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Tehran signals Mogherini for dialogue on human rights

Indian, Iranian puppeteers honored at Mobarak festival

ART TEHRAN — The 16th Mobarak International Puppet Theater Festival came to an end in Tehran on Sunday evening, honoring puppeteers Behruz Gharibpur from Iran and Dadi Pudumjee from India for their lifetime achievements.

The ceremony took place at Tehran's City Theater Complex, while members of the Iranian artists' world paid tribute to actor Davud Rashidi, who died of heart failure on Friday.

Dadi Pudumjee, who is currently the President of (Union Internationale de la Marionette) UNIMA International's Social Justice Commission, was called on stage to receive his award from actor Atila Pesyani and the Zoroastrian priest Mehraban Firoozgari.

The Indian puppeteer asked the audience to stand up and observe a moment of silence in memory of Davud Rashidi.

The honorary diploma and plaque of honor was handed to the Indian puppeteer by Mehraban Firoozgari, who had recited the words of the play Pudumjee had staged in India about the customs of the Zoroastrians.

Tehran props nuclear airspace with Russian predator

POLITICS TEHRAN — Tehran has ratcheted up airspace security around one of its nuclear sites by deploying a battalion of S-300 surface-to-air defense system, making any future air attack against the facilities more difficult.

A footage aired by the IRIB TV on August 28 showed that the first battalion of the Russian predator had been stationed around Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant, now a nuclear, physics, and technology center under the nuclear deal Iran and world powers signed in July 2015.

Iran-South Korea technology exchange center inaugurated

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Tehran and Seoul opened their joint technology exchange center in a ceremony attended by Ali Yazdani, the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), and Young-Sup Joo, the head of South Korea's Small and Medium Business Administration, in the Iranian capital on Sunday.

"The established center will improve the activities of both countries' small and medium industries in the fields of education, marketing and transfer of technical know-how," Yazdani told reporters on the sidelines of the inaugural ceremony, IRNA reported.

Noting that the current level of Iranian trade with South Korea stands at \$5 billion per year, the Iranian official added that both sides have set a target to raise the figure to \$25 billion within the next ten years.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the joint center was signed during South Korean president's visit to Tehran.

President Park Guen-hye paid a three-day state visit to Iran from May 1 to 3. Her tight schedule in Iran included a summit with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani as well as economic and cultural events.

President Rouhani attends Shahid Rajai Festival's closing ceremony



'Heikal praised Iran Leader for regard for science, defense power'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Late Egyptian journalist Mohamed Hassanein Heikal used to praise Iranian Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei for two specific reasons, an advisor to the Majlis speaker said on Monday.



One reason was the Leader's special attention to science and the other his regard for defense power, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian quoted Heikal as having said, Asriran reported.

Iran to host CAPA summit in Sept.

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Center for Asia-Pacific Aviation (CAPA) plans to hold Iran Aviation Summit 2016 on September 18-19 in Tehran, IRNA reported on Monday.

As Reza Jafarzadeh, the manager of Iranian Aviation Organization's Public Relations Department, announced, more than 150 foreign participants from 20 countries will take part in the event.

The conference mainly aims to investigate ways for financing projects and making investments in Iranian aviation industry in the post-JCPOA era. Other issues to be discussed in the conference include leasing and buying planes, building and developing airports, investigating monetary, insurance as well as banking challenges in Iranian aviation industry, and developing local and international flight networks.

The summit will bring together airlines, aircraft manufacturers, lessors, banks, export credit agencies, regulators and law firms, along with airport operators and investors, and infrastructure developers for panel discussions and networking sessions to identify financing solutions for transactions related to aircraft acquisition, leasing and infrastructure development.

Resistance festival to focus films on MKO

ART TEHRAN — The 14th International Resistance Film Festival (IRFF) plans to review seven movies and TV series on Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO, MeK — also known as People's Mujahedin of Iran, PMOI), an Iranian political-militant organization in exile that carried out many terrorist operations to overthrow the Iranian government.

Movies "My Sky" by Mohammadreza Ahanj, "The Little Black Fish" by Majid Esmaili, and "The 1001st Stronghold" by Amir-Hossein Noruzi have been selected to be screened in a special program, the organizers announced on Monday.



In addition, the program includes the acclaimed TV series "Black Intelligence 2" by Masud Abparvar and "Salman Group" by Kazem Masumi.

"Border Road", a documentary co-directed

by Hossein Riggi and Mohammad Qanefard, and "Naku", a short film by Hossein Riggi, will also be reviewed.

The 14th International Resistance Film Festival is scheduled to be held in Tehran from September 23 to 30.

Twenty-eight documentary films, including films by U.S. filmmakers Michael Moore, "Where to Invade Next", and Oliver Stone, "Mi Amigo Hugo", will be screened in the documentary section of the festival.

The festival is organized every year during the Sacred Defense Week in September to commemorate the anniversary of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Tabriz hosting 1st ACD ministerial meeting on tourism

TOURISM TEHRAN — The first edition of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) ministerial meeting on tourism opened on Monday in the northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz, in a bid to expand cooperation among the member states.

The Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization of Iran presides over the two-day meeting which was initiated by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif during the 14th ACD Ministerial Meeting, which was held earlier in March in Bangkok.

Ministers and high-ranking officials from about 20 member states have come together at Tabriz's Kaya Laleh Park Hotel to exchange views on how to converge their policies and regulations in compliance with the tourism industry across the continent.

Rafsanjani hails govt's role in boosting educational system as 'unique'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, chairman of the Expediency Council, said on Monday that the current government has played a "unique" role in boosting the educational system of the country.

"The Government of Prudence and Hope has played a unique role in boosting the country's educational system using the JCPOA's achievements at the international arena," he said during a ceremony in Tehran.

He said that Iran's relations with other countries is increasingly expanding, leading to the



country's development in various areas especially in science.

He also described knowledge-based development as one of the country's principal policies.

Iran has the capacity to earn a global reputation as a country which possesses advanced sciences, Rafsanjani said.

He said that Iran has achieved a "good status" at the international level in science.

Iran and the 5+1 group (the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany) finalized the text of the JCPOA in Vienna in July 2015. The nuclear agreement went into effect in January 2016.

The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

It can benefit a wide range of tastes from students to professional journalists. Persian equivalents have been given for all entries, including idioms and expressions. The glossary also includes example sentences for entries the authors thought it would be a bit difficult to learn.

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ARTICLE
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Seismologist

Italy earthquake, an evidence for vulnerability of our world in 21st century

The earthquake of 24 August 2016 in Central Italy with a magnitude of 6.2 which claimed over 290 lives, might be an evidence for the vulnerability of our world in the 21st century.

The quake occurred in Italy, which is a member of the European Union and one of G7 state members.

The death toll and a total ruin of at least one town, Amatrice, indicate that even in such developed country in Central Europe in early 21st century, we may expect such a level of vulnerability.

Amatrice is in the province of Rieti, Northern Lazio, about 140km from Roma, the Capital of Italy.

About 48 hours after the main shock, rescue efforts are in progress; however, more than 200 aftershocks, having a magnitude greater than 3 in the 2 days after the main shock, have caused difficulties for search and rescue teams and for those living in pre-fabricated shelters.

Italy has an important history of disastrous earthquakes as well as high level of seismicity in the southern Europe. This country is located along a continental collision zone between the African and Eurasian plates, geologically speaking.

The small town of Amatrice, having had about 2,500 inhabitants before the 2016 earthquake, had experienced another devastating earthquake in 1638 when it was totally damaged. Today, after the passage of about 400 years, another severe earthquake has demolished the town, taking nearly 300 lives. This town is located in 43km north of L'Aquila, the epicenter of 6 April 2009 earthquake with a magnitude of 6.3.

Italy is known for having had over 30,000 medium and high intensity earthquakes in the last 2,500 years, out of which 560 were strong and damaging, about one every 4 and half years.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Implementation of Leader's guidelines a must for government: Rouhani

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian president has stressed that a thorough implementation of the guidelines of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei should be regarded as a must by the government.

Speaking to the cabinet on Monday, Hassan Rouhani said the Leader's guidelines boost the government's morale for rendering more service to the public, IRINN reported.



West to suffer from terrorist acts of anti-Iran MKO: Larijani

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani warned certain Western countries against the consequences of their supports for the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO), saying the West will be plagued with the groups' terrorist acts in future.

"The group (MKO) has the darkest record of terrorist acts in the world but the Westerners support the sinister group," Larijani said in a speech in the central province of Qom on Monday.



Iran marks anniversary of 1981 bombing at PM's office

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic of Iran is marking the anniversary of the assassination of former president Mohammad Ali Rajaei and then-prime minister Mohammad Javad Bahonar, who lost their lives in a bombing in Tehran 35 years ago.

On August 30, 1981, Rajaei, Bahonar and several other Iranian officials had convened at the Tehran office of the Iranian prime minister in a meeting of Iran's Supreme Defense Council when a bomb explosion ripped through the building.



Iran makes its new radar operational

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran has activated its advanced "Nazir" radar, Commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Air Defense Base Farzad Esmaili said.

The new radar can detect small objects, anti-radar aircrafts, and ballistic and cruise missiles, Esmaili said, IRINN reported on Monday. Esmaili further said that the radar is capable of tracking U-2 aircrafts and UAVs such as MQ-1 and RQ-4.



Iran to extradite hundreds of Afghan convicts soon

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Consular, Parliamentary and Expatriates' Affairs Hassan Qashqavi announced that 251 Afghan prisoners will be extradited from Iran in coming weeks.

Twenty one Iranian nationals sentenced to imprisonment in Afghanistan were extradited to Iran on Sunday, Qashqavi was quoted as saying on Monday by IRIB.



International drugs precursor smuggling band nabbed in southern Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran has arrested the members of an international drug precursor smuggling band in its southern province of Hormozgan.

The team was spotted and crushed by local intelligence forces and found in possession of a huge number of 220-liter acid anhydride barrels that amounted to 21 tons, Tabnak reported on Monday.



Party affairs to be relegated to House of Parties

POLITICS TEHRAN — Party affairs in Iran are going to be relegated to the House of Parties, according to Mohammad Hossein Moqimi, deputy interior minister for political affairs.

"We at the Interior Ministry will be only supporting parties, but the affairs that used to be carried out by the ministry will from now on be pursued at the House of Parties," he told reporters, Fars reported on Monday.

Tehran signals Mogherini for dialogue on human rights

POLITICS TEHRAN — After a successful marathon with the West over its nuclear impasse, Tehran has accepted in principle to initiate dialogue with the European Union on human rights, and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini already knows this.

"The negotiations have been approved by the Iranian High Council for Human Rights (IHCHR), and it was announced to Mrs. Mogherini by our Foreign Ministry that the Iranian side agrees in principle with the process," Mehr news agency quoted Kazem Qaribabadi, IHCHR deputy chief for international affairs, as having said on Monday.

The Judiciary official provided no details on the content of the negotiations, the make-up of the negotiating team, or when the talks begin.

The announcement is a follow-up to Iran's Judiciary chief Sadeq Amoli Larijani's remarks in a forum on human rights in Tehran on August 3, where he proposed Iran and Europe open talks on issues of mutual concern.

The dialogue would provide a platform for both sides to reach a better, mutual understanding of one another's judicial and legal mechanisms, Qaribabadi underscored.

However, the two sides have to be



Kazem Qaribabadi, IHCHR deputy chief for international affairs

Iranian Judiciary official says Iran has a lot to say particularly on areas such as Islamophobia, racial discrimination, double standards, and the breach of human rights by the West.

mutually responsive, something Iran has always been forthcoming to accept, rejecting the debate is a one-way street, Qaribabadi said.

"We have always been open to constructive and bilateral negotiations."

In a similar vein, Amoli Larijani had highlighted earlier that human rights negotiations with the West should be pre-conditioned upon a bilateral, rather than a unilateral, framework where only Iran would be subject to questions.

While European countries have been hurling human rights charges at Iran, Tehran has replied with theoretical and practical queries in connection with the issue of human rights in Europe.

Theoretically, Tehran believes the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights has been drafted upon an utterly secular-liberal view with no concern for philosophical, logical, or religious underpinnings.

From a practical standpoint, also, Tehran has discouraged the West of imposing its take on the human rights on the whole world.

"Iran has a lot to say particularly on areas such as Islamophobia, racial discrimination, double standards, and the breach of human rights by the West," stated Qaribabadi.

ISIS under Iran surveillance from Raqqa to Mosul: official

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran has been closely watching Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militants from Syria to Iraq, a senior Iranian parliamentarian said, explaining how Iranian security forces thwart terrorists linked to the group from wreaking havoc inside the country.

"From the very moment they (ISIS members) are assigned missions against Iran in their bastions, be it in Raqqa, Syria to Mosul, Iraq, our security entities monitor them until arrested," said Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the head of the parliament's National Security And Foreign Policy Committee, on Monday.

Iran has been helping the governments of Iraq and Syria to battle the extremist Islamic State group and other self-styled terrorist bands, which hold swathes of land across the Syrian and Iraqi territories.

Being neighbor to Iraq to its west, the country has already dismantled ISIS-affiliated cells planning attacks within its territory, particularly over the past months.

Two weeks ago, Iranian forces clashed with one in Kerman-

shah, western Iran, killing four and arresting some more.

Among the killed was Abu Aeshe Kurdi, a senior commander of the Daesh brigade in Mosul, Tehran announced later on.

Also, in June Iranian Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi revealed Iranian security squads had thwarted a major jihadist plot to conduct bomb attacks in the capital Tehran and other parts of the country.

Apart from security forces being on the lookout, a national watch has made it extremely difficult for plotters to plan sabotage inside the country, Alavi stressed.

"160 million eyes are watching the security of the country. So far the clues and information we have re-

ceived from people have proven very effective," he said.



Senior Iranian parliamentarian says, "From the very moment they (ISIS members) are assigned missions against Iran in their bastions in Raqqa in Syria to Mosul in Iraq, our security entities monitor them until arrested."

Zarif says terrorism is terrorism, rejects good, bad debate

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has warned of the scourge of terrorism in the region, underscoring that Tehran is against sorting terrorists into "good or bad" ones.

The Iranian foreign policy point man made the remarks in a meeting with Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani in Tehran on Monday, where he emphasized all terrorist and extremist groups must be countered.

"Afghanistan's stability is of greatest importance for Iran," the Iranian foreign minister said.

"The issue of security is very important for both Afghanistan and Iran and the two sides should hold successive talks to discuss the issue," he added.

The Iranian top official further said that Iran sees Afghanistan's progress and security its own.

Visiting Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani, for his part, highlighted the importance of the bilateral talks for

the Afghan government and people.

Rabbani hailed a decree by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, under which all Afghan children in Iran were allowed to attend schools in Iran.

Rabbani arrived in Tehran on Sunday to hold formal talks with senior Iranian officials on mutual interests.

In a separate meeting on Sunday with Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, Rabbani applauded Tehran's role in supporting stability in Afghanistan, adding that Kabul has succeeded in improving its national security.

"Despite the enemies' actions to destabilize the country, the Afghan people and government seek sustainable peace and stability in their country," Rabbani said.

Larijani, for his part, called on all countries to cooperate in fighting terrorism.

The Iranian parliament speaker further reminded the threats posed by terrorism in the region, saying Afghanistan must



FM Zarif (R) meets Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani (L) in Tehran on Monday

not become a safe haven for terrorists.

Fighting terrorism in Afghanistan requires political stability, Larijani said, underlining the importance of joint action to combat terrorism.

The top Iranian official pointed to friendly relations between Iran and Afghanistan, calling for expansion of economic cooperation between the two countries.

'Coup attempt shows Turkey should change position on Syria'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Akram al-Kaabi, the secretary general of Harakat al Nujaba, said on Monday that the coup attempt in Turkey showed that the country should change its position on Syria.

During a meeting with in Tehran Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, the chairman of the Assembly of Experts, Kaabi said that Turkey's support for terrorist groups in Syria is obvious.

He added that Turkey is still the best route for terrorists to enter Syria.

Ayatollah Jannati said that Iran will spare no effort in supporting the Iraqi and Syrian people.

"I am sure that presence of faithful youths in fighting Takfiri groups affiliated with the global arrogance will lead to victory," he said.

A military coup attempt in Turkey on July 15 claimed the lives of more than 200 people and left nearly 1,500 others wounded.

Also, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, met with Kaabi on Monday.

During the visit, Boroujerdi said that Iran supports any action taken to help restore peace to the Middle East region.

He added that it is Iran's "revolutionary" and "Islamic" duty to help the Iraqi people, highlighting the importance of protecting Iraq's territorial integrity.

Kaabi, for his part, said that Iraq's Harakat al Nujaba will stand beside Hezbollah militants in Iraq and Syria, underscoring that the U.S. and Saudi Arabia provide terrorists with missiles and arms.

Elsewhere, he praised efforts being made by the Iranian people, government and Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei for supporting the innocent people in the region.

Tehran props nuclear airspace with Russian predator

Although Iran has already installed armed eyes and missile sites in upwards of 3700 points across its territory, the S-300 system makes the country's airspace more costly for flying objects to penetrate.

Iran paraded parts of the advanced missile battery in Tehran on April 17, ending speculations over Russians' hesitation to ship the system to Iran.

In May, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan formally confirmed the news, saying Khatam-ol-Anbia Air Defense Base had received the first delivery of S-300.

The sale of the \$800-million S-300, originally concluded in 2007, was repeatedly delayed due to pressure exerted on Russia by the West.

In 2010, then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev voided the deal, citing UN sanc-

tions on Iran over its nuclear program.

In addition to the UN arms embargo, the U.S. and Israel heavily lobbied Russia to block the agreement, saying it could be used to shield Iran's nuclear facilities against possible future air strikes.

Incensed by Moscow's lack of commitment to the pact, Iran filed a case against Russia in the International Court of Arbitration, asking for \$950 million of compensation for the contract cancelled by Russia

arms export agency Rosoboronexport.

Under the contract, Rosoboronexport has to deliver four battalions of the system to Iran.

Later in 2015 the two sides buried the hatchet as Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree lifting the ban on the delivery of the S-300 systems to Iran.

Ever since then, there were conflicting reports as to when Iran would actually receive the system.

Ansarullah sends delegation to Iraq, visits to other countries on agenda

A delegation from the Yemeni Ansarullah (Houthi) movement has traveled to Iraq to meet with senior Iraqi officials as part of lobbying efforts to gain international recognition for a political body formed by Ansarullah and allied factions to run Yemen.

According to Yemen's al-Masirah news website, the official Ansarullah delegation headed by the movement's spokesman, Mohammed Abdulsalam, arrived in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad on Sunday evening.

The delegates are scheduled to meet with Iraq's Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and a number of other Iraqi officials and political leaders.

The delegation plans to visit several other countries in the region as well, according to the report.

Besides gaining recognition for the Yemeni Supreme Political Council, the visits are also aimed at briefing regional governments about the latest atrocities by Saudi Arabia in its war against Yemen, the recent negotiations between Yemen's warring parties in Kuwait, and means of supporting the Yemeni people in the face of an all-out siege imposed by Riyadh on Yemen.

The Yemeni delegation had been in Kuwait City for the negotiations, which were being held with former Yemeni officials who were now under Saudi instruction. Riyadh has prevented the Yemeni delegation at the talks from returning to Yemen three weeks after the fruitless end of the negotiations in Kuwait.



In its latest military strikes against Yemen, Saudi Arabia on Sunday pounded areas across Yemen, leaving scores of people dead and injured.

In retaliation for the Saudi strikes, Yemeni army snipers allied with Ansarullah and Popular Committees — armed groups formed to fight back the Saudi invaders — killed two Saudi soldiers in a military base in Saudi Arabia's southwestern region of Jizan.

Meanwhile, reports say the Riyadh regime seeks to hire mercenaries from southern Yemen and have them protect Saudi borders in the face of the heavy casualties it has lately been suffering there.

Yemen's Aden al-Ghad newspaper said at least 270 militants have already

left the Yemeni city of Aden toward the Eritrean Island of Assab to be deployed to the southwestern Saudi border province of Najran.

Saudi Arabia reportedly plans to add 5,000 Yemeni mercenaries to its border guard.

Saudi Arabia has been hitting Yemen almost daily since March 2015, with internal sources putting the death toll from the military aggression at about 10,000.

The war was launched in an attempt to reinstate Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, the former president of Yemen and a Saudi ally who has resigned from the presidency but seeks to grab power by force. That objective has so far not been accomplished. Instead, the Saudi war

continues to take a heavy toll on civilians in Yemen, an issue that has even raised concern among some of Saudi Arabia's own allies.

Earlier this month, Riyadh escalated its strikes on Yemen after the peace talks ended without result.

■ Bomb attack in Aden

In a separate incident, Yemeni sources said a car bomb exploded near a gathering of new recruits belonging to the pro-Hadi forces in Aden on Monday, reportedly killing 60 soldiers and injuring scores of others.

The Takfiri terrorist group of ISIL (Daesh) has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The director general of Yemen's health ministry in Aden, al-Khader Laswar, told Reuters that at least 67 other people were wounded in the attack in the city's Mansoura district.

"Around 60 dead in a martyrdom operation by a fighter from Islamic State targeting a recruitment center in Aden city," the statement said, without giving further details.

A security source said the attack targeted a school compound where conscripts of the Popular Committees, forces allied to fugitive president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, were gathered for breakfast.

Witnesses said the suicide bomber entered the compound behind a truck that had brought breakfast for the conscripts, who had queued for the meal.

(Source: agencies)

Germany, Poland and France call for more efforts to end Ukraine crisis

The foreign ministers of Germany, France and Poland agreed there should be greater international efforts to end the fighting in eastern Ukraine, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told reporters.

He said there had not been sufficient progress in implementing the Minsk ceasefire agreement. Western officials were talking with Russia and Ukraine to encourage them to implement measures already agreed in the Minsk process, including communal elections, he said.

"We have to work for a de-escalation of the situation," he told reporters after a meeting with his counterparts aimed at reinvigorating the Weimar Triangle trilateral group.

Steinmeier said the group also wanted to reassure Europeans about the continued importance and relevance of the European Union after the June 23 vote by Britain to exit the bloc.

"The Weimar Triangle can plan an important role ... It is a format where we can discuss progress or the lack of progress on issues such as the Normandy format aimed at ending the Ukraine conflict," Steinmeier said.

The Normandy group comprises Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany.

Steinmeier said fresh efforts began in recent days to revive talks between Russia and Ukraine and pressure both sides to honor agreements they had already made.

The leaders of Russia, Germany and France have agreed to meet to discuss the situation in Ukraine on Sept. 4-5 in China on the sidelines of the G20 summit, the Kremlin said last week.

A recent surge in fighting in eastern Ukraine, where Kiev is fighting separatists, and fresh tension in Crimea have raised concern that a fragile ceasefire agreed in Minsk in February 2015 could collapse.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said last week he did not rule out introducing martial law and a new wave of military mobilization if the separatist conflict worsened.

(Source: Reuters)

FARC declares permanent ceasefire

Ceasefire open new chapter for Colombia

A ceasefire to end the 52-year-old war between the Colombian state and FARC fighters has gone into effect, with a full peace agreement expected to be signed in September.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has issued the order for its men to observe the ceasefire from midnight (05:00 GMT Monday).

Juan Manuel Santos, Colombia's president, said on Twitter: "This August 29 a new chapter begins for Colombia. We are putting down our weapons. We've ended the war with FARC!"

Hundreds of thousands of Colombians have died since 1964 as government forces and FARC fighters battled in the jungles in what is considered Latin America's last major civil armed conflict.

Este 29 de agosto empieza una nueva historia para Colombia. Silenciamos los fuegos. ¡SE ACABÓ LA GUERRA CON LAS FARC!

On the government side, Santos on Thursday ordered the Colombian national armed forces to halt military operations against the FARC.

"The end of the conflict has arrived!" he said on Twitter.

In a declaration before the media on Sunday in Cuba, where peace talks were held, Timoleon Jimenez, top FARC leader, said: "I order all our commanders and units and each one of our combatants to definitively cease fire and hostilities against the Colombian state from mid-

night tonight.

"We noted with excitement the president's order to the army. Consequently we are proceeding to give the same order to our troops."

The FARC declared a unilateral ceasefire in July 2015. But Sunday night's ceasefire is the first in which both sides have committed to a definitive end to the fighting.

"The ceasefire is really one more seal on the end of the conflict. It is the test of fire," said Carlos Alfonso Velazquez, a security expert at the University of La Sabana.

Al Jazeera's Alessandro Rampiotti, reporting from Bogota, said the two sides are due to sign a full peace agreement at a formal ceremony some time between September 20 and 26.

"The Colombians will have the last word on the peace deal through a referendum on October 2," he said.

The ceasefire and definitive end of hostilities will be followed by a six-month demobilization process.

From Monday, the FARC's estimated 7,500 fighters will start heading to collection points to give up their weapons under UN supervision.

Guerrillas who refuse to demobilize and disarm "will be pursued with all the strength of the state forces," Santos told El Espectador newspaper.

Before the demobilization, the FARC



will convene its leaders and troops one last time before transforming into "a legal political movement," according to a statement published on Saturday.

Peace referendum

On October 2, Colombians will go to the polls to cast ballots in a referendum that Santos hopes will endorse the peace agreement.

"A victory for the 'Yes' vote will be a mandate from citizens for future governments," Santos was quoting as saying by El Espectador.

"The plebiscite will grant the political legitimacy that is needed."

He said the exact question that will be posed to voters in the referendum would be announced "in the coming days."

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Turkey accuses Kurdish fighters of 'ethnic cleansing' in Syria

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has accused the Syrian Kurdish fighters of engaging in ethnic cleansing in northern Syria.

Cavusoglu told a news conference in the Turkish capital Ankara on Monday that fighters of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and its affiliate Democratic Union Party (PYD) were attempting to put their own people in areas that had been released from Takfiri Daesh terrorists in the northern parts of Syria.

"Those people that were forced to leave these places should be placed back in these regions, they should live

there, but that is not the YPG's aim. The YPG is engaged in ethnic cleansing, they are placing who they want to in those places," Cavusoglu said.

Ankara regards the YPG and YPD as allies of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been fighting for an autonomous Kurdish region inside Turkey since the 1980s.

The YPG, which controls nearly Syria's entire northern border with Turkey, has been fighting against Daesh.

Cavusoglu said the ethnic composition of the area around the Syrian city of Manbij west of the Euphrates - captured by the YPG from Daesh terrorists earlier this

month - was largely Arab.

"Residents who had to leave the region (before fighting broke out) must be the ones who live there. But that is not the goal of the YPG," the minister said.

Top Turkish diplomat stressed that Turkey's military operation in northern Syria will continue until YPG withdraws to east of Euphrates. "The YPG (People's Protection Units) first of all... needs to cross east of the Euphrates as soon as possible. So long as they don't, they will be a target."

(Source: Hurriyet)

Bomb attack leaves over a dozen dead in central Iraq

ISIL claims suicide bombing at Iraqi wedding

More than a dozen civilians have lost their lives in a powerful bomb explosion that ripped through a residential neighborhood in Iraq's central province of Karbala.

The Euphrates Operations Command said in a statement released on Monday that the incident took place in the town of Ayn Tamer, located 120 kilometers (74.5 miles) west of the provincial capital city of Karbala, the previous night, when five terrorists clad in explosives-laden vests attacked a wedding ceremony.

One of the assailants hurled hand grenades at the site, fired gunshots from a Kalashnikov rifle, and blew himself up at last.

Iraqi security forces managed to gun down the four remaining attackers before they could inflict more casualties.

The provincial health directorate said at least 18 people were killed in the act of violence, while at least 26 others were wounded.

ISIL (Daesh) terrorist group claimed responsibility for the assault, Amaq news agency, which is affiliated to the terrorist group, said in a statement.

The bombing is the first in the Kerbala region since Iraqi forces dislodged ISIL terrorists from their stronghold in Falluja, 80 km (50 miles) north of city.

The ultra-hardline group has been retreating since last year in the face of government forces backed by Shia volunteers.

But it remains in control of parts of northern and western Iraq and continues to claim bombings all over the country, targeting mainly Shia districts and cities.

ISIL claimed a truck bomb that killed at least 325 people in Baghdad's Karrada shopping street in July, the deadliest attack since the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The latest figures released by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq show a total of 759 Iraqis were killed and 1,207 others were injured in violence and armed conflict last month.

According to the UN mission, the number of civilian fatalities stood at 629. Violence also claimed the lives of 130 members of Iraqi security forces.

A great portion of the fatalities was recorded in Baghdad, where 513 civilians were killed.

The northern and western parts of Iraq have been plagued by violence ever since Daesh began an offensive in Iraqi territory in June 2014. Iraqi army soldiers and fighters from Popular Mobilization Units are seeking to win back militant-held regions in joint operations.

(Source: agencies)

EU stance on Muslim refugees unacceptable: Merkel

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has criticized some European Union members for refusing to accept refugees just because they are Muslim.

"What I continue to think is wrong is that some say 'we generally don't want Muslims in our country, regardless of whether there's a humanitarian need or not,'" Merkel told German public television channel ARD on Sunday.

Several EU members, particularly those in the east with pro-nationalist leaders, oppose any plans to take in any refugees from the Mideast and South Asia.

Last week, Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka said he does not want a large Muslim community because of the "problems we are seeing."

The political party of Dutch far-right politician, Geert Wilders, pledged on Thursday to close mosques and ban Islam's holy book of Qur'an amid growing Islam phobic sentiment in the European country.

The wave of anti-Muslim and anti-refugee sentiment is growing almost a year after Merkel decided to allow hundreds of thousands of refugees stuck in other European countries to enter Germany.

Nearly 1.1 million refugees, most from Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan, arrived in Germany in 2015.

In her interview on Sunday, Merkel supported the idea of a quota system for fairly distributing asylum-seekers among all the bloc's 28 member states.

German officials expect to grant entry to as many as 300,000 migrants throughout all of 2016. They are mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, where their lives are in danger from war and Takfiri terrorism.

German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel on Sunday distanced himself even further from Merkel's position on the refugee policy.

"We've always said that it's simply incredible for Germany to take in a million people per year," Gabriel said in an interview with broadcaster ZDF.

Gabriel leads the Social Democrats (SPD), a coalition partner in Merkel's government, and his comments come as campaigning kicks off for a federal election next year.

Anti-refugee sentiment has also swayed regional and national elections across Europe in recent years.

International organizations and rights groups have expressed concern over an increase in the number of arson attacks on refugee shelters.

Europe is facing an unprecedented influx of refugees, most of whom are fleeing conflict zones in Africa and the Middle East, particularly Syria.

Many blame major European powers for the unprecedented exodus, saying their policies have led to a surge in terrorism and war in the violence-hit regions, forcing more people out of their homes.

(Source: DPA)

JUMP

Iran-South Korea technology exchange center inaugurated

Her efforts were focused on creating a platform for Korea and Iran to make a leap forward going beyond the restoration of somewhat estranged bilateral ties caused by international sanctions against Iran.



President Park, in her meeting with the her Iranian counterpart, emphasized the need to revitalize trade and diversify cooperation to encompass investment and construction of such infrastructure projects as railways, airports and water management and energy facilities as well as various other sectors, including health-care, medical services, culture and information and communications technology (ICT).

In reply, President Rouhani expressed hope that the two countries would be able to work together in such areas as electric vehicles, agricultural machinery, garbage disposals and a sewage treatment system.

NEWS

Russian economy at risk of delayed recovery after Crimea flareup

The recent flare up over Crimea may have just delayed Russia's economic recovery.

After President Vladimir Putin accused Ukraine of plotting terrorist attacks on the Black Sea peninsula this month, the chance that Western countries will scrap economic sanctions against Russia has declined, according to a Bloomberg survey of economists. Of the 21 asked, 52 percent see the European Union beginning to lift its penalties in the next 12 months. That's down from 69 percent in the previous survey. Only 10 percent expect the U.S. to start removing its sanctions, down from 19 percent a month ago.

"Increasing Ukraine tensions will undermine investor confidence, keep EU and U.S. sanctions in place and further put off foreign capital flows, as Putin will not be focused on economic reforms," said Christopher Shiells, a senior analyst



at Informa Global Markets. "This will weaken the ruble and force the central bank to adopt a more cautious, hawkish tone."

The sanctions imposed after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 have compounded pain from a drop in oil prices, triggering capital outflows and a plunge in the ruble. With oil now near \$50, the government is running its widest budget deficit since 2010 and forecasts the economy to grow less than 1 percent next year. The central bank kept the key rate unchanged last month at 10.5 percent after a June cut that ended nearly a year holding pat.

The ruble has gained more than 13 percent against the dollar this year, the second best performer among emerging-market currencies tracked by Bloomberg, after the Brazilian real. Still, the gains have yet to erase last year's 20 percent loss.

Tensions between Russia and Ukraine escalated this month when Putin accused the government of staging attacks that killed two servicemen in Crimea. Ukraine said the incident never happened, while both sides bolstered their forces manning the frontier along the peninsula.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said it's not possible to ease sanctions now, as Russia hasn't shown progress on meeting the terms of a 2015 truce accord aimed at stopping fighting between pro-Moscow separatists and Ukrainian troops in that country's easternmost regions.

This escalation over Crimea will affect investor confidence, according to 76 percent of the economists. It will also intensify capital outflows, 62 percent said.

"Given the prolongation of EU sanctions into early 2017 and recent hawkish statements by German Chancellor Merkel, we see only a small chance of sanctions easing in a one-year horizon," said Andreas Schwabe, an economist at Raiffeisen Bank International AG in Vienna. "Moreover, for any easing of the Western sanctions, we see the requirement of Russia showing some flexibility in its position, which is currently not the case."

Reducing the penalties will have a positive impact on Russia's economy but the benefit will depend on the scope of any action by the EU or U.S., according to Sergey Narkevich, an analyst at Moscow-based Promsvyazbank PJSC.

"If it is the result of reduced military tensions and a general improvement in relations between Russia and Western countries, the effect would be substantial," he said. "If it is an uncoordinated action by just some of the European countries, the influence would be much less material."

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iran, TRACECA explore expansion of transport co-op

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Abbas Akhondi and Mircea Ciopraga, the secretary general of the Intergovernmental Commission TRACECA, explored the ways for the expansion of transportation cooperation between Iran and TRACECA members in a Sunday meeting in Tehran.

In the meeting, Akhondi referred to the logistic role of Iran in the region and expounded upon the country's plans for development of dry ports, IRNA reported on Monday.

A dry port (sometimes inland port) is an inland intermodal terminal directly connected by road or rail to a seaport and operating as a center for the transshipment of sea cargo to



Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Abbas Akhondi (L) shaking hand with Mircea Ciopraga, the secretary general of the Intergovernmental Commission TRACECA, in Tehran on Sunday

inland destinations.

The Iranian minister also called on the secretary general of TRACECA to visit Iran's potentials in the north and south of the country, especially those in the southeastern port of Chabahar.

Ciopraga, for his part, put emphasis on the expansion of ties between Iran and TRACECA and while expressing satisfaction over Iran's condition in the post-sanction time, he called for the more active contribution of the Islamic Republic in TRACECA program.

TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia) is an international transport program involving the European Union and 14 member states of the Eastern European, Caucasian and Central Asian region.

Armenia, Iran working towards creating free economic zone

The Armenian and Iranian governments are currently in the process of creating a free economic zone in Armenia's southern Meghri region, Yerevan's Minister of Economy Artsvik Minasyan said on August 25.

According to Minasyan, the proposed zone will stimulate relations between Iran and the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which Armenia joined in

January 2015.

The goods produced in the two countries will also enjoy preferential trade regimes as Armenia has established with the EU, United States, Canada, Switzerland, and Japan, RFE/RL reported.

Armenian Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan announced the plans for the zone on August 22, adding that production and the export of goods would be

carried out from the zone.

Tehran is particularly interested in developing closer ties with Armenia as it will allow Iran to establish joint ventures with EEU member states and start exporting goods to the common market.

Iran has in recent months moved quickly to capitalize on its re-established access to international markets after being placed under strict economic sanction

for more than a decade.

International businessmen from the West and the EEU have flocked to Iran since Tehran agreed to a deal on its nuclear development program.

Foreign businesses operating in the region consider Iran to be a potential investment cash cow due to its vast economic potential.

(Source: Georgia Today)

Greek economy grows in second quarter, strong rebound elusive

Greece's economy grew in the second quarter although the 0.2 percent expansion was slower than previously estimated due to weaker consumer spending and net exports, provisional figures from statistics service ELSTAT showed on Monday.

An ELSTAT flash estimate issued earlier in August and based on seasonally adjusted data had suggested gross domestic product would grow 0.3 percent in April-to-June from the previous three months. The economy contracted 0.2 percent in January-March.

"We had a downward revision but it is encouraging that GDP recorded positive growth on a quarterly basis," said Eurobank economist Platon Monokroussos.

"Overall, a milder than initially expected contraction in the first half points to a full year GDP decline of close to 0.5 percent or slightly better."

Monday's data also showed Greece's 176 billion euro (\$196.9 billion) economy shrank 0.9 percent on an annual basis in the second quarter, more than a flash estimate of



-0.7 percent.

The European Commission and the Greek central bank project a 0.3 percent economic contraction in 2016 while the OECD sees a milder 0.2 percent decline. Rating agencies Moody's and S&P are more pessimistic, expecting the economy to shrink 0.7 percent and 1.0 percent respectively.

The EU sees the economy rebounding by 2.7 percent in 2017.

Looking at the components of gross domestic product, the year-on-year decline in economic output was due to a further weakening of private consumption and a slightly negative contribution from net exports.

Consumption declined 0.1 percent in the second quarter from Q1, with gross capital formation rising 1.0 percent. Imports fell 0.4 percent, while exports decreased by 1.0 percent, the data showed.

Gross capital formation recorded positive quarterly growth of 1.0 percent.

"This (capital formation) was boosted by transport equipment, weapon systems and public construction," said National Bank economist Nikos Magginas.

"Despite the revision, the figures are in line with expectations for a recovery in the second half of the year, unless there is a further slump in private consumption."

(Source: Reuters)

Palestinian business champions blueprint for economy

In the face of stalling growth, rising unemployment and a bleak political horizon, Palestinian business leaders are championing an action plan to resuscitate their faltering economy.

The blueprint, billed as a "new vision for the revival of the Palestinian economy", is being launched on Wednesday at a conference in Ramallah sponsored by top Palestinian companies, including Paltel, the telecoms group, Padico, an industrial conglomerate, the Bank of Palestine and the National Beverage Company — the local Coca-Cola bottler.

The fragile economy relies heavily on foreign donor aid and Israel, which controls the Palestinians' external borders and holds sway in other areas, including travel permits and planning permission in more than half of the West Bank.

In the two decades since the Oslo Accords, which were meant to lay the groundwork for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, numerous plans have been drafted to promote growth and development in the West

Bank and Gaza Strip.

In 2013, the Quartet for Middle East Peace, headed at the time by former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, launched an economic initiative for the Palestinians. But it was predicated on gestures of goodwill by Israel, many of which never materialized, and on progress in the peace process, which broke down irrevocably in 2014 after the failure of talks and an Israeli military operation against Hamas, the Islamist group that controls Gaza.

The new "vision" being launched on Wednesday will be different, its backers say, because it is entirely a Palestinian initiative that embraces gloomy but realistic assumptions that relations with Israel will not improve any time soon.

"We need to concentrate on what we can do, given the givens," said Nabeel Kassis, director-general of the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), which is organizing the conference. "We are looking at things that can be successfully tackled under adverse conditions."

He said the approach would be "more modest and more targeted" than in past Palestinian economic plans, and would recommend tackling specific socio-economic challenges or promoting investment in given sectors, then identifying whether they should be tackled by government or the private sector, or both. Sectors targeted by the plan include agribusiness, water, power infrastructure and tourism.

"I hope the government will listen to us and listen to our recommendations," said Zahi Khouri, chairman of the National Beverage Company. These, he said, could include the posting of more customs agents near crossings with Israel to crack down on "parallel imports" of consumer goods smuggled from Israel, which he says hurt the Palestinian treasury and cost local jobs.

"We don't need 70,000 people in security-related jobs", Mr Khouri said in a reference to the largest single item in the Palestinian Authority's wage bill. "We can live with 65,000 people in security, and

put 5,000 in customs."

Donors, who have been pressing Palestinian officials to focus on long-term planning, are likely to welcome the new initiative.

"I think this stems from the need to have a policy vision," said Ragnar Gudmundsson, the International Monetary Fund's representative in Jerusalem. "So much of the focus has been on managing the crisis and day-to-day fiscal challenges."

The IMF said in an April report that GDP growth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would probably reach 3 percent this year, the same rate as population growth.

Unemployment is 17 percent in the West Bank and 41 per cent in Gaza, and disproportionately high among young people, women and university graduates.

One Ramallah-based executive, who asked not to be named, said businesspeople realize "if they don't do something to get the economy going, they could lose everything they have."

(Source: Financial Times)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Citroen CX reborn in brand's bold EXPERIENCE concept

Citroen is hinting at how a future replacement for its C5 family car could look with its Paris Motor Show star, the plug-in hybrid EXPERIENCE.

The concept is a large hatchback (Citroen calls it a two-box saloon) that's around the same length as the current five-door Ford Mondeo. The EXPERIENCE is considerably wider, though, at two meters, and sits much lower, with a roof-line at just 1.37 meters — some 10cm lower than the Ford's.

It is fitted with the latest version of the PSA Group's plug-in hybrid powertrain, which pairs an 80kW electric motor driving the rear wheels with a front-mounted petrol engine developing between 150bhp and 200bhp.



Brexit hits Tata Motors Q1 profit, but shares rally for second day

Tata Motors June quarter net profit more than halved to Rs 2,236 crore and missed Street estimates, but its shares continued to find favor with buyers for second straight session on Monday. Tata Motors was the top Nifty50 gainer.

India's top automaker by revenue said its net profit more than halved to Rs 2,236 crore in the June quarter on account of forex losses and higher expenses. Tata Motors' profit was hit by forex losses of Rs 2,296 crore mainly due to pound depreciation post-Brexit vote and adverse commodity derivatives impact of Rs 167 crore.

The majority of the forex loss was at Jaguar Land Rover, where profit after tax fell to 304 million pounds from 492 million pounds in the year ago quarter.



Yamaha Motor underscores commitment to Africa

Yamaha Motor announced that it has participated in the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI), held in Nairobi, Kenya on August 27-28, 2016.

At the Japan Fair 2016, held concurrently with TICAD VI, Yamaha Motor exhibited its Clean Water Supply System, a compact system for water purification. Because the system does not require a powerful electric supply or special coagulant chemicals, it is simple to deploy and allows for easy maintenances for local residents to operate water supply stations themselves.

Tabriz hosting 1st ACD ministerial meeting on tourism

The summit also aims to pave the way for further sustainable social, cultural, economic, and environmental growth amongst the Asian nations.

The Asia Cooperation Dialogue was inaugurated in June 2002 in Cha-Am, Thailand, where 18 Asian foreign ministers met together for the first time. It aims to constitute the missing link in Asia by incorporating every Asian country and building an Asian community without duplicating other organizations or creating a bloc against others.

The ACD members hope that Asia would play an overriding and pivotal role in the further expansion of the Tourism industry and act as the main driving force for the expansion of the world tourism market.

The ACD proclaims that the 65 percent surge of Asian outbound tourists during the last decade and the continuance of its expansion during the coming years ahead along with an ever increasing 34 percent of interna-



This undated photo depicts a view of Tabriz in northwest Iran with the 15th-century El Golu seen in the foreground. An exemplar of traditional Iranian architecture of the time, the yellow mud-brick edifice is surrounded by a large park of the same name.

tional tourists to Asia has positioned this continent as the significant tourism market in the world. Since its inception, the ACD has rapidly developed in two dimensions, namely, dialogue and projects.

Specified roofing covers to enhance protection for Pasargadae

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A team of Iranian and Italian experts has been tasked to construct custom-made roofing covers for some certain glorious ruins at Pasargadae, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in southern Iran.

The scheme will be implemented during fall in close collaboration with the Rome-based International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, Hamid Fadai, director of the world herit-

age site announced in a press release on Monday.

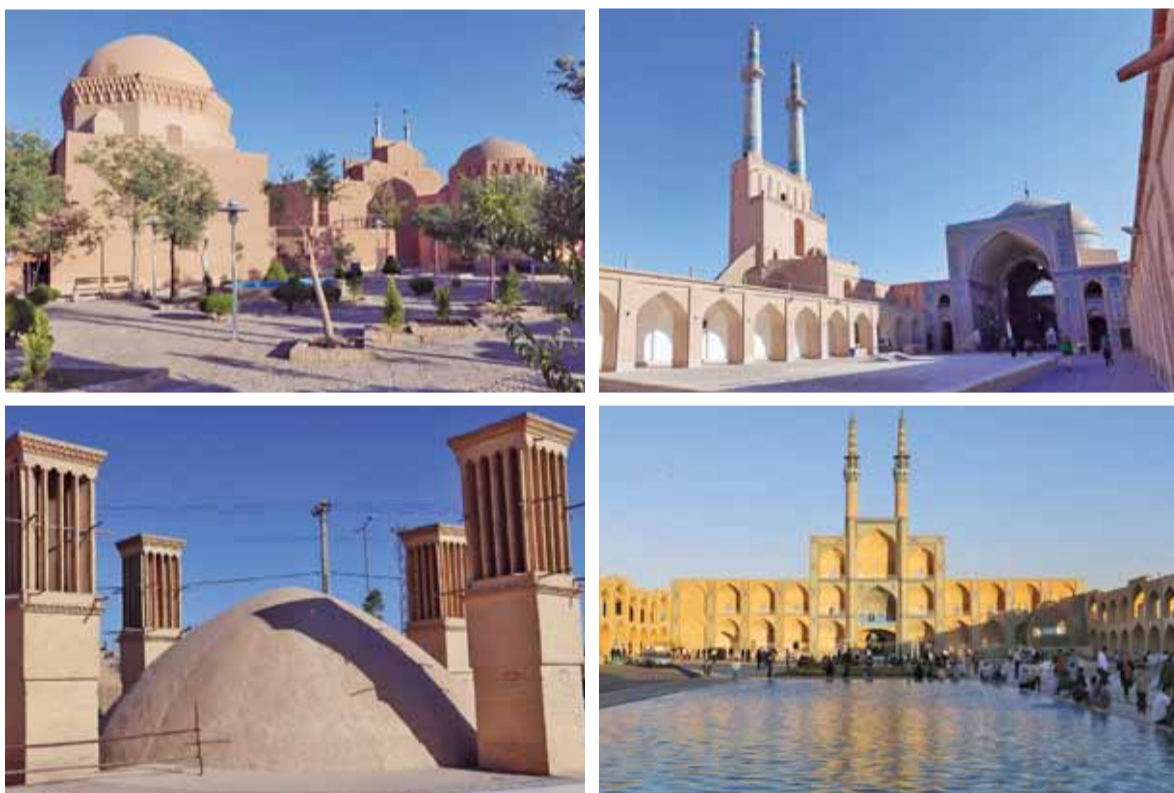
Situated in about 50km north of Persepolis, Pasargadae was the capital of the Achaemenid Empire under Cyrus the Great who had issued its construction in about 546 BC.

The site which hosts the tomb of Cyrus, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004 during the World Heritage Committee's 28th session in Suzhou, China.



The tomb of Cyrus the Great in Pasargadae

PICTURE OF THE DAY IRIB News Agency/ Mahmud Yusefi



A combination picture shows a number of significant mud-brick structures that are scattered across the historical city of Yazd in central Iran, August 27, 2016.

UAE Ministry of Economy to launch 'Tourism Leadership Program'

ABU DHABI (Travel Daily News) — The UAE Ministry of Economy will hold its 'Tourism Leadership Program' from October 30 to November 3, in collaboration with the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Themis Foundation.

The program falls under the framework of the Emirates Host initiative launched recently by the Ministry which aims to enhance the capabilities of the tourism sector and support the preparation of a strategic integrated five-year development plan.

The plan will raise the efficiency of the UAE's tourism workforce, improve service levels, and build local capacities.

H.E. Eng. Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Economy, said: "The development of the tourism sector and the enhancement of its contributions to the national economy are among the main pillars supporting economic diversification and promoting policies for a post-oil economy."

Bookings down for terror-hit tourist countries

Destinations struggling to attract visitors after terrorist attacks will continue to see a fall in international arrivals, flight reservations suggest.

Turkey will be hardest hit, with bookings for September to December expected to be down by 52% on the same period last year.

Bookings to France are down by nearly 20% over the same period.

Research also suggests Spain, Portugal and Italy are the favored substitute destinations in southern Europe.

Travel data company Forward Keys analyzed flight reservation data for Radio 4's You and Yours program.

Alternative destinations

During the first seven months of this year, the available seats to Spain from the UK increased by 19% compared with the same period a year earlier, Germany increased by 12%, and Portugal increased by 12%.

Low cost carriers are the airlines most responsible for pushing up capacity.

You and Yours listener Grace Finnigan, who has been on holiday to the Algarve in Portugal, said: "There is a marked increase in the number of people around this year. The traffic is horrendous and the restaurants are heaving with people."

Darren Northfield, who is in Marbella in Spain, said: "It is much busier than it was two years ago when we last visited."

'Other routes'

The series of terror attacks in France, starting with the Charlie Hebdo shooting, triggered a decreasing trend in international arrivals there, which was worsened by the Paris shootings in November 2015, according to Forward Keys.

France has suffered an accumulated year-on-year decrease of 5.4% between August 2015 and July 2016 and Paris suffered a worse decline, down 7.5% over the same period.

Bookings to Turkey were down by 15% between August 2015 and July 2016 compared with the same period last year due to a series of terror attacks and July's attempted coup d'etat.

Olivier Jager, from Forward Keys, said: "Travelers create a situation when they decide to visit alternative destinations. Operators and airlines decide to use their aircraft for other routes that allow them to fill their planes."

Tunisia starting to recover

International arrivals into Tunisia fell by 39.4% between August 2014 and July 2015, when a series of terror attacks - including on the beach in Sousse - targeted tourism destinations in the country.

However, figures from the Tunisian Tourist Board show that there has been an increase in the number of visitors from Algeria and Russia.

Turkey will be hardest hit, with bookings for September to December expected to be down by 52% on the same period last year.

Turkey will be hardest hit, with bookings for September to December expected to be down by 52% on the same period last year.

(Source: BBC)

UNDER VISITORS' EYES Abbasi Hotel in Isfahan

TOURISM TEHRAN — The extensively renovated Abbasi Hotel located in downtown Isfahan was once the Safavid-era caravanserai of the Madraseh-ye Chahar Bagh.

Facilities include a delightful traditional teahouse, a welcoming coffee shop, a business center and an indoor pool, sauna and gym.

One of the most desired destinations in the country, Isfahan is a living museum of traditional culture and home to a wide range of magnificent Islamic structures.

Following is some comments posted to tripadvisor.com by a number of visitors to the time-honored hotel:



"Not what I had in mind"

We traveled to Isfahan two years ago and we stayed in this hotel's first floor, it was absolutely gorgeous and I would've recommended it to anyone visiting Isfahan.

But when we traveled this time we stayed in the basement level, which was miles away from the entrance, extremely plain and did not look in anyway similar to the first floor we stayed in last time we were there...

In conclusion this hotel is a beautiful hotel with an excellent location near Imam Square, but only the first floor of it is beautiful.

(Lemoclema from Kuwait, stayed August 2016)

"First in class with excellent location"

Luxury and opulence - come to be pampered and admire the beautiful hallways and decor. The Abbasi is centrally-located right in the heart of Isfahan, a block from the main north-south artery of Chaharbagh-e-Abbasi Avenue just north of the river.

Virtually every tourist attraction is within a 2 mile radius including the bazaar, travel agency, the palace, restaurants, shopping and Isfahan's famous bridges.

(Jeffrey H. from Walnut, California, stayed July 2016)

"Luxury hotel"

The facilities are excellent! The room was clean and the staff was very helpful. There is a beautiful garden and a luxury restaurant where to have dinner.

The breakfast was not so good compared to other cheaper hotels in Iran.

(Cmolinuevo from San Sebastian, Spain, stayed December 2015)

"Iran's landmark hotel"

Located in the central heart of Isfahan is the Abbasi Hotel, Iran's oldest hotel. This world class hotel is Isfahan's and quite possibly Iran's most luxurious hotel. This hotel is absolutely gorgeous, from the multi-level reception area, the enormous central courtyard, and the hand painted flowers and birds on the walls. The helpful front desk staff checked us in within five minutes and offered us an upgrade to room 148, a suite, which we accepted for a nominal fee...

The food service was absolutely impeccable. There was a wide variety of food from Iran in addition to Western classics. I would definitely recommend this hotel to those looking to travel to Isfahan, as it is second to none.

(Izedtravel101 from Boston, Massachusetts, stayed August 2016)

NEWS IN BRIEF

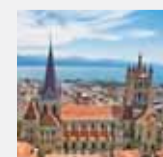


Qatar to levy airport tax on passengers

Qatar's government will levy a new airport tax on passengers from Tuesday as the country seeks new revenue streams amid falling oil prices.

Every passenger leaving Qatar from Doha's Hamad International Airport, including transit passengers, will be charged 35 riyals (7.10 pounds) for using airport facilities, according to a statement by the airport.

The charge will apply to tickets issued after Aug. 30 and for any travel starting on Dec. 1 onwards and would be used to "further increase the airport's capacity and invest in new infrastructure", the statement said.



Lausanne, an unmissable destination for foodies

Lausanne in Switzerland has increasingly become the ultimate hotspot as tourists across the world, especially from the GCC region, flock to the European city during the summer season.

The Lausanne Experience is an exquisite combination of a premium gastronomic experience and other thrilling activities that include cruises, panoramic train rides, UNESCO World Heritage vineyard visits and the amazing Glacier3000 experience in the Alps.

FEATURE

Is Trump secretly winning behind wave of silent support?

Donald Trump's campaign manager Kellyanne Conway was blasted this week for suggesting that the Republican is doing better than polls suggest. She may be right, but not for the reason she thinks. The leading discussion among the political punditry over the last week, besides the hysterical conspiracy theory that Vladimir Putin is somehow behind an elaborate scheme to undermine Hillary Clinton, has been around what is known as the "Bradley effect" – that controversial political candidates tend to poll worse than they actually perform on election day.



The concept was bizarrely confirmed by the Washington Post's Philip Bump in his criticism of the methodology of the LA Times/USC Poll, which the pundit calls "Donald Trump's new favorite poll," wherein the analyst claims that people may "forget" whether they voted for Romney or Obama in 2012. This seems like a bizarre sort of thing for somebody not to remember, so the flaw that it seems Philip Bump is pointing to is that a certain part of the population lied. The LA Times poll, which showed Donald Trump leading by 2 points at a time when other polls were showing him falling behind Clinton by an average of 5 to 6 points, is constructed of a panel of 3,200 people who are polled continuously over the course of the election. Philip Bump believes it makes perfect sense that these folks lied about who they supported in 2012, but could be nothing but honest in 2016. Assuming the LA Times poll is incorrect, perhaps a better explanation for why its results appear to differ substantially from other polls may be because people are asked repeatedly who they favor and, knowing the power they wield as the chosen few, these respondents may be subconsciously directing candidates to stop doing things they do not like even if on election day they will ultimately support them. Through that understanding, Trump's surge in the LA Times poll may mean more people were upset by things Hillary did that specific week compared to Trump.

Reuters announced that they removed the "neither" option in their polling display coming under fire by a number of professional pollsters for what they called malpractice to artificially inflate Hillary's numbers. You may be asking yourself, how does removing "neither" help Hillary? By doing so it requires people who don't like either candidate to choose between one of the two.

■ Lesser of two evils

The media narrative is that Hillary, whether or not flawed as a candidate, is the more socially acceptable of the two – so these people who dislike both candidates and would probably not vote at all choose the "lesser of two evils." It appears that neither of these polls, with a whopping range of 14 points, are accurate reflections of the state of the race so what is the best number to look at? During normal election seasons, you would look at the poll of polls, or the Real Clear Politics Average that shows Clinton leading by 6.3 points.

Trump's campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, thinks that is wrong arguing that there is a tide of "undercover" Trump supporters. Does she have a point? No. The so-called Bradley effect is most vividly observed when individuals only have two options – the availability of choices such as neither or the selection of a third party candidate in large part mitigate the influence of social desirability. If somebody favors Trump, but is unwilling to admit it they won't give Hillary the vote so it won't be a two-vote swing, but only one vote.

Hillary holds nearly a 30 point lead over Trump among millennial (18-34 year old) voters, but trails Donald Trump by a slim margin among older voters. Hillary's general election base of young voters favored her Democratic primary rival Bernie Sanders by a rate of nearly 9 to 1. This begs the question whether these voters will actually show up to support her or whether these individuals will opt for a 3rd party candidate. Trump's general election base – generally older voters – by contrast is the same group of voters who propelled him during the primary election. Trump's core voter base will turn out in full. Poll modelling is based on the demographic make-up of previous election cycles such as 2008 and 2012 when younger voters showed out in droves, but the question remains to be seen whether millennials Hillary can drive turnout of young voters at rates comparable to Barack Obama. If not, she would still be leading but not by much. It appears suppressing Hillary's base of support is exactly what Donald Trump's strategy appears to be – he knows that feuds will lower her voter turnout whereas his cadre of supporters will hold strong. In the words of George Bernard Shaw, "I learned never to wrestle with a pig. You get dirty, and besides, the pig likes it." It seems that is a lesson yet unlearned by the Hillary campaign. (Source: Sputnik)



ARTICLE

By Paul R. Pillar
Former veteran of CIA

The peace accord between the Colombian government and the guerrilla group known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or FARC deserves our applause and our support. It makes possible the end of one of the longest-running wars in the Western hemisphere. The agreement is good news for Colombians, for the hemisphere, and for the principle of peaceful resolution of disputes.

Significant resistance to the accord exists, however, and the outcome of a referendum in October to approve the agreement, although it probably will be favorable, is by no means a sure thing. The most significant figure in opposition is the immediate past president of Colombia, Álvaro Uribe. Uribe deservedly got high marks from Colombians and from Washington for significant improvements to security during his time in office. Perhaps Uribe sees the peace negotiations conducted under current president Juan Manuel Santos (who was Uribe's defense minister) as some kind of rejection of his own policies. He shouldn't. The proper way to look at the policies of the last two Colombian presidencies is that Uribe's success in weakening and containing the FARC set the stage for successful negotiations under his successor.

Any attempt now at a purely military solution to the insurrection would be unsuccessful. The war has gone on too long and there are too many interests identified with the insurgent side for it to succeed. Measures taken in an attempt to crush the FARC would introduce their own forms of insecurity for Colombians—who have gotten a taste of this with the excesses of right-wing paramilitaries that initially were formed to combat leftist guerrillas.

A general and understandable reason for unease about the newly announced agreement is that it makes concessions to, and limits any punishment of, people who have done genuinely bad things. The FARC certainly has done many bad things, including things that we properly define as terrorism. But Colombians, and we, need to consider whether the type of individual justice that underlies the unease is more important than achieving a greater degree of peace and stability for the entire nation. One also must consider that the announced agreement does something that even (or especially) those most appalled by violent and illegitimate methods should support: providing a

The Colombia accord: When negotiations and concessions are necessary

channel for those who have used such methods to pursue their interests instead through peaceful, legitimate means.

■ Better deal

There is talk about a "better deal" that might have been gotten. Probably some

Colombians sincerely believe an alternative agreement with the FARC was feasible, with the belief based on a vague sense that ultimately full justice ought to be able to prevail. But it is unlikely any "better deal" was possible. The announced agreement is the



Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos shakes (L) hands with FARC leader Timoleón Jiménez (R)

Uribe deservedly got high marks from Colombians and from Washington for significant improvements to security during his time in office.

Finding ways to open dialogue and reduce chaos

By Luay Shabaneh

Between World Refugee Day, World Population Day, International Youth Day and World Humanitarian Day, the United Nations may look as if it has spent its summer celebrating international days.

In reality, the summer has been painful in the Arab region and a reminder that even the largest development and humanitarian network finds the challenges of natural and man-made disasters almost insurmountable. Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Libya and Palestine suffer the brunt of intense armed conflicts in which civilians seem to pay the highest price. Sudan and Somalia continue in their protracted crises, and several other countries in the region struggle with internal political turmoil, making their route to prosperity difficult.

Every now and then, a major and tragic development, such as the stories of Aylan Kurdi or Omran Daqneesh, provokes public outcry and calls to the UN for renewed action to end the misery of people, as it serves as a reminder that conflicts have not spared anyone.

The Arab region, one of the youngest regions in the world in terms of the age of its population, is one of potentials, a region that should be able to use youth to its advantage rather than to push it away in search of a better future, often through perilous routes across the Mediterranean. One in five Arabs is 15 to 24 years old, but more than one in four is unemployed, according to recent research.

To them, the grass is greener on the other side, a side they see as abounding with education and employment possibilities that they have lost the hope of finding in their own countries.

Young girls are even more at a disadvantage, more the subject of discrimination generally and during conflicts especially. Despair and destitution increases the trend of early marriage among young girls, often as a way to relieve the family from a burden by handing the girl over to another family.

Research consistently shows that marrying early does



not solve problems. If anything, it adds problems by putting the physical and psychological health of young girls at increased risk, preventing them from continuing their education and putting them at increased risk of abuse.

Disappointment, frustration and loss of hope pushes bright young Arabs to leave, despite repeated promises by their governments to empower them, include them in decision-making, and respond to their aspirations.

In fact, Arab states, like all 193 member-states of the United Nations, have subscribed to the Strategic Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 goals that define the rights, needs and responsibilities of people to ensure their well-being through the commitment to end poverty and hunger, improve health and education, and make cities more

Disappointment, frustration and loss of hope pushes bright young Arabs to leave, despite repeated promises by their governments to empower them, include them in decision-making, and respond to their aspirations.

sustainable, among others.

■ Potential of youth

And although governments generally recognize the potential of youth in a country, they need to address the root causes of inequality, instability, vulnerability and insecurity, forced migration, crime, radicalization, exploitation and terrorism. Within the wider global discourse on migration, which is a source of economic and security concern for many countries, only concrete measures that will give women and young people equal access to education, information and employment will make many of them want to stay and contribute to the development of their communities and countries.

And while a major part of the responsibility for reaching the SDGs falls on governments, the process is in fact shared between governments, civil societies and the private sector which, each in its area, is a major player. The United Nations, and in our case the United Nations Population Fund, support governments in establishing their priorities, reaching out to partners in civil society, and evaluate the impact of policies and their effectiveness in really reducing poverty, improving access to education and jobs, and adopting environment-friendly policies.

To this end, the UNFPA facilitates consultations among governments, youth councils, academic institutions, and the private sector, to identify the specific needs of young people in the region and adequately respond to four priorities: employability and entrepreneurship, civic engagement, participation and inclusion, health and well-being, and education. Only a true partnership between governments and non-governmental entities, with open dialogue and sincere efforts will yield the much needed results enshrined in the global goals. Anything less concrete will fuel the turmoil, adding to the migration flows from the Arab region and to the global malaise that results directly from the frustration and despair of young people.

(Source: The National)

Britain's weak borders perpetuate Calais migrant crisis

It is estimated that about 200 migrants a week are being smuggled into Britain from the Calais area on the back of lorries.

The British government's failure to get to grips with porous borders is the height of irresponsibility.

They will never know for sure how many people are coming; by its very nature illegal immigration is impossible to quantify.

But what is most worrying is that they also have no idea who these new arrivals are, where they have come from or what they are likely to get up to once they have made it here.

They could well be convicted criminals, gangsters or terrorists. At the very least they will be living here illegally and most likely working here illegally as well.

That they are finding it so easy to bypass the border controls is a major threat

to their national security.

If it is so easy for people to sneak across British borders what is stopping criminal gangs from bringing drugs, weapons and whatever else they fancy into Britain as well?

And on a related note, it is not surprising that the Jungle migrant camp in Calais now has a record number of inhabitants.

Many migrants believe that if they can make it here they will get benefits, hous-

ing and access to public services.

That it is pathetically easy to get across the Channel only encourages more of them to attempt the journey.

Strong borders are vital to Britain's security and to finding a lasting solution to the problems in Calais.

Those tasked with protecting them must be given the resources they need to do their jobs properly.

(Source: express.co.uk)

Iran calls for co-op with France in building renewable power plants

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's Energy Minister **Hamid Chitchian** said on Sunday that his country plans to establish 5,000 megawatts (MW) capacity of renewable power plants within the next five years and France could be a good partner achieving this goal, IRIB news agency reported.

According to the report, Chitchian made the remarks in a meeting with French Minister of Environment, Energy and Marine Affairs **Ségolène Royal** in Tehran.

After the meeting, Chitchian said that the two sides discussed the ways of cooperation in the field of renewable energies, among other topics.

Royal for her part said that Iran and France could cooperate in the field of renewable energies such as wind, solar and etc.

"Considering 3500 kilometers of seashores available, two countries can also collaborate in the field of marine energy," she added.

Chitchian further added that Iran's Ministry of Energy is also ready to cooperate with French companies in other fields such as deep water exploration, restoring the groundwater balance and new technologies in the field of desalination.

The collaboration could be in the form of investment or using new systems of production, Chitchian said.

Mentioning the capacities and capabilities of Iran's water and power industries, the energy minister stressed that his country plans to increase its renewable energy generation capacity to 7,500 MW by 2030.



Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian (L) and French Minister of Environment, Energy and Marine Affairs Ségolène Royal met at the Energy Ministry building in Tehran on Sunday.

South Pars phases 20, 21 refinery's 1st train launched

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The first train of Iran's South Pars gas field's phases 20 and 21 refinery was launched on Sunday and the phases' flare was lit up using the sour gas received from phases 6, 7 and 8, IRNA reported.

Inaugurating the gas sweetening process, the refinery's network will be connected to the national gas pipeline in few days, IRNA cited the Public Relations Department of Oil Industries Engineering and Construction (OIEC) Company as saying.

Based on the report, OIEC is implementing the development project of South Pars phases 20 and 21 in both onshore and offshore sections, aiming



to produce 2 billion cubic feet of gas and 80,000 barrels of gas condensate per day. Earlier in March, Alireza Ebadi, the

operator of phases 20 and 21 development project, said that development of these phases will be completed by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2017).

South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

South Pars is divided into 24 standard phases, of which phases 1-10, 12, 15 and 16 are fully operational. Each standard phase is projected to produce 50 million cubic meters of gas per day.

PICTURE OF THE DAY SHANA



The project for constructing refinery of Iran's South Pars gas field's phase 19 of development is over 95 percent complete, Hamidreza Masoudi, the operator of phase 19, said on Tuesday. This phase is aimed at producing 50 million cubic meters of sweet gas, 550 tons of ethane, 2,000 tons of propane, 1,200 tons of butane, 80,000 barrels of gas condensate and 400 tons of sulfur per day. Some 1.5 million barrels of condensate have been already exported from phase 19, according to Masoudi.

(SHANA)

Iraq can crush OPEC's oil freeze believers

By Julian Lee

When the OPEC nations last met with Russia to agree an output freeze, back in April, it was Saudi Arabia that shot down the deal -- refusing to take part without Iran. This time both countries may be more accommodating; the stumbling block is more likely to be Iraq. OPEC members are planning an informal meeting in Algeria in late September, where discussions of a freeze could be revived. In April, the Saudis refused to limit output unless Iran did the same. Not surprisingly, as it was still raising production after the easing of sanctions, Iran refused and the Saudis walked away. Things are different now. Saudi production has surged, hitting a record

10.67 million barrels a day last month, according to official figures. That's almost 450,000 barrels more than the January level on which that last failed deal was based. The kingdom might be willing to adopt this as a ceiling, at least temporarily. After all, domestic demand will start to fall in line with its normal seasonal pattern in September. Freezing output at a seasonal high point is much more attractive than doing it at the seasonal low.

Iran's rapid recovery

Iran still isn't likely to accept a cap while neighbor Iraq and arch-rival Saudi Arabia continue to boost supply. But its grounds for opposition are diminished. It's determined to get to 4 million barrels a day by the end of September. And if its production reaches a point where it

can't be raised further without significant investment and a long lead-time it might, just might, agree to a freeze to call the Saudis' bluff. So Iraq is the most probable holdout. Almost the first action of new oil minister Jabbar Al-Luaibi was to ask oil companies operating in the south of the country, including BP, Shell, Lukoil and CNPC, to revive spending plans that they were ordered to shelve earlier this year and to boost output. The results won't be immediate, but they could come soon enough to conflict with any undertaking by Iraq to freeze production at the current level. Nigeria, too, will balk at freezing production at its current level, which has fallen by about 500,000 barrels since January because of sabotage in the Niger River delta region. A temporary cease-

fire by the Niger Delta Avengers militant group, who claim responsibility for most attacks, could let companies restore some of that production. 855,000 barrels a day of Nigerian production is subject to force majeure -- 42 percent of January's output. Russia, an architect of the April gathering, also seems wary of risking a repeat of the embarrassment inflicted by the Saudis last time. So it will play its cards carefully. This won't stop others in OPEC from continuing to promote the idea of a freeze. Nor will it prevent the oil price from jumping on every hint of a deal -- no matter how absurd. Just don't expect to wake up in late-September to a world in which OPEC and Russia have reached a credible agreement on a cap.

(Source: Bloomberg)

NEWS

Iran, Italy negotiating condensate refinery project

Iran is negotiating with Italian energy firm Eni for investment in Shiraz Pars Refinery project, Abbas Kazemi, Iran's deputy oil minister, said.

Talks are underway with the Italian firm for cooperation and investment in the gas condensate refinery project, Kazemi who heads the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company, said, Mehr news agency reported August 28.

Shiraz Pars Refinery will be the first national condensate refinery in Iran.

Upon inauguration, it will have a daily capacity to refine 120,000 barrels of condensate and produce a daily amount of 12 million liters of gasoline conforming to Euro-5 standard.

Eni came to Iran in the early 2000s. It was to develop Phase 3 of Darkhovin Oilfield in Khuzestan Province and Phase 19 of South Pars Gas Field, but halted operations due to sanctions.

Eni is active in exploration and production sector as well as downstream projects, including refining and marketing of petroleum products. It is one of the world's major oil and gas contractors in engineering, construction and drilling projects both offshore and onshore. (Source: Trend)



Oil falls towards \$49 on high output, strong dollar

Oil fell towards \$49 a barrel on Monday, pressured by high output from Middle East OPEC members and as a stronger U.S. dollar weighed on commodities.

Iraq, which has exported more crude from its southern ports in August, will continue ramping up output, its oil minister said on Saturday. Top exporter Saudi Arabia has kept output at around record levels this month.

Brent crude was 62 cents lower at \$49.30 a barrel at 0904 GMT. The global benchmark is down more than 6 percent from its 2016 peak of \$52.86 reached on June 9.

U.S. crude was down 60 cents at \$47.04.

The comments about high oil output have dampened expectations that OPEC and outside producers such as Russia will agree steps next month to support prices such as a production freeze, following the collapse of a similar effort in April.

"The market is increasingly likely to discount the outcome of the event, given, even in the instance of a freeze being agreed, compliance will be an issue," Barclays said in a report.

Members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries are due to meet informally in Algeria on Sept. 26-28 on the sidelines of the International Energy Forum. Russia is also expected to attend the IEF.

Oil prices are less than half their level of mid-2014 because of a persistent supply glut. The chief executive of U.S. oil company ConocoPhillips, Ryan Lance, said at an industry conference in Stavanger, Norway, he believed oversupply would extend into 2017.

A strong dollar also weighed on oil, traders said. The U.S. currency rose to a three-week high against the yen on Monday after the Federal Reserve bolstered expectations that it would increase interest rates soon.

A rise in the dollar makes dollar-priced commodities such as crude more expensive for holders of other currencies, and tends to put downward pressure on oil prices. (Source: Reuters)

PERSPECTIVE

The renewable energy revolution is under way

Governments are finally realizing clean energy offers more benefits than just reducing carbon emissions

After years of discussion and stalled plans, the Middle East's renewable energy revolution is well and truly under way.

The impressive progress that Dubai has made with its solar energy ambitions in the past three years illustrates the potential that renewable energy has for the Middle East and North Africa region. It is no longer simply about reducing carbon emissions; developing renewables can save governments money and shore up energy security.

Since Dubai Electricity & Water Authority (Dewa) commissioned its first 13MW solar plant in 2013, its progress with its renewable energy programme has been spectacular. After awarding contracts for the 200MW photovoltaic (PV) independent power project (IPP) second phase in 2015, double the capacity of the originally planned 100MW, the utility recently selected the preferred bidder for the 800MW third phase, with a world-record low tariff. Not only is the selected tariff a record for solar energy, it is also lower than costs for many conventional gas and oil fired generation facilities.

In addition to the increasing cost benefits of renewable energy, another key attraction is the energy security it can provide for its users. With regional and global political and economic events creating growing volatility in hydrocarbons markets, renewable energy can offer governments the opportunity to produce increasing amounts of power without having to import gas.

While prices of oil and gas have both fallen significantly in recent months, past cycles have shown prices can rise as quickly as they have fallen. Moving ahead with renewable energy schemes can limit exposure to volatile international markets and provide a stable supply of electricity.

The next challenge for the burgeoning renewables market is developing solar energy with storage capabilities to produce electricity during the night. While it will be some time before these technologies are widely used, Dubai and Morocco have already started planning for integrating storage capabilities into their renewable energy programmes. (Source: meed.com)

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Study confirms MammaPrint's accuracy in assessing treatment for early breast cancer

The percentage of patients classified as low risk were shown to have prolonged survival regardless of receiving adjuvant chemotherapy, giving MammaPrint level 1A clinical evidence and confirming the clinical utility of MammaPrint. Initial results of the MINDACT trial were presented at the 2016 AACR Annual Meeting, which showed that MammaPrint demonstrated a high level of accuracy at identifying a large subset of women with clinically high-risk early stage breast cancer for whom adjuvant chemotherapy was unlikely to produce benefit.

"When we developed MammaPrint, we knew we wanted to achieve the same level of evidence required for a typical pharmaceutical drug," said study author Laura van't Veer, MD, chief research officer, Agendia, leader, Breast Oncology Program, and director, Applied Genomics at UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, in a statement. "That is why we are one of only a few diagnostic tests with FDA clearance and why we rigorously evaluated MammaPrint in the context of clinical-pathological factors in the randomized MINDACT trial. Now indeed, we have the only genomic assay with level 1A evidence to help physicians more accurately predict risk of distant

metastasis in patients with early-stage breast cancer."

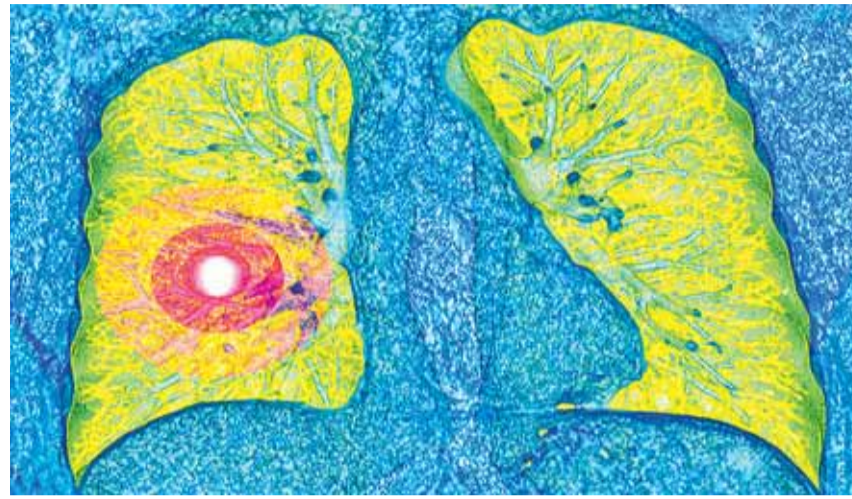
Clinical outcome

In the phase III randomized, controlled study, 6693 patients were evaluated with MammaPrint to help predict clinical outcome in women with early-stage disease. Patients were stratified into 4 subgroups: low clinical risk/low genomic risk (2745), low clinical risk/high genomic risk (592), high clinical risk/low genomic risk (1550), and high clinical risk/high genomic risk (1806).

Altogether, 88% of the patients enrolled had hormone receptor (HR)-positive tumors and 10% had biologically aggressive HER2-positive disease. After a median follow-up of 5 years, 3% of the study population died and 5.4% experienced either distant metastases or death.

In the 1550 patients (23.2%) with high clinical risk and low genomic risk, the 5-year survival rate without distant metastasis was 94.7% for those who did not receive chemotherapy (95% CI, 92.5-96.2). In those who did receive chemotherapy, the survival difference was 1.5 percentage points, with the rate being lower without chemotherapy.

Among patients in the intention-to-treat population who were at high clinical risk and low genomic risk at enrollment,



those who underwent randomization on the basis of clinical risk and received chemotherapy had a 5-year survival rate without distant metastasis of 95.9% (95% CI, 94.0-97.2). For those who underwent randomization based on genomic risk and did not receive chemotherapy had a rate of 94.4% (95% CI, 92.3-95.9). This was 1.5 percentage points lower than the rate among those who received chemotherapy (HR, 0.78; 95% CI, 0.50 to 1.21; P = 0.27).

Similar survival rates without distance

metastases were observed in the estrogen-receptor-positive, HER2-negative subgroup, the authors noted, and either node-negative or node-positive disease.

Gabriel Hortobagyi, MD, FACP, FASCO Professor and Chair Emeritus, Department of Breast Medical Oncology, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, chair of Agendia Inc Medical Advisory Board, said that the MINDACT trial design demonstrates the clinical utility of the assay.

(Source: Onclive)

Illegally manufactured fentanyl linked to rise in overdoses

The increasing distribution of illicitly manufactured fentanyl (IMF) across the United States, and the sharp rise in overdose deaths linked to this drug, are causing more concern about a growing threat to public health and safety.

According to a report published online August 25 in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), the number of drug products obtained by law enforcement that tested positive for fentanyl (fentanyl submissions) increased by 426% from 2013 through 2014. Deaths related to synthetic opioids (excluding methadone) increased by 79% during that period.

"An urgent, collaborative public health and law enforcement response is needed to address the increasing problem of IMF and fentanyl deaths," said the report's

authors, led by R. Matthew Gladden, Ph.D., National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Breakthrough in cancer pain

Pharmaceutical fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, is approved for the management of surgical/postoperative pain, severe chronic pain, and breakthrough cancer pain. IMF, which is unlawfully produced fentanyl obtained through illicit drug markets, is commonly mixed with or sold as white powder heroin.

Starting in 2013, the production and distribution of IMF increased to unprecedented levels. In 2015, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the CDC issued

nationwide alerts identifying increases in fentanyl-related overdose deaths in multiple states.

The current report documents changes in synthetic opioid-related overdose deaths among 27 states where death certificates consistently report drugs involved in overdoses. These changes were highly correlated with fentanyl submissions, but not with fentanyl prescribing, which remained relatively stable.

The report identified eight states where increases in fentanyl submissions and synthetic opioid deaths were primarily concentrated. In these "high-burden" states, the synthetic opioid crude death rate increased 174%, and the rate of reported fentanyl submissions increased by 1000%.

(Source: Medscape)

NEWS

Baby simulator programs may make girls more likely to get pregnant

Schools that have infant simulator programs, where students use dolls and classes to learn what having a baby is like, may actually make teenage girls more likely to become pregnant, according to a new Australian study.

The study, published in *The Lancet*, found that girls enrolled in schools with baby simulator programs were 36% more likely to have a pregnancy by age 20 than those enrolled in schools with standard curriculums. Of the girls enrolled in the program, 8% had at least one birth by age 20, compared to 4% in the control group; and 9% of the girls in the program had at least one abortion compared to 6% in the control group.

"We were very surprised" Sally Brinkman, lead author and associate professor at Telethon Kids Institute at University of Western Australia told ABC News. "It's one thing to get results to say it doesn't work, it's another to get results that does the opposite."

The study tracked more than 2,800 teen girls, age 13 to 15 years old, at 57 schools in Australia, following them until age 20. (Source: Time)

Discovery of a novel inhibitor with potential to eradicate colorectal cancer stem cells

A team including the National Cancer Center (NCC) (Tokyo, Japan), the RIKEN Center for Life Science Technologies (CLST) (Yokohama, Japan), and Carma Biosciences Inc. (Kobe, Japan) has jointly announced the development of a novel small-molecule Wnt inhibitor named NCB-0846. Wnt signaling is a key pathway of cancer stem cell (CSC) development. The inhibitor may provide a new therapy option for patients with drug-refractory colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is a major cause of cancer death, accounting for approximately 700,000 deaths annually worldwide. Over 90% of colorectal cancers carry somatic mutations in Wnt signaling component genes such as the adenomatous polyposis coli (APC) tumor suppressor gene, resulting in constitutive activation of Wnt signaling. This in turn leads to the generation of CSCs, which are intrinsically resistant to conventional chemotherapy. Therefore, therapeutics that can block Wnt signaling are likely to eradicate cancer stem cells and cure the disease. However, despite a wealth of data and investment in research and development, no Wnt-inhibiting drug has yet been incorporated into clinical practice. (Source: EurekAlert)



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PERSPECTIVE

Merkel under fire over "open-door" refugee policy

By Maryam Azish

A series of bloody attacks on civilians in July have focused attention on German Chancellor Angela Merkel's open-door migrant policy, which allowed hundreds of thousands of migrants from the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere into Germany last year and resulted in a decline in her domestic popularity in this European country.

In July, Germany was rattled by several attacks, three of which authorities say have been carried out by asylum seekers or refugees inspired by extremists.



According to a survey published in the newspaper "Bild am Sonntag", fifty percent of Germans oppose Merkel, blamed for her moderate asylum policy for exposing the country to a shocking bloodshed, seeking a fourth consecutive term.

Results indicate that 50 percent of poll participants were against a new term for the Chancellor, while 42 percent were in favor.

Party support

Meanwhile, within supporters of Merkel's center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), 70 percent support another term for Merkel, while 22 percent said they were opposed.

So far Merkel, who was first appointed as Chancellor in November 2005 and is serving her third term, has yet to announce whether or not she will seek a fourth term as Chancellor.

According to the German magazine "Der Spiegel", Merkel is waiting to see if she has the backing of the CDU's Bavarian sister-party, the Christian Social Union (CSU).

The next German federal elections are expected to be held at some point between August 27 and October 22, 2017. Merkel was first appointed as Chancellor in November 2005 and is serving her third term.

Recently, the sudden rise of attacks in Germany has encouraged political rivals of Merkel, criticizing her modest asylum policy.

The attacks have revived a backlash against Merkel's decision last year to open the borders to those fleeing war and persecution.

In the span of a week in July, an axe rampage, a shooting spree, a knife attack and a suicide bombing stunned Germany, leaving 13 people dead, including three assailants and dozens wounded.

Defending Open-Door Policy

Defending her open-door policy towards refugees, Merkel, who has led Europe's economic powerhouse for nearly 11 years, is insisting she feels no guilt over a series of violent attacks in Germany and was right to allow hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees to arrive last summer.

"A rejection of the humanitarian stance we took could have led to even worse consequences," the German chancellor said, adding that the assailants "wanted to undermine our sense of community, our openness and our willingness to help people in need. We firmly reject this."

Recognizing how fearful people were about their personal safety, she said: "We're doing everything humanly possible to ensure security in Germany," acknowledging the "huge degree of insecurity people feel as a result of the recent events, that people are scared". But, she said, "fear cannot be a counsel for political action".

Anti-Merkel Rally

On July 30, over 5,000 protested in Berlin and thousands more throughout Germany over the 'open-door' policy that many have blamed for four brutal terrorist attacks that left 13 dead over the last month, while a key political ally Horst Seehofer, the conservative premier of Bavaria, dramatically withdrew his support over immigration policy.

Seehofer has launched a fresh attack on her leadership, distancing his party from Merkel and straining the coalition that keeps her in power.

Stressing he had no wish to start a quarrel with Merkel's party, Seehofer said it was important to look 'reality' in the face. 'Merkel must go' has been trending on social media, with people posting powerful pictures including one claiming that she has blood on her hands after recent attacks.

A survey found that 83 per cent of Germans see immigration as their nation's biggest challenge - twice as many as a year ago.

Recent attacks have fuelled the right-wing movement, which has long called for stricter immigration controls, particularly in Bavaria, where she faces heavy criticism from high-profile politicians.

New Asylum Policy

The violence reignited political friction that had eased as the number of new arrivals to Germany slowed to a trickle in recent months due to the closure of the Balkans migration route and an EU deal with Turkey to take back migrants.

According to German government, some 222,000 asylum-seekers arrived in this European country in the first half of this year, reflecting a much-reduced influx.

Last year, nearly 1.1 million people were registered as asylum-seekers in Germany. Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said he won't forecast how many will arrive in 2016, given uncertainty about developments.

Public conscience in the international community view Merkel's stand toward the refugees in the context of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The question come to the mind of the ordinary people regardless of their partisan affiliation is that what to do with the refugees standing behind the borders of the European states in the cold weather?

Human rights violations in the name of democracy

In a speech last year, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei highlighted the numerous crimes which were committed by the US against Iranian nationals from June 26 to July 2, and suggested that the week should be entitled the "Week of American Human Rights".

"In this period, the true nature of American human rights was revealed in our country," the Leader said, back on June 27, 2015.

Accordingly, on January 11 this year, President Hassan Rouhani communicated a law designating July 2 in Iran's calendar as the "Day of Revealing American Human Rights".

Historically, one of the earliest uses of the term "human rights" is attributed to Frederick Douglas when he referred to the fundamental rights of enslaved African-Americans at the time when the United States did not recognize their humanity or their rights.

Since 1945 America has displayed exceptional leadership in promoting international human rights. At the same time, however, it has also resisted complying with human rights standards at home or aligning its foreign policy with these standards abroad.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) in its annual reports has repetitively talked upon the widespread abuses linked to prison overpopulation, racial disparity, capital punishment, solitary confinement, youth in criminal justice system, police killings, drug reform, immigration, and many other human rights violations instances in the US. In its annual review in 2016, HRW ranked police mistreatment of Blacks in America among human rights crises occurring across the globe.

It has presented high-profile police killings of unarmed African Americans, especially in recent years. Trayvon Martin in Florida, Freddy Gray in Baltimore, Walter Scott in South Carolina, Michael Brown in Missouri, Alton Sterling in Louisiana, are among hundreds

of other unarmed black minorities recently killed by police in the US.

African American men are incarcerated at six times the rate of white men, and three percent of all black males are currently incarcerated in a state or federal prison. US police killed at least 102 unarmed black people in 2015, nearly twice each week most of them identified as unarmed, though the actual number is likely higher due to underreporting.

However, when it comes to hu-



man rights issue, the US exempts itself from any kind of violations and abuses upon its own citizens, and particularly regarding its own crimes against other nations of the world.

Issuing its annual list of human rights violators, the US has been accustomed to accusing other countries of human rights violations and claiming to be a champion in defending human rights, while there are many report coming out to prove the US holds the first place as the biggest human rights violator in the world.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, for the first time, has launched an art festival to display US policies completely opposed to human rights basic demands,

and to promote public awareness and culture of human rights, and also to introduce the real face of international human rights claimants, through art tools, as Leader of Islamic Revolution believes, "any idea not integrated in art is ephemeral."

The event held on Sunday evening, August 28, to commemorate Iranian artists who have dedicated their works for fighting against arrogance.

The festival was introduced first in June 28, coinciding with American Human Rights Week, and is set at the national level and held in cooperation with the Iranian Lawyers Mobilization, Art Center, Islamic Propagation Organization, the Human Rights Council of the Judiciary, the Organization for Mobilization of the Oppressed, and some other public organizations and NGOs.

The most important approach of the popular event is to produce research-based art works on the nature, significance and instances of American human rights.

The study which includes a series of human rights violations of US governments is fully presented to the artists, and they have to produce all artworks of the festival based on the major research findings, using it as a reference which elucidates instances of the US

documentary form.

The festival received about 800 works in different sections and in the form of motion graphics, infographics, poster and paper boards, photography and cartoon.

The works were produced by 350 artists of 'revolutionary values' across the country, most of them based on research studies and have been adopted by the festival's secretariat as accomplished particularly based on American human rights issues.

During the closing ceremony for the first American Human Rights Art Festival, Iranian artists were appreciated, including Iranian film director, producer and documentary filmmaker Nader Talebzadeh and Organizer of Iran's International Holocaust Cartoons Exhibition Sayed Masoud Shojae Tababaei who have contributed for years to the disclosure of real face of American and arrogance human rights violations.

US laws and practices routinely violate rights, often rights of those least able to defend their rights in court or through the political process—racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, children, the poor, and prisoners and they most likely to suffer abuses.

US national security policies, including mass surveillance programs, are wearing away freedoms of the press, expression, and association.

Muslim Americans are widely seen as victims of discrimination. Discriminatory and unfair investigations and prosecutions of American Muslims are alienating the communities the US claims it wants as partners in combating terrorism.

Every US jurisdiction allows children under the age of 18 to be prosecuted as adults and sentenced to adult prison terms in certain circumstances. At the end of 2013, 1,200 children were being held in adult state prison facilities.

Hundreds of thousands of children work on US farms. Child labor is common on tobacco farms in the US, the world's fourth largest tobacco producer. Congress has not closed a legal loophole allowing children to do hazardous work in agriculture at 16.

US military veterans face systemic barriers in accessing health care, including long delays in obtaining adequate care at Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) health centers.

Millions of women in the United States had been victims of attempted or completed rape. At least one in five women is sexually assaulted in college, according to the reports released by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The list goes on. You can find millions of words in describing American crimes and human rights violations, something that is corresponding to the policies of authoritarian, dictatorial and greedy policies of the US.

West playing with fire by curbing Aleppo liberation

By Hamidreza Gholamzadeh

Aleppo is the biggest and second most important Syrian city after capital Damascus which was occupied by terrorists and Takfiri armed groups in 2012. Recently, Syrian Army and Russian forces cut the only border route to Turkey and completed their siege around the city in a significant achievement during more than 5 years of war with terrorists and Takfiris. The achievements of Syrian army and its allies, though, are not limited to this and they have been spending recent months gaining momentum on the battleground.

The imminent recapturing of Aleppo, and even the siege over the city, has improved and will increase Syrian government and Army's position and will drastically change the game in favor of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his resistance policy. In other words, liberating Aleppo would pave the way for Syria – and Russia and Iran as its allies – to defeat Al-Nusra Front on one hand, and ISIL which is weakened both in Syria and Iraq on the other hand.

There are two evidence marking the significance of the ongoing developments in Syria. Split of Al-Nusra Front from al-Qaeda was a headline-making news for many media outlets, but did not surprise so many people. It is no secret that Al-Nusra has long been supported by states seeking removal of Assad both in region and outside the Middle East as so-called 'moderate' fighters who can fight Assad and Syrian Army to follow a regime change policy in the war-torn country. However, when it was clear that Al-Nusra is affiliated with Al-Qaeda, no more – at least direct – support was possible; though they still managed to funnel supports in lower scale.

The idea was in fact raised more than a year ago by Qatar and some Persian Gulf states who suggested the group to split up with Al-Qaeda and they in return would provide the group with funds and supplies, according to a Reuters report in March 2015. The Arab countries had suggested

the idea to get rid of notoriety and illegality of working with and supporting an Al-Qaeda-affiliated group. So in this way they could circumvent the international laws and work with the same terrorists who were once in allegiance with Al-Qaeda in order to use the terrorists to topple Bashar Assad and pursue their regime change plan in Syria.

Now, with the tough situation for Al-Nusra in Aleppo, the same scenario seems to be under way. Al-Nusra has split off from Al-Qaeda and voices of



support for the group under the pretext of humanitarianism is being heard from west. Syria and Russia have considered three 'safe corridors' for nearly 250,000 civilians and one for the fighters who lay down arms to evacuate the city; Assad has also issued an amnesty verdict for 3 months for any fighter who lays down arms and surrenders to Army or releases prisoners captured by terrorists. Yet, the United States who has the group on its list of terrorist organizations, cast doubt on Moscow's intent where Secretary of State John Kerry claimed "it has the risk, if it is a ruse, of completely breaking apart the level of cooperation."

French and British foreign ministers were next

to stand against the siege which can weaken terrorists in Aleppo after about five years, talking of possible humanitarian catastrophe despite measures such as safety corridors and distribution of warm food to the displaced taken by Syria and Russian forces. German FM Frank-Walter Steinmeier also joined the western officials to oppose the siege. With Syrian Army and its allies' upper hand in the country's war on terror and renaming of Al-Nusra, western states and some regional Arab countries seem to be trying to rescue terrorists in Aleppo and prolong Syrian war.

It is also important to have an eye on the other side of Syria to understand the situation in Syria and find out another evidence the government is gaining the upper hand in the devastating war. Reviewing last few months in behavior of ISIL terrorist group shows that they losing the ground in Syria (and of course in Iraq as well) more and more and to keep their face, they have turned toward spreading fear by carrying out terrorist attacks in different parts of the world. Recent tragic events in Afghanistan, Iraq, Germany and France which were claimed by ISIL reflects the fact that they are trying to bully the world and hide their losses on the battle ground in Syria and Iraq.

By supporting terrorist groups – directly or indirectly – and curbing Syrian government's achievements, anti-Assad countries are playing with fire as they have put collapse of Assad government on the top of their agenda, while it negatively impacts their own security. Such terrorist attacks by love wolves or ISIL members across the Europe and other parts of world can happen again unless the Syrian government uproots the terrorists in the country and is 'truly' and 'honestly' helped in that way. Otherwise, the current policy of west in supporting so-called 'moderate' terrorists with their double-standards and impeding Assad's victory by engaging him in a prolonged war, will have no other result but more sporadic terrorist attacks in their lands.

Rocket Lab nears completion of world's first private orbital launch site in New Zealand

Launching satellites into space could get even cheaper very soon.

Rocket Lab, whose technology aims to propel small satellites into orbit at a fraction of the current industry prices, has nearly completed construction of the world's first private launch site.

Located on New Zealand's Mahia Peninsula, the site was designed to "enable the highest frequency of space launches in history," according to Rocket Lab, a U.S. company with a New Zealand subsidiary. Once ready, the site will be home to the company's first set of trials, scheduled for the coming months.

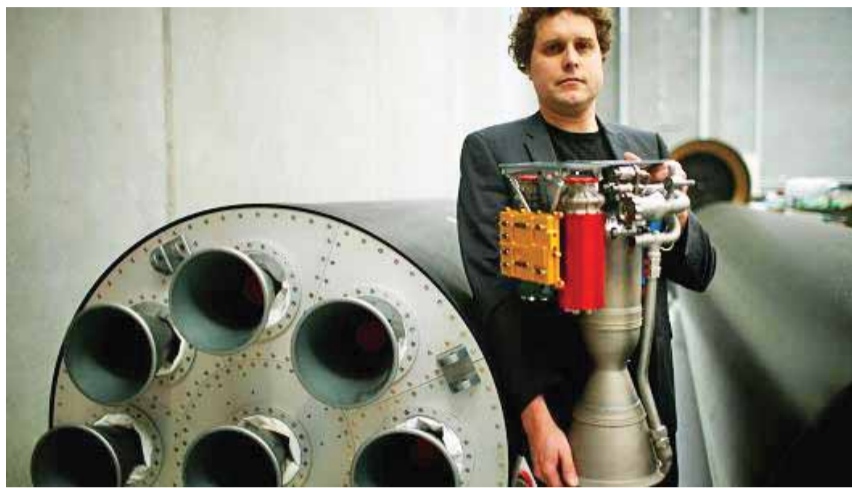
Ten-year old Rocket Lab will be charging \$4.9 million per launch, a significant discount to SpaceX's \$62 million price tag, and hopes to conduct weekly operations.

The launch vehicle

Its launch vehicle, called the Electron, boasts a battery-powered rocket engine printed on 3D parts that enables the firm to offer such low pricing and frequent trips, Rocket Lab said.

CEO Peter Beck hopes the service will resolve two of the biggest complaints he hears from players in the space industry: frequency and availability of launches.

"This program is about enabling the



small satellite industry," Beck told CNBC's 'Squawk Box' on Monday.

RocketLab CEO, Peter Beck poses with The Rutherford at the company's Auckland headquarters on June 10, 2015. The

Rutherford, a battery-powered rocket engine printed on 3D parts, is set to reduce the cost for companies to send satellites to space by as much as US\$5-45 million.

Thee "Electron is now capable of carry-

A platform weighing around 50 tons was installed on the Mahia site and will be used to erect the Electron from a horizontal to a vertical position and service the vehicle from fueling to launch.

ing of over 60 percent of all the satellites that were launched in 2015," he said, noting that the shrinking size of modern satellites allows for the Electron's high capacity.

The model appears to be environmentally friendly too. One launch on the Electron is expected to consume the same amount of fuel as a 737 jet aircraft going from Los Angeles to San Francisco, Beck said.

"We needed an island-nation that was in the middle of the Pacific to reach all the launch angles we needed, somewhere where we could build our own private range."

Because most U.S. launch sites are federally-owned, it would have been too expensive to conduct regular trials there, Beck added.

A platform weighing around 50 tons was installed on the Mahia site and will be used to erect the Electron from a horizontal to a vertical position and service the vehicle from fueling to launch.

Rocket Lab boasts contracts with both NASA and the U.S. Defense Department but Beck said the vast majority of customers were commercial entities, such as Planet Labs, Moon Express and other small satellite companies.

(Source: CNBC)

Hurricanes are worse, but experience, gender and politics determine if you believe it

Objective measurements of storm intensity show that North Atlantic hurricanes have grown more destructive in recent decades. But coastal residents' views on the matter depend less on scientific fact and more on their gender, belief in climate change and recent experience with hurricanes, according to a new study by researchers at Princeton University, Auburn University-Montgomery, the Louisiana State University and Texas A&M University.

The researchers plumbed data from a survey of Gulf Coast residents and found that the severity of the most recent storm a person weathered tended to play the largest role in determining whether they believed storms were getting worse over time, according to the study published in the *International Journal of Climatology*. The survey was conducted in 2012 before Hurricane Sandy, the second-most expensive hurricane in history, caused \$68 billion in damage.

Respondents' opinions also strongly differed depending on whether they were male or female, whether they believed in climate change and whether they were a Democrat or a Republican. For instance, people who believe in climate change were far more likely to perceive the increasing violence of storms than those who did not. The researchers noted that because climate change has become a politically polarizing issue, party affiliation also was an indicator of belief in strengthening storms.



Coastal regions

"Understanding how people in coastal regions perceive the threat is important because it influences whether they will take the necessary actions to address that threat," said Ning Lin, the senior researcher on the study and a Princeton assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering.

"What you see is that there is often a gap between the reality of the storm trends and how people interpret those trends," said Siyuan Xian, a doctoral candidate in Lin's lab and co-lead author of the new paper. While scientists continue to debate the impact of climate change on the frequency and strength of hurricanes, numerous studies of objective measures -- such as wind speed, storm-surge height and economic damage -- show that hurricanes are stronger than they were even a few decades ago.

For instance, eight of the 10 most economically damaging hurricanes since 1980 have occurred since 2004, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

(Source: EurekAlert)

UK's most endangered butterfly back from the brink

The most endangered butterfly in Britain enjoyed its best summer for a decade last year after highly focused conservation efforts on its 30 remaining sites.

Numbers of the critically endangered high brown fritillary increased by 180% last year compared with 2013 according to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS), with warm spring weather also helping its caterpillars survive.

Its recovery, which builds on an increase in numbers in 2013, raises hopes that this large, dynamic butterfly is no longer heading towards extinction.

As recently as 50 years ago, the high brown fritillary was a common sight in large woods across England and Wales. In recent decades, lepidopterists have puzzled over its dramatic disappearance, fearing it would become the first butterfly species to fall extinct in Britain since the large blue was lost in 1979.

But according to Tom Brereton of Butterfly Conservation, recent "fine-tuning" of conservation management in the high brown fritillary's last remaining strongholds -- Morecambe Bay in Lancashire and Exmoor and Dartmoor in the south-west -- has revived its fortunes.

"There's quite a lot of fine-tuned, targeted management on many of these sites," said Brereton. The "sites being managed specifically for the high brown fritillary are where this butterfly did well last year."

Female butterflies

The high brown fritillary's cater-



pillars feed on wild violets found on moorland, wood edges and rough pasture. The loss of traditional grazing in many areas has seen these flowers shaded out by scrub -- clearing this, and controlling bracken growth, is required for both the violets and the butterfly. Then there must be precisely-timed livestock grazing in early summer to help the female butterflies locate the violet leaves on which to lay their eggs.

Even with two good years, however, the high brown fritillary has still declined by 62% since 1978. Brereton said climate change as well as habitat loss was contributing to its decline. Like many butterflies, the high brown fritillary spends the colder months as a hibernating caterpillar, and these die if winters are warm and wet.

"It is not doomed, but the long-term prognosis is that the weather is making it harder to manage for this butterfly," said Brereton. "We will need to work harder to get the management right in the future."

(Source: The Telegraph)

Inauguration of First Boehmite Production Unit

ECONOMY Iran's first boehmite production unit inaugurated by attendance of chairman of the board of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

Based on the report of public relations of IMIDRO, some officials of Eastern Azerbaijan, administrators and consultants of the project attended the inauguration ceremony of boehmite production from alumina.

So far, country's need to boehmite was being provided from other countries but now boehmite production unit will meet the needs of country in this sector, during the ceremony, Mehdi Karbasian said.



Boehmite production unit with annual production capacity of 300 tons has been localized and operated by experts of domestic firms.

Boehmite powder is the base powder for production of catalyst products and as a refractory and humidity absorber is extensively being used in various industries. Boehmite will create a high added value in the country.

Conducted studies shows that industrial production of boehmite has a high buy-back rate.

Price of per ton of boehmite is 25 million toman.

Boehmite production unit located at western research center of the country (Azarshahr, Eastern Azerbaijan province)

AFZ to Host Seminar on "National Role of Free Zones in Booming Economy"

ECONOMY Aras Free Trade-Industrial Zone Organization will host a seminar dubbed "Role of Free Zones in Realizing Objectives of Resistance Economy".

Public Relations and Intl. Affairs Department General Manager of Aras Free Trade-Industrial Zone Organization Yousef Dadashzadeh announced the above statement and said: "This prestigious seminar will be held on Oct. 19-20, 2016 in Aras Free Zone with the aim of studying and introducing salient advantages of free zones in materialization of

objectives of resistance economy."

He put the deadline for sending abstract of articles to the seminar's Secretariat on August 31 and the deadline for sending article on Sept. 29.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he referred to the main topics of the Seminar as follows: role of free zones in taking advantage of economic capacities and capabilities of the country, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), promoting salient status of private sector, linking with trans-regional countries, seeking various resources for financing projects, role of finance and

credit institutions, diversifying exports, focusing on knowledge-based economy, managing import activities, sustainable development, entrepreneurship, generating new employment opportunities, national production, productivity, etc.

Regarding special emphasis of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution in the beginning of current year named after "Resistance Economy, Action and Implementation", he pointed to the key role of free zones in booming economy of the country and said: "Developing free zones and special economic zones in the

country should be taken into serious consideration in order to transfer technical know-how, expansion and facilitation of production, export of products and services, meeting necessary demands and financial resources from abroad, etc.

In the end, Plan and Budget Director of Aras Free Trade-Industrial Zone Organization added: "This prestigious seminar will be held in cooperation with higher education centers in the presence of distinguished and outstanding university lecturers of academic centers across the country."

NEWS

How big is the world's largest marine preserve?

A graphic from The Pew Charitable Trusts puts that size in perspective -- the area will be more than 3.5 times the size of California, 10 times the size of Iowa and 105 times the size of Connecticut.

The monument was created by President George W. Bush in 2006 to preserve the vegetation and wildlife in the area off the coast of Hawaii, and this week, President Barack Obama announced that he would expand the area to a total of more than 580,000 square miles.

Having monument status means that commercial fishing and new mining is banned, but scientific research is allowed, as is recreational fishing with a permit. Native Hawaiian cultural practices that involve removing fish or other resources will continue.

The White House has said that expanding the monument will help protect more than 7,000 species and preserve a sacred place for Native Hawaiians. Matt Rand, director of the Pew Charitable Trusts' Global Ocean Legacy Project, told the PBS NewsHour Weekend that the area also contains the oldest living organism on Earth: a 4,500-year-old deep sea coral.

Areas that encompass about 2 percent of the ocean are marine protected areas, but many scientists recommend protecting a greater area. A recent analysis of 144 previous studies on ocean protection found that more than half recommended designating at least 30 percent of the ocean as marine protected areas.

(Source: The Online NewsHour)



How aluminum changed engineering forever

In the late 1800s, aluminum was the most expensive metal in the world. A few decades later, it was being used to build everything.

Aluminum has been around for thousands of years, but until fairly recently, it was very expensive and a poor building material. The discovery of cheaper manufacturing processes and strong aluminum alloys that were lighter than steel completely changed entire industries in the early 20th century.

Aluminum was very rare until almost the end of the 19th century, when two men, Charles Martin Hall and Paul Héroult -- working independently -- discovered a new technique for making aluminum that turned aluminum from one of the most expensive metals in the world into one of the cheapest.

About 20 years later, a German scientist named Alfred Wilm discovered a technique to produce an alloy of aluminum that was stronger than the pure metal. This technique, called age hardening, produced the alloy duraluminum, which saw widespread use as a building material.

Duraluminum was used in countless applications, and completely changed early 20th century industry. It allowed airplanes to be built stronger and larger, it allowed buildings to be built higher, and it allowed power lines to be built further apart. Much of the world in the early 20th century was built from aluminum.

(Source: Popular Mechanics)

'SpaceEngine' is like a free 'No Man's Sky' modelled after the real universe

The SpaceEngine simulator may sound like one of this year's most anticipated games -- it's an unfathomably massive, independently developed, procedurally generated universe.

But this isn't No Man's Sky. You won't find any alien outposts, cartoonish creatures, fluorescent flora, or multi-tools to mine imaginary minerals with. There's no \$60 price tag or Sony-backed marketing campaign. There's just one guy with his computer, and a free-to-download sandbox simulator.

SpaceEngine is a universe, a tremendous tract of empty space and more explorable worlds than anyone can comprehend. The program boasts the entire Hipparcos catalog of stars, 10,000 known galaxies, and practically every recorded celestial body from asteroids to exoplanets. In total, it contains over 130,000 real space objects.

Russian astronomer-cum-game developer Vladimir Romanyuk knew he could never write enough code to represent the entire universe. He didn't have time. He could, however, develop algorithms to fill in the gaps and expand his to an incredible scale.

The "idea to use procedural generation came naturally," Romanyuk tells Digital Trends. "You can model a planet off its general parameters like mass, radius, and temperature," he says, but the topographies of most distant bodies are impossible to replicate because we have few clues to what they really look like. The Milky Way alone has 100 billion planets with surfaces hidden from even our strongest telescopes.

The universe may be vast, populated with innumerable bodies, but there aren't all that many types of objects. "I can even count them," Romanyuk says, "galaxies, nebulae, star clusters, stars (including normal stars, giants, white dwarfs, neutron stars, and black holes), and planetary objects (planets, moons, asteroids and comets)." So, in 2005, he began methodically populating his simulator with sets of data from astronomical catalogs.

Procedural generation may be this season's video game buzzword, but believe it or not, the concept isn't new. For decades, developers have automatically created large amounts of content from relatively small sets of parameters.

(Source: Digital Trends)



"Fly free, my daughter. Be what I could never be and leave the cage forever."
Nalini Singh

NEWS

Oil and gas industry in vital need for women: experts

Workplace diversity is becoming more important than ever as the energy sector undergoes a rapid transformation, and as gender balance increasingly emerges as a definitive factor in organizational success, female leaders said ahead of the upcoming ADIPEC 2016 'Women in Energy' conference.

Speaking on the occasion of Emirati Women's Day, Aug. 28, female achievers said that while great strides have been made in promoting gender diversity, the oil and gas industry is still struggling with exceptionally low female-to-male ratios when compared to other fields of work.

"Things have dramatically improved for women in the UAE in the past few years, driven principally by the strong and unwavering support of the country's leadership," said Fatema Al Neaimi, Manager, Gas Strategy and Master Planning Unit at the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), and a speaker at the ADIPEC 2016 'Women in Energy' conference.

"However, we still have a long way to go as there are many challenges that need to be addressed, and these challenges are not just specific to this country or the region, but are global obstacles that the industry is facing every day. They are also both physical and socio-psychological in nature – from creating supportive corporate infrastructures, to inspiring women to be a part of the industry's future developments."

With an established track record of raising an engaging and inspiring debate on the issues surrounding the role of women in the energy sector, 'Women in Energy' (formerly 'Women in Industry') will take place on Nov. 9 at Al Maareed Hall, and is part of the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference (ADIPEC), one of the world's leading energy events and a global meeting place for oil and gas professionals.

According to a recent Reuters report, the oil and gas industry has the lowest representation of female professionals among all employers. In addition, an analysis of U.S. energy companies by global advisory firm Korn Ferry found that women make up just 6 percent of CEO positions in energy. (Source: Saudi Gazette)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK
Fresh peach dessert

"We look forward to peach season every year just so we can have this dessert. Make sure to use sweet, ripe peaches. You could also substitute other fruits such as raspberries or strawberries, but I think fresh peaches are the best."

Ingredients:



- 16 whole graham crackers, crushed
- 3/4 cup butter, melted
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 4 1/2 cups miniature marshmallows
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 pint heavy cream
- 1/3 cup white sugar
- 6 large fresh peaches - peeled, pitted and sliced

Directions:

Combine the graham cracker crumbs, melted butter, and 1/2 cup sugar in a mixing bowl. Mix until evenly moistened, reserve 1/4 cup of the mixture for the topping. Press the remaining mixture into the bottom of a 9x13-inch baking dish.

Heat marshmallows and milk in a large saucepan over low heat and stir until the marshmallows are completely melted. Remove from heat and cool.

Whip cream in a large bowl until soft peaks form. Beat in 1/3 cup sugar until the cream forms stiff peaks. Fold the whipped cream into the cooled marshmallow mixture.

Spread 1/2 the cream mixture over the crust, arrange the peaches on top of the cream, then spread the remaining cream mixture over the peaches. Sprinkle the reserved crumb mixture over the cream. Refrigerate until serving.

Goharshad Intl. Award to honor benevolent women

WOMEN TEHRAN — Goharshad International Award is to be granted to eight benevolent Muslim women from across the world in the Iranian city of Mashhad on Wednesday.

The women nominated for the first edition of the Award are active in different public-service sectors, including development, health, education, research, science, culture, art and management, IRIB news agency reported.

Out of the eight women designated for the Award, four are from Iran and the other four are from Bahrain, Iraq, Turkey, and Kenya.

The Award seeks to appreciate wise and philanthropist women who are devoted to Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam.

The Goharshad Award seeks to promote benevolence and unity in the world of Islam.

Goharshad, the wife of Shah Rukh, the Emperor of the Timurid Empire of Herat, is an example of benevolent women, who stepped in the path to promote religion and Shia views, and Goharshad Mosque in the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza (AS) is a symbol of this pious woman's benevolence and her devotion to infallible Imams.



Goharshad Mosque in the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza (AS)

Tehrani breadwinner women showcasing home-made products

WOMEN TEHRAN — The first exhibition of home-made products of Tehrani breadwinner women opened here on Saturday, aiming to support breadwinner women who are making money by producing goods in their homes, Mehr reported.

The headquarters for empowering women, affiliated to Tehran Municipality, authorizes women heads of family who attend the exhibition, Fatemeh Tanhayee, an advisor to Tehran Municipality for women's affairs said.

A number of 60 women heads of family are present-

ing their works on doll making and jewelry, Tanhayee said.

The added value of jewelries is high, therefore, breadwinner women welcome making jewelries at home.

The headquarters for empowering women is to create a network of household jobs to support women heads of family to find a market for presenting their products.

The seven-day exhibition will wrap up on September 2, 2016.



France: Two Muslim women thrown out of restaurant by manager for wearing hijabs

Two women wearing hijabs were thrown out of a Paris restaurant in tears after being verbally abused by a member of staff. The incident at the Le Cenacle restaurant in Tremblay-en-France was captured on a mobile phone by one of the women who secretly recorded the incident as it unfolded on Saturday (28 August).

The women are seen sitting at a table where they were initially offered glasses of water, before a man, thought to be a manager of the restaurant, emerged from the kitchen and launched into an abusive tirade.

He confronts the two women telling them: "I don't want people like you in my place, I'll make that clear". Maintaining their composure the women respond calmly saying: "We don't want to be served by racists."

The man continues saying: "Racists like me don't kill good people. Racists like me?"

"Because we have placed bombs sir?" the woman answers.

"Madame, terrorists are Muslims, and all Muslims are terrorists. Analyze my words, you'll see that they're right," he says. Alluding to the murder of French priest Father

Jacques Hamel by ISIL supporters Adel Kermiche and Abdel-Malik Petitjean, at a church in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, the manager says: "They killed a priest recently OK?"

Continuing his rant he says: "I'm living in a secular country and this is my opinion." Raising his voice again he shouts: "It seems like you didn't understand. Now get out!"

The women get up and leave in tears. The restaurateur – who has not been named – later apologized for his conduct when he was confronted by a group outside the restaurant, the Mirror Online reports.

He accepted the situation got "out of hand" and said he regretted the verbal altercation with the women. He claimed he had been roiled by recent tensions surrounding the burkini ban and had also been reacting emotively having lost a friend who had died at the Bataclan concert center attack in November 2015, Le Parisien reported.

The video which has since gone viral has prompted Laurence Rossignol, the Women's Rights minister, to call for a full enquiry by the Inter-ministerial Delegation into Racism and anti-Semitism (DILCRA). Rossignol called for

sanctions against the "the unacceptable behavior of this restaurant owner".

The incident comes after a woman was surrounded by police on a Nice beach and ordered to remove her burkini. The image sparked global outrage and resulted in the controversial measure, which prevents women wearing Islamic looking swimsuits, being overturned by a Paris appeal court on grounds of civil liberties.

Reacting to the removal of the two hijab-wearing women from the restaurant, French anti-Islamophobia organization CCIF said that "following the umpteenth Islamophobic incident which... led to the humiliation of two young Muslim women" its director would be speaking outside the local mosque on Sunday (28 August) evening, reports BBC News.

The CCIF, which says it is offering legal and psychological support to the two young women, appealed for no protests outside the restaurant itself. The local prosecutors' office confirmed it has opened an investigation into racial discrimination.

(Source: International Business Times UK)

Turkey, Canada allow women officers to wear hijab

For the first time ever, the Turkish government has allowed female police officers to wear a headscarf as part of their uniform.

The move aims at helping those policewomen who want to observe the Islamic hijab while on duty, Press TV reported. According to a ruling published in Turkey's Official Gazette on Saturday, women who serve in the police force "will be able to cover their heads" under their caps or berets providing that the headscarf is "the same color as the uniform and without pattern."

Rulings that are published in the gazette come into force quite soon.

In 2010, Ankara lifted a ban on wearing hijab on university campuses and allowed female students to wear it in state institutions in 2013. A year later, high school students were also allowed to wear hijab.

Critics of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) have long accused them of undermining the secular bases of modern Turkey, as founded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923, by granting such freedoms.

Pro-government media, however, argue that a number of Western countries have already allowed policewomen to wear the headscarf.

Hoping to boost recruiting of Muslim women, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is allowing its officers to wear hijabs as part of their uniforms, the government said Tuesday.

"The commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police recently approved this addition to the uniform," Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale's spokesman Scott Bardsley told AFP.

"This is intended to better reflect the diversity in our communities and encourage more Muslim women to consider the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as a career option," he said.

(Source: Agencies)

ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER
AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

یک سیار 55/95
30/08/2016

THE AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY, AFFILIATED TO MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURAL JIHAD OF I.R OF IRAN, IS CONSIDERING THE PURCHASE OF 70,000 MTS +-5% OF GDAP THROUGH ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER.

ALL OF QUALIFIED AND INTERESTED COMPANIES ARE INVITED TO RECEIVE TENDER DOCUMENTS FROM WEDNESDAY ON 31/08/2016 TILL SATURDAY ON 10/09/2016 (SEVEN WORKING DAYS) WHILE SUBMITTING THEIR LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION AND ALONG WITH REMITTANCE BILL OF RIALS 1,200,000 TO ASSC ACCOUNT 4001039704005791 WITH CENTRAL BANK OF ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN (SHABA NO. IR250100004001039704005791 FROM OUR PURCHASING COMMITTEE (9TH FLOOR, NO. 1, FOURTH ALLEY, GANDHI ST., TEHRAN, IRAN).

AND TO SUBMIT THEIR SEALED AND STAMPED ENVELOPES CONTAINING OFFERS LATEST ON SUNDAY DATED 16/10/2016 (TILL THE END OF OFFICIAL HOURS) TO OUR SECURITY OFFICE LOCATED ON 8TH FLOOR. MEANWHILE THE MEETING FOR THE OPENING OF ENVELOPS WILL BE ON MONDAY DATED 17/10/2016 AT 9:00 A.M. WITH THE PRESENCE OF BIDDER'S REPRESENTATIVE(S) IN OUR PURCHASING COMMITTEE (9TH FLOOR, NO. 1, FOURTH ALLEY, GANDHI ST., TEHRAN, IRAN).

WE WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE BID BOND AMOUNT SHOULD BE AT €532,875(EQUAL TO RIALS 18,743,345,250) FOR EACH PART OF 35,000 +-5% MTS IN CASH OR BANK GUARANTEE.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, YOU MAY REFER TO OUR WEBSITE www.assc.ir AND <http://iets.mporg.ir> OR CONTACT US BY PHONE NO. 00982188776325.

Public & International Relations Department
Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed that Turkey will show the same determination in fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group and Syrian Kurdish fighters, on the fifth day of a cross-border operation that has already left dozens dead in northern Syria.

Speaking in Gaziantep in southeast Turkey, where 54 people were killed in a suicide attack at a Kurdish wedding last week, Erdogan said: "We can not tolerate any terror organization within or close to our borders."

"That's why we are in [Syria's] Jarablus. And, if necessary, we will not flinch from taking on similar responsibilities in other areas."

On Sunday, Turkey intensified its "Euphrates Shield" military offensive in northern Syria, with Turkish warplanes and artillery pounding areas held by pro-Kurdish forces close to Jarablus, the town taken from ISIL by Ankara-backed Syrian rebels earlier this week.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 40 civilians were killed in separate Turkish strikes near the village of al-Amarneh and in Jeb al-Kussa, outside Jarablus - the first reports of significant civilian casualties since the start of Turkey's operation on Wednesday.

The group, which monitors Syria's war, also said at least four Kurdish fighters had been killed and 15 wounded in the bombardments south of Jarablus.

But Turkey denied the reports of civilian deaths, saying its raids had killed 25 Kurdish "terrorists", according to the state-run Anadolu news agency.

Erdogan: 'Syria operations will continue until the end'



In a statement, the Turkish armed forces said the air campaign was carried out against "terrorist groups" which had attacked Turkish soldiers supporting a Free Syrian Army (FSA) operation in Jarablus.

On Monday, the U.S. criticized the clashes in northern Syria, terming them "unacceptable" and called on all armed actors in the fighting to stand down and focus on the fight against ISIL.

Meanwhile, at the Gaziantep rally, Erdogan told thousands of flag-waving

supporters that "operations against terrorist organizations will continue until the end."

"We will make any kind of contribution to the work to clear Daesh from Syria," he said using an Arabic acronym for ISIL, also known as ISIS.

"For the issue of the PYD (Democratic Union Party) terror group in Syria, we have just the same determination," he added, referring to the main pro-Kurdish party and its military arm in northern

Syria.

Turkey has long accused the YPG of being linked to the outlawed PKK in the southeast of the country. The YPG is the military arm of the Syrian Kurdish PYD political party.

Turkey has ordered the YPG, a well-trained force that has been the U.S.-led coalition's most effective ground partner in the war against ISIL, to withdraw to the east bank of the Euphrates River, which crosses the Syria-Turkey border at Jarablus.

"For president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, PKK, YPG, ISIL are just different facades of the same group," said Al Jazeera's Hashem Ahelbarra, reporting from Gaziantep on Turkey's border with Syria.

"And he says his country will definitely use whatever it has to defeat these groups."

He said the Turkish army had been "shelling and launching air strikes" in areas controlled by the YPG.

"These are areas that Turkey has asked the YPG to pull out of. The YPG insists those areas are part of their own territory, and there's no way it will pull out. That will likely increase tension."

During his Gaziantep speech, Erdogan also said that Turkey's cross-border offensive into Syria was giving people who fled ISIL-controlled areas a chance to return home, including to Jarablus.

"Jarablus has been freed," said Erdogan. "The original inhabitants of Jarablus are now in the process of going back."

"Anyone who wants to go back to Jarablus, will be given any support they need from us."

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Uzbek president in intensive care after brain hemorrhage

Strongman Uzbek President Islam Karimov, who has dominated the Central Asian nation for over 25 years, is in intensive care after suffering a brain hemorrhage, his younger daughter said Monday.

"My father was hospitalized after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage on Saturday morning, and is now receiving treatment in an intensive care unit," Lola Karimova-Tillyaeva, Uzbekistan's ambassador to UNESCO, wrote on Instagram of the 78-year-old leader.

She added that "his condition is considered stable" but that "at the moment it is too early to make any predictions about his future health."

Uzbekistan's cabinet of ministers said Sunday that the leader had been "hospitalized", in a statement published by the state news agency that gave no details.

Authoritarian leader Karimov has long been the subject of rumors of ill health that are difficult to verify, since information in the Central Asian country is very tightly controlled.

The former Soviet apparatchik whose brutal crackdown on dissent has been widely criticized by rights groups, has held onto power in the strategic country bordering Afghanistan since 1989,

before it gained independence from Moscow in 1991.

The wily leader has played off Russia, China and the West against each other to keep Uzbekistan from total isolation.

Karimov, who was reelected to a fifth term in 2015 with more than 90 percent of the vote, has no obvious successor and the country has never held an election judged free and fair by international monitors.

■ Possible successors?

Those tipped as possible successors following Karimov include Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov.

The country's powerful security chief Rustam Inoyatov, who has held the post since 1995, has a reputation tainted by violent suppression of protesters and is already 72.

Karimov's elder daughter Gulnara, a flamboyant figure formerly seen as a potential successor, has suffered a spectacular fall from grace after she openly criticized officials and family members on Twitter.

Her father's authorities placed Karimova under house arrest in 2014 after she accused her mother and younger sister of sorcery, compared her father to



Stalin and assailed the country's powerful security chief for corruption and harboring presidential ambitions on Twitter.

Karimov's younger daughter Karimova-Tillyaeva is based in Paris. She revealed in a 2013 interview that she had not spoken to Gulnara for 12 years.

Karimov was raised in an orphanage in the ancient city of Samarkand, before studying mechanical engineering and economics and rising up Communist Party ranks to become head of Soviet Uzbekistan in 1989.

Like the authoritarian leader of neighboring Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, he led his majority-Muslim country through the transition from the former USSR without any major chal-

lenge to his rule.

He has long been lambasted by critics for brutally crushing dissent -- most prominently the deadly 2005 response to protests in the city of Andijan in which government forces are accused of killing hundreds of demonstrators.

In the wake of the international criticism over the alleged massacre, which Karimov's regime rebuffed, Tashkent shut down a US military base used to supply operations in neighboring Afghanistan since 2001.

The US State Department's 2015 human rights report highlighted Uzbekistan's "torture and abuse of detainees by security forces" and "denial of due process and fair trial."

Amnesty International in a report released in April this year said that there was "overwhelming evidence that torture continues unabated in Uzbekistan."

But Uzbekistan has fiercely denied all the allegations against it and has staved off a complete rupture in relations by balancing the West off against Russia.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met Karimov on a visit to the country in November and Russian President Vladimir Putin last held talks with him in Tashkent in June.

(Source: AFP)

Italy earthquake, an evidence for vulnerability of our world in 21st century

➔ In the 20th century, 7 earthquakes with a magnitude equal to or greater than 6.5 struck the country. The most important earthquakes are 1908 Messina earthquake (M7.2, claimed about 100,000 victims), 1930 Iripina earthquake (M6.6, about 7,000 victims), 1976 Friuli earthquake (M6.6, about 1,000 victims), and 1980 Iripina earthquake (M6.9, about 9,000 victims).

Italy has areas more prone to earthquakes of smaller magnitudes, most notably in the southern part of Roma, in Vesuvius and Etna area, as well as other locations where earthquakes occur less frequently but with greater magnitude like Calabria Apennines.

The recent earthquake in central Italy tells us that time is ripe for review the lessons learned from previous earthquakes especially from L'Aquila 2009 earthquake. The reconstruction of L'Aquila earthquake prone area was widely criticized for delays and its ineffectiveness. Meanwhile, the emergency relief response to Amatrice 2016 earthquake may now be evaluated and compared

to the 2009 L'Aquila earthquake.

There was another important issue raised after the L'Aquila 2009 earthquake: The 'earthquake prediction' by an Italian laboratory technician, Giampaolo Giuliani, who claimed to have predicted the L'Aquila earthquake and the position of "National committee for predicting and preventing major risks" to reject this claim before its happening (and giving this message to the inhabitant that "no important earthquake will occur!"), caused a long judicial process (from September 2011 until October 2012) that finally found six scientists and a former government official (members of the national risk committee) guilty of "involuntary manslaughter."

The prosecution declared that the members of the risk committee to "spread inaccurate, incomplete and contradictory statements after preliminary tremors could be felt on the days before 6 April 2009" and the scientists declared to be guilty of failing "to give ade-

quate warning." After L'Aquila earthquake, the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has politicized the process (for both cases: earthquake prediction and the reconstruction). The L'Aquila reconstruction effort suffered problems with local ownership, national, regional and municipal coordination.

The Amatrice earthquake of 2016 should be taken as a case in point to review the earthquake resiliency and the re-evaluation of response and recovery vis-à-vis earthquakes in central Europe and certainly as a lesson to be learned for us all in Iran.

The Amatrice 2016 and L'Aquila 2009 earthquakes are both in the comparable size (Magnitude and extent of damages) to the Varzeghan 2011, Azarbaijan, NW Iran earthquake (M6.4, 306 victims). A scientific collaboration (to be initialized as bilateral workshop) between Iranian and Italian scientists might be helpful for both sides to review, share and learn such scientific and technical lessons.

U.S. says clashes between Turkish forces and opposition in Syria 'unacceptable'

The United States criticized clashes between Turkish forces and some opposition groups in northern Syria on Aug. 29 as "unacceptable" and called on all armed actors in the fighting to stand down and focus on the fight against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group.

"We want to make clear that we find these clashes - in areas where ISIL is not located - unacceptable and a source of deep concern," Brett McGurk, the special presidential envoy for the coalition to counter ISIL, said on his official Twitter account, citing a defense department statement.

"We call on all armed actors to stand down... the U.S. is actively engaged to facilitate such deconfliction and unity of focus on ISIL, which remains a lethal and

common threat."

Turkey and its Syrian rebel allies seized territory controlled by Kurdish-aligned forces on Aug. 29, the fifth day of a cross-border campaign.

Turkish officials say their goal in Syria is to drive out ISIL but also to ensure the People's Protection Units (YPG) militia, the military wing of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria, which Ankara says directly linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), do not expand the territory they already control along Turkey's border.

The YPG fighters are backed by the United States in the fight against ISIL in Syria.

■ U.S. should keep its word and force to withdraw

Meanwhile, Turkey Deputy Prime Min-

ister Numan Kurtulmus has said United States "should keep its word" and force the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) to withdraw to the east of the Euphrates.

"The U.S. knows Turkey's sensitivity on this issue. A promise was given: The PYD won't be west of the Euphrates," Kurtulmus told journalists in Istanbul on Aug. 29, referring to Ankara's demand that the PYD moves back to the east of the Euphrates.

"We expect the U.S. to use its influence on the PYD," he added.

Earlier, Washington had criticized clashes between Turkish forces and some opposition groups in northern Syria on Aug. 29 as "unacceptable," calling on all armed actors in the fighting to stand down and focus on the fight against Is-

lamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

"We want to make clear that we find these clashes - in areas where ISIL is not located - unacceptable and a source of deep concern," Brett McGurk, the special presidential envoy for the coalition to counter ISIL, said on his official Twitter account, citing a defense department statement.

In response, Kurtulmus vowed that Turkey will "protect itself from future attacks," adding that it "cannot sit back and watch an attack that could come from Syria."

"If the whole region falls under control of a single group, the PYD, then Syria will be divided. We are in favor of [maintaining] Syria's territorial integrity," he said.

(Source: agencies)

NEWS

Brussels crime lab attacked to 'destroy evidence'

Attackers rammed a car through the gates of Belgium's national crime laboratory on Monday in Brussels and then started a fire in what officials said may have been an attempt to destroy evidence.

Five people were arrested nearby but later released, while prosecutors said there was no confirmed link to terrorism so far. No one was injured in the fire or by a large explosion which shook houses nearby.

The incident comes as Belgium remains on high alert following suicide attacks on the capital's airport and metro system in March which were claimed by the ISIL terrorist group.

"This location was not chosen randomly," said Ine Van Wymersch, a spokesman for the Brussels prosecutor's office, adding that the institute deals with "sensitive information in connection with several ongoing cases."

Prosecutors had opened an investigation into "deliberate arson of a building and damage by explosion", while bomb disposal experts attended the scene.

"The possibility of a terrorist act is not confirmed. It goes without saying that several individuals may have wanted to destroy evidence related to their legal cases," Van Wymersch added.

She said that "several attackers forced their way into the institute using their car and were able to attack the building" and had apparently deliberately targeted the wing where the laboratories are located.

The incident happened in the early hours Monday at the national criminology institute in Neder-Over-Hembeek, a northern suburb of Brussels, and near the famed Atomium tourist attraction.

Part of the building was scorched and burned out, an AFP reporter saw, while a burned out car was lifted from the scene by a crane.

■ 'Powerful' explosion -

Fire service spokesman Pierre Meys said there was an "extremely powerful" explosion, adding: "Windows of the lab were blown out dozens of meters away."

He said about 30 firefighters were at the scene at around 3:00am (0100 GMT) fighting the blaze.

A young woman living in the neighborhood said the explosion woke her up. "It made the house shake," she told AFP, asking not to be named.

The institute is part of Belgium's federal justice system. Among its tasks is carrying out forensic analysis for criminal cases.

Belgium has been on high alert after suicide bombers struck Brussels airport and a metro station near the European Union headquarters on March 22, killing 32 people.

Those attacks were claimed by the ISIL group, which controls large areas of territory in Iraq and Syria and has claimed numerous terror attacks in Europe in recent months.

The terrorist cell responsible for the Brussels attacks was also heavily involved in the November Paris attacks in which 130 people were killed and hundreds more wounded.

The bomb-maker for the Paris attacks, Najim Laachraoui, blew himself up at Brussels airport.

Earlier this month it emerged that Belgian authorities were also hunting a cousin of the El Bakraoui brothers who also blew themselves up in the Brussels attacks.

Belgium has caught several people linked to the Brussels and Paris atrocities including Salah Abdeslam, the last surviving member of the Paris ISIL cell, who has since been extradited to France.

In June Belgian authorities approved a French extradition request for Mohamed Abrini, the "man in the hat" seen on CCTV footage with Laachraoui and Ibrahim El Bakraoui at Brussels airport. Abrini has not yet been handed over pending further investigation into the Brussels attacks.

(Source: AFP)

Anti-Trump protesters rally in Washington, DC

A number of U.S. activists have gathered outside one of Donald Trump's projects in Washington, DC to express their opposition to the Republican presidential nominee.

The gathering, which was held at Trump International Hotel's building site, condemned Trump's racist and insensitive rhetoric. Officials and representatives of various political organizations also attended the event.

The New York businessman's campaign has been marred by his disparaging remarks against minorities in the U.S. His comments include a call to ban all Muslims from coming to America as well as forced deportation of Mexican migrants by building a long wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

On Saturday, the bombastic candidate reiterated his plans to deport "illegal immigrants" as soon as he is sworn in as president.

"On day one, I am going to begin swiftly removing criminal illegal immigrants from this country - including removing the hundreds of thousands of criminal illegal immigrants that have been released into U.S. communities under the Obama-Clinton administration," he told his supporters in Des Moines, Iowa.

Trump also doubled down on the most controversial aspect of his immigration policy - building a towering wall along the US-Mexico border.

"I am going to build a great border wall, institute nationwide e-verify, stop illegal immigrants from accessing welfare and entitlements and develop an exit-entry tracking system to ensure those who overstay their visas are quickly removed," Trump said.

Earlier this month, the real estate mogul defended his Muslim ban proposal during his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention (RNC) in Cleveland last month.

When faced with backlash from the family of a Muslim U.S. soldier who was killed in Iraq, Trump set off another firestorm by making fun of them in response.

The Republican nominee's recent missteps have put him behind Hillary Clinton, his Democratic rival the race for the White House.

According to the latest Reuters/Ipsos daily tracking poll released on Friday, the former secretary of state leads the New York billionaire by 5 points, 41 percent support to 36 percent.

(Source: Press TV)

FOOTBALL

England boss Allardyce defends decision to omit Barkley

England manager Sam Allardyce has defended the decision to leave Everton midfielder Ross Barkley out of his first squad for the 2018 World Cup qualifier in Slovakia at the weekend.

The 22-year-old has enjoyed an impressive start to the Premier League season and many observers felt he had done enough to deserve a place in the 23-man group named on Sunday.

However, Allardyce, who succeeded Roy Hodgson as manager after England's underwhelming Euro 2016 campaign, said there was still time for Barkley to feature in his future plans.

"We have had to make a few difficult decisions and none more so than Ross Barkley," Allardyce told a press conference.

"For him it's disappointing, for me, you have to make these decisions. The door will always be open for Ross but right now I feel the squad I've picked is the right one."

Marcus Rashford also missed out, instead selected for the under-21 squad against Norway, even though the 18-year-old striker featured for England at Euro 2016 and scored Manchester United's injury-time winner against Hull City on Saturday.

"Having international experience in the under-21s will prove invaluable for us further down the line," the former West Ham, Bolton Wanderers and Sunderland manager added.

"If he plays for Manchester United on a regular basis, if he is regularly breaking into the United team then it will be a good basis for inclusion in my squad."

Allardyce, 61, will take his first training session with the players later on Monday with several, most notably Manchester City's goalkeeper Joe Hart, involved in speculation over their club futures ahead of Wednesday's transfer deadline day. "If Joe arrives today, and I'm sure if there's anything in the pipeline Joe will tell us this may happen. Then we can get ready if it does," Allardyce said.

Slovakia held England to a goalless draw in their last meeting at Euro 2016, a game Allardyce expects will have little bearing on Sunday's meeting in Trnava.

"The tactics will be different when we play them in Slovakia. That team will have to come out to attack us, they're playing at home, whereas in the Euros, we knew that one point was enough for them.

"They were a very sound, solid unit that proved very hard to break down, because they weren't interested in playing any type of attacking football I don't think."

(Source: Reuters)

Ozil convinced me to join Arsenal in Premier League - Shkodran Mustafi

Soon-to-be Arsenal defender Shkodran Mustafi revealed that German national teammate Mesut Ozil convinced him to join the London club from Valencia.

The former Everton centre-back is set to be unveiled as an Arsenal player this week after Arsene Wenger admitted that the club are sorting out the paperwork to finalise the deal.

Arsenal secured their first league win of the season on Saturday when they won 3-1 away to Watford, and will use the international break to strengthen their squad with a couple of signings.

Mustafi, 24, will be a much needed defensive boost for the Gunners, having been one of the top defenders in the La Liga last season.

His move to Arsenal has been quickened following the injury to compatriot Per Mertesacker, while Ozil spoke to him about life at the club. "I did not see Per for a long time because he quit international football but I talked to Mesut," Mustafi told Sky Sports Germany. "He told me everything I wanted to know. Everything was positive, so I was convinced very fast. It did not take much."

"I have always loved Arsenal, I like how they play here, it is not typical English."

"The game here is more like in Spain and with the German national team, keeping the ball on the grass, so it was easy to convince me."

Mustafi has reported passed a medical along with Deportivo La Coruna striker Lucas Perez, with Valencia agreeing to sell the defender for a fee of £35 million.

(Source: Soccernet)

Winning run ahead of Manchester derby important for United - Rooney

Manchester United's unbeaten start to the Premier League has helped the club build momentum before the derby clash against Manchester City, striker Wayne Rooney has said.

Marcus Rashford slotted in a winner in stoppage time against Hull City last weekend to ensure that Jose Mourinho's side were tied at the top of the Premier League on nine points after three league games.

However, Rooney, who scored in United's 3-1 victory against Bournemouth in their opening league game, urged his team not to take their foot off the pedal against City, who also remain unbeaten this season.

"It's early but you want to try to build momentum and especially going into the international break," Rooney told British media.

"To go there with three wins is important and with the next game being Man City it was a big win for us, even though it's so early in the season."

"We know whatever happens against City isn't going to define the season but it's always nice to go into that break with the three wins."

Mourinho and City manager Pep Guardiola will renew their rivalry when the two Manchester clubs meet on Sept. 10 at Old Trafford, and Rooney said there was an air of excitement ahead of the eagerly anticipated clash.

"It's a game players, staff, media, fans, everyone will be looking forward to," he added. "It's a Manchester derby but also with Jose and Pep Guardiola at Man City."

"It's exciting for everyone and exciting to play in."

(Source: Reuters)

Russia 2018 Asian Qualifiers Final Round: Group A at a glance

With Thursday's FIFA World Cup qualifiers looming large on the horizon, join the-afc.com as we remind you of the teams in Group A of Asia's third qualifying round.

GROUP A

IRAN Opening game: September 1 v Qatar (HOME)

Iran had a mixed start to Preliminary Round 2 of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia Asian Qualifiers having drawn 1-1 twice at the midway stage, but a strong second half, in which the three-time Asian champions scored 15 times and conceded just one in a run of four straight wins, saw Iran comfortably top Group D six points clear of second-placed Oman.

After debuting at the FIFA World Cup finals in 1978, Iran qualified for the global game's most prestigious tournament on three further occasions. They appeared for a second time in 1998, defeating the USA for their first ever World Cup win, before going on to take part in Germany 2006 and Brazil 2014, where Team Melli were unable to follow up that famous victory in Lyon with a second World Cup win.

KOREA REPUBLIC Opening game: September 1 v China (HOME)

The Taeguk Warriors marched into the Final Round of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia Asian Qualifiers in imperious fashion, scoring 24 times and conceding none during their seven successive victories to top Group G and emerge as the only team to advance with a 100% record.

Debuting in 1954, Korea Republic had to wait over three decades for a return to the FIFA World Cup finals, but their qualification for Mexico '86 marked the beginning of an Asian record of participating in every edition of the global game's biggest tournament since, a run that included reaching the semi-finals in 2002 when the South Koreans co-hosted the competition with Japan.

UZBEKISTAN Opening game: September 1 v Syria (HOME)

After an opening 4-2 defeat to DPR Korea, Samvel Babayan took over the managerial reins from Mirjalal Kasimov and oversaw a run seven straight victories - including big away wins in the Philippines (5-1) and Bahrain (4-0) - as the Uzbeks finished top of Group H.

Yet to participate at the finals having tak-



en part in three FIFA World Cup qualifying campaigns since 1992, Uzbekistan reached the Asian playoffs on two occasions, bowing out to Bahrain on away goals in the qualifiers for 2006 before losing 9-8 on penalties to Jordan on the road to Brazil 2014.

CHINA Opening game: September 1 v Korea Republic (AWAY)

Sitting third in Group C with two games remaining, China eased to victory over the Maldives before ending Qatar's 100% record to squeeze through as the fourth-ranked of the second-placed sides, as the East Asians benefitted from final day defeats for DPR Korea, Jordan, and Oman.

All but one of their ten previous FIFA World Cup qualification campaigns have ended in disappointment, with China's only ever appearance on football's biggest stage coming when Asia hosted the tournament for the first time but after defeats to Cos-

ta Rica, Brazil, and Turkey, the East Asians bowed out at the Group Stage of Korea-Japan 2002.

QATAR Opening game: September 1 v Iran (AWAY)

After a fortuitous stoppage-time goal against the Maldives gave Qatar a winning start to their 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia Asian Qualifiers, Preliminary Round 2 qualifying campaign, Al Annabi went on a run of victories that saw them become the first side through to the Final Round, with their impressive winning streak - coupled with results elsewhere - guaranteeing a first-place finish in Group C with two games to spare.

As hosts of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Russia 2018 marks the last time Qatar can debut at the finals via a successful qualifying campaign having missed the cut for every edition of the World Cup since Argentina 1978.

SYRIA

Opening game: September 1 v Uzbekistan (AWAY)

Despite the well-documented social upheaval in their homeland that saw their home matches played in Oman, Syria put in a strong showing in Round 2 of the qualifiers with the West Asians winning all their matches against Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Singapore, to finish runners-up in Group E behind Japan and advance to the Final Round of qualifiers as the second-ranked, second-placed side.

Progression marks the first time Syria have participated in the final round of FIFA World Cup qualifiers since losing 3-1 on aggregate to Iraq in the campaign to reach the 1986 finals in Mexico, while their hopes of reaching Brazil 2014 ended in the second round after they had fielded an ineligible player in their 6-1 aggregate win over Tajikistan.

(Source: AFC)

Leicester eager to enjoy Champions League debut, says Vardy



Leicester City striker Jamie Vardy has said the club will look to enjoy competing against Europe's elite in their Champions League debut.

The English champions were drawn in Group G along with Porto, Club Brugge and FC Copenhagen in the Champions League after winning the English top-flight title for the first time in their history.

"We'll take anyone. We will always give it our all and it's a new experience for us so we're going to go out and enjoy it," the 29-year-old told British media on Monday.

"They will obviously be doing their

homework on us because they won't have seen that much and we'll be doing exactly the same."

The England international scored his first league goal of the season as Leicester beat Swansea City on Saturday to get their opening win of the campaign.

"We weren't meant to win the league were we? We're not meant to win it this year either. We're just enjoying ourselves," he added.

"We know we can hurt teams. People saw that last year, so we'll just keep going out on that pitch enjoying ourselves."

(Source: Reuters)

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola: I haven't watched Man United yet



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has claimed that he has not watched Manchester United yet as the two teams prepare to meet at Old Trafford on Sept. 10.

Both Manchester clubs go into the game having won all three of their league games this season.

And looking ahead to the game, Guardiola -- who will resume his rivalry with United boss Jose Mourinho -- told reporters: "Still I didn't see Manchester United playing, so now I have 10 days to see United, Borussia Monchengladbach and other teams."

"We have to make an amazing per-

formance to win at Old Trafford. I can imagine the atmosphere. I am looking forward to living that experience."

"Hopefully, they [City's players] come back with no injuries and in a good mood and we can do it."

Guardiola indicated that he might have been happier to play United before the international break rather than having to wait.

He said: "If we should play [United] in three or four days, OK, we go there. But now we [City's players] go to the national team. We never know what is going on."

(Source: ESPN)

Man United's Zlatan Ibrahimovic will get extra time off - Jose Mourinho

Zlatan Ibrahimovic will be given extra holiday time over the international break, Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho has said.

United striker Ibrahimovic has enjoyed an impressive start to his career at the club by scoring in the Community Shield match then adding another three goals in three Premier League games, played on successive weekends.

Having retired from playing for Sweden after Euro 2016, the player will not have any international duty next weekend, but United manager Mourinho still wants to protect him further.

Mourinho said: "At 34 years old, you need to rest. You cannot play 70 matches a season. So I give the



other guys, who are not selected for the national teams, two days -- and I give four days to Zlatan. I give holidays a la carte. It depends on the situation. And he is playing every match, every minute. So four matches, he played 360 minutes -- four days off for the big guy."

The first of those matches was the 2-1 win in the Community Shield against Leicester City on Aug. 7 when Ibrahimovic scored a match-winning header. The Swede then fired in another goal against Bournemouth in a 3-1 win on Aug. 14.

He struck twice against Southampton on Aug. 19, from a header and a penalty in a 2-0 win, but failed to find the net in the 1-0 victory against Hull City on Aug 27.

(Source: ESPN)

We're not scared of Iran, says Qatar coach

SPORTS Qatar national football team head coach Jose Daniel Carreno stated that his team has no fear of playing against Iran and will go to Tehran in order to take the three points.

"Iran is one of the best teams in Asia but we don't have any fear against them. We've totally prepared for this game as we have had good training camps and friendly matches during the last thirty days. I can assure that the players are in the best form as we're getting ready to fly to Tehran," said the Uruguayan coach Jose Daniel Carreno.

"We're going there to take the three points while a draw would be considered as a good result for us in an away game," he added.

"I know Iran team quite well, they had some changes but the constituent is the same as before. Physically, Iran is the strongest team in our group while they play with their passion but they have weaknesses as well. In fact this is not going to be an easy game for us but I hope my players do their best in order to get the best result," he added.

The Persians will play Qatar in the first game of 2018 World Cup qualification third round on September 1 while it has to face China five days later in Shenyang, more than 6,000 kilometer away.

Iran has been drawn in Group A of the World Cup qualification along with Uzbekistan, China, Qatar and Syria.



FOOTBALL

Al Haidos: Qatar ready to embrace pressure

With just days to go before Qatar begin the last round of Asian qualifying for the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™, captain Hasan Al Haidos is brimming with confidence. "This time, I'm very optimistic," he told FIFA.com, sharing his hopes in an exclusive interview. "We're more determined than ever to realise the dream we've been pursuing for a very long time."

The task awaiting Al Haidos and Co is a Group A featuring Korea Republic, Syria, Iran, China and Uzbekistan. They kick off away to Iran at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran on 1 September, and will be eager to improve on past results if they are to hit the ground running. That game will be the ninth between the two nations, Qatar having recorded just one win to go with three draws and four defeats – all three stalemates and one loss coming on the road to Brazil 2014.



Al Haidos played in two of those games and he is adamant that his team need to make a strong start against Team Melli.

"It's always important to begin well," he said. "I don't think we could have had a more difficult opening game. It's always very tough against Iran, and even more so away from home in front of their fans. But I think we're ready to face the challenge this time. We've prepared well with [head coach] Jose Carreno. The players have a perfect understanding and everyone is determined to meet expectations over there."

Those expectations have certainly risen since Qatar was chosen to host the 2022 World Cup, which the national team will compete in as automatic qualifiers. While work on stadiums and infrastructure continues around the country, Carreno's charges have performed well in the lead-up to the 2018 edition – improving on their failed bid to reach Brazil 2014.

"We're aware of the pressure upon us," said Al Haidos. "Our loyal supporters want to see us at the World Cup, which is entirely fair. The pressure will only build, but we're determined to transform it into positive energy. One of our major assets against our opponents will be our combativeness."

"Like I've said before, optimism doesn't spring from hope alone. Everything we're experiencing at the moment is feeding our ambition. Our preparations have been productive and varied, and we've improved our physical condition in the early part of this season. Our friendly games have shown that the players have progressed in terms of technique as well. We've put in a lot of work and we want to see it pay off on the pitch."

■ Stern opposition

Qatar will be pitting themselves against a trio of former World Cup participants in Group A, with Korea Republic, Iran and China PR having all graced previous finals.

For Al Haidos, their presence makes his team's mission even more complicated, but he does not view those sides as clear favourites. "Experience counts, but football has changed a lot," he explained.

"It's difficult to pick out a favourite to go through. I think all the teams will start on an equal footing. They'll all be kicking off with a lot of ambition and the intention of taking points, and that's normal."

"What will make things difficult is the diversity of the teams in this group. Some of them are all about pace and excellent technique, while others are more noted for their physical power and tactical expertise. We'll be relying on our hard work and our coach Carreno to put the right game plans in place for each of our opponents."

Despite their past travails in World Cup qualifying, Qatar appear in good shape to challenge this time, having topped Group C in the previous round thanks to seven wins from eight games.

That enabled them to progress before any other team, and their impressive tally of 29 goals was also the best on the continent. Playing out wide or as a withdrawn forward, Al Haidos notched five of those strikes in seven appearances, and he goes into the next phase as Qatar's leading scorer.

"Our start against Maldives was hard work, but after that the wins kept coming," he said. "We improved in every match, as our victories against China and Hong Kong just go to show. We only lost on the last day, when we'd already qualified. As for my goals, if I scored a few it was thanks to the work of the whole team."

For me, it's more important to win and get points than score goals. I hope I can continue finding the net and helping my team-mates do the same."

At 25, Al Haidos could be forgiven for finding the captain's armband a heavy responsibility, but after several years of testing himself on the international stage, he feels comfortable in the role. "It's an honour for any player."

I hope I'm able to live up to the greats who've gone before me in recent years, like Mohammed Salem Al Enazi and Mubarak Mustafa."

Leading from the front, the key now is to maintain the momentum that has spread such belief through the Qatari ranks. "We're all going to pull together to clinch qualification. I know the fans will be there for us in the stadiums. Everything will depend on what happens on the pitch and I hope this long road will lead us to a place at Russia 2018."

(Source: FIFA)

Iranian fans expect World Cup qualification, says Iran Vice President



SPORTS Iran's First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri who paid a visit to Iran national team training session on Monday, stated that the government will make every effort in order to facilitate qualification for the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

"I would like to thank Mr. Queiroz for his excellent work in recent years, he has shown his extraordinary capabilities in numerous

occasions. With his hard work at Team Melli we are ranked the top team in Asia," Iran's First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri said.

"Iranian fans expect the national team to qualify for the World Cup. We will make every effort in order to facilitate Team Melli's qualification and make Iranian fans happy," Jahangiri added. Carlos Queiroz men will face Qatar on September 1st, 2016 in Tehran and China on September 6th in Shenyang.

Sajjad Anoushirvani to remain Iran weightlifting coach



Sajjad Anoushirvani will remain at the helm of the Iran weightlifting coach through the 2018 Asian Games.

The federation's technical committee decided to keep him in his post in a session held in Iran Weightlifting Federation's headquarters in Tehran on Sunday.

Anoushirvani, who won a silver

medal in the men's +105kg during the London 2012 Olympic Games, replaced Hossein Tavakkoli in March.

Under leadership of Anoushirvani, Iran won a gold medal in the Olympics by Sohrab Moradi in 94kg.

Kianoush Rostami also won the gold medal in 85kg but he finished in the first place by his own decisions.

(Source: Tasnim)

Iran's Sarmayeh Bank volleyball team beats Maseco TP HCM

Iranian professional volleyball team Sarmayeh Bank has put in an impressive performance at the 2016 Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) Club Volleyball Championship in Myanmar, clinching an emphatic victory over an outfit from Vietnam.

On Monday, the Iranian side registered a straight-set win (25-18, 25-16 and 25-18) over Maseco TP HCM of Vietnam at the end of a quarterfinal encounter in Myanmar's capital city of Naypyidaw.

The Iranian squad started the match in a strong and energetic fashion, and managed to collect most of the points in its way to lead at the end of the first set 25-18.

After the break, the Iranian volleyball players did not relinquish superiority and sustained momentum, and managed to overcome the Southeast Asian side 25-16.

The Iranians extended their lead into the third set,



and made optimal use of their skills and resources to roll to a 25-18 win.

(Source: PressTV)

Thierry Henry: Belgium can make history



Thierry Henry believes Belgium is capable of making history as he looks forward to his role as assistant with the national team.

Arsenal and New York Red Bulls great Henry will serve as coach Roberto Martinez's No. 2 after being appointed last week.

Henry will now work with the likes of Eden Hazard, Kevin de Bruyne and Romelu Lukaku as Belgium aims to fulfill its enormous potential, having failed to

progress beyond the quarterfinals of Euro 2016 under former boss Marc Wilmots.

"It is an exciting challenge, but one of the things we are going to have to work on is the team's mentality to make sure they can become a great team," Henry told Sky Sports.

"I am the second assistant, Roberto is the main guy and I will help with the structure and help him make sure that the team goes really far."

(Source: Goal)

Injury forces Schurrle out of Germany squad



Borussia Dortmund winger Andre Schurrle has been forced to pull out of Germany's upcoming friendly and World Cup qualifier because of injury.

Schurrle complained of a back problem following Dortmund's 2-1 triumph over Mainz in the club's Bundesliga opener Saturday.

The injury means he will not feature in Germany's friendly against Finland in Monchengladbach or in the World Cup qualifier at Norway

on Sept. 4.

A statement released by the German Football Association (DFB) said coach Joachim Low has not yet decided if he will call up an injury replacement.

World champion Germany is in Group C for its 2018 qualifiers alongside Norway, Northern Ireland, the Czech Republic, Azerbaijan and San Marino.

(Source: Soccerway)



Poem of the day

If there were no hope of rest and trouble
The foot of the dervish would be upon the sphere
And if the vezier feared God
Like the king he would be king.

Sadi

Prayer Times

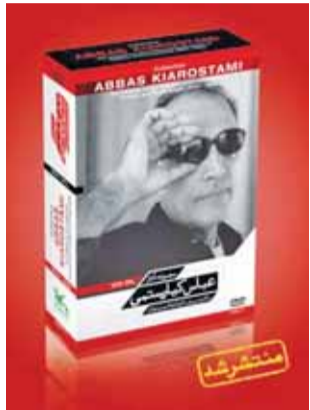
Noon:13:05 Evening: 7:53 Dawn: 5:08 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:36 (tomorrow)

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NEWS

Kiarostami's film collection appears on DVD

T A R T TEHRAN — Fifteen movies by world-renowned Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami has recently been released in Tehran in a collection containing eight DVDs.



The collection has been published by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), which produced the movies over the past four decades.

"Bread and Alley," "Breaktime," "Orderly or Disorderly," "Fellow Citizen" and "Life, and Nothing More" are among the films.

The collection also contains "Two Solutions for One Problem," "Where Is the Friend's Home?,"

"The Traveler," "Homework," "The Chorus," "So Can I," "First Graders," "The Colors," "Toothache" and "Solution No. 1".

After seeking treatment for a severe gastrointestinal disease in a Paris hospital, Kiarostami died on July 4.

"The Cemetery Men" crowned best at Thai filmfest

T A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Ali Mardomi's short film "The Cemetery Men" won the best short film award in the international section of the 20th Thai Short Film and Video Festival, which was held at the Bangkok Art and Culture Center from August 20 to 28.



"The Dog's Lullaby" by Makbul Mubarak from Indonesia and "Three Wheels," a France-Cambodia joint production by Kavich Neang, received honorable mention in this section.

Produced by the Urmia branch of the Iranian Youth Cinema Society, "The Cemetery Men" is the story of an old man working in a cemetery. He is the only one there who say prayers for the

dead until a young man with a beautiful singing voice comes to the cemetery.

Mexican singer Juan Gabriel dies of heart attack aged 66

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Mexican singer Juan Gabriel, a musical icon across Latin America for more than 40 years, died on Sunday of a heart attack at age 66, broadcaster Televisa reported.

The prolific songwriter and performer, who was known for his powerful love ballads, died in Santa Monica, California, Televisa reported. He was due to sing at a concert in El Paso, Texas, later on Sunday.

Gabriel, whose real name was Alberto Aguilar, was born in 1950 into a poor family in the western Mexican state of Michoacan and rose to sell millions copies of his albums and have his own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Gabriel, who lived much of his young life in the border city of Ciudad Juarez, entertained generations of Latin Americans with his energetic performances of songs such as "Querida" and "Amor Eterno" in glittering mariachi outfits.

"A voice and a talent that represented Mexico," Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto said on Twitter. "His music, a legacy for the world."

Hollywood stars pose for 2017 Pirelli Calendar

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Nicole Kidman, Penelope Cruz and Lupita Nyong'o have posed for the 2017 Pirelli Calendar, which features a host of Hollywood's biggest names.

The likes of Uma Thurman, Kate Winslet and "House of Cards" actress Robin Wright are also among the 15 stars who appear in the calendar.

The photos were taken by the German fashion photographer Peter Lindbergh, who has shot for Pirelli twice before.

Other movie greats featured include Alicia Vikander and Helen Mirren, with the photos taken in Berlin, London, Los Angeles, Le Touquet and New York.

The first Pirelli Calendar was published in 1963, and the publication has since featured many of cinema's best known performers.

Indian, Iranian puppeteers honored at Mobarak festival

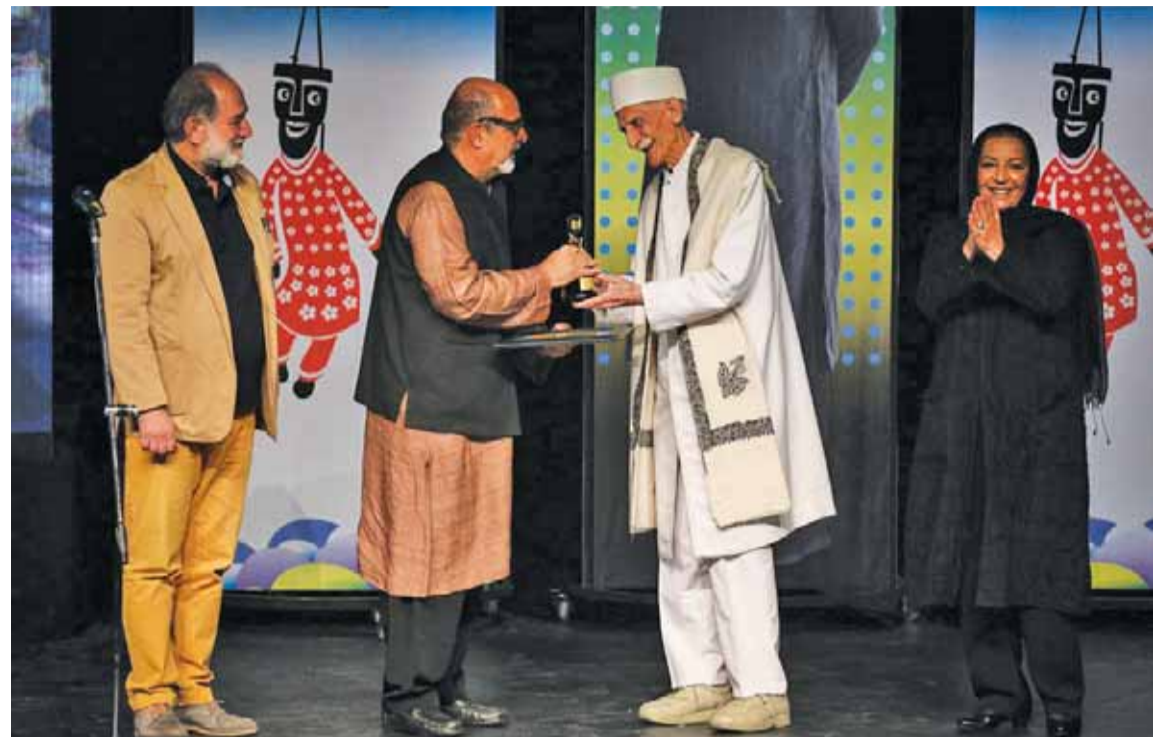
Gharibpur was next called on stage to receive his honorary plaque.

He expressed his thanks to Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Ali Moradkhani and Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei who have helped revive puppet shows.

The ceremony was followed by performances of several puppet shows.

Secretary of the festival Marzieh Borumand also referred to the festival as an event that brought color to the city and removed all the dust and dirt.

The festival, which ran from August 22 to 28, played host to 27 Iranian plays and seven plays from different countries.



Indian puppeteer Dadi Pudumjee (2nd L) receives an award from the Zoroastrian priest Mehraban Firoozgari for his lifetime achievements during the 16th Mobarak International Puppet Theater Festival at Tehran's City Theater Complex on August 28, 2016. Festival secretary Marzieh Borumand (R) and actor Atila Pesyani (L) are also seen in the photo. (Mehr/Mahmud Rahimi)

"The March of the Sun" to display beauty of Iranian deserts at Tehran museum

T A R T TEHRAN — An exhibition titled "The March of the Sun" will open to the public today at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) to display photos of Iranian deserts by Mohammadreza Javadi.

In a press conference held at the museum on Sunday, TMCA director Majid Mollanoruzi, the director of Iran's Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism, Mohammad Beheshti, film critic Akbar Alami, and filmmaker Mohammadreza Aslani elaborated on different aspects of the exhibit.

"A selection of 70 photos by Javadi alongside works by Iranian masters, also focusing on Iranian deserts, and being kept in the treasure vault of the museum, will go on display at the exhibit," Mollanoruzi said.

The works by the masters belong to Parviz Kalantari, Sohrab Sepehri, Reza Naami, Ebrahim Jafari and several others, he added.

"The project of the desert is our youngest project. It contains photos taken between 1984 and 2013. My



colleagues and I have been working in an institute doing research about the culture of Iran. We have completed about 40 projects, and this is one of them," Javadi said at the conference.

For his part, Alami promised that the exhibit would be one of the best of its kind and would remain in the mind of every visitor. "This exhibit will make you feel proud and make you think more about your homeland," Alami said.

"When we don't think correctly about the desert, it means that we do not belong to our homeland. If we want to be happy, we need to belong to this land. People like Javadi have helped us take a step in this direction. He has become friends with the desert and has revealed the real image of the desert. He has actually composed poetry by means of his photos of deserts," Beheshti remarked.

For his part, Aslani also said that the photos will help the visitors remember part of their culture, adding, "We learned through deserts not to fight with nature, but to make nature."

The exhibit will be running until October 26 at the museum located on North Kargar St., next to Laleh Park.

"Muhammad (S)" to open Kazan film festival

T A R T TEHRAN — "Muhammad (S), the Messenger of God," Iranian director Majid Majidi's epic about the childhood of the Prophet of Islam (S), will be the opening movie of the Kazan International Muslim Film Festival.

The 39th Montreal World Film Festival also opened with the world premiere of the movie in May 2015.

Nine more Iranian movies will also go on screen in the various sections of the festival, which will be held in the capital of the Tartar Autonomous Republic, Russia

from September 5 to 11.

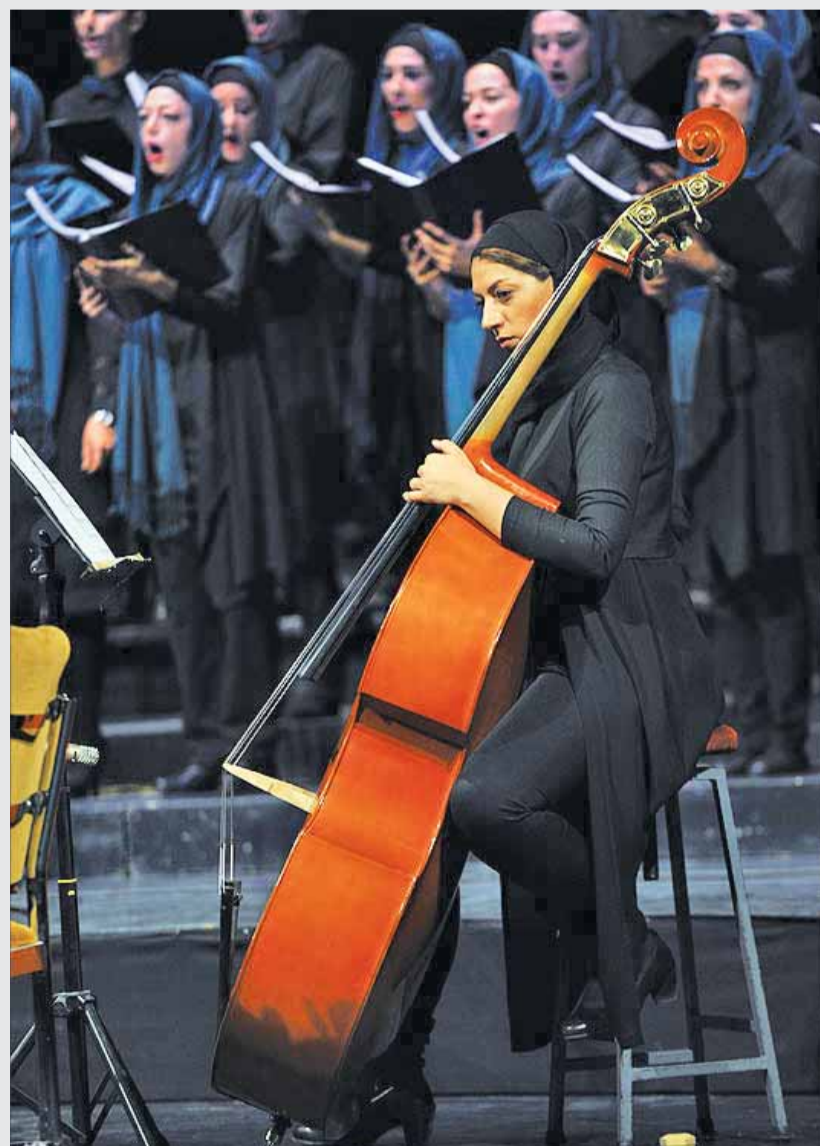
"Children of Oak" by Saadat Rahimzadeh and "Junk Girl" by Mohammad Zare will compete in the animation section.

"With These Hands" by Reza Haeri, "I Want to Be a King" by Mehdi Ganji and

"Lian River" by Ramtin Balef will go on screen in the documentary section.

"Immortal" by Hadi Mohaqeq, "Mobarak" by Mohammadreza Najafi-Emami, "The Salt Man" by Sajjad Musavi and "The Cemetery Men" by Ali Mardomi will be screened in the other sections.

PICTURE OF THE DAY Honaronline/Farzan Qasemi



A cellist performs with Iran's Bel Canto Symphony Orchestra during a concert at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on August 28, 2016.

Beyonce storms Video Music Awards, Rihanna gets lifetime award

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Beyonce dominated the MTV Video Music Awards on Sunday, prowling the stage with a 15 minute medley from her powerful "Lemonade" album and taking home eight statuettes, including the top prize - video of the year.

On a night when women ruled, Britney Spears returned to the VMA stage for the first time in a decade, and Rihanna performed four times to mark her lifetime achievement award.

Beyonce brought the house down at New York's Madison Square Garden, stringing together five of her "Lemonade" album tracks about betrayal, revenge and female empowerment in a song and dance routine that brought a long standing ovation.

VMA organizers had announced only three hours before Sunday's show began that Beyonce would perform. The singer arrived on the red carpet accompanied by the mothers of three African-American men who have died at the hands of U.S. police in the past two years.

Her politically charged "Formation" beat Adele's 2015 comeback single "Hello," Drake's "Hotline Bling," Justin Bieber's "Sorry" and Kanye West's sleeping nude celebrity look-alikes in "Famous" for video of the year.

She also won best female video and prizes for choreography, editing, and long form video in the awards that are voted on by fans.

Where Beyonce was angry and bold, Spears, 34, dressed in a sparkly gold leotard and matching over the

knee boots was slinky retro pop. It was the "Toxic" singer's first time on the VMA stage since her humiliating 2007 performance when her personal and professional life was falling apart, and follows the release of a new album last week.

Rihanna, 28, sang 13 of the biggest hits in her 13-year career, including "Rude Girl," "Diamonds" and "Only Girl in the World." She was presented with the Michael Jackson Video Vanguard award by Canadian rapper Drake - with whom she has often been romantically linked.

"She's someone I've been in love with since I was 22 years old. She's one of my best friends in the world. All my adult life, I've looked up to her even though she's younger than me," said Drake.

Fifth Harmony, the five-girl group that won TV talent show "The X Factor," took home 2 "Moonman" awards.

Kanye West, who has often hijacked the live VMA show, presented a new video for his single "Fade." West preceded the video with a rambling, improvised speech that touched on poverty, his wife Kim Kardashian, his long-running feud with Taylor Swift, and violence in black neighborhoods.

"We are undeniably the influencers, the thought leaders," he said, before screening what he called a "piece of my art."

Many of pop music's biggest names, including Justin Bieber, Britain's Adele and Taylor Swift were absent on Sunday.