by NASA's Jupiter-orbiting Juno spacecraft show fluffy-looking white clouds casting their comparably tiny shadows on the giant planet's monstrous, multicolored cloud decks.

The white clouds, which get up to 50 miles (80 kilometers) wide or so, are high up in Jupiter's atmosphere — so high that they're very cold, and the material they shed is therefore almost certainly frozen, Juno team members said.

"It's snowing on Jupiter, and we're seeing how it works," Juno principal investigator Scott Bolton, of the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, said

during a news conference on May 25. Zoomed-in view of a photo taken by NASA's Juno probe on May 19, 2017, showing clouds of water ice and/or ammonia ice high up in Jupiter's atmosphere in the south tropical zone.

Zoomed-in view of a photo taken by NASA's Juno probe on May 19, 2017, showing clouds of water ice and/or ammonia ice high up in Jupiter's atmosphere in the south tropical zone.

Ammonia ice

"It's probably mostly ammonia ice, but there may be water ice mixed into it, so it's not exactly like the snow that we

have (on Earth)," Bolton added. "And I was using my imagination when I said it was snowing there — it could be hail."

Small bright clouds of water ice and/or ammonia ice dot Jupiter's entire south tropical zone in this image captured by NASA's Juno spacecraft on May 19, 2017, at an altitude of 7,990 miles (12,858 kilometers). This is the first time so many cloud towers have been visible, possibly because the late-afternoon lighting is particularly good at this geometry.

Small bright clouds of water ice and/or ammonia ice dot Jupiter's entire south tropical zone in this image captured by

NASA's Juno spacecraft on May 19, 2017, at an altitude of 7,990 miles (12,858 kilometers). This is the first time so many cloud towers have been visible, possibly because the late-afternoon lighting is particularly good at this geometry.

The \$1.1 billion Juno mission launched in August 2011 and arrived in a highly elliptical orbit around Jupiter on July 4, 2016. The spacecraft's main mission involves characterizing the structure, composition, and gravitational and magnetic fields of Jupiter, to help scientists better understand how the giant planet formed and evolved.

(Source: space.com)

Official Expounds on Solvency of IIC

Considering the insertion of a news item entitled "Solvency of Iran Insurance Company (IIC)" published in one of media outlets, the followings are informed to the attention of fellow countrymen:

1- The "solvency" mentioned is related to the performance of company for the fiscal year closing on 1394 (from March 20, 2015 to March 19, 2016). With regard to the retrospective method of calculation, such performance does not necessarily reflect the solvency of company at the current situation.

2- Socioeconomic conditions caused by cruel sanctions imposed on the insurance industry in the past years, release of insurance policy in insurance industry

and subsequently, rate breaking in companies active in insurance industry which reduced the cost and increased the risk lead to the reduced profitability for whole insurance industry and solvency of companies.

3- In calculation of solvency, major share of risks of company (over 90 percent) is related to two third-party and treatment disciplines. Accordingly, in "compulsory insurance law of damages incurred to the third-party as a result of accidents caused by vehicles", Iran Insurance Company is only obliged to issue third-party insurance policy. Therefore, the company has not managed to control risk practically arising from issuance of third-party insurance policy. It should be noted that the

annual increase of the mentioned insurance policy and relevant compensations has led to the considerable increased risk of insurance in recent years.

4- "Capital Increase" is of the salient strategies for the promotion of solvency as mentioned in Article 9 of Solvency Regulations. Unlike other insurance companies, Iran Insurance Company needs approving the concerned units and receiving special legal licenses.

5- In addition to what were mentioned in above, solvency (Regulations No. 69 of Higher Council of Insurance) is associated with significant drawbacks. For this purpose, correction and revision of the mentioned regulations has been followed up.

Banks' Interest-Free Loans to Production Units Will Spur Growth and Development

Chief Executive of Resalat Bank in Qom Province Ja'farzadeh met and held talks with the managing director of Salafchegan Special Economic Zone (SSEZ), Public Relations Department of the Zone reported.

In this get-together meeting, chief executive of the bank revealed the readiness of his bank in offering quality banking services to the economic activists of Salafchegan Special Economic Zone.

He pointed to the salient activities of the bank in offering quality interest-free loan services to the economic enterprises and said: "Banks play important role in economic development and growth of country."

It is hoped that policies of banking system will focus on materializing objectives of economic enterprises in the country deservedly, he maintained.

For his part, Managing Director of Salafchegan Special Economic Zone

Tabatabaei pointed to the revival of interest-free loan culture as sublime recommendations of pure religion of Islam and said: "Rehabilitation of interest-free loan culture is one of the most important factors in economic prosperity and reduced inflation rate in macroeconomic level of the country."

Turning to the interests which are paid in today's banking system to the depositors, he stated: "Salient achieve-

ments and performance of Resalat Bank will be disseminated to the investors and merchants based in this Zone in order to witness a positive move in economic activities of this Zone more than ever."

In the end, Managing Director of Salafchegan Special Economic Zone Tabatabaei expressed his special thanks to the officials and managers of the bank who took giant strides for materialization of most objectives in relevant field.

Sky-high PNG trees cause re-think on forest assumptions

Remote mountains in Papua New Guinea could be home to some of the world's tallest trees at extreme altitudes, scientists said Wednesday, with a new study questioning assumptions about forests at such heights.

Trees located far above sea level do not usually grow more than 15 meters (49 feet), but scientists from Australia and Canada found those in the Pacific nation's pristine highlands were up to 40 meters tall.

"Unexpectedly, forest biomass had a major peak at altitudes of 2,400-3,100 meters, an altitude where forests fail to grow more than 15 meters tall in other parts of the world," said Michael Bird of James Cook University.

The discovery questioned the belief that "mountains make small trees" with forests at such altitudes often "squat and gnarly", lead author, Michelle Venter of Canada's University of Northern British Columbia, said.

"However, we recorded more than 15 tree families with individuals growing 30-40 meters tall at extreme altitudes, which brings this assumption into question."

The scientists studied 195 forest plots in largely unresearched Morobe Province -- from coastal lowlands at 50 meters above sea level to tropical forests at 3,100 meters -- with their findings published in the Global Change Biology journal.

University of Queensland's John Dwyer said the study could push researchers to re-evaluate the ideal environments for growing very large trees.

(Source: AFP)

130 million-year-old skull of unknown marine reptile species found in Russia

Paleontologists have found the remains of an unknown type of pliosauroida - an extinct marine reptile - that lived alongside the dinosaurs 130 million years ago on the bank of the Volga River in Russia. The skull of the reptile was first discovered in 2002, but until now had not been identified as a new species.

Pliosauroida, better known as Pliosaurus, is believed to have lived 220-70 million years ago and their remains are mostly found in Europe. The new species has been dubbed "Luskhan itilensis," meaning the Master Spirit.

Pliosaurus existed from the earliest Jurassic to the early late Cretaceous period. They did have a long and large heads like many dinosaur species but had four big flippers, giant bodies up to two meters long, and could swim efficiently.

The beak of the latest fossil is assumed to have been extremely slender, resembling that of fish-eating aquatic animals like river dolphins. The newly discovered skull most likely belongs to a highly unusual pliosaurus from the Early Cretaceous period according to the researchers.

"This is the most striking feature, as it suggests that pliosaurus colonized a much wider range of ecological niches than previously assumed" said Valentin Fischer, lecturer at the University of Liege and lead author of the study.

The new find also suggest that pliosaurus were able to bounce back after the latest Jurassic extinction as the age of the skull discovered is estimated to be about 130 million years old. But they likely faced another extinction that wiped them off the depths of ancient oceans.

(Source: IBT)

Shoes made of polluting algae help clean lakes

After a massive explosion of algae growth in China's Lake Taihu a decade ago left more than two million people in the area temporarily without safe drinking water, the government started spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year to try to solve the algae problem. One part of the solution: working with a company that harvests algae from the lake before it grows out of control, and turns it into a flexible, rubbery ma-



terial that is now being made into shoes.

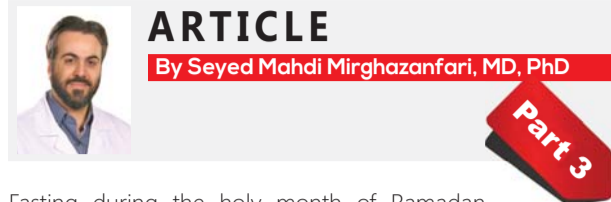
Vivobarefoot's water-resistant Ultra III shoes are usually made from a petroleum-based version of the same material, ethylene-vinyl acetate (EVA). But a version that will launch in July is made from a blend of algae and EVA, instead. To get enough algae to make one pair means cleaning 57 gallons of water, which are then returned to the lake.

A company called Bloom supplies the material to Vivobarefoot, producing it using mobile platforms that gently suck algae from the water, returning water that is filtered and clean. The harvested algae is mixed with the raw petroleum material that is typically used to make EVA, helping reduce the carbon footprint of the shoes and cleaning the water of the lake. The current material uses 40% algae and 60% EVA, though Bloom is working on materials that use more algae.

The algae explosions (called blooms, hence the company name) that make this possible are caused by pollution—particularly fertilizer runoff from agriculture—in the water, that can make algae grow uncontrollably, which can cut off oxygen and sunlight for marine animals. Some species of algae also release toxins as they die, that cause even more damage to the ecosystem. While some governments try to reshape the systems that pollute the water (China, for example, closed several factories near Lake Taihu), Bloom is attempting to treat the problem more quickly.

(Source: Fast Company)

Health tips for Ramadan



ARTICLE

By Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, PhD

Part 3

Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan requires dogged determination and as hard as it seems, considering the long hot days, it would greatly help to create balance in the body.

It is worth mentioning that everyone should keep in mind corresponding to one's distinguishing temperament is of utmost importance even during the month of Ramadan.

Fasting would help teenagers who hit puberty to be able getting a grip on the hormonal changes they might face during that stage.



Between the ages of 20 to 30 the body is characterized by excessive warmth and fasting would increase the heat in body as well. Now that the days are fairly long and hot it is necessary for the parents to set the scene for their children to experience better fasting condition to be able to continue fasting in the future.

Taking advices from Iranian traditional medicine would certainly help us all to feel better after a month of abstaining from eating and drinking both mentally and physically.

■ Fasting is anti-aging, lowers cholesterol levels

Some studies reveal that fasting would reduce cholesterol levels and would slow down the aging process.

■ Less fatty, salty, spicy foods, fizzy drinks

The core principle of eating during Ramadan is to eat lightly at Iftar, meal eaten after breaking fast, as the digestive system is not prepared for huge amounts of food.

It is also better to avoid consuming or cut down on fatty, salty, spicy, and fried food stuff and fizzy drinks both at Suhur and Iftar.

In general the meals eaten at the month of Ramadan ought to be small in quantity and rich in nutrients.

LEARN ENGLISH

Interview Skills 7 - Describing One's Weaknesses

Mr. Parsons: Okay Rebecca, well I think you've given me a clear **impression** of your positive qualities, but let's talk a little bit about your **weaknesses**.

Rebecca: Okay, well it's always more difficult to describe them isn't it? Mr. Parsons: Definitely, but if you had to **pinpoint** one weakness what would it be?

Rebecca: Well as I mentioned before, I do tend to get **frustrated** if I don't see progress in my work or career. I suppose I'm quite a **restless** character. My father always taught me to be a **high achiever** so.

Mr. Parsons: So would you say if things don't **go your way** at work it could easily **get you down**?

Rebecca: Well, in a way yes. But I must say that even if I'm not completely happy in my work I would never **shirk** my responsibilities. I suppose sometimes I expect too much too soon.

Mr. Parsons: Well, you know journalism is a highly **competitive** world, so you do need to keep **pushing** yourself it's true. Okay well let's move on to talk about the job position here shall we? Rebecca: Yes please.

■ Key vocabulary

impression: the feelings one has after a specific event

weakness: a personal defect or failing

to pinpoint: to locate or describe exactly or precisely

frustrated: upset

restless: unwilling to stay in one place, and always wanting new experiences

high achiever: a person who achieves more than the average person in their work

go someone's way: proceed according to one's plans or wishes

get someone down: to exhaust, discourage, or depress someone

to shirk: to avoid or neglect

competitive: relating to, characterized by, or based on competition

push: to encourage or force someone to do something or to work hard

■ Supplementary vocabulary

honest: to tell the truth

workaholic: a person who is obsessed with their work

professional: to still behave accordingly even if unhappy

overachiever: to strive to be the best

temper tantrum: to throw a fit if things do not go your way

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Have an idea?
Be in touch!

lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com

Charity event collects \$1m to free prisoners

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iranian benefactors **d e s k** have donated a total of 33.426 billion rials (nearly \$1 million) to help free prisoners who had committed involuntary crimes.

The money was collected during a charity fund ceremony, which was held at Tehran's Abgineh Hall on Tuesday, Tasnim news agency reported.

Every year concurrent with the holy month of Ramadan Iranians make generous donations to help free prisoners.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, President Hassan Rouhani, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, and Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani made a total of 6.83 billion rials (nearly \$170,000) in contributions to the event.

The leader and the president donated 3.13 billion rials (\$78,250) and 2.7 billion rials (\$67,500) respectively, while the parliament speaker and the judiciary chief each made 500 million rials (\$12,500).

Some 290 fundraising events are planned to be held nationwide, Blood Money Organization's director Asadollah Jolaei announced.

Last year, some 178 charity fundraising events to free prisoners took place nationwide and contributions totaled some 400 billion rials (nearly \$10 million), he explained.

He also pointed out that the leader, the president, the parliament speaker, and the judiciary chief donated 3 billion rials (\$75,000), 2.5 billion rials (\$62,500), 500 million rials (\$12,500), and 500 million rials (\$12,500) to the event respectively.



A benefactor donates money during charity fund raising ceremony on Tuesday in Tehran

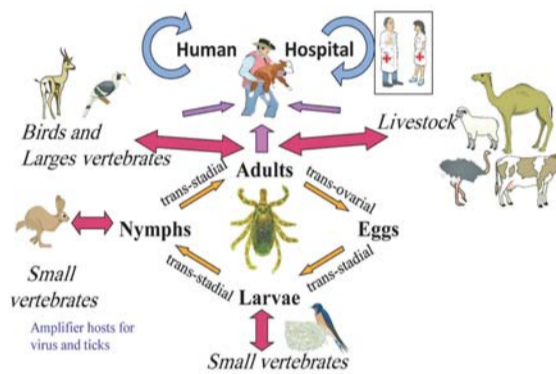
Iran adopts preventive measures against Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The Veterinary **d e s k** Organization, the Health Ministry's center for communicable disease control, and the health committee of the parliament (Majlis) held a meeting on Tuesday, adopting preventive measures to curb the spread of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever across the country.

At first, the number of mechanized abattoirs should be increased, the head of the Majlis health committee Mohammad Naem Amini told Fars news agency.

The places where the kettle render for slaughtering in cities should be organized as well, he added.

For his part, the head of the Veterinary Organization,



urged people to buy and consume livestock which are slaughtered meeting sanitary conditions under the supervision of the organization.

Since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), 31 people nationwide have been infected with the Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, three of them lost their lives.

According to the World Health Organization, CCHF's mortality rate is about 30 percent and is endemic to Africa, the Balkans and Ukraine, the Middle East and Central Asia.

CCHF was first detected in the Crimea in 1944 and then in the Congo in 1969. In 2011, it was detected for the first time in ticks in Spain.

Tree-climbing, seed-spitting goats aid farming in Morocco

It's tough for trees to thrive in the semi-desert Sous valley region of southern Morocco, but scientists have found that some might be getting a helping hand from an unlikely source.

While the local goats have been considered something of a menace because of their fondness for the argan fruit, Spanish ecologists have observed an unusual way in which they might actually be helping - they are constantly spitting out their seeds.

Domesticated goats in the region are inordinately fond of climbing to the precarious tops of argan trees to find fresh forage.

In some arid habitats, such as argan forests, most green vegetation is at the tops of the trees - which can grow 10 metres high.

Local goatherds are known to encourage the activity, pruning the bushy, thorny trees to make it easier for goats to ascend them, and even helping the



Goats graze on an argan tree in southwestern Morocco

goats' kids to learn how to climb.

During the bare autumn season in the region, goats can spend three quarters of their foraging time "treetop grazing" in

the argan trees.

Argan is popular for the beauty products which feature in argan oil, made from the tree's nuts.

In argan forests, most green vegetation is at the tops of trees. Pic: J Roman/EBD-CSIC

However, the goats don't like the large argan seeds. Like cows, sheep and deer, goats re-chew their food after fermenting it for a while in a specialized stomach, and while ruminating over their cud, the goats have been observed spitting out the argan nuts.

This means they are delivering clean seeds to new ground, wherever the goat has wandered.

Scientists believe that in gaining some distance from the parent tree, the seedling gains a much better chance of survival.

This novel seed dispersal effect is a variation on the mechanism ecologists call "endozoochory", in which seeds more commonly pass all the way through the animal's digestive system before departing at the other end.

(Source: news.sky.com)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

INOTEX hosting 40 overseas Iranian companies

About 40 Iranian companies, which are active abroad, are participating in the 6th International Innovation and Technology Exhibition (INOTEX) which opened on Wednesday at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

The goal of INOTEX is in line with the government's plan for encouraging Iranian experts abroad to come back to the country, the vice president for science and technology affairs Sorena Sattari said, Tasnim reported.

INOTEX is the premier regional event for professionals engaged in technology and innovation.

Cosponsored by the presidential office for science and technology, the presidential center for innovation and technology cooperation, and the national innovation fund, the exhibition runs until May 26.

۴۰ شرکت ایرانی خارج از کشور به نمایشگاه نوآوری اینوتکس آمده‌اند

۴۰ شرکت ایرانی خارج از کشور از روز چهارشنبه همزمان با آغاز به کار ششمین نمایشگاه بین‌المللی فناوری و نوآوری اینوتکس در محل دائمی نمایشگاه‌های بین‌المللی تهران حضور دارند.

به گزارش خبرگزاری تسنیم سورنا ستاری معاون علمی و فناوری رئیس‌جمهور گفت: در راستای برنامه حمایت از بازگشت متخصصان ایرانی خارج از کشور، امسال در ششمین نمایشگاه فناوری و نوآوری شاهد حضور ۴۰ شرکت از این بخش هستیم. این نمایشگاه که تا ۶ خرداد ماه ادامه خواهد داشت با همت معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری، مرکز همکاری‌های فناوری و نوآوری ریاست جمهوری، و صندوق نوآوری راه اندازی شده است.

ENGLISH PROVERB

You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours

■ **Explanation**: you help me and I'll help you
■ **For example**: if you do my Physics homework, I'll do your English homework. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours!

PHRASAL VERB

Cut something out

■ **Meaning**: to stop something from happening or existing
■ **For example**: A catalytic converter will cut out 90% of carbon monoxide emissions.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Zero in on something

■ **Explanation**: If you zero in on something, you focus all your attention on that particular thing.
■ **For example**: The boss immediately zeroed in on the sales figures

Kabul bombing: Huge explosion rocks diplomatic district

World leaders condemn deadly attack

A massive truck bomb blast has ripped through the heart of Afghan capital Kabul's diplomatic district, killing at least 80 people and wounding hundreds, in a powerful explosion described by officials as "one of the biggest" to have hit the capital.

A tanker truck believed to be carrying either water or human waste exploded on Wednesday near Zandab square, in Kabul's 10th district, close to shops and restaurants, as well as government offices and foreign embassies.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Taliban, told Al Jazeera that the group was not involved in the attack.

Police and health officials confirmed to Al Jazeera that at least 80 people were killed and more than 300 wounded in the attack.

Aziz Nawin, an IT engineer with the Afghan TOLONews outlet, was one of the first victims to be named.

Mohammed Nazi, a driver with the BBC, was also killed, while four journalists from the British public broadcaster were being treated in hospital.

"[Nazi] was driving journalist colleagues to the office," the BBC said in a statement posted to Twitter. "He was in his late thirties and leaves a young family."

An Afghan security guard at the German embassy also died in the attack.

The victims appear mainly to have been Afghan civilians and there were no immediate reports of casualties among foreign embassy staff.

Video shot at the scene showed burning debris, crumbled walls and buildings and destroyed cars, many with dead or wounded people inside.

Al Jazeera's Qais Azimy, reporting from Kabul, said the location of the attack was very significant, as it hit one of the Afghan capital's busiest and most secure



parts.

"Kabul has been very quiet for the past week but police has confirmed to us that this was one of the biggest blasts Kabul has ever seen," he said.

The incident raised many security questions in Kabul, Azimy said, noting that many were wondering how "a truck full of explosives could manage to get to that highly secure" part of the Afghan capital.

"Heavily-loaded vehicles are checked thoroughly and usually they are not allowed to pass through these areas without prior clearance from the security forces," he said.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group has claimed responsibility for several recent bombings in the Afghan capital, including a powerful blast targeting an armored NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) convoy that killed at least eight people and wounded 28 on May 3.

Sigmar Gabriel, Germany's foreign minister, said that an Afghan security guard was killed and several employees of the German embassy wounded in the blast.

Sushma Swaraj, India's minister of external affairs, tweeted that all of the staff at the Indian embassy "were safe in the massive Kabul blast".

French officials said the country's embassy in Kabul was damaged in the attack, but there were no signs at this stage of any victims.

Ambulances rushed to the scene of the blast, while a huge plume of smoke could be seen rising from the area.

Houses and shops hundreds of meters away from the blast site were damaged, with windows and doors blown off their hinges.

World leaders condemn Kabul attack

Meantime, several world leaders have offered sweeping condemnations of "one

of the biggest" attacks to hit Afghanistan's capital, Kabul.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani strongly condemned the attack, which came just days into the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

A statement from his office quoted Ghani as saying that "the terrorists, even in the holy month of Ramadan, the month of goodness, blessing and prayer, are not stopping the killing of our innocent people".

Pakistan condemned the "terrorist attack in Kabul this morning that has caused loss of precious human lives and injuries to many".

Mohammed bin Jassim Al-Thani, Qatar's foreign minister, condemned the "appalling attack".

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted "thoughts & prayers" to those affected by the attack.

We strongly condemn the terrorist blast in Kabul. Our thoughts are with the families of the deceased & prayers with the injured.

Lavrov: Reject double standards
The deadly attack in Kabul has become another sign of the necessity to renounce double standards and establish coordination of all external stakeholders, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday.

"An awful terrorist attack ... Another very sinister alarm which signals the need to renounce double standards, finally establish fully-fledged coordination with participation of all external stakeholders without exceptions, the support of Afghan government in the fight against terrorism. Renounce the attempts to use everything that takes place regarding Afghanistan in geopolitical games," Lavrov said.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Amnesty: France using terrorism powers to curb peaceful protests

Rights group Amnesty International accused France on Wednesday of using emergency powers to fight terrorism as a pretext for clamping down on peaceful protests, including over sensitive environmental and labor issues.

The report comes just days after President Emmanuel Macron said his government would ask parliament to extend by several months the emergency powers introduced in 2015 to counter the threat of militant attacks.

Emergency rules giving French police wider search and arrest powers were introduced after gunmen and suicide bombers killed 130 people in and around Paris in November 2015.

Amnesty said that between November 2015 and 5 May 2017, authorities had used their powers to issue 155 decrees prohibiting public gatherings.

It also said 639 measures preventing specific individuals participating in public assemblies had been imposed, including 574 that targeted labor law reforms protesters.

The new government has said that following last week's Manchester attacks claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, the

emergency measures should run beyond mid-July to Nov. 1.

"Emergency laws intended to protect the French people from the threat of terrorism are instead being used to restrict their rights to protest peacefully," said Amnesty International researcher Marco Perolini.

"Under the cover of the state of emergency, rights to protest have been stripped away with hundreds of activists, environmentalists, and labor rights campaigners unjustifiably banned from participating in protests."

Macron, who reviewed national security with defense chiefs on Wednesday, said security measures for the summer period would be reinforced taking into consideration the state of emergency's planned extension.

Amnesty said the current measures included powers to ban demonstrations on vague grounds and prevent individuals attending protests.

With Macron expected to push through new economic reforms in the coming months, there is potential for more widespread demonstrations across the country.

"In the run-up to the election, Emmanuel Macron promised to protect the right to protest in France. Now



he is President, he must turn his words into action," said Perolini.

"With the battle lines already being drawn between the new president and the unions on labor law reform, President Macron must stop the misuse of anti-terrorism powers to restrict peaceful protest and end France's dangerous and dizzying spiral towards a permanent state of emergency."

(Source: AFP)

Trump decides to exit from Paris Climate deal despite EU's objections

1→ After a meeting with Trump, European Council chief Donald Tusk said that the stances of Washington and Brussels on climate and trade still differ.

Moreover, newly-elected French President Emmanuel Macron during bilateral talks called on the U.S. leader to review his stance on the Paris climate deal. After the meetings with EU

leaders, Trump said he will make his "final decision" this week.

In April, Trump once again lashed out at "one-sided" Paris climate deal, saying it doesn't benefit America, and promised to make a "big decision" regarding the agreement. Trump stated that full compliance with the agreement would reduce U.S. GDP by \$2.5 trillion over the next decade, explaining that it means "factories and plants closing all over the country."

The Paris climate agreement within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, championed by former US President Barack Obama, was signed in 2015 by 195 countries and ratified by 147. It aims to hold the increase in average global temperature

to below 2 degrees above pre-industrial level by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with all the signatory states agreeing to reduce or limit their greenhouse gas emissions.

Syria and Nicaragua are reportedly the only two states who didn't sign the climate agreement.

(Source: Sputnik)

Putin 'convinced' Damascus not behind April chemical attack

Russian President Vladimir Putin, in an interview published Tuesday, said he was "convinced" the Syrian government was not behind an alleged chemical attack in the country last month that killed dozens.

In an interview with the online news feed of the conservative French daily Le Figaro, Putin added that he agreed with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron that use of chemical weapons was a "red line".

"According to our information, there is no proof of the use of chemical weapons by (Syrian President Bashar al-) Assad," he said.

"We are convinced he did not do so," Putin told Figaro Live, a day after meeting with Macron in Versailles.

Several Western countries including France have accused Assad's government of carrying out the April 4 attack on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhun that was reported to have killed 88 people, including 31 children.

U.S. President Donald Trump ordered air strikes three days later on the Syrian air base from where Washington believes the attack was launched.

In an interview with AFP late last month, Assad, a longstanding Moscow ally, dismissed the allegation as "100-percent fabrication".

Asked about Macron's assertion that use of chemical weapons in Syria would be considered a "red line", Putin replied, "I agree."

Macron had also said Monday that France would respond immediately to any use of these arms.

The Russian leader added that Macron had agreed with him that "this issue should be placed in a wider context."

He said the international community should "establish a joint policy" to address the use of chemical weapons by "anyone, any force... and make a response that would render the use of chemical weapons simply impossible."

A report by French intelligence services said the April 4 attack bore the "signature" of the Syrian government, accusing it of possessing chemical weapons in violation of commitments made in 2013.

Since the start of the Syrian conflict in March 2011, Damascus has been repeatedly accused of using chemical weapons.

A 2013 attack in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta that left hundreds dead crossed a "red line" drawn by then U.S. president Barack Obama.

The massacre led to an international accord under which Assad agreed to hand over Syria's entire chemical weapons arsenal.

But since then, dozens of other attacks have been recorded, though responsibility has often been difficult to assess.

Last week an official at UN headquarters in New York said the UN was working to obtain security assurances needed to dispatch an international team of experts to Khan Sheikhun.

Russia has criticized the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for not sending experts to the site, instead analyzing samples gathered from "various sources".

The Russian defense ministry said Syria's military has said it is ready to halt fire around the site if experts are sent in to conduct a probe.

Last year reports by UN and OPCW investigators concluded that Damascus had carried out three chlorine attacks and that the ISIL terrorist group was behind a mustard gas attack.

(Source: AFP)

Putin lifts restrictions on hiring Turks

Russia's President Vladimir Putin has lifted restrictions on hiring Turkish workers and on Turkish firms operating in Russia, the Kremlin said on Wednesday, under a deal to mend relations hurt by Turkey's downing of a Russian jet in 2015.

Putin also partially restored a mutual agreement on the movement of each country's citizens that was suspended after Turkey shot down the plane near the Syrian border, the Kremlin added.

The Russian leader agreed to lift some of the restrictions after meeting his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in early May.

Russia is still keeping a ban on Turkish tomato imports, in the face of a Turkish proposal to lift the bar outside the Russian growing season.

In response, Ankara imposed prohibitively high import tariffs on Russian wheat from mid-March, but resumed purchases after the presidents' meeting on May 3.

(Source: Reuters)

Casualties reported after bomb attack in Iraq's Anbar province

At least 14 people have been killed and over 20 more injured in a bomb blast in Iraq's western province of Anbar.

The Tuesday attack took place in the province's city of Hit after a bomber wearing an explosive vest blew himself up close to the al-Shaimaa school.

The area around the school has been cordoned off by security forces. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but it has the hallmark of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.

The recent attack comes just one day after two bomb explosions have hit the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, killing a total of at least 27 people and injuring 100 others just days after the start of the holy month of Ramadan, when Iraqi families often stay out late after breaking their daily fast.

ISIL has recently increased its terrorist activities across Iraq in revenge for the blows it has been suffering at the hands of Iraqi forces and pro-government popular fighters, particularly in the northern city of Mosul, the terror group's last urban bastion in the country.

Iraqi forces took control of eastern Mosul in January and launched the battle in its west in February.

(Source: agencies)

Bahrain dissolves largest leftist political party

Bahrain has dissolved the country's largest leftist political party, the National Democratic Action Society (Wa'ad) as part of a heavy-handed crackdown led by the ruling House of Khalifah regime on political dissent.

Bahrain's administrative court ruled on Wednesday to dissolve Wa'ad and hand over all its properties to the treasury, al-Wasat newspaper reported.

Back in March, Bahrain's Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments accused Wa'ad of "incitement of acts of terrorism and promoting violent and forceful overthrow" of the Manama regime.

It also claimed that the political group "glorified convicted terrorists and saboteurs who used weapons and detonated bombs in killing and wounding several security [personnel], threatened citizens and residents' safety and damaged private and public properties."

Last year, Bahraini authorities dissolved the country's main Shia opposition group, Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, as well as Islamic Enlightenment Society (Tawiya) and al-Risala Society.

Sheikh Isa Qassim, Wefaq's spiritual leader, was stripped of his nationality last June over accusations that he had used his position to serve foreign interests and promote sectarianism and violence. Despite denying the charges, the cleric was handed a suspended one-year prison term and ordered to pay a fine earlier this month.

The ruling against the prominent Shia cleric sparked widespread protests and condemnations.

Since 2011, Bahrain has been the scene of peaceful anti-regime protests against the systematic abuse of the Shia population and discrimination against them.

The Bahraini regime has responded to the protests with excessive and lethal force, which has drawn international criticism.

(Source: Press TV)

Yemen health system mangled as cholera bites: UN envoy

1→ Hudaydah is controlled by Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement, which is defending the country against Saudi regime-led raids with the help of the army and popular forces.

In March, reports said Washington and the Saudi regime-led coalition are considering an attack on Hudaydah to seize the port city from Ansarullah fighters.

Ahmed highlighted the overall lack of progress in settling the conflict, blaming ongoing fighting on the "reluctance of the key parties to embrace the concessions needed for peace."

Moreover, Ahmed called on the parties to urgently start a dialogue to prevent further aggravation of the situation.

The persistent military action is leading to an increased militarization of the Yemeni population, extensive proliferation of weapons, and widespread use of deadly landmines, the official cautioned.

Ahmed, meanwhile, said the rampant instability had turned much of the country into breeding grounds for extremist groups such as al-Qaeda.

(Source: Press TV)

Woods asleep at wheel of car before Florida arrest: police

Tiger Woods was asleep at the wheel of a Mercedes-Benz stopped on a Florida road and did not know where he was, said a police report released on Tuesday, a day after the former world No. 1 golfer was arrested on a charge of driving under the influence. Woods, 41, blamed the incident on medications.

Woods had "extremely slow and slurred speech" after being awakened by a Jupiter police officer, who found the car the golfer was driving stopped in the right lane of the roadway and still running with the right blinker light flashing, the report said.

Woods was heading south, away from his Jupiter Island home, before his arrest at about 3 a.m. on Monday, according to the report. It said Woods was cooperative but had a hard time walking and keeping his eyes open.

The police report said that during his interaction with the arresting officer, Woods "changed his story of where he was going and where he was coming from." At one point he indicated he was returning from a golf trip in Los Angeles, the report said.

The athlete, currently sidelined from competition after his fourth back surgery in April, said on Monday that an unexpected reaction to legal drugs led to his arrest on the DUI charge.

He also was cited for improper parking. Two breath tests showed Woods' blood alcohol content to be zero, according to the report, which added he performed several field sobriety tests incorrectly.

"I want the public to know that alcohol was not involved," Woods said in a statement.

His previously unblemished life and career were turned upside down as he lost both his marriage and some lucrative endorsement deals.

(Source: Reuters)

Enrique 'blames' Messi and Neymar for failed La Liga title challenge

Luis Enrique reportedly blames Lionel Messi and Neymar for Barcelona not winning La Liga.

Enrique has left the Nou Camp after beating Alaves in the Copa del Rey final on Saturday.

His departure was announced in March but despite ending the season on a high, the campaign was a disappointing one after losing the La Liga title to Real Madrid.

Messi and Neymar both scored against Alaves but reports in Spain suggest the duo were behind Enrique's decision to call it a day.

Diario Gol report the superstar duo told senior club figures a new manager should be brought in.

A number of other Barca players are said to have shared their view and Enrique felt it would have been a more successful season, had he had his players' backing.

It is even suggested some players felt Enrique should have lost his job after defeat to Real Sociedad in January 2015.

Meanwhile, Ernesto Valverde has been confirmed as Enrique's successor.

The former Athletic Bilbao boss has agreed a two-year deal with the view to a third.

He will be formally presented on Thursday.

(Source: Mirror)

Doping: Three more Russian athletes accepted as neutrals

Three more Russian athletes have been cleared to compete in international competition as neutrals while a further 28 have had their applications rejected, the governing body for athletics (IAAF) said Wednesday.

The IAAF said that 400 meters runner Kseniya Aksyonova, javelin thrower Vera Rebrik and 400 meters hurdler Vera Rudakova had met the "exceptional eligibility criteria" required to be able to compete as neutrals.

They will join 12 others who were previously cleared after satisfying the IAAF's doping review board that they have been training in an environment that passes the necessary anti-doping requirements.

Aksyonova is a former European champion in the 400 meters relay and silver medalist in the individual event. Rebrik is also a former European champion and Rudakova has won several golds in junior world and European championship events.

Their participation is still subject to IAAF formalities and acceptance by meeting organizers.

The Russian national athletics federation (RUSAF) remains suspended as a result of widespread and systematic doping, meaning that the majority of Russian athletes will miss the world championships in London in August.

The IAAF said a further 27 applications are still being considered.

"I'm grateful to the members of the Doping Review Board for the dedication and diligence they are giving to this on-going review process," said IAAF president Sebastian Coe.

"The importance of this huge task should not be underestimated. There can be no time constraints or deadlines when the protection of clean athletes everywhere is at stake."

Coe said last month he was disappointed by the lack of progress being made by Russia in cleaning up its anti-doping regime and made it clear that the ban on the country's athletics federation would continue indefinitely.

(Source: Reuters)

Champions League: A grand finale of many contrasts



That's how hard it is to win it.

Both teams are on a high, having won the leagues in their respective countries. It is now time to decide the champion of Europe. Real Madrid, who had to wait 12 years after Zidane's stunning goal led them to the title in 2001-02, have now appeared in three of the last four finals in a return to their powers of the past.

If they beat Juventus on Sunday night, it will mean they will not have lost a Champions League final in six attempts—a staggering record of converting finals into titles. For Juventus, it would mean winning

it for just the third time. The last time they played the final was in 2015, against Barcelona, losing 3-1. But in the two finals they won, they beat the holders.

Since 1989, an Italian team has won the Champions League every seven years. History suggests it is Juve's turn.

But for many, it will come down to wanting to see the combination of Zidane and Ronaldo lift the trophy once more, against wanting to see Buffon win it for the first time and become a real contender for the Ballon d'Or next season. No goalkeeper has won it since the legendary Lev Yashin

and a glorious night on 4 June could well be the final chapter to seal the Italian's legacy.

In the current season, Juventus have been impeccable. They have trailed in a game just once and are not just about their defence. Juventus are like transformers.

Champions League 2016-17 has certainly brought to the fore stars of the future. But come the final, it will be players like Ronaldo and Buffon—those who've dominated world football over the past decade—who will ascend the greatest stage of club football once again.

(Source: Guardian)

Manchester United ranked as Europe's most valuable club, Bayern Munich in fourth place



The professional services company KPMG has rated Manchester United as Europe's most valuable club. The only German outfit to make it into their top 10 is Bayern Munich, rated as Europe's fourth-most valuable club.

The report, released by KPMG on Wednesday, estimated the value of Manchester United at three billion euros (\$3.4 billion), making the English Premier League club the first to crack the three-billion-euro threshold.

According to the report, KPMG compiled its ranking by examining figures from the latest publicly available financial statements of 32 European football clubs from the 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons, as well as their levels of success in European competitions and their popularity on social media platforms. The authors of the report ranked the clubs by enterprise value, an accounting measure used to assess how much it would cost to buy any given club or company, also taking into account its total debt.

Under the KPMG formula, Manchester United's enterprise valuation increased by seven percent compared to the business'

value in the company's last report, despite two relatively disappointing seasons on the pitch between 2014 and 2016. This is due to the northern-English club's strong performance off the pitch, including what KPMG describes as "kit value," an indicator of how much a club's jersey is worth. Here, Manchester United was also ranked first, ahead of Barcelona and Bayern Munich.

Overall, the only German club to crack the top 10 were Bundesliga champions Bayern, who were ranked in fourth place at an enterprise value of 2.4 billion euros, behind Spanish giants Real Madrid (2.9 billion) and Barcelona, (2.7 billion). However, Bayern narrowed the gap on the Catalan club, posting enterprise value growth of 14 percent since the previous report. Borussia Dortmund were valued in 12th place, their Ruhr region rivals Schalke in 14th.

KPMG is an acronym for Amsterdam-based "Klynveld Peat Marwick Goederder," which was formed following the 1987 merger of Klynveld Main Goederder with Peat Marwick. KPMG. It provides financial services including audit, tax and business-advisory services.

(Source: Deutsche Welle)

Maradona not interested to comment alongside Pele



Argentine legend Diego Maradona and Brazilian legend Pele have had a long rivalry over who is the best and it has often gone to the extent to which both players have often traded insults. However, during a FIFA ceremony last year the two footballing legends buried the hatchet as Maradona called the Brazilian an "icon".

Pele was also kind in his response as he said the most important thing right now is peace. Despite the two legends exchanging a few kind words, Maradona seemed a bit upset at the ceremony where FIFA was trying to decide the player of the 20th Century.

FIFA organised an online vote which Maradona easily won but they felt the people who voted were too young and hence decided to sound out the readers of FIFA magazine and an international jury. This time Pele won and FIFA decided to name the Argentine and the Brazilian as the two greatest players of all time.

Maradona did not sit for the entire ceremony and walked out of the gala and said: "I had the vote of the

people, Pele won by forfeit". That was followed by another comment in which Maradona accused Pele of letting his former Brazil teammate Garrincha "die in misery". Pele responded to that by saying Maradona was "sick".

Though the night started on a good note, things were back to square one in no time and it could be one of the reasons Maradona refused to comment alongside him in a friendly match between Brazil and Argentina.

Maradona, who is the manager of UAE team Al-Fujairah SC, said he had prior commitments to the club and that was the reason he decided to turn down the offer. No one will really know the real reason and despite saying he has club commitments, the UAE league is already over and does not start until the end of the year.

Brazil are set to play Argentina in Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on June 9 and that match will be followed by a match against Australia on June 13.

(Source: IBT)

Wenger agrees two-year Arsenal extension

Arsene Wenger has signed a new two-year contract with Arsenal to bring an end to the speculation surrounding his future at the Premier League club.

Arsenal confirmed the extension on Wednesday after the Frenchman had met with majority owner Stan Kroenke on Monday before a board meeting on Tuesday.

Wenger's contract was due to expire at the end of June and the Frenchman had been evasive when facing questions on his future over the final months of the 2016-17 campaign.

But he has now extended his stay, with Kroenke believing he is the best man to secure the club's first Premier League title since 2004.

"Our ambition is to win the Premier League and other major trophies in Europe," Kroenke told the club's website.

"It is what the fans, players, staff, manager and board expect and we won't rest until that is achieved.

"Arsene is the best person to help us make that happen. He has a fantastic track record and has our full backing."

Arsenal revealed Wenger had conducted a full review of the club's activities on and off the field along with chief executive Ivan Gazidis.



And the manager is optimistic a positive transfer market can lead to him meeting the demands of the Gunners' supporters.

"I love this club and I am looking forward to the future with optimism and excitement," said Wenger.

"We are looking at what we do well and how we can be stronger everywhere. This is a strong group of players and with some additions we can be even more successful. We are committed to mounting a sustained league challenge and that will be our focus this summer and next season.

"I am grateful to have the support of the board and Stan in doing everything we can to win more trophies. It's what we all want and I know it's what our fans around the world demand."

Fans were divided on the issue of the Frenchman's tenure, with many staging protests in a bid to force out the 67-year-old, who took the helm in 1996.

Last week's FA Cup win saw the Gunners finish an otherwise underwhelming season – which saw them miss out on Champions League football for the first time in 20 years – with silverware, as Wenger lifted the FA Cup for a record seventh time.

A fifth-placed top-flight finish and humiliating Champions League exit, which came in a 10-2 aggregate loss to familiar foes Bayern Munich, were among the reasons for discontent.

But Wenger will now remain in his role until at least 2019, with Arsenal fans no doubt hoping his decision to stay will help keep star forward Alexis Sanchez at the club despite reported interest from Manchester City and Chelsea.

(Source: Soccerway)

Persepolis deserved win against Lekhwiya: Branko Ivankovic

S P O R T S Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic says that they deserved to qualify for the AFC Champions League quarter-final.

The Iranian giant progressed to the quarters after a Chico Flores own goal handed them a 1-0 victory over Lekhwiya in the second leg of the last 16 to advance by the same scoreline on aggregate.

After a goalless draw in the first leg in Tehran last week, Persepolis grabbed a crucial away goal midway through the first half at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium when Vahid Amiri released Mehdi Taremi, whose low ball across goal was diverted into his own net by Flores.

"I am so happy due to the win because we won a big match. I would like to congratulate my players because they did their best in the match against Lekhwiya," Branko said in the post-match news conference.

"We knew that the match would be a tough game. We showed a good performance and defeated the Qatari team on their home soil. Lekhwiya is one of the best Asian teams," the Croat added.

"Persepolis is the best Iranian football team at the moment and I believe that we deserved the win," Branko Ivankovic concluded.



Sarmayeh Bank sixth at Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship

Chinese Taipei's Taiwan Power defeated Iran's Sarmayeh Bank 3-1 (25-20, 18-25, 25-20, 25-12) to earn fifth place in the SMM 2017 Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship at the Boris Alexandrov Sports Palace on Wednesday.

Wan-Ling Tseng provided a solid performance, picking up 23 points from 18 attacks and five blocks.

"Today, we made some mistakes and could have played better, but we are happy with this result. We really wanted to get into the final four in this competition. We will work harder and come back stronger and hopefully get the best results in the next tournament," Tseng said.

Taiwan Power's Chen-Yu Huang and Wan-Ling Tseng commanded a strong presence in the middle to connect with their attacks and blocks in the first set. Sarmayeh

Bank utilised their hitters Maedeh Borhani and Mahdien Khaje Kolaei at the wings, but lost points to errors. The Chinese Taipei side took the 16-10 advantage by the second technical time-out.

Taiwan Power likewise suffered with attack and ball-handling errors, while Sarmayeh Bank tried to pass the ball better and saved two set points. The Chinese Taipei side seized momentum and grabbed a 25-20 win in the opening set.

Mahsa Saberi provided the offensive spark that was needed by Sarmayeh Bank in the second set. She added firepower to the wing, giving much support to Borhani and Khaje Kolaei. Chinese Taipei's Tzu-Ying Lee tried to retaliate but Iran set their plays more tightly to allow them the second set win at 25-18.

Taiwan Power tried to establish a faster offence in the third set. Sarmayeh Bank were able to keep up with this, showing how they could also play fast. The Chinese Taipei club took to running better plays to take a 12-7 lead. Taiwan power continued to utilise their middle attackers with much success to take the third set at 25-20.

In the fourth set, Sarmayeh Bank tried to improve their play with Mahsa continuing to score from the wing and Farnoosh Sheikhhi at the middle. By this time, the Chinese Taipei club tried to use combination plays and even scored from the service line. The Iranian side was unable to post good defence, and Taiwan Power finished the final set 25-12.

(Source: Asianvolleyball)

Esteghlal Khuzestan fail to advance to AFC Champions League quarter-final



Omar Khrbin and Salem Al Dawsari scored the goals as Al Hilal secured their place in the AFC Champions League quarter-finals after a 2-1 victory over Esteghlal Khuzestan in the second leg of the Round of 16 on Tuesday saw the Saudi side run out 4-2 winners on aggregate.

Needing at least two goals to have any chance of progressing after last week's 2-1 defeat in the first leg, Esteghlal Khuzestan started brightly and went in front on 12 minutes at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium when Mehdi Zobeidi squared for Aloys Nong to

tap into the back of the net.

But Al Hilal levelled four minutes later as Khrbin stooped low to unorthodoxly head home Mohammed Al Burayk's cross from the right for his fourth goal of the competition.

Al Hilal came out strongly after the interval and scored a deserved second with eight minutes remaining when Carlos Eduardo found substitute Al Dawsari, who burst into the box and fired into the roof of the net to book a spot in the last eight.

(Source: AFC)

Saudi Arabian hopes dashed at FIFA U-20 World Cup



Saudi Arabia's title aspirations came to an end at the FIFA U-20 World Cup on Wednesday after they were narrowly beaten 1-0 by Saudi Arabia to exit the tournament at the quarter-final stage.

With the Saudis looking to secure a spot in the last eight for a first time, it was Uruguay who began brightly, with both Joaquin Ardaiz and Nicolas Schiappacasse wasting chances to put their side ahead in the opening minutes.

That profligacy almost came back to haunt them as, having shown fleeting signs of threatening, Ayman Al Khulaif

fired a fierce effort just inches wide to send the Uruguayans into half-time knowing they were well and truly in a contest.

It then took a stroke of luck to finally get the South American champions going. A handball in the box saw captain Nicolas de la Cruz gifted the chance to put them in front from the penalty spot and he made no mistake, thundering his effort home.

Try as they may, Saudi Arabia had no response, crashing out at the same stage as their last appearance at Colombia 2011.

(Source: AFC)

Persepolis edge Lekhwiya to qualify for AFC Champions League quarters

Persepolis progressed to the AFC Champions League quarter-finals for the first time on Tuesday after a Chico Flores own goal handed the Iranian side a 1-0 victory over Lekhwiya in the second leg of the last 16 to advance by the same scoreline on aggregate.



After a goalless draw in the first leg in Tehran last week, Persepolis grabbed a crucial away goal midway through the first half at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium when Vahid Amiri released Mehdi Taremi, whose low ball across goal was diverted into his own net by Flores.

The hosts introduced Youssef El Arabi shortly after the interval and the Moroccan striker almost had an immediate impact but his close-range effort from Nam Tae-hee's centre was deflected onto the crossbar and over.

Lekhwiya continued to probe but, despite dominating possession, were struggling to break through a resilient Persepolis backline and Farshad Ahmadzadeh almost killed the tie off when he had a rare sight on goal for the visitors with six minutes remaining but stabbed just wide.

Youssef Msakni and Nam's late misses summed up the hosts' misery as Persepolis held firm to qualify for the last eight, while Lekhwiya fell at the Round of 16 for the second successive year.

(Source: AFC)

Analysis: Al Ain tear through Esteghlal in show of strength

Al Ain: A 6-1 victory at home to Islamic Republic of Iran's Esteghlal handed Al Ain a pass through to the quarter-finals of the 2017 AFC Champions League, with last year's runners-up hoping to go one better this time around.

Al Ain obliterated their opponents with a display of coordinated attacking prowess, with their individual stars stepping up to seize the initiative on the night.



With the hosts also enjoying 65.8 percent of possession and 22 shots to their opponent's seven, it was a night Al Ain fans will savour for some time to come.

As Al Ain tore through Esteghlal with ease in the second half, it was the endeavours of Brazilian Caio earlier in the game to which they must have been thankful.

The wide forward struck twice in the first half, handing his side a 2-0 lead in the game's opening 33 minutes to help Al Ain pull clear on the aggregate scoreboard.

With 41.8 percent of Al Ain's attacking play coming down the left flank, Caio's unceasing commitment to running in behind the defence opened up space for the side's star central midfielders to shine.

With seven shots on goal, including his two goals, Caio was Al Ain's leading goal threat throughout and it was little surprise that his goals set the tone for his side's performance overall.

With Caio occupying the thoughts of the Esteghlal defence on a regular basis and forcing the back four deeper, Emirati playmaker Omar Abdulrahman enjoyed space to excel in midfield—and he did not disappoint.

The No. 10 created an impressive eight chances on the night, including an assist for Nasser Al Shamrani and in addition to two goals of his own.

Abdulrahman had been below par in the first-leg of the clash, but showed his quality to put his opponents to the sword—as well as contributing defensively with 10 recoveries.

The 2016 AFC Player of the Year was at the heart of everything for Al Ain as an attacking unit, attempting killer passes (just 65.1 percent final third accuracy) to release Al Ain's pacy attacking unit.

Esteghlal's biggest issue on the night came through their inability to relieve pressure as it built in the face of Al Ain's waves of relentless attacking.

A passing accuracy of just 71.3 percent, dropping to just 60.3 percent in their own half, tells a story of a side unable to build from the back—with the harrying of Al Ain's forward line largely responsible.

With 30.6 percent of the game played in the Esteghlal final third, it was all too easy for Al Ain to wait for mistakes before pouncing through their talented attacking quartet.

The combined 19 ball recoveries of Al Ain's starting front four tells its own story of their success in winning the ball high up the pitch.

(Source: AFC)

Second Iran National Grassroots Conference held in conjunction with AFC Grassroots Football Day

The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) held its second Islamic Republic of Iran National Grassroots Conference recently in conjunction with the Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) Grassroots Football Day.

Over 600 grassroots coaches and managers from across Iran participated in the conference, the main objective of which was to discuss the development of grassroots activities throughout Iran.

Head of Iran Grassroots Committee Mostafa Zarei who opened the conference, began by detailing the previous year's accomplishments, and outlining the programmes currently being undertaken. Zarei said: "The main aim of the Committee is to promote and increase the number of participants in football, especially women's grassroots football."

"We hope that our current plans and programmes will lead to a twofold increase in the participation of women in grassroots by the year 2020."

The conference also covered the topic of Fair Play



in grassroots football courtesy of a presentation by Dr Kabiri, while UEFA/FIFA instructor Richard Bate discussed the future of football and role of grassroots in building

a future for football.

Finally, AFC Grassroots Panel member Anders Krystad spoke about the upcoming AFC Grassroots Charter. The Charter is a development tool with which Member Associations (MA) can raise the quality of their grassroots activities through an endorsement programme, and Krystad explained the criteria, key concepts and financial support required to develop grassroots in Asia.

"I am truly impressed with the dedication FFIRI has shown," said Krystad in his closing remarks.

"Gathering 600 coaches and leaders to discuss the future of Iranian football proves commitment. I am also impressed with the quality of the presentations, they were all up-to-date which represents a modern and forward looking MA."

"I wish Iranian football the very best, and am assured that the FFIRI will take the necessary steps to implement the AFC Grassroots Charter"

(Source: AFC)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
Printed at: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



“Fools” coming to Tehran theater

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Nader Naderpur will stage American playwright Neil Simon’s “Fools” at the Tehran Theater Complex on June 6.



Director Nader Naderpur

the main members of the cast for the play.

The 1981 play is a comedy about a schoolteacher, Leon, who takes a new job educating Sophia, the daughter of the doctor of a small village in Ukraine.

Leon soon learns that there is a curse on the village that makes everyone stupid, but complications ensue when Leon falls in love with his pupil.

Jalil Farjad, Reza Emami, Ladan Nazi, Samira Salimi and Milad Soleimani are

NEWS IN BRIEF



“The Prophets of Terror” to go on screen at Italian festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Ahmad Khoshnati’s short animation “The Prophets of Terror” will be screened at the 15th Salento Finibus Terrae in Italy.

The international short film festival will be held in several cities located in the Apulian region from June 29 to July 9.

The 4-minute film, which is a combination of animation and photos, is about World War II and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States.



“Gas Pipe” competing in 20Minmax festival

A R T TEHRAN — “Gas Pipe” by Hossein Darabi from Iran is competing with a lineup of short films from different countries at the 20Minmax International Short Film Festival now underway in the German city of Ingolstadt.

“Gas Pipe” tells the story of a misplaced installation of a gas pipe in a street, which has caused various incidents, and everybody has a different solution for the problem.

The festival opened on May 25 and will run until June 4.

Country stars to be honored in ACM TV special

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — George Strait, Dolly Parton, Kelsea Ballerini, Eric Church, Reba McEntire, Toby Keith, Willie Nelson and Shel Silverstein will be honored by the Academy of Country Music during a television special.

ACM announced Tuesday the special award honorees for the ACM Honors show, to be held in Nashville on Aug. 23 and broadcast at a later date on CBS.



In this Jan. 7, 2017, file photo, Willie Nelson performs in Nashville, Tenn. Nelson is one of several country stars who will be honored by the Academy of Country Music during a television special later this year. (AP Photo/Mark Humphrey, File)

Strait will receive the Clifflie Stone Icon Award and Parton will receive the Gary Haber Lifting Lives Award. The Gene Weed Milestone Award will go to Ballerini, while Church will receive the Merle Haggard Spirit Award. McEntire and radio DJ Bob Kingsley will receive the Mae Boren Axton Service Award, while Keith, Nelson and Silverstein will get the Poets Award.

Book reviewing foreign works at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art unveiled

A R T TEHRAN — A book reviewing the foreign treasure trove preserved at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) was unveiled during a ceremony at the museum on Tuesday.

“A Review of Foreign Works of TMCA” has been compiled by Mehdi Hosseini and published by Aban Publications.

Speaking at the ceremony, Hosseini said that he has written a book that can be understood by the public and not just by artists and intellectuals.

“So, I decided to write a tangible introduction to the works, that is, a brief explanation about the education of artists, the period they have lived in, and the artistic groups they belonged to, followed by a description of the works.

He also said that he completed the book in 2010 and handed it over to the museum, but 6 years elapsed before it was published due to the museum’s financial problems.

“We finally negotiated with a private publisher, Aban, which helped publish the book,” he added.

Scholar Soltan Kassefi called Hosseini a good painter and an expert, and the best choice for the compilation of the book.

“I cannot hide my happiness over the publication of the book. We lack adequate archives for artworks and contemporary artists. After all these years a book has been published about the museum and this is good news,” he said.

The Center for Visual Arts director and the former director of the museum, Majid Mollanoruzi, also spoke



Iranian artist Hossein Mahjubi unveils some copies of “A Review of Foreign Works of TMCA” at the TMCA on May 30, 2017.

(Mehrdad/Asghar Khamseh)

of the importance of the book and said that it provides comprehensive information about the artworks and the artists.

He added that the entire works of the museum have

been photographed and are due to be published in five volumes.

Works by many august artists of the West, including Claude Monet, Francis Bacon, Pablo Picasso, Max

Poster exhibition on Imam Khomeini underway at IAF

A R T TEHRAN — An exhibition of forty posters on Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, is currently underway at two galleries of the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran.

The exhibit entitled “Path to the Sun” is displaying artworks by Iranian artists including Alireza Purakbari, Mehdi Hajimohammadi, Alireza Hesaraki and Mohammad Khazai.

The exhibition has been organized to commemorate the death anniversary of Imam Khomeini who died on June 3, 1989.

The showcase runs until Saturday at the forum and then it will go



on display at the shrine of Imam Khomeini on Sunday and Monday.

Copies of the posters are also being shown in exhibitions at the Abolfazl Aali Gallery of the Tehran Art Bureau and Tehran’s Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art until June 8.

DEFC making doc on history of animation in Iran

A R T TEHRAN — The Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) is producing a documentary that will chronicle the history of animation in Iran.

“The largest part of the work has been undertaken and will be completed in several months,” Mehrdad Sheikhan, the director of the documentary titled “Iranian Animation,” told the Persian service of MNA on Tuesday.

“It took a great deal of time to gather information and to do research into the subject,” he added.

Lack of any written comprehensive source about Iranian animation caused difficulties for the project that

will recount six decades of the history of Iranian animation from the 1940s.

In his research for the documentary, Sheikhan encountered a number of animators who were mainly engaged in animated commercials and had a strong influence on Iranian animation from the 1940s to 1970s.

“The Iranian people were familiar with its native animation by numerous animated commercials produced during those decades,” he said.

“Iranian Animation” also studies the roles of public and private organizations, independent filmmakers and academic centers in the development of the industry in Iran.

MK2 Films acquires 20 films by late Iranian master Abbas Kiarostami

PARIS (Variety) — French mini-major MK2 Films has acquired all rights to late Iranian film master Abbas Kiarostami’s first 20 movies.

Under the agreement – signed with the Institut Kanoon (Institut iranien pour le Développement Intellectuel des Enfants et des Adolescents), MK2 will restore the 20 films of Kiarostami in 4K.

Among the acquired titles are “Where is My Friend’s Home”, “And Life Goes On” and “The Traveler”, Kiarostami’s first feature film.

“And Life Goes On” complete the trilogy including “Where is My Friend’s Home?” and “Through the Olive Trees”, both of which are already acquired by MK2.

Some of the acquired titles include films that mostly unknown, as well as 14 short- and medium-length films, notably his very first film, “The Bread and Alley”, which came out in 1970.

MK2 now owns nearly all of Kiarostami’s films. The French company already detained rights to Kiarostami’s more recent films, notably “Like Someone in Love”, “Certified Copy”, “Taste of Cherry” (which won the Palme d’Or 20 years ago) and “Shirin”, among others.

“MK2 had a very close relationship with Abbas Kiarostami. We produced and distributed his films since 1999,” said Karmitz, MK2’s president who is



An image of Kiarostami’s “24 Frame”, Courtesy of Cannes Film Festival

running the vertically-integrated company with his two sons, Nathanael and Elisha Karmitz.

“This collaboration with the Institut Kanoon will allow us to give every generation of audiences the opportunity to discover these world cinema masterpieces that have inspired and continue to inspire filmmakers and cinefiles for the last 30 years,” said Karmitz, who added that Kiarostami gave birth to the tradition of Iranian documentary.

MK2 had started working with Kiarostami on a new feature before he passed last year. The movies was

due to start shooting last September in China.

Cannes Film Festival paid tribute to Kiarostami with the screening of his last feature “24 Frames” as part of the special screenings of the festival’s 70th anniversary on Tuesday.

Karmitz said MK2 was exploring many possibilities to give the newly-acquired films some exposure. The company runs a thriving international sales division as well as France’s leading arthouse theater circuit in Paris.

MK2’s library now comprises over 400 films from some of the world’s best known auteurs, notably Charles Chaplin, François Truffaut, Krzysztof Kieslowski, David Lynch, Claude Chabrol, Alain Resnais, Xavier Dolan, Olivier Assayas, Kiarostami, as well as Agnes Varda and Jacques Demy.

“Through these films, MK2 perpetuates the heritage of world cinema. We remain the biggest co-producer and distributor of foreign films,” pointed out Karmitz.

The veteran producer and businessman explained the company’s growth going forward is increasingly vested in its exhibition activities. MK2 owns theaters in France, Spain and is considering opening some in Montreal. The banner also recently bowed a venue dedicated to virtual reality and launched international sales of director-driven VR content at Cannes.

Grande, Bieber, Katy Perry to top concert for Manchester victims

LONDON (Reuters) — Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber and Katy Perry will headline a star-studded concert in Manchester, England, on Sunday to benefit victims of the suicide bombing at Grande’s May 22 concert there, organizers announced on Tuesday.

American artists Miley Cyrus, Pharrell Williams and Usher will also perform at the June 4 concert, along with Britain’s Coldplay, One Direction singer Niall Horan and the Manchester-based band Take That.

The benefit will take place at the Old Trafford cricket ground. Proceeds will benefit victims of last week’s suicide bombing at Grande’s show at another venue in the northern English city, the Manchester Arena.

Islamic State claimed credit for the bombing, which killed 22 people and took place moments after Grande finished playing.

All proceeds from Sunday’s “One Love Manchester” concert will go to the We Love Manchester Emergency Fund which was set up by the Manchester City Council

in partnership with the British Red Cross.

The fund has already raised more than 5 million pounds (\$6.4 million), organizers say.

Grande, 23, is offering free tickets to the charity concert to all of those who were at her Manchester show on May 22.

The suicide bombing injured more than 100, many of them members of Grande’s large, young female fan base. Grande was unharmed but she later canceled several concerts scheduled in London and Europe through June 5.

Sunday’s show will be broadcast live by BBC television and radio, Tuesday’s statement said.

Grande said in an open letter on her social media accounts last week that “There is nothing I or anyone can do to take away the pain you (her fans) are feeling or to make this better. However, I extend my hand and heart and everything I possibly can give to you and yours, should you want or need my help in any way.”

“We will not quit or operate in fear. We won’t let



A youngster wearing a t-shirt showing U.S. singer Ariana Grande talks to the media near the Manchester Arena in Manchester, Britain May 23, 2017.

(Reuters/Andrew Yates)

this divide us. We won’t let hate win,” she added.

Tickets for Sunday’s concert went on sale on Thursday.

The next book by Matt de la Pena is a “Love” story

NEW YORK (AP) — The next book by prize-winning children’s author Matt de la Pena is a “Love” story.

De la Pena and illustrator Loren Long are collaborating on a picture book

called “Love,” Penguin Young Readers told The Associated Press on Tuesday. The book is scheduled for Jan. 16.

The publisher is calling the book a “heartfelt celebration” of love and how

“it connects us all.” The author said in a statement that such a story was especially important in this “divisive time.”

De la Pena won the John Newbery

Medal, one of the highest honors in children’s publishing, for his 2015 release, “Last Stop on Market Street.” His other books include “The Hunted,” “The Living” and “I Will Save You.”