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No obstacles for admitting Iran to SCO: Putin

Zarif seeks Iran's SCO accession in Tashkent

POLITICAL TEHRAN — While the Euro zone is losing one of its stars in the wake of a Brexit leave vote, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) members,

including Tehran in its observer capacity, have convened in Tashkent to consolidate bonds. Having wrapped up his third round of European visit, the Iranian foreign minister

represented Iran in the event, seeking a tentative, initial okay on Tehran's membership in the growingly influential body, among other things.

While Iran submitted an accession application to the SCO back in April 2008, its membership was hindered by its nuclear row with the West. →2

Boeing offers details on Iran deal, saying all was done legally

The Boeing Company on Thursday offered new details on its proposed passenger aircraft deal with Iran and rejected suggestions that it had not done sufficient homework in identifying end users of the planes.

In a letter to congressional critics of the politically delicate deal, Boeing said Iran Air, the national airline, intended to buy 80 passenger planes in a variety of models worth \$17.6 billion and lease 29 of the company's 737s, with deliveries projected to begin as early as next year.

The letter, by Tim Keating, vice president of government operations, also said "we have a vigorous compliance mechanism at Boeing with regard to the screening of all parties with which we do business."

Keating wrote that Boeing had strictly adhered to dealings with Iranian entities approved by United States sanctions monitors.

Boeing's proposed deal with Iran Air, disclosed this month, is potentially one of the most significant economic outcomes of the international nuclear agreement with Iran that took effect in January, which rescinded or eased many sanctions in exchange for Iran's verifiable commitments to peaceful nuclear activities. →4

'Explosive shock' as Britain votes to leave EU, Cameron quits

World stocks in freefall as Britain votes for EU exit

Britain voted to leave the European Union (EU), forcing the resignation of Prime Minister David Cameron and dealing the biggest blow to the European project of greater unity since World War Two. Global financial markets plunged on Friday as results from a referendum showed a 52-48 percent victory for the campaign to leave a bloc that Britain joined more than 40 years ago, Reuters reported. Sterling plunged to its lowest in three decades and the value of London's big banks sank by the most since the 2008 financial crisis on Friday as Britain's shock vote to leave the European Union sparked turmoil on global financial markets. See page 9

New Russian version of Holy Quran unveiled in Tehran

CULTURE TEHRAN — A new Russian version of the Holy Quran was unveiled during a ceremony at the 24th International Holy Quran Exhibition in Tehran on Thursday.



Russian translator Nazim Zeynalov holds a copy of a Russian version of the Holy Quran after being unveiled after at Russia's stand during the 29th Tehran International Book Fair on May 8, 2016. (IQNA/Mohammad Namazi)

Russian Shia scholar Nazim Zeynalov is the translator of the edition, which was published by the Center for Translation of the Holy Quran in Qom.

Fifteen Russian translations of the Holy Quran by Christian and Sunni scholars have previously been published, the center announced at the ceremony.

Zeynalov won an Iran's Book of the Year Award for work last year.

The 24th International Holy Quran Exhibition is running at Imam Khomeini Mosalla until June 28.

Iran suffers defeat against Brazil in FIVB Volleyball World League

SPORTS Iran lost to Brazil in the second match of the FIVB Volleyball World League second week on Friday.

The Iranian team, who had defeated Bulgaria 3-1 on Thursday, lost 3-1 (25-18, 24-26, 25-16, 25-17) to Brazilian team in Belgrade, Serbia.

Wallace De Souza led the Brazilian team with 17 points while Mohammadjavad Manavinezhad top scored Iran with 13 points. Iran has been scheduled to face Serbia on Saturday.

Tourism to create 140,000 jobs in Iran by March 2018: CHTHO chief

TOURISM TEHRAN — Iran will create some 140,000 job opportunities in the field of tourism by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 2018), the head of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization (CHTHO), Masoud Soltanifar, announced.

We have already submitted some plans to create jobs in these fields to the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, he explained.

CHTHO is already developing 1,752 projects in tourism sector in different parts of Iran, including building hotels and residences, he said.

"We have already held some negotiations with Turkish and German investors for building about 20 five-star hotels in coming years. This will have a great impact on tourism industry in the country," he concluded.

Turkish investors will build ten hotels in Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz and Mashhad, under the terms of an agreement with Iran signed during a Turkish delegation's visit to Tehran in mid May.

According to an agreement signed between CHTHO and German hospitality company, Steigenberger Hotel Group in late May, the company is set to build 10 hotels in different parts of Iran over the next ten years.

Countries' silence has emboldened Saudi Arabia: Shireen Hunter

INTERVIEW By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, believes that other countries' silence toward Saudi Arabia's "transgressions" has made Riyadh emboldened.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon publicly acknowledged on June 9 that he removed the Saudi-led coalition currently bombing Yemen from a blacklist of child killers — 72 hours after it was

published — due to a financial threat to defund United Nations programs.

The secretary-general didn't name the source of the threat, but news reports have indicated it came directly from the Saudi government.

According to the Intercept, the UN's 2015 "Children and Armed Conflict" report originally listed the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen under "parties that kill or maim children" and "parties that engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals." The report, which

was based on the work of UN researchers in Yemen, attributed 60 percent of the 785 children killed and 1,168 injured to the bombing coalition.

Hunter tells the Tehran Times that "the blame should be addressed to those countries which in the past have overlooked Saudi transgressions and thus emboldened it to behave in disregard of international norms of conduct."

Following is the text the interview: →9

"When Saudi Arabia threatened to cut its contribution, other members should have come forward and declared that they will cover the financial shortfall resulting from Saudi action," Hunter suggested.

Poachers kill two rangers in Iran

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Two rangers got killed while chasing poachers in Geno biosphere reserve in the southern province of Hormozgan on Thursday, the Department of Environment website reported.

While patrolling the area, the two rangers, Mohammad Dehqani and Parviz Hormozi, got shot in the head and the heart and passed away, Hormozgan province department of environment director general said.

Majid Vafadar explained that the poachers ran away from the scene and the searches to



find the murderers are still ongoing. Dehqani, 35, and Hormozi, 54, each have got the experience of 12 and 23 years under

their belts, Vafadar said.

As the area is almost impassable the two rangers' bodies must have been brought back by helicopter but due to the darkness it was not possible either, Vafadar noted.

"So the rangers' co-workers climbed up the mountain to bring back their dead bodies," he added.

Masoumeh Ebtekar, chief of the Department of Environment, has also extended her condolences and urged the police to catch the criminals in no time.

Russia's Lukoil plans to resume Iranian oil refining at Sicily plant

Russian oil giant Lukoil plans to resume refining of Iranian oil at the company's ISAB refinery located at the Italian island of Sicily to replace Russian Urals brand oil, President of Lukoil Vagit Alekperov said Thursday.

"Today, we want to return it [Iran's oil] there [to the ISAB], because at the moment Urals is more

expensive than Iranian oil. Today, we are placing it at other refineries very effectively," Alekperov told reporters.

He added that oil from Iran was the best option for the ISAB, because it was designed for 70 percent of heavy oil from Iran and 30 percent of light oil from Libya. Lukoil Estimates Investment in

2nd Stage of West Qurna-2 Project at \$6.5 Billion.

Iran began stepping up international trade and investment cooperation after reaching a historic deal on its nuclear program to ensure its peaceful nature in exchange for the suspension of international anti-Iran sanctions, in particular

on its oil sector, in July 2015.

In April, Iran signed a deal with European refineries that could allow for the country to sell up to 700,000 barrels of oil per day to Europe. The deal was set to be implemented "within the next few months," according to country's Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh. (Source: Sputnik)

PERSPECTIVE
By Serge R. Nakouzi
The FAO Representative to Iran and to ECO

Conserving biological diversity to save our environment

During the month of June, we marked the National Environment Week here in Iran. The commemoration of this week provided an opportunity for reflection on the importance of natural resources to all of us both individually and collectively.

Over the coming days I would like to share some of my own reflections on the various aspects as to why the preservation of the environments is critical to the safeguarding of humanity's fate on earth.

I wish to begin with the subject of biodiversity and its role in preserving life on our planet.

More than 70 percent of the world's poor live in rural areas and depend directly on biodiversity and ecosystem services for their subsistence.

Biodiversity plays a determinant role in reinforcing food security, sustainable livelihoods and ecosystem resilience, as well as ushering appropriate strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation, adequate nutritional requirements, insurance for the future and the management of biological processes needed for sustainable agricultural production.

When addressing the issue of food security, however, the principal focus tends to be cast normally on the challenges of increasing food production to meet rising demands. Every so often, a fundamental consideration that tends to be disregarded is that of safeguarding the nation's biodiversity so as to ensure the sustainability of food security in the longer term.

We need to understand and accept that majority of the current production practices are not sustainable; they damage the environment, undermine the nutritional and health value of foods, lead to reduced function of essential ecosystem services and result in the loss of biodiversity. →9

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Revoking cleric of citizenship indicates Al-Khalif fright: cleric

TEHRAN — Tehran's interim Friday prayer leader has said Bahrain's act in stripping the leading Shia cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim of citizenship is a sign that the ruling Al-Khalifa family is filled with fright.

The Bahrain government which was originally devised to serve people has now changed into a tool to betray the nation, Kazem Seddiqi stated, IRNA reported.

He reprimanded "those who claim supporting human rights and democracy in the U.S. style" for keeping silent in face of the Bahraini nation's demand for suffrage.



Velayati backs General Soleimani's warnings to Bahrain

TEHRAN — Director of the Strategic Research Center of the Expediency Council has endorsed Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani's recent warnings against Bahrain which has stripped the leading Shia cleric of his citizenship rights.

What General Soleimani did was very important and meant that the Islamic world will not keep silent against the Bahraini government's act, Ali Akbar Velayati said on Friday, Fars reported.



Presidential advisor proposes 'national transparency committee'

TEHRAN — President's cultural advisor has proposed that a "national transparency committee" be launched to prevent corruption.

In a comment addressing recent salary scandal in Iran, Hessesmeddin Ashna said the committee could be formed according to Article 127 of the Constitution, ISNA reported on Friday.



Hamid Abutalebi: Brexit is historic opportunity for Iran

TEHRAN — Brexit is going to be a historic opportunity for Iran and the Islamic Republic should make the most of it, said Hamid Abutalebi, political director of the presidential office.

"A great earthquake has shaken Europe and the UK has quit the European Union," he wrote on twitter on Friday.

"The stars of Europe's union are falling down. Economic changes in south European countries, terrorism, and the refugee crisis showed that the union is about to fall. But the domino was ticked off with Brexit."

Abutalebi stated that European people lost their hope in the EU long ago, adding that the new changes will bring more power, security, and prosperity to them.



Iran arrests two terrorists

TEHRAN — Police forces arrested two terrorists in the city of Khash, Sistan-Baluchestan province, this week, IRGC Ground Force commander announced on Friday, Mehr reported.

One died of wounds and the other is in custody, Mohammad Pakpour said.

"They have confessed to a broad range of crimes and Saudi as well as American support behind them, of which details will be revealed in the future," Pakpour added.

In another story, East Azarbaijan's prosecutor general said a separatist team in the province has been disbanded.

The team, consisting of six members, used to gather military information and send them to enemies, Ali Mozaffari said on Thursday.



Al-Khalifa's evil thoughts will not come true: cleric

TEHRAN — The secretary general of the Forum for the Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thoughts has said the Bahraini government's evil thoughts will not become a reality.

Condemning Al-Khalifa's stripping of Shia cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim of his citizenship, Ayatollah Mo-hsen Araki told Tasnim on Friday that such deeds will backfire on the Yemeni government.

Syria crisis should be settled through dialogue, Iran insists

By staff and agencies

Gholam-Hossein Dehqani, the deputy permanent representative of Iran to the UN, has reiterated the long-held position by the Islamic Republic that the Syrian conflict should be settled through dialogue among the Syrians themselves without any preconditions.

"This political approach should go hand in hand with counter-terrorism efforts," Dehqani said in a statement he read on Wednesday before the informal meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Humanitarian Situation in Syria.

Following is the full text of the statement carried by IRNA:

Mr. President,

In the complex situations such as Syria, a successful and efficient humanitarian operation needs to be guided by the criteria such as those outlined in General Assembly resolution 46/182, namely the principles of neutrality, impartiality, non-politicization of humanitarian work and respect for national sovereignty, and coordination with the national authorities.

It is an established fact that a number of armed terrorist groups are currently in control of and active in parts of Syria and control large patches of territory and arteries.

They have and continue to be a tremendous challenge for humanitarian operations in Syria. Their occupation of

some densely populated regions has exacerbated the situation.

They have spread terror and intimidation among the population, who they have forcibly used as human shields. Such a control of territory and arteries by feckless and reckless groupings, no matter where it occurs, creates major threats and can kick off humanitarian crises.

This is exactly at the core of the problem we are facing in Syria. Terrorist groups, such as Daesh and Jebhat al-Nosra and their affiliates and foreign fighters that they attract, have wrecked havoc in the country and constitute the major challenge that the international community needs to confront if it seeks to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria.

At the same time, the unilateral coercive measures imposed by certain countries have had a major impact on the civilian life and economic situation in Syria, impeding, inter alia, the delivery of basic humanitarian needs such as food, medicine, medical supplies and basic services, let alone the minimum functioning of economy.

Experience shows that successes achieved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to beneficiaries in both stable and unstable parts of Syria would not be possible without the assistance and facilities provided to the United Nations and international organizations by the Syrian authorities.



We welcome the continued cooperation between the Syrian Government and the United Nations in order to provide and deliver humanitarian aid to those affected by the crisis in all governorates of Syria and without distinction.

We note that out of the 17 restive areas, requested by the UN under June 2016 plan, the approval to reach 16 has already been granted by the government where the humanitarian activities can be carried out.

At the same time we voice our grave concern over the tragic humanitarian situation in Foua and Kefraya as a result of

continued siege by opposition fighters. We want to know how UN and others plan to break this siege and ensure humanitarian access in those areas?

And finally, the crisis in Syria requires a comprehensive political settlement based on dialogue among Syrians without preconditions.

This political approach should go hand in hand with counter-terrorism efforts.

We emphasize an exclusively Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition in order to end hostilities and reestablish peace and tranquility.

Zarif seeks Iran's SCO accession in Tashkent



Now, it seems Iran is facing a less bumpy route to accession to the organization after it signed a pact with global powers in July 2015. Accordingly, the organization's state members have shown the green light.

During the organization's summit in Tashkent on Friday Russian President Vladimir Putin said, "We believe that after Iran's nuclear problem was solved and United Nations sanctions lifted, there have been no obstacles left (for Iran's membership in the SCO)." Also, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev was quoted as saying, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a very important organization across the Eurasian space ... Now, it is a very important step in Tashkent. We will admit new members: India and Pakistan. After it we are going to consider the terms of admission of Iran."

"Kazakhstan repeatedly expressed readiness to positively consider the issue of full-fledged membership of this country in the SCO, the possibility for which will open

by practical implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on settling the Iranian nuclear problem," said Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov in an interview with the Russian TASS news agency.

The news comes amid reports that the SCO members have failed to reach a consensus on Iran initiating the accession process, rejected shortly after by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Asian and Pacific Affairs Ebrahim Rahimpour.

According to the Iranian official, "Under the SCO regulations, the sanctions regime was a serious obstacle. But, now that we are emerging from international sanctions, the organization has to decide on whether Iran is entitled the right to initiate the accession process."

The accession of Iran, as a regional, stable powerhouse, to the body can bring about more credibility and clout.

With a populace of nearly 80 million, Iran sits on colossal energy reserves as well as mineral deposits.

Besides, for the regional grouping, the geopolitical posi-

tion of Iran means to widen its sphere of political influence.

The SCO was founded in Shanghai in 2001, and formed originally as a confidence-building forum to demilitarize borders.

Currently, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are full-fledged member states of the SCO. Member states with an observer status include Afghanistan, Belarus, India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan. Dialogue partners are also Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey, and Sri Lanka.

In July 2015, the members agreed on a 10-year development strategy for the organization in Ufa, Russia's republic of Bashkiriya as well as started the accession process of India and Pakistan.

As laid out in its charter, the organization functions as a forum to strengthen confidence and neighborly relations among member countries and promote cooperation in politics, trade, economy, and culture to education, energy, and transportation.

Velayati: For Iran there's no difference between Syria and Iraq



POLITICAL TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Velayati, top adviser to the Supreme Leader on international affairs, has said Tehran's support to Damascus and Baghdad is a matter of formal requests from the countries, rejecting that Tehran is leaning toward Syria.

There have been reports saying Iran's support for the Iraqi government has not been as strong as that of for the Syrian government.

"Our helps to the Iraqi government are only constrained by their desire and requests. Without any hesitation, we have helped them whenever they have wished so," Velayati tells the Tehran Times.

"[Accordingly], as far as Iran is concerned, there is no difference between Syria and Iraq as two brotherly and friendly countries for us."

Ever since conflicts broke out in Syria and Iraq in 2011 and 2014, respectively, Tehran has been helping the two, which share long borders, in fighting terrorist groups, providing advisory and logistical support to them.

While some regional countries, notably Saudi Arabia, have accused Iran of fueling sectarian conflicts in the two countries, Iraqi and Syrian officials have formally announced that Iran's presence is in reply to formal requests put in by Syria and Iraq.

No obstacles for admitting Iran to SCO: Putin



By staff and agencies
Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that there are no obstacles for admitting Iran to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

"Iran has been taking a proactive part in the organization's work as observer for a long while, since 2005. I think that after the resolution of the Iranian nuclear problem and lifting of the UN sanctions there are no obstacles for a positive answer to Iran's request," Tass news agency quoted Putin as saying during a meeting of the member states' leaders in Tashkent.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev told Tass on Thursday that

possible admission of India, Pakistan and Iran to the organization is an important step in the development of the Eurasian Economic Space.

Summit of the SCO heads of state was held on Friday in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The SCO is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organization which was founded in 2001 in Shanghai by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

On July 10, 2015, the SCO decided to admit India and Pakistan as full members, and they are expected to join by 2016.

Iran applied for full membership on 24 March 2008.

Bahrainis unable to oppose Al-Khalifa ruling peacefully, Zarif says

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Thursday that the international community should pay more attention to the situation in Bahrain.

"The Bahraini people cannot oppose peacefully due to foreign pressure being imposed on the country" after the Saudi forces entered Bahrain to suppress opponents, he said during a joint press conference with Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders in Amsterdam.

Saudi forces have been clamping down on the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain.

Zarif also said Iran and the Netherlands enjoy great opportunity to expand ties in different areas.

"There are many opportunities for bilateral coopera-



tion between the two countries in different fields," Zarif said, according to the Press TV.

For his part, Koenders said the Dutch government attaches great importance to the nuclear deal between Iran and the 5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany).

He also said Tehran and Amsterdam have a very good opportunity to improve relations following the implementation of last year's nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries - the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany.

Koenders added that in the talks with his Iranian counterpart, they exchanged views about leading issues in the Middle East, particularly the latest developments in Iraq and Syria.

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Syria: Kurdish-led forces enter ISIL-held Manbij city

ISIL abducts 900 in Aleppo

By staff & agencies

Kurdish and Arab fighters of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have entered a key northern city of Manbij, an Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) stronghold, the forces and monitoring group have said.

SDF was advancing slowly to the centre of Manbij on Thursday after entering the city backed by air strikes by the United States-led coalition bombing the ISIL terrorist group.

Nasser Haj Mansour, an adviser to the SDF, said the forces moved into the city on Wednesday from its northern edge, close to its grain silos which are still controlled by ISIL.

"Fierce street fighting between buildings" erupted as they entered the city, said Rami Abdel Rahman, the chief of the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR).

He said progress was likely to be slow as SDF forces were facing booby-traps "planted by the jihadists to try to prevent the loss of the city".

Abdel Rahman said tens of thousands of civilians were trapped inside the city, though some 8,000 had been able to flee since the start of the SDF offensive on Manbij on May 31.

There were fears that ISIL would use civilians as human shields inside the city, which had a population of about 120,000 before the start of Syria's civil war in 2011.

The SDF managed to encircle the city on June 10 but its advance slowed as ISIL fought back, including with almost daily suicide bombings.

Major breakthrough

The advance marked a major breakthrough in the battle for Manbij, once a key link on the supply route between the Turkish border and ISIL's de facto Syrian capital of Raqqa.

ISIL has held the city since 2014, the year ISIL seized control of large parts of Syria and neighboring Iraq and declared its "caliphate".

Formed in October 2015, the 25,000-strong SDF is dominated by the powerful Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/Yekineyên Parastina Gel?) but includes an Arab contingent that has



been steadily growing to around 5,000 fighters.

As well as air support, coalition countries have provided ground advisers to the SDF, including about 200 U.S. Special Forces.

ISIL abducts 900 in Aleppo

Meanwhile, the ISIL terrorist group has reportedly kidnapped as many as 900 people from a Kurdish city in the northeast of the Syrian border province of Aleppo.

The abductees were spirited away from 15 villages and a township in the city, the SOHR said on Friday.

Some of the abductees, Britain-based SOHR said, have been transferred to the Kurdish town of Qabaseen in the province's east.

Others have been taken to the cities of al-Rai and Manbij near the Turkish border, where the terrorists have come under attack from several fronts, to either be forced to dig trenches or be used as human shields, it added.

It has also been reported that the terrorists have executed 18 civilians who had tried to flee ISIL captivity in the area.

Aleppo's provincial capital is under continued shelling by al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra), the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda.

The province forms an important front

for the Syrian government's soldiers, who recently slew nearly 170 Takfiri terrorists there.

Backed by Russian airpower, the troops have entered the neighboring Raqqah Province and are advancing toward the provincial capital, which is considered ISIL's so-called headquarters.

The potential recapture of Raqqah in Syria and the Iraqi city of Mosul — which ISIL has declared as its "headquarters" in Iraq and which likewise awaits liberation operations — would mark the ultimate blow to ISIL.

In a separate development, the United Nations (UN) estimates that there are five million Syrians in need of humanitarian aid who are living in hard-to-reach areas.

Top militant commander slain in north Syria

In another event, a high-ranking commander of the Takfiri Aynad al-Sham (Islamic Union of the Soldiers of the Levant) militant group has been killed during fierce clashes with Syrian army troops and allied forces in Syria's northern province of Aleppo.

Samir Shartah, better known by the nom de guerre Abu Mohammad Kafrouma, was killed on Thursday when Syrian soldiers and fighters from pro-government popular defense groups closed in on the extremists in Duwayr al-Zaytoun

village, Syria's official SANA news agency reported.

Shartah reportedly served as the military leader of the Aynad al-Sham terrorist group, which joined the foreign-sponsored militant alliance of Jaish al-Fatah (Army of Conquest) on March 24, 2015, and took part in the onslaught on Idlib then.

The development came only a day after a senior commander of the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra Front militant group was killed in the same Syrian province.

While some reports said Abu Abdullah Jabal, who led al-Nusra Front operations against the strategic al-Eis town and Khan Tuman village southwest of Aleppo, was killed in a Russian aerial attack, other reports said that the terrorist commander lost his life in a bomb attack during a meeting with close aides.

On April 23, Majed Hussein al-Sadeq, the leader of the al-Qaeda-linked Ahrar al-Sham (Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant) terrorist group, along with three other members of the militant outfit were killed in a bomb attack that targeted the Takfiri militants' headquarters in the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib.

An unspecified number of the terrorists were also injured in the bombing.

Last July, one of Ahrar al-Sham's most senior leaders, identified as Abu Abdel Rahman Salqin, was killed after two unidentified bombers detonated their explosives at the terrorist group's bases in the Abu Talha area of Idlib. Six other high-ranking members of the terrorist group were also killed in the deadly incident.

Syria has been gripped by a foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. According to United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, over 400,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

A ceasefire brokered by the U.S. and Russia went into effect on February 27 in Syria, but it does not apply to the ISIL and al-Nusra Front terrorist groups.

The Syrian army has vowed to press ahead with its counter-terror operations and drive terrorists out of their major positions.

Savage storm pummels eastern China, killing 98

A violent storm in eastern China that packed gale-force winds and hail killed 98 people and injured hundreds as it flattened power lines, overturned cars and ripped roofs off houses in Jiangsu province.

The storm, which included a tornado, struck mid-afternoon on Thursday near Yancheng city, a few hours' drive north of China's commercial capital Shanghai, the Ministry of Civil Affairs said.

Winds reached 125 kilometer per hour (78 mph) and battered several townships in Funing County, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The death toll stood at 98, with 800 people injured, state-run China National Radio said on its website on Friday.

Pictures online showed injured people lying amid destroyed houses, overturned cars and split tree trunks. One showed a man who had apparently tried to shield a woman from falling debris; both were dead in a pile of rubble.

The worst of the storm seemed to have hit only a limited area, however.

"It looks like the tornado only hit very specific places," said a Reuters reporter at the site. "Even nearby villages were fine."

In the nearby village of Dalou, tree trunks were snapped, with plates and household items scattered amid rubble, as survivors picked through the debris.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, visiting Uzbekistan, ordered China's cabinet to send a team to oversee relief efforts, Xinhua reported. Premier Li Keqiang urged authorities to speed search and rescue work.

GCL System Integration Technology Co Ltd (002506.SZ), a \$5-billion solar cell module maker, said a 40,000-sq-m. (430,000-sq-foot) factory it part-owned had collapsed, and it was assessing the damage.

Environmental campaign group Greenpeace said the



storm caused the collapse of a GCL facility used to store hazardous chemicals, located near a drinking water plant and a river.

(Source: Reuters)

Three people killed in shootout in Turkish hospital

Separate PKK attacks leave six soldiers dead

A hospital technician opened fire in a Turkish teaching hospital in the capital Ankara on Friday, killing three people and seriously wounding another, the governor's office said, Reuters reported.

The gunman, who opened fire in a pharmacy in the complex, was captured by the police, the governor's office said in a statement. The three victims were pharmacy employees, it said.

It gave no details on the reason for the shooting, but the privately-owned Dogan news agency said it was a personal dispute. Police teams were sent to the scene and security inside the hospital has been tightened, Dogan said.

PKK attacks

Meanwhile, at least six Turkish soldiers have lost their lives when members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) launched two separate attacks against government forces in the southeastern provinces of Hakkari and Mardin.

Security sources, requesting anonymity, said PKK militants detonated a roadside bomb by remote control on Friday as army troopers were conducting

a military operation near Cimenli village in Hakkari province, located 1,026 kilometers (638 miles) east of the capital Ankara. Four Turkish soldiers were killed in the attack.

Less than an hour earlier, two soldiers had been killed in a clash with PKK terrorists in the Derik district of Mardin province, situated about 1,100 kilometers (683 miles) east of Ankara.

The provincial governor's office said in a statement that counter-terrorism operations against PKK militants would continue "resolutely" in the area.

The developments came only a day after PKK militants detonated a car rigged with explosives near a gendarme outpost in the town of Omerli, located some 500 kilometers (310 miles) east of the capital, killing a civilian and injuring two police officers.

The civilian was reportedly a truck driver who was passing by in his vehicle.

A shaky ceasefire between the PKK and the Turkish government collapsed in July 2015, and attacks on Turkish security forces have soared ever since.

Ankara has been engaged in a



large-scale campaign against the PKK in its southern border region in the past few months. The Turkish military has also been conducting offensives against PKK positions in northern Iraq and Syria.

The operations began in the wake of a deadly July 2015 bombing in the southern Turkish town of Suruc. More than 30 people died in the attack, which the Turk-

(Source: agencies)

NEWS

Saudi-backed side hindering peace: Ansarullah leader

The Ansarullah (Houthi) movement says it has given difficult concessions in negotiations to establish peace in Yemen but the House of Saud regime-backed side is obstructing the process by refusing to compromise.

"In order to fulfill its obligations, the Ansarullah delegation brought itself to giving some concessions, some of which were tough to give," the movement's Leader Abdul-Malik Badreddin al-Houthi said.

"But now, the opposite side has returned to square one and is demanding the submission of the Yemeni nation," Abdul-Malik Badreddin added.

Peace talks have been underway in Kuwait between the two sides in order to find a solution to the country's conflict.

"There are practical solutions to resolve the conflict and we have proposed many. If the opposite side opts for conflict resolution, we are ready [to cooperate], and if it chooses to keep up the invasion, we are also ready [to fight back]."

Abdul-Malik Badreddin said resistance on the part of the movement is not a "political tactic" but is at the heart of Yemeni values and civilization.

The House of Saud regime, an ally of the former regime, has been staging military attacks against Yemen in a bid to bring former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power and undermine the Ansarullah movement.

More than 9,400 people have been killed and at least 16,000 others injured since the onset of the Saudi aggression on March 26, 2015.

"The continuation of your crimes, will never dissuade us from resistance. No matter how much U.S. support you receive, by God, the suffering that you impose on us will bring back but defeat for you," the Ansarullah leader said in an address to Saudi Arabia and its allies.

He accused certain Arab regimes of colluding with Israel, saying they had chosen to fight Muslims.

(Source: Press TV)

Bernie Sanders says he will vote for Hillary Clinton

United States Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders said on Friday that he will vote for presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton.

Asked if he would vote for Clinton in November, Sanders told MSNBC television: "Yes. The issue right here is I'm going to do everything I can to defeat Donald Trump. I think Trump in so many ways would be a disaster if he were elected president."

Clinton clinched the party nomination earlier in June. While Sanders had said he would work with Clinton to defeat Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, he had yet to endorse Clinton and has kept his own election campaign alive.

(Source: Reuters)

Bahraini regime forces attack protesters

Bahraini regime forces have fired birdshots and tear gas to disperse dozens of demonstrators, who had taken to the streets in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom to express solidarity with prominent Shia Muslim cleric, Sheikh Isa Qassim, who was stripped of his citizenship by the House of Khalifah regime earlier this week.

On Thursday evening, protesters gathered outside the home of the 79-year-old spiritual leader of Bahrain's main opposition bloc, the al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, in the northwestern village of Diraz, situated about 12 kilometers (seven miles) west of the capital Manama, to express their outrage at the measure against the top clergyman.

They chanted slogans in support of Sheikh Qassim and in condemnation of the ruling dynasty.

Clashes broke out when regime forces intervened, firing shots and using tear gas to disperse the crowd. The protesters responded by throwing petrol bombs at police vehicles.

The development came a day after similar demonstrations were held in Bilad al-Qadim, a suburb of the capital.

The House of Khalifah regime's June 20 move against Sheikh Qassim came less than a week after Bahrain's Justice Ministry suspended al-Wefaq and dissolved opposition Islamic Enlightenment Institution and al-Risala Islamic Association.

Since February 14, 2011, thousands of anti-regime protesters have held numerous demonstrations on an almost daily basis in Bahrain, calling for the House of Khalifah to relinquish power.

In March that year, troops from the House of Saud regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were deployed to the country to assist the Bahraini government in its crackdown on peaceful protests.

Scores of people have been killed and hundreds of others injured or arrested in the Bahraini crackdown on the anti-regime activists.

(Source: al Alam)

NEWS

U.S. seeks to use business to lock in Iran deal

The White House is pushing to ease the way for companies to complete deals with Iran, aiming to cement the landmark nuclear agreement reached last year and make it difficult for future administrations to undo it, senior U.S. officials said.

The effort, which borrows from President Barack Obama's playbook for solidifying U.S. relations with Cuba, got a boost this week when Boeing Co. reached a \$17.6-billion deal with Iran to sell commercial jets to the country's main airline.

The company's senior vice president for government operations, Tim Keating, said the administration had made it clear in consultations with Boeing that "the ability to provide Iranian airlines with U.S. and European replacement commercial passenger aircraft for their aging fleets was key and essential to reaching closure on the agreement."

Administration officials are also studying whether to publicly back Iran's bid to join the World Trade Organization, a move opposed by America's Persian Gulf allies, such as Saudi Arabia.

Administration officials have said they are seeking in Obama's final months in office to make his policies toward Cuba and Iran, which have been controversial, difficult for his successors to unravel.

U.S. officials are also exploring what they say are other ways of integrating Iran into the global economy, with more announcements expected in the months before Obama leaves office in January. Among them is a process for giving Iran limited access to the U.S. dollar, which administration officials said has made some progress.

"We're not going to stand in the way of permissible business activity with Iran," a senior administration official said. "As long as Iran is meeting the terms of the deal, then we're going to uphold our end of the bargain, and that is going to result in some additional business activity with Iran."

The Boeing deal with Iran Air quickly came under scrutiny from U.S. lawmakers when the company announced it this week. The administration sees the pact as a significant marker for the first anniversary of the nuclear deal reached by the U.S. and world powers with Iran on July 14, 2015.

Under the nuclear agreement, U.S. companies are allowed to sell commercial aircraft to Iran. American companies can also request special licenses from the Treasury Department to conduct transactions with Iran in other sectors, such as agriculture and medicine.

White House officials say deals such as the one reached by Boeing, which they expect the Treasury Department to approve, are carefully scrutinized.

The Obama administration is caught in a growing struggle among its allies over another economic integration avenue: Iran's quest to join the World Trade Organization.

Since the nuclear deal last year, countries such as Oman and Switzerland have pressed for forming a special committee of the WTO to address Iran's bid. Iran's regional rivals, particularly Saudi Arabia, have opposed that effort.

The George W. Bush administration once pledged to support Iran's bid if a nuclear agreement was reached. Obama administration officials said they are now trying to find a consensus among allies on the WTO issue.

Business diplomacy has been a core part of Obama's foreign policy approach in engaging U.S. adversaries. Obama sees the expansion of business transactions with the West in countries such as Iran and Cuba as the most promising means for solidifying the president's policies there, his aides have said.

While business is the overarching tool in cementing Obama's policies toward Iran and Cuba, the two efforts differ, administration officials said. The White House sees encouraging business with Cuba as a way to advance the president's decision to restore diplomatic ties—an effort Havana has embraced.

Iran, however, hasn't agreed to a broader thaw in relations, despite Obama's willingness to pursue one. The administration's use of business as a means to facilitate its Iran policy is more targeted, aimed at doing everything the U.S. can to abide by the sanctions-relief provisions in the nuclear deal to make sure it doesn't unravel, officials said.

(Source: Wall Street Journal)

Iran's mammoth jet orders signal ambition to join airline elite

Iran's signing this week of an outline deal for 109 Boeing Co. jetliners five months after agreeing to buy 118 from Airbus Group SE would create a fleet three-quarters the size of that at British Airways and larger than the current lineup at Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways, one of three Persian Gulf carriers that transformed air travel in the years Iran was stymied by trade sanctions linked to its nuclear program.

While it's not certain that flag-carrier Iran Air will take all of the jets specified under the accord, the arrival of models such as Airbus's A380 double-decker and Boeing's 777-9 seems set to swell the business to global proportions.

"People poured scorn on the ability of the Persian Gulf carriers to fill their aircraft but they've done so. And Iran has had a bigger air market over the years," said John Strickland, an airline analyst at JLS Consulting in London.

Broader aims

Though Iran has long said the lifting of sanctions would spur significant plane orders to serve its 80 million population plus a diaspora of 5 million overseas, a possible fleet of 120 wide-bodies -- more than currently operated by long-haul specialists such as Singapore Airlines Ltd. -- smacks of wider objectives.

That could include building Tehran into a hub where people change planes on intercontinental journeys, emulating the model established by Emirates of Dubai and followed by Qatar Airways, Etihad and, further west, Turkish Airlines.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Ease of banking relations would speed up Iran-Netherlands ties: Zarif

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Referring to the large number of Iranian businessmen active in the Netherlands, the visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a Thursday meeting with Dutch Economy Minister Henk Kamp, underscored that facilitation of mutual banking relations can help accelerate development of trade ties between the two countries.

As IRNA reported, the Iranian foreign minister noted that important measures have been implemented to boost economic cooperation between Tehran and Amsterdam.

During the meeting, the two high ranking officials negotiated on further consultations between the two countries' senior banking officials as well as ways for expansion of joint cooperation in future.

In mid-April, Dutch Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs Martin Van den Berg and the president of the Organization for Investment, Economic, and Technical Assistance of Iran, Mohammad Khazaei signed 10 agreements in various economic fields in a meeting in Tehran.

The signed contracts seek to improve future bilateral cooperation in energy, finance, banking and insurance, as well as transportation, health and water management besides finalizing economic agreements and exchanging experiences and data in different fields.

Reviewing the latest situation for economic cooperation in the joint meeting, Van den Berg referred to the



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (L) shaking hand with Dutch Economy Minister Henk Kamp in Amsterdam on June 23

existing investment opportunities and capacities in Iran and underlined expansion of bilateral cooperation.

Trade between the two countries stood at \$650 mil-

lion in the past Iranian calendar year of 1394 (ended on March 19, 2016), with Iran's imports from the European country of more than \$600 million.

Boeing offers details on Iran deal, saying all was done legally



Among the eased sanctions was a relaxed prohibition on Iran's ability to acquire aircraft for the national airline's aging commercial fleet.

Iran also has negotiated an agreement with Airbus, Boeing's major competitor, to acquire more than 100 aircraft.

The sale and lease of Boeing jetliners, if completed, would constitute the biggest American business transaction with Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Other nonnuclear sanctions imposed by the United States against Iran remain. They include a prohibition on the use of the dollar by Iran and its exclusion from

the American banking system, complicating how Boeing would get paid.

The sanctions designation against Iran Air was later dropped, the congressmen wrote.

Keating said that Boeing had negotiated legally with Iran under the conditions allowed by the nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan

of Action.

He also wrote that Boeing had reached no decisions yet on how to handle the Iranian financing for the aircraft, and reiterated the company's previous pledges to follow the United States government's determinations of what is allowed.

(Source: The New York Times)

Iran names local partners for western energy majors

Iran has confirmed the names of five Iranian companies that it has identified as partners for international energy majors seeking to invest in the Islamic republic, taking it a step closer to opening up its oil and gas-fields to western investment.

Gholamreza Manouchehri, the deputy head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), told the Financial Times that the companies already selected included government-backed Petroiran, Petropars and Mapna Group. But he said that a complete list was still being finalized.

The names of the companies has been eagerly awaited by western energy companies such as BP Total and Eni, as they hope to gain access to the OPEC member's oil and gas reserves after years of sanctions.

Many sanctions were lifted after Tehran reached a deal last year with world powers to scale down its nuclear activities.

Iran, which sits on the world's fourth-largest oil reserves and some of its largest gas reserves, has since been courting investors but has delayed announcing the terms of its contracts.

It has roughly doubled oil exports to more than 2 million barrels a day since January, and is seeking to attract almost \$200 billion of western investment to boost production by at least 600,000 barrels a day within five years.

Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, Iran's oil minister, said on



Sunday that Iran, once the second largest OPEC producer, expected to sign a first post-sanctions oil contract with a foreign company within three months.

But U.S. energy majors, including ExxonMobil and Chevron face an additional wait as Washington maintains sanctions prohibiting U.S. entities dealing with Iranian companies, with a few special cases such as airlines, despite the nuclear accord.

Boeing this week agreed a provisional deal to sell jetliners to Iran Air, the state carrier, becoming the first large U.S. Company to net a potential multibillion-dollar deal since the nuclear deal.

Of the energy companies selected, Petroiran is a sub-

siary of the National Iranian Oil Company and is tasked with onshore and offshore development.

Petropars, another state-linked entity, has signed a memorandum of understanding with one German company and has already held talks with western majors, according to Iranian media.

Mapna is an Iranian power and infrastructure group. It signed an agreement with Siemens in March that will see the German company provide two gas turbines to a power plant in the southern port of Bandar Abbas.

Oil Industries Engineering and Construction group (OIEC) is a partly state-owned oil contractor, while Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) is a conglomerate active throughout Iran's economy.

Manouchehri gave the list to the FT in response to queries about names revealed by an Iranian journalist at the oil ministry's in-house news service. The list also included companies Danaenergy, Jahanpars and Petrogohar, which have yet to be confirmed by the ministry.

Zanganeh, the oil minister, appointed Ali Kardor, whose background is in finance, as the new head of the National Iranian Oil Company last week. The appointment was seen as an attempt to tackle financial issues, which along with unattractive terms of contracts and low oil prices, have hampered new oil projects.

(Source: Financial Times)

Gold soars, oil slumps after shock British vote to exit EU

Gold rallied the most since the 2008 global financial crisis and oil and copper tumbled on Friday, as Britain's vote to leave the European Union rattled commodities markets, forcing a selloff in risky assets and a rush to safe havens.

Sharp falls in oil, base metals and grains mimicked other financial markets, which dived as complete results from a British referendum showed a near 52-48 percent split for the UK leaving the EU.

The vote created the biggest global financial shock since the 2008 crisis, this time with interest rates around the world already at or near zero, stripping policymakers of the means to fight it.

"It's certainly going to retard the kind of recovery momentum we've seen shaping up in Europe and for the UK it will probably negate a lot of the stimulus effects," said Vishnu Varathan, senior economist at Mizuho Bank.

Britain would be the first state to leave the 28-nation European Union since its foundation.

With the global economy likely to take a hit, it could curb demand for raw materials from oil to copper, dragging down prices again just as many were regaining favor in recent weeks.

"Bad economies in the UK and Europe are not good for oil and there could be

a domino effect on other economies in Asia," said IHS oil analyst Victor Shum.

Gold in terms of sterling and euro surged to the highest since April 2013.

U.S. crude was down \$2.50, or 5 percent at \$47.61 a barrel and Brent oil slid \$2.53, also 5 percent, to \$48.38 a barrel.

London copper fell 3 percent to \$4,637.50 a ton, after touching a seven-week high of \$4,795 on Thursday. Nickel fell 3.9 percent and zinc dropped 3 percent.

Stock futures slump after Britons vote to leave EU

U.S. stock futures fell sharply in pre-market trading on Friday in the wake of

Britain's vote to quit the European Union, catapulting global markets into turmoil.

S&P 500 futures and Nasdaq futures were both down about 3.6 percent, while those on the Dow Jones industrial average were off 2.8 percent.

As markets reeled, British Prime Minister David Cameron said he would step down by October.

British markets plunged, with sterling hitting a 31-year low in its biggest intraday percentage fall on record. Britain's FTSE 100 stock index slumped 6.5 percent in early trade. Asian equity markets also tumbled.

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS IN BRIEF



BMW Group declines to speculate on long-term Brexit impact

German carmaker BMW Group said there will be "no immediate change" to its operations in the United Kingdom following the country's decision to leave the European Union and declined to speculate on any longer-term implications.

"Today, we know that many of the relevant conditions for supplying the European market will have to be re-negotiated, but of course we cannot say what this means for our UK operations until those future regulatory and legislative arrangements are agreed," a spokeswoman told Reuters.

"We will not speculate about the outcome of these negotiations nor about any possible effects that might have on our production operations in the UK," she added.



Tata ordered to pay \$1.2b in arbitration award for JV stake

India's Tata Sons Ltd has been ordered to pay NTT DoCoMo Inc \$1.2 billion to buy DoCoMo's stake in a joint venture, the Japanese firm said, citing an international arbitration court ruling.

In 2009, the Japanese telecoms group acquired a 26.5 percent stake in Tata Teleservices Limited for around 127.4 billion rupees. In April 2014, it announced plans to exit the venture, which struggled to grow subscribers as quickly as its peers.

DoCoMo said it held the right to request that Tata find a buyer for its stake at 50 percent of the original price or at fair market value, whichever was higher.

But Tata failed to find a buyer, and India's central bank rejected Tata's offer to buy the stake.



BlackBerry CEO confident on handset profit; results top expectations

BlackBerry Ltd Chief Executive John Chen expressed confidence on Thursday that he can make the company's trimmed-down handset business profitable by a self-imposed September deadline, as the smartphone pioneer posted results that beat expectations.

BlackBerry broke even before charges and write-downs in its first quarter and forecast a smaller-than-expected annual loss, helping to send its stock up 3.6 percent.

The Canadian company has shifted focus from its once-dominant smartphones to software that companies and governments use to manage their mobile devices. Adjusted revenue in that business exceeded handset sales in the quarter.

Where is safe for tourists in the Middle East?

The wonderful old town of Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, is sadly off the agenda for tourists heading to the Middle East these days. Similarly, the Roman wonders of Leptis Magna in Libya or Palmyra in Syria are only accessible to the most hard-bitten (and probably foolish) traveler.

The Middle East tourism industry has taken a hammering in recent years, as a result of political turmoil. A revolution and a series of terrorist atrocities at the Bardo Museum in Tunis and the resort of Sousse have led to the once-thriving tourism industry in Tunisia collapsing. Egypt's travel industry has also been hit by political turmoil and won't have been helped by the mysterious downing of EgyptAir flight 804 on May 19.

But despite all the woes, tourists are still finding plenty of interesting and safe places to go. Overall tourism receipts in the Middle East were up 4% last year, according to the UN's World Tourism Organization.

But where is safe? Western governments routinely issue travel warnings about the region and some are more cautious than others in their advice.

The Australian government advises its citizens to reconsider any travel to Bahrain for example but the UK Foreign Office merely says its people should be "vigilant, avoid large crowds and demonstrations and be alert to local and regional developments." The New Zealand government advises against all non-essential travel to Saudi Arabia, while the US State Department says its citizens should "carefully consider the risks of travelling" to the country.

Of course nowhere in the world is 100% safe, but there are many corners of the region where you don't have to take any special precautions.

Iran

Iran is generally considered safe, other than the areas along its borders with Afghanistan and Iraq. With 19 UNESCO World Heritage sites dotted around the country there are plenty of things to see, including the desert city of Bam and the ancient capital of Persepolis.

Individual circumstances are important though – the U.S. State Department warns against dual U.S.-Iranian nationals from travelling to Iran, for example.

Persian Gulf monarchies

The Persian Gulf monarchies, including the UAE and Oman, are largely trouble-free. They offer tourists a mixture of pretty much guaranteed sunshine, beaches, vast shopping malls, in-door ski slopes and modern high-rise



Foreign tourists visiting Kabood Mosque, in Tabriz, March 2016 (Mehr/Seyyed Kazem Yusefi)

cityscapes in the case of the UAE; and castles, snorkelling, diving, rock climbing and a more sedate city pace in Oman.

Elsewhere in the Persian Gulf, the likes of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are also generally fine, although the Saudi border with Yemen is to be avoided and in Bahrain there is always the chance that demonstrations will flare up – remnants of the pro-democracy movement that was brutally suppressed by the government in 2011.

How much there is to do as a tourist in some of these countries is questionable, although the museums of Doha including the Museum of Islamic Art and the recently opened Slavery Museum are worth exploring.

Jordan

Jordan is also in good shape, something of an oasis of calm in the region. Its border areas with Syria and Iraq are best avoided but the rest of the country offers crusader castles, Roman mosaics in Madaba and one of the region's most impressive sites, the ancient Nabataean city of Petra.

Egypt

Egypt's resorts of Sharm el Sheikh and Hurghada and

inland sites like Luxor and Aswan are generally considered safe, even if the main airport in Sharm el Sheikh still has questions hanging over it. The northern half of the Sinai is off-limits however, and many governments advise against all but essential travel to areas including the monastery of Saint Catherine in the Sinai and Western desert oasis towns like Siwa.

Further west, Morocco has also managed to maintain an air of calm despite the political turmoil in the region, drawing tourists to the markets of Marrakech and to coastal resorts like Agadir.

In the neighboring country of Algeria, things aren't quite so calm. On March 23 there were reports of an attempted suicide bomber being shot and killed in Tizi Ouzou, east of Algiers.

With luck, some of the no-go areas will open up again for safe travel before long and travellers will be able to return safely to see the many wonders of Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen. How much is being destroyed by the wars raging in those countries in the meantime, and how much can be repaired afterwards, remains to be seen.

(Source: Forbes)

NEWS

"Lions and Bulls from Ancient Persia" on display in Italy

TOURISM TEHRAN — An exhibition of 39 ancient Iranian artifacts opened on Friday at the Archaeological Museum of Aquileia in Italy.

Entitled "Lions and Bulls from Ancient Persia to Aquileia", the exhibition will run until September 30.

The selected artifacts are dated back to Achaemenid Empire (550 BC–330 BC) to Sassanid Era (224 to 651 CE), the head of the National Museum of Iran Jebreil Nokandeh said in a press release on Thursday.

All the items are in the shape of lions and bulls and the exhibition focuses on the relation between these two ancient Persian symbols, he explained.

The artifacts were discovered from Iran's famous archaeological sites like Persepolis, Susa, Pasargadae, Kordestan and Ammarlu district in Rudbar, Nokandeh added.

The selected items are comprised of statues, rhytons, plates, daggers, cuffs, scale weight made of stone, metal, plaster, clay and lapis lazuli, he explained.

Aquileia, located in Italy's far northeast near the border with Slovenia, was chosen because "the city has always been considered the doorway between Rome and the Orient," said Italian ambassador Antonio Zanardi Landi, president of the Aquileia Foundation.

The exhibition is sponsored by the Aquileia Foundation in collaboration with the Museums of Friuli Venezia Giulia, the National Museum of Iran and the Iranian Cultural Heritage Handcrafts and Tourism Organization.

The exhibition is a follow-up of "A Statue for Peace: The Penelope Sculptures, From Persepolis to Rome" showcase, which was held at the National Museum of Iran in September 2015.

The exhibition featured four statues of Penelope, the faithful wife of Odysseus Penelope who waits twenty years for the final return of her husband Trojan War, from the collections of the National Museum of Iran and two Italian museums.



PICTURE OF THE DAY © Mehr/Faezeh Salimi



A woman in traditional dress is spinning yarn with a wheel for making jajim at Ziarat village, Golestan



Brief Notice of International Tender No. 9500008

Esfahan Steel Co. intends to purchase 480 MT Mould-Powder.

Prospective bidders specialized and experienced in the said area may visit Esfahan Steel Co.'s Website at www.esfahansteel.ir to get the Tender documents no later than 30.06.2016, and deliver their bids to the following address no later than official closing time (i.e.10 a.m.) on 30.07.2016.

Confidential Secretariat of ESCO, Esfahan Steel Company, The Main Door, End of Zobahan Highway, Esfahan-Iran. For further information, prospective bidders may contact us via the following

phone No.: +98315257-3953
Public Relation of Esfahan Steel Co.



Brief Notice of International Tender No. 9500337

Esfahan Steel Co. intends to purchase 50,000 pcs Casting Semi-Nozzle.

Prospective bidders specialized and experienced in the said area may visit Esfahan Steel Co.'s Website at www.esfahansteel.ir to get the Tender documents no later than 30.06.2016, and deliver their bids to the following address no later than official closing time (i.e.10 a.m.) on 30.07.2016.

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Is the gun lobby finally cornered?

By E.J. Dionne Jr.

A political crisis is usually preceded by an intellectual and moral crisis. Dominant ideas that once seemed to hang together lose their hold when they are exposed as contradictory and incoherent.

Similarly, moral claims made on behalf of a worldview can, gradually or suddenly, come to be seen as empty. Demoralization comes be-

fore defeat.

This is what happened in the Soviet Union. A corrupt and dictatorial system fell for many reasons, but its demise became inevitable when even those with an interest in mouthing the old slogans and defending the old ideology came to realize that almost everyone around them thought they were extolling bunk.

But a crisis can also develop around

particular issues in democratic countries. This is what's happening now to those who maintain an absolutist position in opposing all new measures to limit the use of firearms.

The contradictions of the gun lobby's worldview are not new, but it has taken a terrorist hate crime at an Orlando nightclub to force even the most slavish congressional followers of the National Rifle Association to



rethink whether they can continue to resist every effort, however modest, to prevent violence.

Gun control measures

Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) ended a 14-hour filibuster to force Republicans to vote on two gun control measures on June 16. He told the emotional story of a Sandy Hook victim before he left the floor.

→ 9

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Duplex Villa in Elahieh
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bdrs, large living room,
nice garden, 9000 USD
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130 sq.m, 2 bdrs, furn, **\$1700**
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Apt. in Qeytarieh
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Is 'Brexit' the beginning of end for European Union?

by Anmar Frangoul

Britons voted to leave the 28-member European Union and analysts are worried the outcome could have far-reaching consequences for Europe's political landscape.

A recent poll from YouGov showed that, out of seven countries polled, a majority in six of those felt that more countries would choose to leave the EU if a Brexit occurred.

Sixty-nine percent of Swedes believed it was likely there would be further exits from the EU "post-Brexit," with 66 percent of Danes and 57 percent of Norwegians feeling the same way.

'Euroskeptic'

"From the European perspective, the question of the outcome of the referendum is one thing, but I think if you take the broader picture then what the referendum shows is that you're dealing with these 'Euroskeptic' and populist parties everywhere across the continent these days and so either way, whether the UK stays or leaves, I think that the main takeaway here is that the days of ever closer integration are basically over," Carsten Nickel, a political risk analyst at Teneo Intelligence, told CNBC in a phone interview before the results were known.

While the prospect of a Brexit triggering other countries in Europe to follow



suit and decide to leave is not an immediate one it would "certainly sow seeds of doubt," according to Paolo Dardanelli, senior lecturer in comparative politics and acting director of the Center for Federal Studies at the University of Kent.

"Denmark and Sweden would be the ones to watch in particular, as their position would be significantly weakened," Dardanelli added via email.

Nickel went on to say that while the

risk of countries pushing to leave was not immediate, the Netherlands —in addition to Sweden and Denmark — would be watched closely.

These countries would be in a position of relative strength — compared to other European countries who have been in weaker positions — if a conversation about leaving ever did take place.

"You could argue that the conversation about this could be different in a

place like Denmark, or Sweden or the Netherlands, where you're looking at countries with well-functioning political institutions, and economies that are doing fairly well," Nickel said.

The tone of such conversations was already being set. "You have this already, where you have a conversation where people say 'we don't want to be paying for south Europeans who are incapable of reforming their economy,' so I think that's a problem," he went on to add.

Looking at the broader picture, Dardanelli said that there could be four main consequences of a Brexit, including, "the notion that integration is Europe's destiny — and irreversible — would be shattered."

Other ramifications Dardanelli pointed to include the further marginalization of EU members outside the euro zone, such as Denmark and Sweden; Ireland — a member of the euro zone but also closely tied to the UK — finding itself "in an uncomfortable situation"; and Germany finding itself "in an even more dominant position" whilst at the same time losing "a precious ally on issues such as economic reform, competitiveness, free trade and so forth."

The upshot, Dardanelli said, "is likely to be a less competitive, more protectionist EU."

(Source: NBC News)

Sixty-nine percent of Swedes believed it was likely there would be further exits from the EU "post-Brexit," with 66 percent of Danes and 57 percent of Norwegians feeling the same way.

Can we stop the Mediterranean from becoming a refugee graveyard?

By Adam Levenson

We are reminded about the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis on a regular basis because of the recurring tragic accidents in the Mediterranean Sea as refugees, not only Syrians but also from various North African and Arab nations, attempt to reach Europe.

In April, as many as 500 refugees drowned after their ship capsized en route to Italy. Speaking about a different incident in May, UNCHR spokesperson Barbara Molinaro explained, "usually nobody really knows the exact number of people on a boat like that," since smugglers tend to over-

crowd vessels.

Apart from attempting to solve the conflicts in refugees' countries of origin, regional and global actors have pledged funds to entities like the United Nations to deal with this humanitarian crisis. For example the International Relations Online blog, part of American University's School of International Service, created a data visualization to show the amounts that various states have pledged to support two UN programs, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan and the Syria Response Plan. The chart explains how almost 40 nations and private donors have contributed \$895 million (USD), which have reached 4.8 million refugees.

However, not all pledges are fulfilled. According to Con-

cern Worldwide, several nations have yet to donate funds promised at a February conference in London.

It is important to stress that assistance for the refugee crisis is coming from other sources as well. NGOs and charities have mobilized to support refugees by collecting donations (e.g. funds, clothes and books), while many European families open their homes to migrants.

Ultimately, these well-intentioned initiatives are only part of the answer as they address the effect, not the cause, of the problem. As long as extreme violence persists, we will continue to witness a massive exodus of people who flee their homes to find safety elsewhere.

(Source: juancole.com)

COMMENT

What shared interests Russia, Israel have in the Middle East

The Russo-Israeli relationship has become especially cordial in recent years, CIA veteran Paul R. Pillar notes. But what lies at the root of Tel Aviv's shift to Moscow?

The recent Russo-Israeli rapprochement has become the focus of Washington's attention. CIA veteran and the Brookings Institution's non-resident fellow Paul R. Pillar explains that since the Israeli-Russian relationship is not encumbered by special expectations — either positive or negative — the countries have a space to maneuver.

In contrast, "the U.S.-Israeli relationship carries a very strong expectation, especially within domestic U.S. politics, that the relationship is and ought to be one of strong and unshakable friendship. Any apparent deviation from that expectation is treated as if it were a serious problem," Pillar remarks in his opinion piece for the National Interest.

Washington's relationship

It is no secret that Washington's relationship with Tel Aviv has recently deteriorated, not to mention the chill between the White House and the Kremlin.

Pillar quotes Robert Danin, senior fellow for Middle East studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, who noted in his latest article for Foreign Affairs magazine that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Russian President Putin "clearly enjoy a better relationship with each other than either does with U.S. President Barack Obama."

Curiously enough, while Washington demonstrates its belligerent stance toward Crimea's reunification with Russia and Moscow's backing Syrian legitimate president Bashar al-Assad, Tel Aviv has adopted a pragmatic approach to the matters.

Pillar refers to the fact that Israel abstained from the U.S.-led effort to isolate Russia at the UN over the Crimean issue, thus distancing itself from Washington's policy in Ukraine.

Furthermore, in contrast to Washington, the Netanyahu government is not actually interested in ousting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad: "Israel enjoyed many years of quiet on the Golan front with the Assads in power, which is something it cannot expect with almost any possible alternative outcome of the war," the CIA veteran emphasizes.

Moreover, Israel and Russia are bolstering security ties: "Netanyahu and Putin now have a secure hot line between their offices," Pillar notes, adding that Tel Aviv is selling advanced military technologies to Russia.

A serious geopolitical player

Analysts point to the fact that Tel Aviv regards Russia as a serious geopolitical player in the Middle East.

→ 9

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Experts and activists say saving the bees saves the future

Professing that without bees, there is no future for humans, Peter Marchetta, a canvasser with Environment New Jersey, stood with colleagues and Michael Long, owner of Uriah Creek Apiary, Thursday to educate the public about the impact of bees on their lives.

"It's simple," said Marchetta, a Rutgers University student from Princeton studying environmental policy. "Bees, food, us. It's very direct and people don't get that."



At a "To Bee or Not to Bee" picnic in Buccleuch Park, Environment New Jersey aimed to raise awareness about the issue of bee colony collapse and encourage the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to take action to ban the class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids to protect the bees. Neonicotinoids, also known as neonics, are a class of neuro-active insecticides chemically similar to nicotine.

"We are concerned that foods that we associate with summer fun, including watermelon, blueberries, strawberries, asparagus and lemonade are threatened if we don't act quickly to save the bees," said Colleen McLoughlin, citizen outreach campaign director with Environment New Jersey, a New Jersey-based, citizen-funded advocacy group. "Bees also pollinate alfalfa which is commonly fed to dairy cows. So cheese and ice cream are also on the endangered list. All the summer foods are impacted by the loss of the bees as pollinators. Bee colonies are dying off at unprecedented rates."

(Source: mycentraljersey.com)

'Amazing protein diversity' is discovered in the maize plant

The genome of the corn plant - or maize, as it's called almost everywhere except the U.S. - "is a lot more exciting" than scientists have previously believed. So says the lead scientist in a new effort to analyze and annotate the depth of the plant's genetic resources.

"Our new research establishes the amazing diversity of maize, even beyond what we already knew was there," says Doreen Ware, Ph.D., of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL) in New York. "This diversity is fascinating in its own right and at the same time has great import for agriculture." Maize is one of the world's top-three staple foods; along with rice and wheat it accounts for two-thirds of world food consumption.

Ware was part of a large multinational team that in 2009 assembled the first-ever sequence of maize's 30,000 or so genes, based on a single variety called B73. The discovery of maize's extraordinary protein diversity is based on more accurate "long-read" sequencing technology, provided through a research partnership with PacBio, a sequencing company.

In all, 111,151 RNA transcripts from genes being expressed in six different maize tissues were read and analyzed in the research. About 57% of these messages had never been seen - and therefore had never been sequenced. "These were the messages that told us that our efforts to annotate and characterize the 2009 maize reference genome have been far from complete," says Bo Wang, Ph.D., a postdoctoral investigator in Ware's lab and first author of the paper reporting the new research.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Super-vaccine to prevent Zika and dengue fever is on the horizon

A super-vaccine to prevent both Zika and dengue fever is on the horizon after scientists found that the viruses can be neutralized by the same antibodies.

Antibodies work by combining with bacteria and viruses so that the immune system knows what to attack. They also carry a memory of the invader to stop it coming back.

But because Zika was not believed to be a dangerous virus until recently scientists have not yet managed to isolate the antibodies needed to produce a vaccine.

However now researchers at the Pasteur Institute in France have found that antibodies generated from people infected with dengue can bind with Zika to prevent infection.

A vaccine for dengue was recently approved for use by the World Health Organization so it is possible that it may also protect against Zika. Felix Rey said: "What we found was that an antibody against dengue can very potently neutralize Zika virus as well."

An "individual will make antibodies against Zika virus when infected by Zika but nobody worked in isolating antibodies against Zika virus until now, because it was not considered a dangerous virus." It is only now that everybody is paying attention to Zika virus, but nobody yet has antibodies against Zika virus. The dengue virus is similar to the Zika virus - they belong to the same viral family, called the Flaviviridae, and both are transmitted by the Aedes mosquito. Some 50 countries are now infected and thousands of babies have been born with birth defects, usually with shrunken heads and brain damage.

(Source: The Telegraph)

How plants could soon be keeping our planes in the air

Our appetite for hopping on a plane and traveling thousands of miles has a footprint. The Air Transport Action Group (ATAG) says that in 2015, flights produced 770 million tons of CO₂, with 12 percent of CO₂ emissions from transport sources down to aviation.

It is against this backdrop that technology and innovation are changing the way we think about air travel and how our planes can be fueled. The solar powered aircraft Solar Impulse 2, for example, is in the final stages of its round-the-world solar-powered flight, while European airline Easyjet unveiled its concept for a zero-emission hydrogen fuel system this year.

Bauhaus Luftfahrt have been looking into what they call "new thermo-chemical reaction pathways" to produce synthetic kerosene from CO₂ and water by using solar energy.

"This process is already happening in photosynthesis - in the natural photosynthesis process - where water and CO₂ is combined with the energy of sunlight to make chemical energy," Andreas Sizmann, head of future technologies and ecology of



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aviation at Bauhaus Luftfahrt, told CNBC's Sustainable Energy.

Reversing combustion process
"We realized that this process can be

done without photosynthesis by reenergizing water and CO₂ at high temperature in (a) reactor ... to reverse the combustion process," he added.

Sizmann went on to explain how a reactant releases oxygen, which is then brought into contact with water and CO₂, where the oxygen is "reclaimed" and hydrogen and carbon monoxide are left as products for output.

The "liquid hydrocarbons that come out of the Fischer Tropsch process can have a property or chain length that fits perfectly our fuel system on the airplane ... this is why it's called a 'drop in' fuel, a fuel that can substitute fossil kerosene," Sizmann said.

Sizmann added that the process was "green in a philosophical sense" with sunlight as the primary source of energy, and that improving efficiency was now a key goal.

Going forward, hopes are high. "We were trying to produce the exact same fuel so we will be able to use the exact same infrastructure and the same airplanes that we are using today," Christoph Falter, a researcher at Bauhaus Luftfahrt, said.

(Source: CNBC)

Hubble confirms new dark spot on Neptune

New images obtained on May 16, 2016, by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope confirm the presence of a dark vortex in the atmosphere of Neptune. Though similar features were seen during the Voyager 2 flyby of Neptune in 1989 and by the Hubble Space Telescope in 1994, this vortex is the first one observed on Neptune in the 21st century.

The discovery was announced on May 17, 2016, in a Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams (CBAT) electronic telegram by University of California at Berkeley research astronomer Mike Wong, who led the team that analyzed the Hubble data.

Neptune's dark vortices are high-pressure systems and are usually accompanied by bright "companion clouds," which are also now visible on the distant planet. The bright clouds form when the flow of ambient air is perturbed and diverted upward over the dark vortex, causing gases to likely freeze into methane ice crystals.



Gaseous mountains

"Dark vortices coast through the atmosphere like huge, lens-shaped gaseous mountains," Wong said. "And the

companion clouds are similar to so-called orographic clouds that appear as pancake-shaped features lingering over mountains on Earth."

Beginning in July 2015, bright clouds were again seen on Neptune by several observers, from amateurs to astronomers at the W. M. Keck Observatory in Hawaii.

Astronomers suspected that these clouds might be bright companion clouds following an unseen dark vortex. Neptune's dark vortices are typically only seen at blue wavelengths, and only Hubble has the high resolution required for seeing them on distant Neptune.

This new Hubble Space Telescope image confirms the presence of a dark vortex in the atmosphere of Neptune. The full visible-light image at left shows that the dark feature resides near and below a patch of bright clouds in the planets.

(Source: phys.org)

Drug monitoring programs do curb overdose deaths: study



Drug monitoring programs appear to help reduce deaths from prescription painkillers called opioids, a new study finds.

In an effort to curb overdose deaths from powerful painkillers such as OxyContin and Vicodin, all states except Missouri have implemented prescription-drug monitoring programs to track high-risk patients and prescription providers. But there have been conflicting findings about the effectiveness of these programs.

For instance, a study published June 23 in the New England Journal of Medicine found no change in opioid use or overdoses among disabled workers on Medicare between 2006 and 2012, despite tighter regulations.

But the current study -- based on data from 1999 to 2013 -- found that monitoring programs were associated with the prevention of about one opioid painkiller overdose death every two hours nationwide.

Opioid overdose deaths

"Today, opioid overdose deaths are more common than deaths from car crashes. Our study provides support that prescription-drug monitoring programs are part of what needs to be a comprehensive approach to the prescription opioid epidemic," said lead author Dr.

Stephen Patrick, an assistant professor of pediatrics and health policy at Vanderbilt University, in Nashville, Tenn.

The largest reductions in opioid overdose deaths were in states with the most thorough monitoring programs, researchers found. These tracked a greater number of substances with abuse potential and updated their data at least weekly.

Although the study can't prove causality, states with the most thorough programs had 1.6 fewer opioid overdose deaths per 100,000 people than states without such programs, according to the study. The findings were published June 22 in the journal Health Affairs.

Between 1999 and 2014, more than 165,000 people died nationwide from prescription opioid overdoses, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The drugs are frequently misused because they produce euphoria as well as pain relief. Congress is currently considering legislation to bolster the U.S. public health response to the opioid epidemic. Our findings suggest that investments in upgraded prescription-drug monitoring programs will pay dividends in lives saved," Patrick said in a Vanderbilt news release.

(Source: HealthDay)

The contagious cancer that jumped between species



In the northwest coast of Spain, a delicious clam called the golden carpet shell is suffering from an extraordinary type of cancer -- a contagious leukemia.

Almost every other case of cancer in animals -- including humans -- begins when a single cell in an individual starts growing and dividing uncontrollably, producing a tumor. If the tumor kills its host, it dies too. But the clam's leukemia is caused by cancer cells that have become independent parasites; they can travel between individuals, creating fresh tumors in each new host.

And if that wasn't astonishing enough, this transmissible tumor didn't even originate in a golden carpet shell. Instead, its genes reveal that it first arose in a related species -- the pullet shell. It's the first known cancer that not only jumps into new hosts but has, at least once, leapt over the species barrier.

Some cancers are caused by contagious things like HPV, the virus that causes cervical cancer, or Helicobacter pylori, a bacterium that causes stomach cancer. But in these cases, the tumor cells themselves stay put. It's so exceptional for cancers to become infectious in their own

right that until a year ago, scientists knew of only two types that did so. One is a facial tumor that infects Tasmanian devils. It evolved recently, spreads through bites, and threatens the future of its hosts. The second is a far older venereal tumor that affects dogs. It arose 11,000 years ago and has spread to six continents.

Type of leukemia

A third example emerged last year. Along North America's east coast, soft-shell clams were dying from a strange type of leukemia. Michael Metzger and Stephen Goff, scientists from Columbia University, studied these cancers and found that they were all genetically identical to each other, but genetically distinct from their hosts. That's the same pattern seen in the Tasmanian devil and dog tumors -- a clear sign that these cancers arrive in their hosts, rather than originating from them. They drift through the sea, these selfish shellfish cells, traveling from one cancer-ridden clam to another.

Intrigued, Metzger and Goff polled their marine biologist colleagues and learned that many other shellfish species are afflicted by similar rapidly spreading leukemias.

(Source: the atlantic.com)

Experts and activists say saving the bees saves the future

Professing that without bees, there is no future for humans, Peter Marchetta, a canvasser with Environment New Jersey, stood with colleagues and Michael Long, owner of Uriah Creek Apiary, Thursday to educate the public about the impact of bees on their lives. "It's simple," said Marchetta, a Rutgers University student from Princeton studying environmental policy. "Bees, food, us. It's very direct and people don't get that."

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class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids to protect the bees. Neonicotinoids, also known as neonics, are a class of neuro-active insecticides chemically similar to nicotine.

Bees pollinate alfalfa

"We are concerned that foods that we associate with summer fun, including watermelon, blueberries, strawberries, asparagus and lemonade are threatened if we don't act quickly to save the bees," said Colleen McLoughlin, citizen outreach campaign director with Environment New Jersey, a New Jersey-based, citizen-funded advocacy group. "Bees also pollinate alfalfa which is commonly fed to dairy cows. So cheese

and ice cream are also on the endangered list. All the summer foods are impacted by the loss of the bees as pollinators. Bee colonies are dying off at unprecedented rates."

Scientists, farmers and beekeepers like Long have been sounding the alarm that bee colonies are in collapse. The problem has been building for about a decade and now each year between 30 to 40 percent of all bee colonies have been lost. Scientists, Environment New Jersey and beekeepers like Long point to a class of bee-killing insecticides, known as neonics, as the major cause of the massive bee die-off.

(Source: mycentraljersey.com)

➔ The Bank of England's promise to provide 250 billion pounds of support and extra supplies of foreign currency if needed steadied the ship somewhat, helping halve initial losses for the FTSE 100 and the pound.

The pound fell as much as 10 percent against the dollar to touch levels last seen in 1985, on fears the decision could hit investment in the world's fifth-largest economy, threaten London's role as a global financial capital and usher in months of political uncertainty.

World stocks headed for one of the biggest slumps on record, and billions of dollars were wiped off the value of European companies. Britain's big banks took a \$130 billion battering, with Lloyds and Barclays falling as much as 30 percent at the opening of trade.

The United Kingdom itself could now break apart, with the leader of Scotland - where nearly two-thirds of voters wanted to stay in the EU - saying a new referendum on independence from the rest of Britain was "highly likely".

An emotional Cameron, who led the "Remain" campaign to defeat, losing the gamble he took when he called the referendum three years ago, said he would leave office by October.

"The British people have made the very clear decision to take a different path and as such I think the country requires fresh leadership to take it in this direction," he said in a televised address outside his residence.

"I do not think it would be right for me to be the captain that steers our country to its next destination," he added, choking back tears before walking back through 10 Downing Street's black door with his arm around his wife Samantha.

Quitting the EU could cost Britain access to the EU's trade barrier-free single market and means it must seek new trade accords with countries around the world.

The EU for its part will be economically and politically damaged, facing the departure of a member with its biggest financial centre, a United Nations Security Council veto, a powerful army and nuclear weapons. In one go, the bloc will lose around a sixth of its economic output.

"It's an explosive shock. At stake is the break up pure and simple of the union," French Prime Minister Manuel Valls said. "Now is the time to invent another Europe."

The result emboldened euroskeptics in other member states, with French National Front leader Marine Le Pen and Dutch far-right leader Geert Wilders demanding their countries also hold referendums. Le Pen changed her Twitter profile picture to a Union Jack and declared "Victory for freedom!"

The vote will initiate at least two years of divorce proceedings with the EU, the first exit by any member state. Cameron - who

'Explosive shock' as Britain votes to leave EU, Cameron quits



has been premier for six years and called the referendum in a bid to head off pressure from domestic euroskeptics - said it would be up to his successor to formally start the exit process.

His Conservative Party rival Boris Johnson, the former London mayor who became the most recognizable face of the "Leave" camp, is now widely tipped to seek his job.

Johnson left his home to jeers from a crowd in the mainly pro-EU capital. He spoke to reporters at Leave campaign headquarters, taking no questions on his personal ambitions.

"We can find our voice in the world again, a voice that is commensurate with the fifth-biggest economy on Earth," he said.

Independence Day

There was euphoria among Britain's euroskeptic forces, claiming a victory over the political establishment, big business and foreign leaders including United States President Barack Obama who had urged Britain to stay in. "Let June 23 go down in our history as our independence day," said Nigel Farage, leader of the euroskeptic Britain's Independence Party, describing the EU as "doomed" and "dying".

On the continent, politicians reacted with dismay.

"It looks like a sad day for Europe and Britain," said German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. His boss Angela Merkel invited the French and Italian leaders to Berlin to discuss future steps.

The shock hits a European bloc already reeling from a euro zone debt crisis, unprecedented mass migration and confronta-

tion with Russia over Ukraine. Anti-immigrant and anti-EU political parties have been surging across the continent, loosening the grip of the center-left and center-right establishment that has governed Europe for generations.

U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump, whose own rise has been fuelled by similar disenchantment with the political establishment, called the vote a "great thing". Britons "took back control of their country", he said in Scotland where he was opening a golf resort. He criticized Obama for telling Britons how to vote, and drew a comparison with his own campaign.

"I see a big parallel," he said. "People want to take their country back."

American Vice President Joe Biden said the United States would have preferred Britain to remain in the EU, but respected the decision.

Britain has always been ambivalent about its relations with the rest of post-war Europe. A firm supporter of free trade, tearing down internal economic barriers and expanding the EU to take in ex-communist eastern states, it opted out of joining the euro single currency or the Schengen border-free zone.

Cameron's ruling Conservatives in particular have harbored a vocal anti-EU wing for generations, and it was partly to silence such figures that he called the referendum in 2013. When he called the referendum, he thought it would be a sure thing. But the 11th hour decision of Johnson - a schoolmate from the same elite private boarding school - to come down on the side of Leave gave the exit campaign a credible voice.

Even until the last minute, bookmakers and financial markets had overwhelmingly predicted a Remain vote.

World leaders including Obama, Chinese President Xi Jinping, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and Commonwealth governments had all urged a "Remain" vote, saying Britain would be stronger and more influential in the EU than outside.

Threat of UK break-up

Meantime, the United Kingdom itself now faces a threat to its survival. Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said it was "democratically unacceptable" for Scotland to be dragged out of the EU against its will.

"It is a statement of the obvious that the option of a second referendum must be on the table and it is on the table," she told reporters, two years after Scots voted to stay in the United Kingdom. "I think an independence referendum is now highly likely."

The global financial turmoil was the worst shock since the 2008 economic crisis, and comes at a time when interest rates around the world are already at or near zero, leaving policymakers without the usual tools to respond.

The body blow to global confidence could prevent the Federal Reserve from raising interest rates as planned this year, and might even provoke a new round of emergency policy easing from all major central banks, despite their limited options.

The Bank of England pledged a huge financial backstop to calm plunging markets. Governor Mark Carney said it was offering to provide more than 250 billion pounds (\$347 billion) plus "substantial" foreign currency liquidity and it was ready to take additional measures if needed.

Other central banks around the globe also intervened in markets. The European Central Bank said it was ready to provide euro and foreign currency liquidity if necessary.

Left unclear is the relationship Britain can negotiate with the EU once it leaves.

To retain access to the single market, vital for its giant financial services sector, London may have to adopt all EU regulation without having a say in its shaping, contribute to Brussels coffers, and continue to allow free movement as Norway and Switzerland do - all things the Leave campaign vowed to end.

EU officials have said U.K.-based banks and financial firms would lose automatic access to sell services across Europe if Britain ceased to apply the EU principles of free movement of goods, capital, services and people.

Huge questions also face the millions of British expatriates who live freely elsewhere in the bloc and enjoy equal access to health and other benefits, as well as millions of EU citizens who live and work in Britain.

(Source: agencies)

NEWS

Is the gun lobby finally cornered?

➔ Those of us who have long favored what we typically call "common-sense gun laws" - including background checks, an assault weapons ban and restrictions on the ability of terrorism suspects and the mentally unstable to buy guns - have always seen the absolutists' position as nonsensical. This is why we consider our ideas "common-sense." Judging by most of the polls, a majority of the country agrees with us.

The truth is we already accept the need to subject the right to bear arms to reasonable restrictions. Otherwise, we would repeal laws regulating the ownership of machine guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. (Imagine the bumper sticker: "If RPGs are outlawed, only outlaws will have RPGs.")

Those on our side of this debate cannot understand how earlier horrors, particularly the mass murder of children at Sandy Hook, did not change the hearts and minds of our opponents. Surely something is terribly wrong with laws that make such mass killings routine in the United States in a way they are nowhere else in the democratic world. But even very moderate legislation was defeated.

What makes Orlando different is the clash the attack revealed between two powerful impulses of contemporary conservatism: the reflexive hostility to gun restrictions and

the incessant assertion that we must do what it takes to protect the United States from terrorism. If you believe the second, you really can't believe the first. This has always been true, but the murder of 49 people by a terrorist made the incongruity so stark that Donald Trump was moved to suggest he would talk to the NRA about ways to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists.

Intellectual system crumbling

One can be skeptical about whether Trump will go beyond the NRA's ineffectual solutions to the problem. But Trump's verbal shift was a tell-tale sign of an intellectual system that is crumbling.

And the demoralization of one side in a debate is often accompanied by new energy on the other. This is why the Senate filibuster last week to force votes on gun restrictions led by Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) was so important.

There was power to Murphy's witness itself, coming as it did from a politician whose constituents include the families who suffered grievously at Sandy Hook. And his rejection of business as usual showed that the long accumulation of massacres has broken the patience of those demanding action. It was a signal that advocates of sane gun laws have moved off the defensive.

Since the NRA-inspired backlash against the gun laws passed in the 1990s, Democrats have been paralyzed by the fear that taking a strong stand on guns would be electorally hazardous. The rallying to Murphy and also Hillary Clinton's aggressive use of the gun issue in her presidential campaign suggest that the toll taken by mass shootings is changing this political calculus.

It takes time for new political realities to take hold. The gun lobby still has many obedient followers in Congress. The Republican Party is still dominated by those who will do whatever the NRA tells them to do.

Nonetheless, even the most fervently held dogma is not immune to reality and logic. The collapse of the opposition to reasonable steps toward making us a safer country may not happen all at once. But it is in sight.

(Source: The Washington Post)

What shared interests Russia, Israel have in the Middle East

➔ "Israel can no longer count on the United States for its ultimate security. America is no longer the protector of last resort," Washington Times columnist L. Todd Wood wrote in early June.

In addition, there is an emotional factor that could influence the relationship between Russia and Israel: hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews are living in the Middle Eastern country.

However, according to Pillar, there is even more to that matter than meets the eye.

Citing Anna Borshchevskaya of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the CIA veteran suggests that "the Russian and Israeli leaders share an interest in jointly sticking a finger in the eye of the United States."

"This sort of situation, in which two states team up to frustrate and oppose a third, is one instance of exercising what realists would call a balance of power," he concludes.

(Source: Sputnik)

Countries' silence has emboldened Saudi Arabia: Shireen Hunter

Some say the credibility of the UN is under question after it removed the name of Saudi Arabia from the list of countries violating children's rights. Isn't this in contrary to the preliminary duty of the UN?

It is important to realize that the United Nations is an organization made of its members and has no separate identity. It also does not have independent sources of financing and relies on members' contributions to its budget and to its various operations. Therefore, the blame really should be addressed to its members. When Saudi Arabia threatened to cut its contribution, other

members should have come forward and declared that they will cover the financial shortfall resulting from Saudi action. Also, the blame should be addressed to those countries which in the past have overlooked Saudi transgressions and thus emboldened it to behave in disregard of international norms of conduct. The United Nations is often blamed for the misdeeds of its members.

28 pages of a report supposed to be published about Saudi role in September 11 attacks created lots of debates, but now the CIA chief says the report will be published soon but there is nothing in it about the role of Saudis. What is the reason for this?

A: The head of the Central Intelligence Agency has made this statement, because there has been a lot of speculation that somehow the Commission investigating the 9/11 glossed over the possible involvement of Saudi Arabia in 9/11 attacks. In this way they want to demonstrate that there was no effort to protect Saudi Arabia, and in this way silence the critics.

And there is always the possibility that during the investigation some facts might have been overlooked or not sufficient attention paid to them. There is the possibility that new information has become available which justify a new investigation.

Conserving biological diversity to save our environment

➔ If more sustainable practices are to be implemented in order to help maintain the earth's biodiversity, the current state of agriculture needs to change. Identifying what works in practice, taking into account regional differences and different scales of farming, as well as supporting change will therefore be critical in facilitating how we use diversity to enhance sustainability and food security in the face of change.

Integrated pest management, conservation agriculture, eco-agriculture and organic agriculture are examples of approaches to agricultural production that improve sustainability in a variety of ways that are based on strengthening efficiencies of biological processes and agro-ecosystems, and that are being used over many millions of hectares around the world.

Over the next decades, agricultural practices will need to become increasingly flexible, reflecting the multifunctional nature of agriculture and the need to deal with change and uncertainty. Resilience and adaptability will become more important properties.

Taking into account the envisaged impacts of changes in climatic conditions, there has been a drive advocated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) towards a para-

digm shift in agricultural production that promotes less input-intensive approaches through the embedding of agro-ecological and climate-smart agriculture practices.

In this endeavour, importance is placed on the capitalisation of biological processes and the pursuit of enhanced agricultural production without compromising or adversely affecting natural resources and the environmental capital such as biodiversity and ecosystem services.

When considering that 80 percent of the human diet is provided by plants and only five cereal crops provide more than 60 percent of our daily energy intake, there is no doubt that properly managed, conserved and sustainably used biodiversity can deliver critical elements for meeting growing global food demands.

In countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran where the agricultural sector is comprised by a high proportion of small-scale agriculture, the sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity is likely to be particularly beneficial for small-scale farmers in view of the fact that such farmers are obliged to optimize the limited resources available to them and overcome constrained access to external inputs.

Such successful approaches are likely to bring together positive aspects of sustainable intensification, to reflect the realities of small-scale farmers and to be supported by appropriate policy and economic frameworks.

FAO is actively promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture in Iran. The Organization has called for the establish-

In countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran where the agricultural sector is comprised by a high proportion of small-scale agriculture, the sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity is likely to be particularly beneficial for small-scale farmers in view of the fact that such farmers are obliged to optimize the limited resources available to them and overcome constrained access to external inputs.

ment of a 'National Information Sharing Mechanism' (NISM) on plant genetic resources to secure the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic diversity of the country.

NISM provides an invaluable tool not only to share knowledge and experience on plant genetics, but also to enhance agriculture and thereby ensure that the growing population of Iran will continue to have access to adequate, safe and nutritious food to meet its needs.

When it comes to FAO's role in biodiversity, the Organization has developed a number of biological diversity related instruments and tools of relevance to food and agriculture that contribute to sustainable development while promoting the integration of its own biodiversity-related instruments for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

In this regard, FAO is committed to work in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, together with other agencies of the UN system as well as other partners from across the wide spectrum of stakeholders, to align our joint efforts so as to achieve sustainable management of biodiversity for food and agriculture for the sake of preserving the well-being of the nation and to strive towards securing a healthy country planet.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Wise men speak because they have something to say; Fools because they have to say something. *Plato*

LEARN ENGLISH
Understanding Modern Art

Stephan: What's that?
Livia: It's my latest artwork. It's **experimental**.
Stephan: It's, um...
Livia: **Abstract**. It's part of a **performance art** piece I'm putting together. It'll really challenge people's **perceptions** of reality.
Stephan: I don't really understand **contemporary art**. Is it supposed to **represent** something?
Livia: It's my interpretation of how the rich **oppress** the poor.
Stephan: Really?
Livia: Yes, from a **postmodern** perspective.
Stephan: Oh, I see.
Livia: You do?
Stephan: No, not really. I don't think I'm **cut out for** modern art. I prefer art to be **representational**. I just can't **wrap my head around** this.
Livia: That's the point. It's supposed to challenge you and make you think.
Stephan: Well, it's certainly made me think.
Livia: It has?
Stephan: Yeah, it's made me realize that I've **underrated paint-by-numbers** all these years.

(Source: eslpod.com)

Words & phrases

experimental: using new ideas or methods
abstract: abstract paintings, designs etc. consist of shapes and patterns that do not look like real people or things
performance art: an art form that combines visual art with dramatic performance
perception: the way you think about something and your idea of what it is like
contemporary art: art produced at the present period in time
represent: if a painting, statue, piece of music etc. represents something or someone, it shows them
interpretation: the way in which someone explains or understands an event, information, someone's actions etc.
oppress: to treat a group of people unfairly or cruelly, and prevent them from having the same rights that other people in society have
postmodern: relating to or influenced by postmodernism which is typically defined by an attitude of skepticism or distrust toward grand narratives, ideologies, and various tenets of Enlightenment rationality, including the existence of objective reality and absolute truth, as well as notions of rationality, human nature, and progress
cut out for: to have the qualities that you need for a particular job or activity
representational: a representational painting or style of art shows things as they actually appear in real life; figurative
wrap one's head around: to come to a good understanding of; to comprehend something that one considers challenging, confusing, or a foreign concept.
underrated: better than people think or say
paint-by-number: from children's painting books in which the colors to be used are identified by numbers on the design to be painted

QUIZ OF THE DAY

173) I took the test twice and failed ___ times.
a) both
b) either
c) neither
(Quiz No. 172 answer: b)

PHRASAL VERB

Think over

■ **Meaning**: consider
■ **For example**: I'll have to think over the proposal before I decide.

ENGLISH PROVERB

A good name is better than a good face

■ **Explanation**: a good reputation is better than a good appearance

8 Iranian universities among top 200 Asian universities

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Eight Iranian **d e s k** universities are among the top 200 universities in Asia, according to Times Higher Education's 2016 ranking.

Sharif University of Technology, Iran University of Science and Technology, Isfahan University of Technology, and Amirkabir University of Technology are the Iranian universities among the top 100 universities, Khabaronline reported.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Khaje Nasir Toosi University of Technology, University of Tehran, and Shahid Beheshti University are the universities the lower half of the table respectively.

Singapore leads the way in Times Higher Education's 2016 ranking of the premier universities in Asia and is home to the best two universities in the continent for the first time, while China and Japan have the highest density of top institutions in the region each with 39 universities.

Taiwan and South Korea each with 24 universities, India with 16, Turkey with 11, Thailand with 7, Hong Kong each with



6, Malaysia with 4, Saudi Arabia with 3, Jordan, UAE, Pakistan, and Singapore each with 2, and finally Lebanon, Qatar,

Oman, Bangladesh, Macao, and Indonesia each with 1 university are of the countries represented themselves in the

Asia University Rankings.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings are the only global performance tables that judge research-intensive universities across all their core missions: teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook.

The Asia University Rankings use the same carefully calibrated performance indicators to provide the most comprehensive and balanced comparisons, trusted by students, academics, university leaders, industry and governments, but the weightings are specially recalibrated, based on feedback, to reflect the priorities of Asian institutions.

Teaching (the learning environment) with 25 percent, research (volume, income and reputation) with 30 percent, citations (research influence) with 30 percent, international outlook (staff, students and research) and industry income (knowledge transfer) each with 7.5 percent are the five performance indicators used to rank the universities.

Tehran Municipality to enhance services to people with disabilities

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Tehran **d e s k** Municipality attempts to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities in urban development in the capital.

All parks in the capital will be equipped with wheelchairs for people with disabilities by the end of the current Iranian calendar year falling on March 20, 2017, Tehran's mayor said.

"Moreover we are planning on designing parks in each district perfectly modified for the needs of the people with disabilities," Mehr news agency quoted Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf as saying.

"We have also installed 170 outdoor elevators in the houses with people with disabilities," Qalibaf highlighted.

There is a council in Tehran's Municipality called Disabled People's Council which is particularly focuses on these people's hardships and troubles, he noted.

There are special transportation services for the people with disabilities in Tehran, the mayor said, adding, "We are making an attempt to develop such a service to taxi transport system by allocating a special dial number for the people with disabilities."

He further explained that for those students with intellectual disabilities who couldn't afford to go to school on their own there are free of charge transportation services to take them to and back from school for two years now.

Ban calls for supporting some 245m widows around the world

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his message on International Widows' Day, 23 June 2016, while announcing that there are some 245 million widows around the world, called for supporting them in living productive, equal and fulfilling lives.

The full text of his message reads:

There are some 245 million widows around the world, and nearly half are living in poverty. Widows are often stigmatized by their families and communities. Many suffer discrimination based on age and gender and have lived lives marked by physical and sexual abuse.

Older widows often have few economic assets, after a lifetime of hard but

unpaid work. Even in developed countries, the value of women's pensions can be some 40 per cent lower than men's.

Younger widows face other challenges, as heads of households with childcare responsibilities and very limited economic opportunities.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with its pledge to leave no one behind has a particular resonance for widows, who are among the most marginalized and isolated.

On International Widows' Day, let us pledge to make widows more visible in our societies, and to support them in living productive, equal and fulfilling lives.

(Source: UNIC)

Customer called 'fatty' on receipt

He just wanted to grab a cold drink with friends, but his night turned upside down after receiving a fat-shaming message.

Dillion Arnold was hanging with friends at a bar in Warwick, RI, on Wednesday when he was insulted.

"I was signing my slip," Arnold told CNN affiliate WJAR. "I didn't really pay attention to it yet, and then I just happened to read it and I saw it in the corner and I was like, 'Wow,' and my heart just dropped."

The receipt from All Stars Bar & Grill read "fatty" in the place intended for the customer's name. Arnold shared a photo of the receipt on Facebook and outrage over this incident began to spread on social media.

"[The server] legit ID'ed me as 'fatty,' then he wouldn't admit it. They lost mine and my friends business," the 24-year-old stated in his post.

When Tony Ambrosio, the owner of the restaurant,



found out about the incident he was quick to apologize. And he fired the server in question.

"We sincerely apologize for your negative experience last night. It was very unprofessional to say the least. We take full accountability for what occurred and would like to

make it up to you," Ambrosio posted in the comments of Arnold's Facebook photo.

The server turned out to be Ambrosio's son, not only is he out of a job, but he is also no longer allowed on the restaurant's property.

"That's not what I teach my children," Ambrosio told the affiliate. "Employees or my kids, I hold them all accountable."

Both Ambrosio and his son have reached out to Arnold to personally apologize, but Arnold told CNN he refuses to speak to them right now.

Even though Arnold isn't ready to hear from Ambrosio he did release a statement on his Facebook.

"I'm not looking to see Allstars get shut down or vandalized or anything. Justice has been done and it's over and done with."

(Source: CNN)

IN FOCUS IRIB/ Shahram Marandi



The Flower Garden of Isfahan offers a beautiful collection of Iran's floral diversity. The garden is comprising of a rock garden, a waterfall, a pond, a rose garden, a herb garden, etc.

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Culture minister, Azerbaijani ambassador meet in Tehran

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Ali Jannati and Azerbaijani Ambassador Bunyad Huseynov met in Tehran on Saturday to explore avenues towards broadening bilateral artistic and cultural ties.

Jannati also pointed to Mohammad-Hossein Shahriar, a contemporary Iranian poet who also composed works in Azerbaijani, and the mausoleum of the 12th-century Persian poet Nezami Ganjavi located in Ganja, and called them cultural symbols that both nations have in common. Huseynov also emphasized the need for greater mutual cooperation in music, publications and the motion picture industry.

وزیر فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی با سفیر جمهوری آذربایجان دیدار کرد

علی جنتی وزیر فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی روز شنبه با بنیاد حسین اف سفیر جمهوری آذربایجان در تهران، دیدار کرد. این دیدار در جهت گسترش روابط دو جانبه ی فرهنگی و هنری بین دو کشور صورت گرفت.

جنتی به اشعار شاعر معاصر ایرانی محمدحسین شهریار به زبان آذری و مقبره نظامی گنجوی نیز در آذربایجان اشاره کرد و این ها را از جمله نمادهای فرهنگی مشترک میان دو کشور برشمرد. حسین اف نیز بر ضرورت افزایش همکاری های مشترک در زمینه موسیقی، ترجمه و صنعت فیلم سازی تاکید کرد.

Trooper crashes into wrong-way driver on purpose

FOUNTAIN HILLS, Ariz. (AP) — Arizona Department of Public Safety officials say a trooper purposefully crashed into a wrong-way driver on a highway outside of Phoenix.

They say 10-year DPS veteran Pedro Rodriguez crashed into the wrong-way driver's pickup truck about 2 p.m. Thursday on State Route 87 near the Bush Highway.

DPS officials believe the wrong-way driver was impaired.

They say the woman tried to drive away from the scene after the first impact, but Rodriguez struck her truck with his patrol vehicle again and stopped it completely.

Rodriguez and the woman were taken by ground ambulance to hospitals for treatment of minor to moderate injuries. The woman's name wasn't released.

Iran basketball team named for World Olympic Qualifying

SPORTS Iran Basketball Federation desk has confirmed the 12 players who will compete in the 2016 FIBA World Olympic Qualifying Tournament.

The team is led by former Memphis Grizzlies center Hamed Haddadi.

Dirk Bauermann's team will Tehran on Saturday to hold a training camp in Latvia ahead of the competition.

Iran will play two warm-up matches against New Zealand and Latvia on June 26 and June 28 respectively in its training camp.

The FIBA World Olympic Qualifying Tournament will be held between July 4 and July 9 at the multi-purpose Pala Alpitour indoor sports arena in Turin, Italy.

Iran, Greece and Mexico will trade blows in Group A, and the top two sides will advance to the Final Round to meet the top two sides from Group B, which includes Tunisia, Croatia and Italy.

The first-place team in Group A will take on the second-place team from Group B in one semi-final, and the side that comes top of Group B will go up against the second-top team in Group A in the other semi-final. The winners will then meet in a do-or-die showdown for a spot in the Olympics.



Iran basketball roster:

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Hamed Haddadi | 5. Mohammad Jamshidi | 9. Arman Zangeneh |
| 2. Oshin Sahakian | 6. Behnam Yakhchali | 10. Amir Sedighi |
| 3. Asghar Kardoust | 7. Farid Aslani | 11. Mohammad Hassanzadeh |
| 4. Arsalan Kazemi | 8. Sajjad Mashayekhi | 12. Adnan Doraghi |



Persepolis goalkeeper set to join Norwegian club

SPORTS Last season's Persepolis first choice goalkeeper is currently on trial at Norwegian second division side Mjondalen IF and is expected to sign a contract according to the local media.

"We have been watching him for a while and I think he is an interesting goalkeeper," MIFs sports director Kenneth Karlsen said.

The 29-year old keeper who didn't fulfill the expecta-

tions last season at Persepolis left the club to continue his career in Europe.

The 29-year-old shot-stopper who has previously played for Foolad, Naft Tehran and Steel Azin has made three appearances for the Iranian national team as well.

Makani has been suspended from playing football for six months in Iran for 'inappropriate conduct'.

Hassan Taftian comes first at World Challenge

SPORTS Iran's Hassan Taftian finished in first place at the IAAF World Challenge meeting in Madrid, Spain on Thursday evening.

Taftian improved his 100m national record by 0.06 to 10.04, with Spain's Bruno Hortelano second in 10.06.

Kemar Hyman from Cayman Islands finished in third

place with 10.13.

Iran discus thrower Ehsan Hadadi also came third by throwing 63.10m.

Austrian Lukas Weisshaidinger finished in first place with 64.42 and Colombian Mauricio Ortega came second with 64.22 3.



Iran international striker Ghoochannejhad joins Heerenveen



Iran's international striker Reza Ghoochannejhad has signed a two-year deal with Dutch club SC Heerenveen on Wednesday.

The 28-year-old was released by Charlton at the end of the season. Ghoochannejhad only scored two Championship goals in 23 games. But Ghoochannejhad has found a new club and will return to Eredivisie outfit SC Heerenveen, where he spent four years as a youth player.

Heerenveen technical manager Gerry Hamstra explained that Ghoochannejhad would add much need experi-

ence to the squad.

"We are looking for reinforcements in the 25 to 32 year age group. We have many talented young players but still lack experience and routine in our selection. Reza is therefore a welcome reinforcement," he said.

Ghoochannejhad has made 28 appearances for Iran, scoring 13 times, including the vital goal against Korea Republic which secured Team Melli's place in the 2014 FIFA World Cup, a tournament where he also scored against Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(Source: Tasnim)

Lionel Messi calls Argentina federation 'a disaster' after flight delay



Lionel Messi blasted the Argentine Football Association, calling it a "disaster" after the national team's plane from Houston was delayed on Thursday.

Messi and Argentina comfortably defeated the United States in the Copa America Centenario semifinals on Tuesday, setting the stage for a rematch in the final with defending champion Chile at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

With the team's plane from Houston to New Jersey grounded on Thursday, Messi took to Instagram to voice his disgust with the AFA.

"Once again waiting on a plane to

leave for our destination," Messi wrote.

"What a disaster the AFA are. My god!" After seeing the social media post, the AFA explained the situation, citing weather issues for the delayed departure.

"The Argentine Football Federation informs that the flight which is transporting the national team to New Jersey suffered a delayed departure due to weather issues.

"Also, the AFA advises that all of the scheduled times of the transfers are designated by the organisers of the Copa America Centenario."

(Source: ESPN)

England can win Euro 2016, says captain Rooney

England captain Wayne Rooney has set his sights on winning the European Championship, buoyed by the belief that the gap between his team and Europe's continental footballing elite has narrowed considerably in the past few years.

Monday's 0-0 draw with Slovakia ensured that England finished second in Group B behind Wales, potentially complicating their route to the final as they are now in the same side of the draw as World Cup winners Germany, defending European champions Spain and hosts France.

English FA chairman Greg Dyke had said before the tournament that making the semi-finals or being eliminated at the quarter-final stage by "a good team" would be considered a success, but Rooney has set his sights considerably higher.

"We are here and we want to win it," England's all-time leading goalscorer told reporters.

"Whether it happens remains to be seen, but we're not going to say that getting to the quarter finals will be a sign of progress. I believe we are better than that."

England have not got past the quarter-finals in their last three European Championships and failed to make it out of the group stage at the World Cup in 2014, but Rooney sees



cause for optimism this time round.

"If this was four years ago and you were saying you have to play France, Spain and Germany you would have been worried," he added.

"I think the gap has changed, and not just with ourselves, but with the likes of Wales. The gap to get to those teams is not as big."

Manager Roy Hodgson's men are aiming for their first major international title since the 1966 World Cup, but will

have to find a way past an inspired Iceland in the round of 16 game on Monday. They could face France for a spot in the last four.

Hodgson took six strikers to France, but his team have struggled to turn dominance into goals, scoring three times in three group games and winning only one.

Despite the team's struggles in the final third, Rooney, who has been pulling the strings from a deeper midfield position, said the talent in the side meant he felt less pressure to deliver.

"I have always gone into a tournament thinking if I don't play at my best I cannot see us winning it," said the player who burst on to the international stage as an 18-year old with four goals at Euro 2004.

Rooney has since failed to make a telling impact at the continental championship and though he is yet to open his account in France, he is pleased that the England squad have the talent to ease the burden of expectation on his shoulders.

"I have come into this tournament and we have several players capable of doing magical things. We have five or six match winners in our team and I cannot say we have always had that," he said.

(Source: Reuters)



EURO by numbers: the top performers so far

Which is the 'hardest-working' side at UEFA EURO 2016? The best attackers? The most resilient defenders? EURO2016.com tots up the figures with some unexpected results.

Who has 'put in the most effort'?

Who are the most dangerous attacking team at the finals?

Again, not the answer one would have envisaged going into the tournament, but the 'goals for' column does not lie; Hungary and Wales, with six goals each, have been the most effective attacking sides at the finals. With their 37 shots each, that means a goal every 6.17 attempts. Croatia and Spain have had 50 shots each – constituting a goal every ten shots.

Portugal's four goals, meanwhile, have come at a rate of one every 17.25 shots. Northern Ireland, meanwhile, have progressed to the last 16 despite having just 17 shots in the entire championship.

Top-scoring teams

- 6: Hungary, Wales
- 5: Croatia, Spain
- 4: Portugal, France, Iceland, Belgium
- Most attempts on goal
- 69: Portugal
- 65: England
- 59: Belgium, Germany
- Shots against woodwork
- 4: France
- 3: Germany, Croatia
- 2: Portugal, Romania, Austria, Italy

Making a little go a long way

Four teams have made it to the last 16 by scoring just twice in the group stage: Poland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Switzerland. Northern Ireland, as mentioned above, had only 17 shots – the fewest of any side at the finals – scoring at a rate of a goal every 8.5 shots.

Moreover, Northern Ireland and Iceland (who found the net four times) have had less of the ball than any other country – including the eliminated ones; that means they have had the ball for the equivalent of 30.6 minutes and 31.5 minutes per game respectively.

Thus, Iceland have scored the equivalent of a goal for every 23 minutes and 37.5 seconds they have had possession. Put that into context: Germany have been the possession kings with 66% of the ball in their matches – 59 minutes and 24 seconds per game – and notched three goals: one for every 59 minutes and 24 seconds they have had the ball.

Fewest goals to progress

- 2: Poland, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Switzerland
- 3: England, Germany, Italy, Slovakia
- Possession percentage (lowest)
- 34%: Northern Ireland
- 35%: Iceland
- 42%: Albania
- Possession percentage (highest)
- 66%: Germany
- 61%: Spain, Portugal
- 58%: Switzerland, England

Who are the most defensive side at the finals?

Much has been made of the qualities of teams like Iceland, who have ceded possession and hit their opponents on the break – but, surprisingly perhaps, it is more conventionally attacking sides who have come out with the best defensive record.

Fewest goals conceded

- 0: Germany, Poland
- 1: France, Italy, Switzerland
- 2: Spain, Belgium, Italy, Northern Ireland

Who are the best passers at the finals?

No surprises here. The Spanish school of 'tiki-taka' football – as adopted by Germany – has given Spain and Germany the greatest efficiency when it comes to moving the ball around, though kudos to Switzerland, who have been only marginally less effective distributors than their neighbours from 'The Big Canton'.

Pass completion rate

- 93%: Spain
- 91%: Germany
- 90%: Switzerland
- 89%: Portugal, England

Do the most stylish sides get a hard ride from opposition defences?

The traditional view might be that the intricate 'tiki-taka' passing teams are the ones that come in for the most severe attention from opponents, yet the statistics at UEFA EURO 2016 do not bear out that view. The reasonably muscular Poland are in fact the most sinned-against side at the finals.

Fouls suffered

- 46: Poland
- 45: Turkey
- 43: Italy, Albania, Portugal
- Fouls committed
- 52: Romania
- 49: Republic of Ireland
- 46: Hungary, Ukraine

23 June 2016			
SUI		20:30	POL
23 June 2016			
WAL		20:30	NIR
23 June 2016			
CRO		23:30	POR



Poem of the day

I have prayed the wind o'er my heart to fling
The fragrance of musk in her hair that sleeps.

Hafez

Prayer Times

Noon:13:07 Evening: 20:45 Dawn: 4:04 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:50 (tomorrow)

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NEWS IN BRIEF



"Hippolytus" coming to Tehran theater

T I A R T TEHRAN — Prometheus, an Iranian troupe led by director Farzad Amini, will perform Euripides' "Hippolytus" at Tehran's Hafez Hall on June 29.

"Hippolytus" is an Ancient Greek tragedy based on the myth of Hippolytus whose stepmother Phaedra falls in love with him.

Bahram Abbasizadeh, Elnaz Esmailzadegan, Mohammadreza Farzam and Sanaz Purdashti are the main members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until July 8.



Mehdi Monem to unveil new photos from "War Victims" series

T I A R T TEHRAN — Iranian photographer Mehdi Monem who is best known for his series "War Victims" that contains photos of Iranian civilians injured during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war plans to display new works from the collection in an exhibition at Tehran's No. 6 Gallery during September.

Photos from "War Victims" have previously been published in two books. The second collection was published in January.

The exhibit will be held from September 16 to 23 at the gallery located at No. 2, 20th Alley, off Mirzaye Shirazi St.



Moscow festival to screen "Muhammad (S)"

T I A R T TEHRAN — Renowned Iranian director Majid Majidi's "Muhammad (S), the Messenger of God" will go on screen in the non-competitive section of the 38th Moscow International Film Festival on June 29.

The 178-minute epic drama about the childhood of the Prophet of Islam (S) was also screened at Moscow's Oktyabr Kino (October Cinema) earlier in February.

"The Daughter" by Iranian director Reza Mirkarimi is competing in the festival, which opened on Thursday and will run until June 30.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Multimedia

■ A sculpture collection as well as sets of installation art are currently on display in a group exhibition at O Gallery.

The exhibit featuring works by Farid Jafari Samarqandi, Shabnam Qafqazi and Elham Hajdai runs until July 5 at the gallery located at 44 Khosro Alley, off Ostad Nejatollahi St.

Painting

■ Paintings by 22 artists, including Amir-Hossein Akhavan, Roshanak Aminollahi, Mohsen Ahmadvand and Bahar Behbehani, are on display in an exhibition at Etemad Gallery.

The exhibit runs until July 5 at the gallery, which can be found at 4 Bukan St., off Yaser St. in the Niavaran neighborhood.

■ An exhibition titled "Reflection" displaying paintings by Pantea Baghdadi, Kiana Qasemlu, Fatemeh Sadeqi and several other artists is currently underway at Shirin Gallery.

Saeid Ahmadzadeh is the curator of the exhibit that runs until July 13 at the gallery located at No. 5, 13th St., Karim Khan Zand Ave.

■ Negar Gallery is hosting a group exhibition of paintings by Elham Afshar, Taha Hamed, Rozita Nosrati and several other artists.

The exhibition named "Neither Do I Rain Nor Do I Come to an End" will be underway until June 29 at the gallery located at 33 Delaram Alley, East Roshanai St., in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.

■ A group exhibition of paintings by Haydeh Zarrinbal, Soraya Iranshar, Niyusha Asghari and several other artists is currently underway at Haft-Samar Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until July 6 at the gallery located at No. 8, Fifth Alley, Kuh-e Nur St., off Motahhari Ave.

Mozart's Requiem highlights funeral of maestro Mostafa-Kamal Purtorab

T I A R T TEHRAN — The choirs of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and IRIB Orchestra performed Mozart's Requiem during the funeral procession of maestro Mostafa-Kamal Purtorab that began at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Friday.

Hossein Alizadeh, Shahram Nazeri, Hushang Kamakr, Hafez Nazeri, Ali Torabi, Mohammad Sarir, Duval Ganjei and Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Ali Moradkhani were seen among the large number of musicians and officials attending the funeral.

Purtorab, who was famous for his publications on music and educational achievements, died of heart failure on Wednesday morning. He was 92.

Managing director of Iran's House of Music Mohammad Sarir, who was first to speak at the ceremony, called Purtorab a real maestro who has trained a great number of students.

"His full knowledge of music along with his good memory were his distinguishing characteristics. He was a musician who made most of his efforts to boost the art of music," Sarir said.

He added that Purtorab was always concerned about his students. "He was always proud of his students and I hope we can make the best use of his knowledge now that he is not among us any more."

Vocalist Saharam Nazeri called the maestro one of his hopes in music that died.

"He was one of those individuals who possessed great wisdom. I was extremely fond of him and I



Razmik Ohanian conducts a choir composed of singers from the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and IRIB Orchestra performing Mozart's Requiem at the beginning of the funeral of maestro Mostafa-Kamal Purtorab at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on June 24, 2016. (IRNA/Marzieh Soleimani)

gained a lot of positive energy when I used to meet him," he added.

The maestro was buried in the artists' section of the Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery.

"A Method to Perform Time Heterogeneous Subdivisions of Right and Left Hands on Piano" published several months ago and "Theory of Music" are among Purtorab's noteworthy credits.

Fereidun Moshiri's heirs donate his Personal library to Islamic center

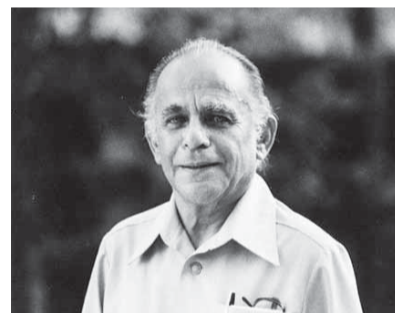
T I A R T TEHRAN — The children of Fereidun Moshiri (1926-2000) have donated the personal of the contemporary Persian poet to the Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia.

The library contains invaluable books and a collection of literary magazines, the director of the center, Kazem Musavi Bojnurdi, said in a press release on Thursday.

Moshiri survived by his daughter, Bahar, and son, Babak.

He began composing poetry when he was at 15. His first collection, "Thirsty for the Storm", was published in 1955.

His credits also include "Cloud", "Cloud and the Alley", "Believe the



Fereidun Moshiri in an undated photo

Spring" and "Of Silence".

Many of his works have been put to music and have been performed by Mohammadreza Shajarian, Alireza Qorbani and several other vocalists.

Veteran cartoonist Mohammad-Rafi Ziai dies at 68

T I A R T TEHRAN — Veteran cartoonist Mohammad-Rafi Ziai died from a heart attack on Thursday. He was 68.

Ziai was one of the most active cartoonists with theoretical knowledge besides his practical experience, Persian media have reported.

Born in 1948 in the small town of Evaz in Fars Province, Ziai had over 30 years of a continuous stream of information and constant activities in the press. He had also written hundreds of articles on cartoons published in Iran and around the world.

The cartoonist worked for several magazines and newspapers during the years of his long career including "Cartoon for Children", "Gol-Aqa" and "Kayhan Caricature".



He has also published many articles on cartoons, many books for children and young adults along with thousands of cartoons.

His funeral procession will begin from the Iranian Artists Forum today. He will be buried in the artists' section of the Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery.

PICTURE OF THE DAY TASNIM/Alireza Ameri



Artisans are busy making windows for the holy shrine of Imam Musa al-Kadhim (AS) at a workshop in the southern Iranian city of Shiraz on June 23, 2016. Six wooden windows, which are currently being built at the workshop, will replace old ones at the shrine of the seventh Imam of Shia Muslims in Kadhimiya, a northern neighborhood of Baghdad.

Ralph Stanley, U.S. bluegrass music pioneer, dies at 89

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — U.S. bluegrass pioneer Ralph Stanley, who with his brother Carter helped popularize the Appalachian music and gained late career fame through the movie "O Brother, Where Art Thou?," died on Thursday, the family said. He was 89.

Stanley died in his sleep after a long battle with skin cancer, grandson Ralph Stanley said on his Facebook page.

"I feel so lost and so alone right now. He was my world, and he was my everything,"

he wrote. Further details about Stanley's death were not immediately available.

During a seven-decade career, Stanley, a banjoist and singer from the coal mining country of southwest Virginia, wrote or co-wrote more than 200 songs, including "Hard Times" and "The Darkest Hour Is Just Before the Dawn".

"I wrote 20 or so banjo tunes, but Carter was a better writer than me," Stanley said in a 2008 interview with Virginia Living magazine.

A major contributor to the so-called "lonesome" style of bluegrass, Stanley and his brother performed as the Stanley Brothers and the Clinch Mountain Boys from 1946 to 1966, according to a profile on the International Bluegrass Music Museum's website.

The band was the first bluegrass group to play the Newport Folk Festival, in 1959, and headlined folk festivals for decades. The Clinch Mountain Boys were the first bluegrass act to record a cappella gospel

hymns, in 1971.

As his brother's health began to fail, Ralph Stanley increasingly began fronting as lead singer and as the face of the band. Carter Stanley died in 1966, and Stanley continued to perform into his 80s with the Clinch Mountain Boys.

Born Feb. 25, 1927, at Big Spraddle Creek in Virginia's Dickenson County, Stanley took early musical influence from his banjo-playing mother and from the Primitive Baptist Universalist Church.

Spielberg brings Dahl's friendly giant to screens with "The BFG"

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Hollywood director Steven Spielberg returns to making films through the eyes of children with "The BFG", a big screen adaptation of the much-loved story by British author Roald Dahl.

The tale follows young Sophie, played by Ruby Barnhill, who comes across a giant, portrayed by Oscar winner Mark Rylance - a Big Friendly Giant (BFG) who, unlike his peers, does not eat children.

Although Spielberg has made many family movies in his award-winning career, he has also directed more historical films such as "Saving Private Ryan" and "Lincoln".

"I haven't really swum in this wading pool in a long time," Spielberg told Reuters at the film's premiere in Los Angeles on Tuesday.

"It was really nice to be able to just let my imagination roam free without being kind of fettered by all the precepts of history and all the truths you need to tell when you do a historical subject. So all of us felt free and very happy to be returning to our childhoods to tell this story."