



Artists opposed to Tehran museum's plan to loan works to German, Italian shows

ART TEHRAN — The desk Iran Painters Association and a number gallery owners have voiced their opposition to the Tehran Museum of Contemporary's plan to loan a selection of its Western artworks for shows in Germany and Italy.

The opposition was made during a meeting that the museum organized on Tuesday to consult with the community of Iranian artists and art experts about how the collection is sent to the European art shows.

Months ago, the museum announced the plan to loan a collection of 40 Western works and a number of pieces from its Persian art collection for shows at Berlin's National Gallery and Rome's MAXXI Museum.

The opponents of the plan said that the collection could be confiscated using some lame excuse. They said that the museum may return copies of the artworks instead of the originals.

"Members of Iran Painters Association are totally opposed to loaning the artworks to the exhibits," the association spokeswoman, Manijeh Sohi, said at the meeting.

Leili Golestan, the owner of Golestan Gallery, also expressed her opposition to the decision and said, "Now is not an appropriate time to send the works to the exhibitions, because we don't know whether the pieces will be sent back or not afterwards."

EU-Iran relations after Brexit

By Seyed Hossein Mousavian

The decision by British voters to leave the European Union coincides with improving relations between Europe and Iran. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's relationship with Europe's major powers has been characterized by periods of economic cooperation followed by near-complete disengagement. The nuclear deal struck between Iran and world powers in July 2015 - which the EU played a major role in negotiating - removed the economic sanctions that since 2006 have stood in the way of deeper ties.

Separating the UK

London and Tehran have not had sustainably good relations since before the revolution. Over the course of the past century, Iranians of all walks of life have come to view Britain differently, and with far more suspicion, than they view other European states. At the root of this mistrust is Britain's colonial era history in Iran. Nearly every Iranian bitterly recalls incidents such as the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which split Iran into Russian and British spheres of influence; the engineering by the British of Reza Khan's (later Reza Shah Pahlavi) ascension to the throne in 1925; Britain's opposition to the nationalization of Iranian oil; and its infamous 1953 plot with the CIA to oust prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh. This history has been so seared into the consciousness of Iranians that many believe Britain is to this day still trying to manipulate events inside Iran to its benefit.

These feelings have been reinforced since the revolution by Britain's support for forceful US policies against Iran, and its continuing refusal to acknowledge its historical offences. This was most evident during the early years of the nuclear crisis, when Iran negotiated with the E3 powers (Germany, France and the United Kingdom) over its nuclear program. During this period, I served as the spokesman for Iran's negotiating team.



Leader says armed forces must be on their toes

POLITICS TEHRAN — Supreme desk Leader of the Islamic revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei called on the Iranian armed forces on Wednesday to remain on their toes both as the country is

encountering "an immense front of enemies." Ayatollah Khamenei made the comments at Shahid Sattari Air Force University while addressing the graduation ceremony of Army cadets. "Today, the Iranian nation faces an immense

front of enemies because of its insistence on Islam, sovereignty, its high values, and belief in the ruling of God, and the armed forces must always be ready to play their role should the need arise," the Leader noted.

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Great powers not responsive to ICC: Amsterdam University professor

By Vahid Pourtajrishi

TEHRAN — A professor from the University of Amsterdam says the great powers are not responsive to the International Criminal Court for their crimes against humanity and these are just weak states which have to be held accountable to the body.

"None of these major powers want to be held accountable, so only weak states are held to the accountability of the ICC," Ugur

Umit Ungor tells the Tehran Times. Following is the text of the interview:

What were the reasons for an increase in genocide in the 20th century?

A: This is a really big question I can't answer in a few lines. First, I don't think there's more violence in the 20th century than before, but the 20th century is notorious for having a) technological means that we didn't have

before, such as train systems to concentrate people, poisonous gas to gas people in death camps, or nuclear bombs to wipe out entire cities, and b) ideological innovations such as the extreme ideologies that killed most people in the 20th century, especially extreme left (Communism) and extreme right (Fascism, Nazism, extreme nationalism). The combination of these two factors produces lots of violence.

Genocide is one of the serious criminal cases which has been investigated by the International Criminal Court. Has the court been successful to seriously address serious criminal cases like genocide?

A: The ICC is still weak because not all countries fully cooperate with it. National sovereignty is still a major force, and they are quite understaffed in responding to major crises like Syria or Central African Republic.

FAO joins UNHCR to improve livelihood of Afghan refugees in Iran

The FAO Representative to Iran received a Note of Appreciation on Wednesday (28 Sep. 2016) from his UNHCR counterpart that welcoming the Organization as the latest partner to the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR).

The Note handed over to Mr. Serge Nakouzi, the Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to the Islamic Republic of Iran, by Mr. Sivanka Dhanapala, who represents the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the country, highlights the contributions to be made by FAO towards SSAR objectives on livelihood related activities including livestock and fishery initiatives as well as nutritional projects in Iranian schools.



The FAO representative to Iran Serge Nakouzi (R), and Sivanka Dhanapala, the UNHCR representative to Iran (L).

According to a press release published by the FAO Representation in Iran, the Organization is currently formulating a number of projects, one of which entitled "Capacity Building for Afghan Refugees on Fisheries and Aquaculture related skills through Practical Technical and Vocational Trainings" and which aims to provide opportunities for the refugees to earn their livelihoods in the growing Iranian fisheries and aquaculture industry.

"These trainings would, over time, enhance refugees' financial, human and social capital and will better prepare them to find a sustainable durable solution, either in their own country or elsewhere" said Mr. Nakouzi during his meeting with UNHCR Representative in Tehran.

Works by Iranian illustrators to go on display at Belgrade Intl. Book Fair

ART TEHRAN — The Iran Cultural Affairs Institute (ICFI) plans to display 50 works by Iranian illustrators at the 61st Belgrade International Book Fair, which will be held in the Serbian capital from October 23 to 30.

Illustrations by Abbas Khanqoli, Ate-na Shams, Bahar Akhavan, Ehsan Bahmani, Maryam Tabatabai, dozens of other artists

have been selected for the exhibition, which will take place at the Iranian stand in the book fair.

Illustrators Sahar Khorasani and Raheleh Barkhordari are schedule to hold workshops during the exhibition.

Iran has been selected as the guest of honor for this edition of the Belgrade International Book Fair.



Austria extends Iran's insurance coverage to €1b

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Austria has extended Iran's insurance coverage from €280 million to €1 billion, ISNA reported.

In a meeting with Valiollah Seif

the governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI), on Tuesday, Hans Joerg Schelling, Austria's finance minister, announced that export credit agency Oesterreichische Kontrollbank AG (OeKB) has increased Iran's insur-

ance coverage by €720 million.

Seif, heading a trade delegation, arrived in the Austrian capital Vienna on Monday for a 2-day stay. He visited Joint Vienna Institute (JVI) on Tuesday and held talks

with Schelling.

According to him, Austrian Central Bank has activated CBI's account again and from now on Iranian banks can operate in the European country.

Foreign tourist arrivals fetches Iran \$24b in 3.5 years: official

TOURISM TEHRAN — Some \$24 billion desk came into Iran over the past three and a half years because of foreign tourists, the deputy director of Iran's Cultural Heritage,

Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization (CHTHO), Morteza Rahmani-Movahhed, said on Monday.

More than 16 million foreign tourists have visited the country during the mentioned period,

ISNA quoted him as saying.

Each traveler has, therefore, spent \$1,500 on average in the country, Rahmani-Movahhed explained.

Iran, Australia ink trade, water management MOUs

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran desk and Australia signed three memorandums of understanding following the arrival of Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Steven Ciobo in Tehran on Tuesday heading a business delegation.

One of the MOUs, signed by Ciobo and Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh, was on cooperation in the field of trade and investment, Shata news agency reported.

In the signing ceremony, Nematzadeh expressed hope that the MOU will promote joint ventures between the two countries.

The official suggested that an MOU to be also inked between Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) and Australian Trade Commission (known as Austrade).

While emphasizing the necessity of continuous ties between Iranian and Australian traders and industrialists, Nematzadeh said that participating in the exhibitions of the other country will provide the ground for achieving this goal.

The other MOU was signed by Ciobo and Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian. It was on cooperation in water resources management and water consumption optimization, IRNA reported.

PERSPECTIVE

By Heidar Soheili Political expert

The U.S., Saddam Hussein, and the war on Iran

Nearly three decades after the Iraqi eight-year war on Iran, there are still war historians who reduce any links between the U.S. and Iraq and Saddam Hussein's war on Iran to sheer propaganda.

However, recent documents made available by the U.S. government come as a reality check against the historians' reductionist thinking.

The documents, recently published under the Freedom of Information Act, indicate that the then U.S. President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) had considered a special role for Saddam to play such that the Iraqi dictator had taken it for granted the U.S. support for an invasion on Iran.

According to one of the texts, the Americans would like Saddam to occupy the three Iranian islands of the Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.

Once sanctioned by the West, Saddam Hussein in a famous footage was talking about Arab countries' appeal to him to launch an attack on the Iranian islands.

Now, the documents show the reality was different from what Saddam narrated. That is, the appeal had been originally put by the Americans.

The documents further reveal that Saddam had prepared equipment, including helicopters and three cargo airplanes in a southern region in the Persian Gulf for a surprise air strike on the Iranian islands.

However, the storming of the U.S. embassy in Tehran had already come as a blow to the Americans, forcing them to reconsider their plans.

But, what did the Americans have in mind? Were the islands to be seized by the Iraqi forces? Or were the islands to serve later on as a naval base for the U.S. forces? Did the Americans have a second thought as simply they were afraid of possible consequence?

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran blames global inaction for massacres

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Wednesday that the mass killing of innocent people is a result of the international community's "deafening silence".

Qassemi also condemned on Wednesday the recent terrorist attacks in Iraq, saying that the international community is partly responsible for the massacre of innocent people by the terrorists because of its disregard for the root causes of terror and violence, IRNA reported.

At least one hundred civilians were killed in the recent terrorist attacks in the war-torn Iraq.



Rezaee: Daesh's plan to target worshippers at Friday prayers thwarted

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mohsen Rezaee, IRNA secretary of the Expediency Council, has said that Daesh militants had intended to carry out terrorist attacks targeting worshippers at Friday prayers but were arrested between Hamadan and Kurdistan provinces.

"The militants were to be armed with bombs in Tehran to carry out terrorist acts," Rezaee said, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

The former IRGC chief also said a group of Daesh militants wanted to enter Iran, but the IRGC and other security forces arrested scores of them.



Yemeni parliament seeks Iran's help to end Saudi invasion

POLITICS TEHRAN — Yemeni Parliament Speaker Yahya Ali al-Raei, in a letter on Wednesday to his Iranian counterpart, urged the Islamic Republic to provide more support for the Yemeni people, ISNA reported.

In his letter to Ali Larjani, the Yemeni speaker also called on Iran to help find a way to end the Saudi-led invasion of the Arab country.

He also denounced the attempts by certain Arab states to question the legitimacy of Yemen's parliament, which he said has been formed under the constitution.



'Iran has affected all regional security equations'

POLITICS TEHRAN — On Wednesday, IRNA Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan said Iran has affected "all security equations in the region and not affected by international developments."

The top military official boasted Iran's security as one of the best in the world, adding, "If it was not for the Iranian nation's efforts in all areas, the country could not reach such condition."

According to Mehr, Dehghan also said that Iran is not affected by the developments that are aimed at making the country unstable.



IRGC launches over 3000 projects to fight poverty

POLITICS TEHRAN — IRGC's Ground Force has launched more than 3,000 projects to fight poverty in Iran, Tasnim reported on Wednesday.

In an official ceremony, the IRGC Ground Force unveiled the projects which are primarily aimed at combatting poverty in six provinces Sistan-Baluchistan, Khuzestan, Hormozgan, West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and Kermanshah.



Homa Hoodfar was released on \$14,000 bail: Ejei

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei said on Wednesday that Homa Hoodfar was released on a bail of 500 million rials (\$14,000).

"If the court decides, a prisoner can be released on bail, and the person can leave the country provided he's not barred from doing so," he told a news conference in Tehran.

Iran said it had freed Iranian-Canadian professor Homa Hoodfar earlier this week for humanitarian reasons such as concerns for her health condition.

World racing to engage Iran: Rouhani

POLITICS TEHRAN — The world is racing to engage in cooperation with Iran, President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday while on a visit to Qazvin province.

"During the UN General Assembly in previous years countries used to race how to slander Iran, but this year they were competing for cooperation with Iran," he said.

He added the Islamic Republic stands as the "ultimate force" against terrorism in the region and the entire world.

"Now the international community is well aware of the nation's true nature," the president noted.

"Gone are the days when Iran would be accused of supporting terrorism and the Iranian people would face other accusations such as building nuclear bombs as the true nature of the nation has come



to light for the world."

On economic achievements despite a sharp fall in oil prices, Rouhani said his government saved the country from many economic afflictions that oil producing countries around the world suffered in the recent years.

"Look what happened to all the oil producing countries in the meantime, what happened to oil prices. In Venezuela inflation hit 485 percent... In recent days Saudi Arabia cut down on the salaries of all government employees for economic conditions and severe downfall of oil prices," he stated.

He added, "Saudi Arabia also suffered a \$100-billion deficit and had to draw money from funds... This is while we did not touch our fund, but on the contrary deposited 20 percent of our revenues in it."

Leader says armed forces must be on their toes

➔ Ayatollah Khamenei described the capable, pious, and young forces of the country as a great source of wealth.

The Leader also pointed to the valor of the armed forces during the Iraqi invasion of Iran in the 1980s, saying, "The era of Sacred Defense was an ordeal, during which the true essence of the Iranian Army came to light and important and glorious achievements were made by the army forces."

Also the Leader reminded the significance of in-

roducing the Sacred Defense era to young cadets in military colleges, noting, "The (Iraqi) eight-year imposed war (on Iran) was in fact an international war and an all-encompassing invasion by major powers and their global and regional followers on (Iran's) borders, identity, values, the Islamic establishment, and the revolution of the Iranian nation."

The ceremony came as a wrap-up of the Sacred Defense Week, an annual event to mark the 36th anniversary of the eight-year Iraqi war on Iran.



Leader says, "Today, the Iranian nation faces an immense front of enemies because of its insistence on Islam, sovereignty, its high values, and belief in the ruling of God, and the armed forces must be always ready to play their role should the need arise."

'French accusation against Iran is oblivious'

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Wednesday dismissed as oblivious the recent remarks by French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault, who accused Iran and Russia of following a "dead-end" strategy in Syria.

Ayrault said on Sunday that Russia and Iran would become "accomplices in war crimes" if they "continued to prolong the war in Syria".



Jean-Marc Ayrault

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Wednesday said, "It

is to be regretted that the remarks of the French foreign minister, despite knowledge which he should have of regional and global developments, are unrealistic and unexpected."

He said, "Iran's spiritual influence in regional countries is being put to use to fight terrorists whose crimes are intimately known to some Western countries, particularly France."

Ayrault had described Russia and

Iran as supporters of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and called on them "to take their responsibility by stopping this strategy that leads to a dead-end."

Qassemi dismissed the West's perception of Iran's role in Syria, saying, "They should have already realized that they should not ask Iran to use its influence against those who are fighting global terrorism at the forefront."

Tehran, Ankara agree on humanitarian aid to Syria

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran and Turkey announced on Wednesday they have agreed on an arrangement to provide humanitarian aid to Syria, after the U.S.-Russian brokered ceasefire failed after one week.

The agreement was announced after Iranian Foreign Minister held closed-door talks with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu and other Turkish officials.

Having attended the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Zarif stopped in Ankara Wednesday morning on his way back to Tehran to hold talks with Turkish officials.

This is the third round of talks between the Iranian and Turkish foreign ministers over the past two months.

AFP quoted an unnamed Turkish diplomatic source as saying that the conflict in Syria was among the topics on the agenda of Zarif-Cavusoglu discussions.

Iran and Turkey have differences



over the situation in Syria, but have started closer cooperation after the July coup in Turkey.

Iran was the first country to condemn the coup attempt.

Also, on agenda has been expansion of relations between the two neighboring countries.

Amir-Abdollahian: Leader ruled out talks with U.S. on Syria

POLITICS TEHRAN — Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, a politician who was Iran's point man for Arab affairs until recently, said late on Tuesday that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had not authorized the government to hold talks with the United States over Syria.

Speaking in a meeting with Speaker of the People's Council of Syria Hadiya Khalaf Abbas in Tehran, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the decree came against the background of White House's efforts to make Moscow go with the approach of eliminating Bashar al-Assad as the Syrian president.

The U.S. also tried indirectly to encourage Iran to discard Assad as having a role in the future of Syria, said Amir-Abdollahian who currently serves as international advisor to Iran's parliament speaker.

Khalaf Abbas, for her part, said Syria will never forget the Islamic Republic's



support in harsh times.

She also appreciated Majlis Speaker Ali Larjani's initiative of launching a joint parliamentary friendship group between the two countries.

She said the group will start work under her supervision in Damascus in the near future.

No confusion why Saddam started war on Iran in 1980: peace activist

'UN didn't name Saddam aggressor until 12 years after the war'

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Mohammad Homaeefar

TEHRAN — Phil Wilayto, a peace activist and editor of The Virginia Defender newspaper, says there is no confusion about how Saddam Hussein started war against Iran on September 22, 1980.

"Saddam Hussein, like other undemocratic government leaders in the region, was fearful of the effect the Iranian Revolution was having on his subjects," Phil Wilayto tells the Tehran Times as Iran is marking its "sacred defense" against the invading Saddam army.

Following is the full transcription of the interview.

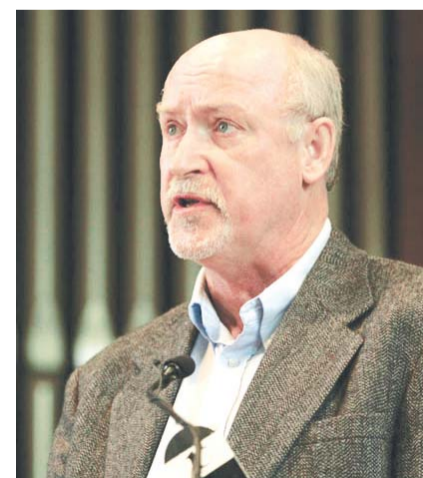
Q: Mr. Wilayto, what's your take on United States' role in Iran-Iraq war?

A: "It's a pity they can't both lose."

This was the famous quote by Henry Kissinger expressing his view of the eight-year war between the Republic of Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The quote really captures the U.S. position toward the terrible war that took the lives of some 600,000 people on both sides

of the conflict. At the time, Kissinger, an architect of the U.S. war against Vietnam, was a member of President Ronald Reagan's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. There's really no confusion about how the war started: Saddam Hussein, like other undemocratic government leaders in the region, was fearful of the effect the Iranian Revolution was having on his subjects. That is why he launched an attack on Iran in 1980. It was just 19 months after the historic overthrow of the U.S.-backed Shah, when Iran's new government was still consolidating itself and working out its relationship with the military establishment. It was truly a very dangerous time for the Revolution.

The U.S. government, of course, was shocked and furious at the loss of one of its most faithful puppets, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi - whom it had in-



stantly after engineering the 1953 coup against democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh. It was

"The U.S. provided military equipment, along with critical intelligence gathered from radar planes and satellite imagery" to Iraq during its war against Iran in the 1980s, Phil Wilayto says.

even more outraged at the prospect of the re-nationalization of Iran's vast oil resources. This is why it assisted Saddam in his aggression.

During this war against Iraq, Iran stood virtually alone, with only Syria providing support. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other (Persian) Gulf states gave Iraq huge loans. The U.S. provided military equipment, along with critical intelligence gathered from radar planes and satellite imagery. The United Nations Security Council expressed concern about the war, but did not identify Iraq as the aggressor until Dec. 11, 1991 - 12 years after Iraq invaded Iran. Similarly, the UN reported the use of chemical weapons - the first time since World War I - but failed to add that it was only Iraq that was using them.

The aid provided to Iraq by the U.S. and its allies was just enough to keep the war going, but not enough to end it. Washington's strategic aim here was to try and weaken both countries in order to eliminate opposition to its own goal of achieving hegemony in the oil-rich Middle East.

Iraqi joint forces start operation to free Anbar district

U.S. to boost military presence in Iraq for Mosul battle

Government and volunteer tribal forces in Iraq have kicked off an offensive to recapture a district in the conflict-ridden western province of Anbar from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists.

Operations began to liberate the Dolab district on Wednesday, al-Sumeria news agency reports.

The news agency added that Iraqi forces are advancing on the ISIL-held district from four separate directions and have so far met no resistance by the Takfiri forces.

Dolab, which is located 10 kilometers west of the city of Hit, was occupied by ISIL forces in mid-2014 and used as a military base by the terrorist group to mobilize and launch terrorist attacks on people and security forces.

Latest reports from the operation on Wednesday said army forces liberated three villages, namely Tahmaniyah, Varidiyah, and Donkeyah, in the Dolab district, neutralizing 100 traps, as well as an explosive-laden vehicle placed on their way.

In a spate incident, the unintentional explosion of a terrorist explosive belt at a group gathering attended by ISIL commanders left 16 Takfiris dead and 17 others wounded in Hawijah, southwest of the city of Kirkuk in northern Iraq.

Elsewhere, volunteer forces known as Popular Mobilization Units (al-Hashd al-Sha'abi) captured a high-ranking ISIL commander in Makhoul Mountains, in the northern province of Salahuddin (Saladin Governorate).

The ISIL commander was in posses-



sion of explosives and mustard gas.

The ISIL terrorists have been a source of constant fear and violence in the northern and western parts of Iraq ever since they staged an offensive more than two years ago, seizing control of swathes of Iraqi territory.

The terrorists have carried out brutal crimes against men, women and children of all ethnic and religious groups residing in the regions under their control.

Iraqi army soldiers and fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units are fighting to win back militant-held regions in joint operations.

U.S. & Mosul battle

Meanwhile, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said on Wednesday that Washington would send more United States troops to help local forces in the battle to retake Mosul from ISIL expected later this year.

"American President Barack Obama was consulted on a request from the Iraqi government for a final increase in the number of trainers and advisers under the umbrella of the international coalition in Iraq," he said in a statement.

In Washington, a U.S. official confirmed the United States was "prepared to provide additional U.S. military per-

sonnel to train and advise the Iraqis as the planning for the Mosul campaign intensifies." The official did not elaborate.

Abadi met Obama and Vice President Joe Biden last week on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, though it was not clear whether the deal was sealed there.

U.S. Army General Joseph Votel, who oversees U.S. forces in the Middle East, told Reuters in July the U.S. military expected to seek additional troops in Iraq.

The United States has at least 4,400 troops in Iraq as part of a U.S.-led coalition providing extensive air support, training and advice to the Iraqi military, which collapsed in 2014 in the face of ISIL's lightning advance toward Baghdad.

Iraqi forces, including Kurdish peshmerga forces and mostly Shia volunteers, have retaken around half of that territory over the past two years but Mosul, the largest city under the ultra-hardline group's control anywhere across their self-proclaimed caliphate, is likely to be the biggest battle yet.

U.S. and Iraqi commanders say the push on the city could begin by the second half of October.

Current U.S. troop levels in Iraq are still a fraction of the 170,000 deployed at the height of the nine-year occupation that toppled longtime dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003, sparking an al-Qaeda-backed insurgency and throwing the country into a sectarian civil war.

(Source: agencies)

U.S. names first ambassador to Cuba in more than 50 years

The United States has tapped career diplomat Jeffrey DeLaurentis to become the first official ambassador to Cuba in more than five decades.

"The appointment of an ambassador is a common-sense step forward toward a more normal and productive relationship between our two countries," U.S. President Barack Obama said in a statement.

"Having an ambassador will make it easier to advocate for our interests, and will deepen our understanding even when we know that we will continue to have differences with the Cuban government," he said.

Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro announced a thaw in relations in December 2014. The two countries restored full diplomatic relations in July 2015.

Since then, Washington and Havana have taken once-unthinkable steps to mend ties after more than half a century of enmity.

Obama visited Cuba earlier this year and relaxed portions of the U.S. embargo imposed since 1962.

Flights have resumed and cruise ships can now sail from Miami to Havana.

U.S. companies like Airbnb and Netflix now operate in Cuba and hotel group Starwood, acquired last week by Marriott International, opened a Sheraton in Havana last June.

DeLaurentis is currently the Chargé d'Affaires at the



U.S. Embassy in Havana and previously worked in Bogota and at the United Nations.

But his nomination, which requires Senate confirmation, is likely to face stiff opposition in Congress, where Cuban-American lawmakers have sought to garner local support by opposing Obama's policies.

Any senator could place an anonymous hold on the nomination. Several Republican lawmakers have opposed Democrat Obama's outreach to the Communist regime led by Castro.

Florida Senator Marco Rubio, a Cuban-American presidential contender in the Republican primary race who ultimately lost to Donald Trump, blasted Obama's nomination.

"A U.S. ambassador is not going to influence the Cuban government, which is a dictatorial and closed regime," Rubio said in a statement.

"This nomination should go nowhere until the Castro regime makes significant and irreversible progress in the areas of human rights and political freedom for the Cuban people."

Accusing the Obama administration of failing to confront Cuba over its repressive policies, Rubio said the U.S. embassy in Havana's Twitter account "seems more like a travel agency than an advocate for American values and interests".

Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, the top Democrat on the Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the State Department and foreign operations, on the other hand, argued for DeLaurentis' confirmation.

"The Cuban people have their ambassador in Washington. The American people need their ambassador in Havana," Leahy said in a statement.

Cuba's top diplomat in Washington, Jose R Cabanas, was given the rank of ambassador last year.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Turkey: 32,000 jailed for links to group 'behind' coup

Turkish courts have placed 32,000 suspects under arrest ahead of trial on charges of links to a group run by the United States-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, who is blamed for the July 15 coup, the justice minister said.

Bekir Bozdag told Turkey's NTV television on Wednesday that 70,000 people had been investigated after the coup and of them 32,000 remanded in custody.

"This process is continuing," he said. The numbers of those arrested marks an increase of more than 10,000 from those previously given by the government.

Bozdag said that there could be new arrests, while some of those currently arrested could still be freed under judicial control or freed entirely.

Some 10 weeks after the coup attempt aimed at ousting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan led to an unprecedented crackdown, there is still no indication as to when trials might start.

The trials of tens of thousands will be the biggest legal process in Turkey's history and are set to put the system under immense pressure.

"It is not entirely clear how the trials will

be carried out," Bozdag acknowledged.

He said trials would take place in cities across the country and not in one single venue.

Bozdag said there was no need to create a special trial venue in Istanbul as capacity was sufficient. But he said one was needed in Ankara and work is taking place for a trial venue at Sincan outside the capital.

"People are not going to be put on trial in just one place but trials will take place in all of Turkey," he said.

U.S. officials will respond to Turkey's

demand to arrest Gulen within a couple of days, the justice minister added.

Turkey wants the U.S. to extradite Gulen, who has lived in Pennsylvania since 1999, and prosecute him for masterminding the attempt to overthrow the government on July 15. The 75-year-old preacher denies any involvement.

Washington has previously said it is cooperating with Ankara and asked its NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) ally for patience as it processes the extradition request to meet U.S. legal requirements.

(Source: Hurriyet)

Syrian jets pound militant bases in Aleppo

Militants get new type of Grad rockets

Syrian aircraft have started launching "concentrated airstrikes" against militant-held areas inside and around the northwestern city of Aleppo.

A source within the Syrian military said the raids are underway against militant bases in the town of Khan Touman to the south of the city and elsewhere in the area, AFP reported.

The strikes led to "the destruction of armored vehicles and (other) vehicles, some of which were equipped with machine guns."

Last Monday marked the last day of a week-long ceasefire in the war-weary country, which had been brokered by Russia and the United States. It ushered in several days of relative calm, including in Aleppo, which has been divided between government forces and militants.

However, later through the ceasefire, violence began to creep back into the city when a United States-led airstrike

killed more than 80 Syrian soldiers who had been fighting the Takfiri terrorists in the eastern parts of the country.

After announcing an end to the truce, the Syrian army said the militant groups "did not commit to a single element" of the agreement.

Russia also criticized the United States for not doing enough to rein in militants in Syria and protect the truce deal, saying continued violations of the ceasefire by militants made it "senseless" for Damascus to stick to the agreement.

The Syrian forces have now begun a fresh set of operations aimed at ridding Aleppo of foreign-backed militants, where they have made a series of gains in recent days.

Syrian state TV reported on Tuesday that government forces recaptured Farafra neighborhood, situated in the old quarter of Aleppo near the city's famous citadel.

The Associated Press quoted a Syrian military official as saying on Tuesday that the operation in Aleppo will

not stop before "terrorist groups" occupying the city's eastern parts have been eliminated.

Militants get new type of rockets

Meanwhile, a militant commander in Syria says his group has received foreign-supplied surface-to-surface Grad rockets amid the escalation of fighting in the embattled northwestern city of Aleppo.

Fares al-Bayoush, the militant commander, told Reuters on Wednesday that the new type of the rockets, which have a range of 22 and 40 kilometers, were supplied in "excellent quantities" and would be used in battlefronts in Aleppo, Hama and the coastal region.

Syria's militants had already received Grad missiles with a 20-kilometer range, but Bayoush stressed that the latest dispatch was the first time the militants got this particular type of rockets.

(Source: SANA)

Former Israeli President Shimon Peres dies at 93

Former Israeli President Shimon Peres, known as the regime's "last remaining founding father," has died almost two weeks after suffering a stroke.

The Sheba Medical Center in Tel Aviv pronounced the 93-year-old dead at 0000 GMT on Wednesday.

He had been rushed to hospital on September 13 following chest pains, an abnormal heartbeat and severe internal bleeding.



While receiving medical care, officials had described his condition as serious, putting him in a medically-induced coma in the intensive care unit.

Over five decades of politicking, Peres held nearly every major office in the regime's ranks.

He served as foreign minister under his Labor Party rival Yitzhak Rabin, became prime minister between 1984 and 1986, and then again during 1995-96 after Rabin's death. The politician also served as the regime's president from 2007 to 2014.

The career also saw him once functioning as the minister for military affairs.

Under Peres's tenure as president, two full-scale wars were launched against the Israeli-blockaded Gaza Strip, which killed more than 3,700 defenseless Palestinians in total.

He, however, slammed as "outrageous" and "one-sided" a United Nations inquiry that blamed Israel for six serious attacks on UN buildings during the first Gaza offensive and said Tel Aviv would not apologize for defending its people.

Two years into his presidency, he surprised even some Israeli politicians by defending Tel Aviv's regular deadly forays into the enclave.

In 2009, he famously prompted a walkout by then Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland after an angry exchange with the latter concerning Israeli warfare against the strip.

Qana Carnage

While he was in office as prime minister in 1996, the Israeli military shelled a United Nations compound near Qana, a village in southern Lebanon, where hundreds of locals were sheltering. The raid killed 106 people and injured around 116 others.

When asked to explain, Peres said, "We did not know that several hundred people were concentrated in that camp. It came to us as a bitter surprise."

However, a UN investigation later revealed that the deaths at the Qana base were unlikely to have been the result of an accident. As director general of the ministry of military affairs in the 1950s, Peres oversaw the development of Israel's nuclear program with assistance from France.

The Israeli atomic stockpile is now estimated to be holding at some 200-400 warheads, while the regime refuses to confirm or deny its existence under a policy of deliberate ambiguity.

Peres once told The Time that Israel's Dimona nuclear reactor in the Negev desert, which is used to manufacture nuclear arms, had helped the regime by leading many Arabs to the suspicion that "it's very hard to destroy Israel."

Israel claimed existence in 1948 after carrying out a wholesale war against Arab states and capturing massive swathes of Arab land. A year earlier, Peres had joined the Haganah, the predecessor of the Israeli military. He had been tasked by his mentor David Ben-Gurion, the so-called "primary founder of Israel" and first Israeli premier, with recruitment of personnel and arms purchases.

"As long as there was a danger to the existence of Israel, I was what you would call a hawk," Peres once said.

His career was also marked by an incessant push to expand the regime's illegal settlements, which have been mushrooming across the occupied Palestinian territories.

'Beginning of the end of occupation'

Palestinians, meanwhile, reacted to Peres' death, blaming him for their suffering in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and blockaded Gaza.

Gaza-based Palestinian resistance movement Hamas said "the Palestinian people are very happy at the passing of this criminal who caused their blood to shed."

Sami Abu Zuhri, the spokesman for Hamas, said Peres "was the last remaining Israeli official who founded the occupation, and his death is the end of a phase in the history of this occupation and the beginning of a new phase of weakness."

Palestinian residents of Gaza and the West Bank also slammed the late Israeli politician for the carnage of many of their compatriots. "It is known that he has killed many Palestinians," said Halim Jaber, resident of Ramallah in the West Bank.

Zahra Al-Najjar, resident of Gaza, also said "As a Palestinian I feel happy because Shimon Peres and all of them (Israeli leaders) were part of imposing the siege on Gaza and on the Palestinian nation." (Source: Press TV)

The U.S., Saddam Hussein, and the war on Iran

Or maybe, at the end of the day, they came to the conclusion that the Iraqi forces would be buried there forever by Iranian commandos!

The first days of the Iraqi war on Iran are a clear evidence that the Iraqi navy could not hold a candle to the Iranian side.

The documents are but a small pool of documents all bearing testimony to the stance that Washington and Iraq were united in their efforts to wage the bloody war against Iran, a war that still continues to haunt our region.

Annual trade between Iran, Germany to double in 2016: AHK Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The annual trade between Germany and Iran is planned to double in 2016, the chairman of German-Iranian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AHK Iran), Rene Harun, said in Tehran on Wednesday.

The official put the worth of trade between the two countries at \$2.5 billion in 2015, IRNA reported.

The German director expressed hope that the figure will also rise to over \$10 billion in the coming years and his country can lag China behind to become Iran's leading trade partner.

Bank of England's Shafik says 2016 rate cut will hinge on data

Bank of England Deputy Governor Minouche Shafik said the chances of a further interest rate cut by the British central bank this year would hinge on the strength of incoming economic data.



Shafik said in a speech on Wednesday that a further loosening in monetary policy would probably be needed "at some point" but did not repeat language the central bank used earlier this month which pointed to a rate cut this year.

Asked after her speech if a rate cut was possible at the BoE's next rate meeting in November, Shafik said: "If we have data prior to that which signals that stimulus is needed, we will obviously

act on that."

Any changes to the government's fiscal policy - which will only become clearer later in November - would also be important, Shafik said, and she added that the longer-term economic outlook still pointed to a slowdown.

"I would much rather be on the front foot and act preemptively than be on the back foot and do too little too late," she said. (Source: Reuters)

Seoul hosts foreign investment event to attract more investors

SEOUL (Yonhap) — South Korea is hosting a foreign investment promotion event to highlight potential business opportunities in the country and attract more overseas investors, the government said Wednesday.

The Foreign Investment Week (FIW), scheduled to run through Thursday in Seoul, includes business forums, person-to-person consulting sessions and on-site visiting, with 291 foreign firms attending.

The event is hosted by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy and is organized by the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA).

Some 70 Chinese investors are participating in the event, up from last year's 34, on the back of the free trade deal between Seoul and Beijing that took effect in December last year.

The ministry said this year's FIW focuses on new-generation industries including renewable energy, information technology convergence and bio-health, as the South Korean government has been making efforts to foster the sectors as new growth engines.

"South Korea is an attractive country that grows steadily despite rising uncertainties in the global economy and is widely linked with a number of big markets through free trade pacts," Vice Trade Minister Jeong Marn-ki said in his opening remarks. "I expect foreign investors to witness South Korea's attractiveness and find new opportunities here."

Russia hopes to receive all permits on Turkish stream project soon

Russia hopes to receive all remaining permits to construct the Turkish Stream gas pipeline in the near future, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said Tuesday.

Earlier in September, Russia's Gazprom energy company said it had received the first permits from Turkey through diplomatic channels to construct the offshore section of the Turkish Stream gas pipeline and that the project was advancing to its practical implementation stage.

According to Novak, the coordination work on drafting the intergovernmental agreement and the roadmap is currently on the stage of consultations with Turkey.

Earlier in September, Novak said he planned to sign the intergovernmental agreement on the Turkish Stream project in October.

The Turkish Stream project was announced in the end of 2014 by President Vladimir Putin on his state visit to Turkey. In November 2015, the Turkish Stream project, which was planned to bring Russian gas via the Black Sea into Turkey and southern Europe, was suspended after a Russian Su-24 aircraft was downed by a Turkish F-16 fighter in Syria. In June, following Turkey's apology to Russia for the November incident, the sides began a reconciliation process. (Source: Sputnik)

Iran, Australia ink trade, water management MOUs

In the signing ceremony, Chitchian said as Iran and some parts of Australia have similar climate, the both sides can benefit from the experiences of each other when it comes to water management.

Expansion of economic ties between Iran and Australia requires determination of the two countries' state-run and private sectors, the Iranian minister noted, adding that there is no obstacle from the side of his country for promotion of bilateral ties.

Iran and Australia also inked an MOU on exports guarantee cooperation. The MOU was signed on Wednesday by the managing director of Export Guarantee Fund of Iran, Seyed Kamal Seyed Ali, and the CEO of Australia's Export Credit Agency, Andrew Hunter.

Addressing Iran-Australia Trade Forum, which was held at Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on Wednesday, Ciobo said his country considers Iran a new market and at this stage it is looking for finding trade partners in the Islamic Republic.

He said Australia should take post-sanction advantages in Iran, noting that his country seeks win-win trade with Iran.



Ciobo (R) and Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh



Ciobo (R) and Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian

Tehran, Muscat to bolster economic ties

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran and Oman signed five memoranda of understanding (MOU) at the end of the 16th Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee meeting in Tehran, Shata news agency reported on Wednesday.

The MOUs were signed by Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh and Omani Minister of Commerce and Industry Ali bin Masud Al Sunaidy.

The agreements covered various fields including standard, insurance, investment and export promotion.

In the signing ceremony Nematzadeh mentioned the historical relations between Iran and Oman and stressed the need for expansion of cooperation.

He also emphasized the importance of developing banking and insurance relations in trade and economic cooperation between the two countries and noted, "Investment in the Iranian ports of Chabahar and Bandar Abbas could be a positive outlook in regards to mutual coop-

eration". Elsewhere in his remarks the Iranian minister pointed out the necessity of drawing up a five-year economic cooperation framework between the two countries, saying that this roadmap should be developed and approved by the two sides within the next six months.

The Omani minister for his part, expressed his satisfaction with the establishment of two flight lines and three shipping lines between the two countries and hoped for opening an office in Iran to facilitate banking relations.

Al Sunaidy also voiced his country's interest in investing in the Iranian southern port of Bandar Abbas and said, "Tourism as well as technical and engineering services could also be potent fields for future cooperation".

He mentioned the banking relations between Oman and Iran and said that the two sides should also cement the ground in insurance sector to facilitate trade.

German consumer morale falls slightly heading into October

The mood among German consumers worsened slightly heading into October but remains at one of the highest levels in more than a decade, a survey showed on Wednesday, suggesting that private consumption is likely to compensate for weakening exports.

The consumer sentiment indicator, published by the Nuremberg-based GfK institute and based on a survey of around 2,000 Germans, fell to 10.0 going into October. A Reuters poll had expected unchanged at 10.2.

Record-high employment, rising real wages and ultra-low borrowing costs are boosting the spending power of Germans.

GfK said the slight fall was linked to a prevailing sense of uncertainty linked to the threat of possible attacks in Germany and the economic consequences of Britain's vote in June to leave the European Union.

"The consequences of this (Brexit) for the European and, above all, German economy are still completely unclear," GfK researcher Rolf Buerkl said.



"Nevertheless, GfK confirms its forecast that a rise in real private consumer spending of around two percent in 2016 appears achievable and realistic," he added. "Consumption therefore remains an important pillar of economic growth in Germany."

A sub-index measuring economic expectations fell for the third time in a row, suggesting German consumers fear the economy will be weaker over the next few months.

Data and sentiment surveys published over the summer have painted a mixed picture of Europe's largest economy. (Source: Reuters)

Gold hits one-week low as dollar firms

Gold inched lower on Wednesday to touch a one-week low, after suffering its biggest single-day loss in nearly a month in the previous session, on a firmer dollar.

The safe haven asset slid nearly one percent on Tuesday, its biggest single session percentage loss since Aug. 30, as investors viewed that Democrat Hillary Clinton had won the first U.S. presidential debate against Republican rival Donald Trump, boosting the appetite for riskier assets like equities.

Spot gold fell 0.2 percent to \$1,324.71 an ounce by 0430 GMT on Wednesday, and touched a bottom of \$1,324.35, the lowest since Sept. 21.

U.S. gold futures eased 0.1 percent to \$1,328.50 an ounce.

"Demand for gold as a safe haven has fallen, simply because Hillary has more or less trumped over Trump in the presidential debate," said OCBC Bank analyst Barnabas Gan.

"Falling gold prices suggest that market watchers look at Hillary as a safer bet than Trump."

Markets have tended to see Clinton as the candidate of the status quo, while few are sure what a Trump presidency might mean for U.S. foreign policy, trade or the domestic economy.

"The rise in risk-off sentiment has undermined (gold) prices. This is made

worse by the fall in yields and U.S. dollar gains," HSBC analyst James Steel said in a note.

"We think gold may be driven lower near-term to closer to \$1,310 per ounce," Steel added.

The dollar index, which measures the greenback against a basket of six major currencies, was up 0.14 percent on Wednesday. A stronger greenback makes dollar-denominated gold more expensive for holders of other currencies.

Gold can move further to the downside in the coming days with key support at the 100 day moving average of about \$1,310, according to MKS trader James

Gardiner. Holdings of the SPDR Gold Trust, the world's largest gold-backed exchange-traded fund, fell 0.22 percent to 949.14 tons on Tuesday.

Among other precious metals, spot silver was down for the fourth straight session having dipped 0.6 percent at \$19.03 an ounce. The metal fell 1.4 percent in the previous session, its biggest single day loss in nearly three weeks.

Platinum was up 0.2 percent at \$1,024.40 after falling over one percent in the prior session.

Palladium gained 0.4 percent to \$700.60 per ounce. (Source: Reuters)

Fed may change stress tests, capital buffers for U.S. banks: Yellen

The Federal Reserve is considering changing the annual stress tests it gives to U.S. banks to see if they can withstand a massive financial crisis, and also using test results to set the capital buffers that banks must maintain to blunt the effects of a downturn, according to its chair, Janet Yellen.

In prepared testimony for a House of Representa-

tives Financial Services Committee hearing on Wednesday, Yellen said the Fed is "now considering making several changes to our stress testing methodology and process."

"The existing capital conservation buffer would be replaced with a risk-sensitive, firm-specific buffer that is sized based on stress test results," she also said.

For the eight U.S. banks that are large and considered important to the global financial system the new buffer calculation "would result in a significant aggregate increase in capital requirements," Yellen said.

Yellen did not comment on the outlook for the economy or monetary policy in her prepared remarks. (Source: Reuters)

NEWS IN BRIEF



South Korea to widen Takata air bag recall by 110,000 vehicles

South Korea said on Wednesday that 13 automakers will recall some 110,000 vehicles equipped with Takata Corp's defective air bags, the latest development in a long-running safety crisis involving the Japanese company.

The United States in May announced a new round of recall of Takata's air bag inflators which have been linked to at least 14 deaths and more than 100 injuries and triggered the largest-ever auto recall. Since then, other countries have been announcing their own national recalls.



RBS to pay \$1.1b to resolve U.S. regulator's mortgage cases

Royal Bank of Scotland Group Plc will pay \$1.1 billion to resolve claims that it sold toxic mortgage-backed securities to credit unions that later failed, the U.S. National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) said on Tuesday.

The settlement with RBS brings the U.S. regulator's recoveries against various banks to \$4.3 billion in lawsuits over their sale of mortgage-backed securities before the 2008 financial crisis.

NCUA Board Chairman Rick Metzger said the regulator was pleased with the settlement and plans to continue "to pursue recoveries against financial firms that we maintain contributed to the corporate crisis."



Japan steel industry sees China merger promoting structural reform

China's Baosteel Group's acquisition of Wuhan Steel will create stronger leadership in the country's steel industry and promote structural reform, the chairman of the Japan Iron and Steel Federation said on Wednesday.

"We welcome the move as the higher concentration will help advance structural reform in the Chinese steel industry," Kosei Shindo, the chairman of the Japan Iron and Steel Federation, told a news conference.

China's Baosteel Group fleshed out its plans to buy rival Wuhan to create the world's second-largest steel-maker behind ArcelorMittal last week, part of Beijing's effort to consolidate its fragmented steel industry.

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9/11: Twin towers 'could have been destroyed by controlled demolition'

The destruction of the World Trade Center's high-rise buildings triggered a lot of controversy prompting various speculations. On the 15th anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy a group of physicists published a study, suggesting that the towers could have been destroyed by controlled demolition. The World Trade Center (WTC) Twin Towers possibly were destroyed by controlled demolition, the study published by Europhysics News, the magazine of the European physics community, assumes.



"On September 11, 2001, the world witnessed the total collapse of three large steel-framed high-rises. Since then, scientists and engineers have been working to understand why and how these unprecedented structural failures occurred," the article dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the September 11 read. The authors of the study argue that neither before, nor since 9/11 have fires caused the total destruction of a steel-framed high-rise.

"The only phenomenon capable of collapsing such buildings completely has been by way of a procedure known as controlled demolition, whereby explosives or other devices are used to bring down a structure intentionally," the study underscored.

In an interview with Sputnik Deutschland Europhysics News' editors and scientists Victor R. Velasco and Jo Hermans shared their views on the controversial issue.

"According to some physicists, in three cases it remained unclear why the steel-framed high-rise buildings collapsed from exposure to high temperatures in a way it occurred [on September 11, 2001]. Several groups of scientists, including those from Purdue University, have carried out a number of rigorous simulations of tower destructions and conducted endurance tests on steel girders exposing them to kerosene fire. These simulations and experiments have brought different results," the scientists told Sputnik.

■ The U.S. official position

Answering the question on the consistency of the U.S. official position on the 9/11 tragedy the scientists noted that although they cannot speak for the authors of the study they have no reasons to throw into question Washington's official stance. However, they highlighted, there appear to be gaps in the U.S. argument.

→13

By Yvonne Ridley

A major row is escalating in Britain over whether individual soldiers should be dragged through the courts and held to account for alleged war crimes carried out in Iraq and Afghanistan. Leading the debate is the failed former Middle East peace envoy Tony Blair, who is running to the defense of British soldiers by insisting that they should not be put through the courts. The former prime minister, who has been condemned roundly for committing Britain to a war in Iraq eight months before receiving parliamentary and legal backing, has condemned the actions of the Iraq Historic Allegations Team (IHAT) which was set up to probe allegations laid against the military.

Cynics might say that Blair is simply trying to save his own skin and can only do that by killing off any investigations by IHAT in case its findings come back to haunt him. This is an important point, as there are still calls for the former PM himself to be investigated for war crimes. He has already been excoriated in Sir John Chilcot's blistering report on the Iraq invasion which, after seven years of investigations, held Blair responsible for misleading the country over his intentions to send British troops into a war alongside their American allies. Britain's political, military and intelligence establishments were all heavily implicated for misjudgements and occasional ineptitude by Chilcot; his most stinging criticism, though, was reserved for Blair.

However, to date, no senior officers, commanders or politicians have been held directly accountable in a court of law for the disastrous Iraq and Afghan wars. Professor Noam Chomsky said of the post-9/11 world: "For the powerful, crimes are those that others commit." How prescient his words look today.

■ The Geneva Conventions

Either Britain believes in upholding international law or it doesn't, it is as simple as that. After World War II the Nuremberg principles were established and war crimes were outlined in great detail under international law. In case there was any doubt, in 1949 the Geneva Conventions were introduced, giving nation states uni-

Blair must still be held to account for Iraq



The war has created conditions where groups like Daesh have been able to flourish.

versal jurisdiction over war crimes. Since then, several international courts have been created and additional categories of war crimes have been introduced. Unless British politicians stand by such principles the moral high ground will collapse beneath their feet and Britain will be just another morally bankrupt country, devoid of respect for basic human rights and standards.

Some would argue that we have already reached that stage, citing British support for countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and, of course, Israel.

Whether taxpayer's money is squandered or not remains to be seen, but all accusations against British soldiers must be thoroughly investigated if Britain is to abide by the international laws and conventions that we insist should be upheld by other states.

"Our armed forces gave extraordinary

service in both Iraq and Afghanistan," said Blair this weekend, "and this type of investigation simply makes their job harder to do." He may be right, but there is a growing body of opinion that any war crimes investigations make Blair feel uncomfortable as he has yet to be held to account in a court of law for the decisions he alone took over the invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

At a meeting with defense chiefs last week, Prime Minister Theresa May said that "every effort" would be made to stop the legal system being abused and thus protect British soldiers from "vexatious" allegations. She knows the uncomfortable truth though: if justice is not seen to be done in Britain then trials will eventually be heard by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

According to Iraq Body Count, more than 250,000 people were killed in a war

brought about by former U.S. president George W. Bush and his chief ally Blair; some say the real total is much higher and accounts for more than a million widows in Iraq. The country is still in turmoil; hundreds and thousands are still displaced; and the war has created conditions where groups like Daesh have been able to flourish.

While ordinary squaddies may have carried out war crimes for which they should be held accountable, justice will only really be done when the likes of Bush and Blair are put before the courts to answer for their own actions. Millions of innocent Iraqis are living in fear and chaos today as a result of decisions made by these two men; they need justice just as much as any individual who was tortured or beaten by rogue British and American soldiers.

(Source: middleeastmonitor.com)

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EU-Iran relations after Brexit

In spring 2005, I privately presented a similar proposal to my counterparts in Germany, France and the United Kingdom. While it was met with support in Berlin, my meeting with ultimately turn down the offer in my talks with him, French nuclear negotiator Stanislas Lefebvre de Laboulaye led me to conclude that France would accept the proposal only if the UK did. However, London's nuclear negotiator, John Sawers, would tell me that Washington would not tolerate even one centrifuge spinning in Iran. This episode served as a striking example of America's hold, through Britain, on the foreign-policy decision-making of other EU states. Jack Straw, then UK foreign minister, would later say: 'Had it not been for major problems within the US administration under President Bush, we could have actually settled the whole Iran nuclear dossier back in 2005.'

The period of negotiations between Iran and the E3 from 2003-05 was nevertheless significant, as it marked an effort by the EU to play a strategic role in the Middle East. The subsequent eight years, however, would see Iran's relations with the EU, and the UK in particular, hit rock bottom. The format of the negotiations changed in 2006 to include other major world powers, adding the United States along with China and Russia to what became the E3+3, also known as the P5+1. As negotiations stalled during the second term of George W. Bush and President Barack Obama's first term, the US and its allies imposed an increasingly draconian sanctions regime while Iran increased the size and capacity of its nuclear program.

In late 2011, the crisis reached its peak. Iran's 'breakout time' – the amount of time it needed to amass the quantity of fissile material needed for a single weapon if it made the decision to do so – reached just a few months, according to some estimates. In November 2011, the United States and its allies also imposed what would be their hardest-hitting sanctions on Iran, effectively cutting the country out of most international trade and banking.

Immediately following this move, Iran's parliament passed a bill to expel the British ambassador to Tehran and reduce diplomatic contact. This was not a spontaneous decision, but rather the result of years of increasingly louder calls in Iran to downgrade relations with Britain. The origin of the feud went back to the protests that rocked Iran following Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election in 2009, during which Iranian authorities arrested nine local British embassy staff, including chief political analyst Hossein Rassam, for allegedly playing a 'significant role' in the post-election protests of that year. At the time, then-foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki warned that Iran would downgrade ties, and intelligence minister Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i even alleged that some of the violent protesters had been

ly four years after it was attacked. For many in Iran, it had become clear that the EU's position was heavily influenced by the UK and that Iran could not have a meaningful economic relationship with the EU if it continued to have poor relations with Britain.

One implication of an EU without the United Kingdom is that British, and by extension American, influence on EU-Iran relations will be diminished. This was one reason why Hamid Aboutalebi, Rouhani's deputy chief of staff for political affairs, tweeted after the vote that 'Brexit is a "historic opportunity" for Iran'. Continental Europe has always been friendlier towards Iran and far more willing to do business with it. This has been evident since the JCPOA was reached, with EU-Iran trade picking up dramatically (serious banking issues notwithstanding) and political delegations travelling back and forth.

Iranian leaders should bear in mind, however, that despite Britain's exit from the EU, Iran's relations with the UK will still affect the kind of relationship Iran can have with the West. If tensions between Iran and the US and UK were to increase to the levels seen during the nuclear crisis, EU-Iran relations would almost certainly

The impending exit of the United Kingdom from the EU further paves the way for a new paradigm in Europe's relationship with Iran

deteriorate again as well. As such, in light of Brexit, there is a vital need for direct high-level talks between London and Tehran aimed at defining a new relationship. These talks should focus on eliminating mistrust, and give Britain the opportunity to address Iranian grievances and acknowledge past wrongdoings. Given the unique history between Iran and the UK, the talks need to be held within their own framework and separately from efforts aimed at EU-Iran engagement. And for the UK-Iran relationship to be reconstructed, it is also imperative that regional policies be discussed, as many Iranian officials firmly believe that London has always pursued a strategy of dividing Iran from its Arab neighbors.

Britain today has strong ties with many of Iran's Arab neighbors, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. By engaging Iran at a deeper level, it stands to play an instrumental role in fostering detente between Iran and the GCC states and facilitating the



of the Joint Commission that will oversee the JCPOA's implementation.

Following the conclusion of the JCPOA, Europe has the opportunity to shift towards a more constructive approach towards Iran. The increasingly shared interests and threats between the two sides have created room not just for tactical cooperation and increased trade, but for broader strategic dialogue on a host of decisive issues.

Western Asia today is a significantly different place than it was a decade or even five years ago. Large swathes of Iraq and Syria have become battlefields or been occupied by violent terrorist groups, the most notorious of which is the Islamic State (also known as ISIS or ISIL). Other Arab states, such as Libya, Egypt and Bahrain, are either in complete disarray or on shaky foundations. Refugees in their millions are entering Europe, testing the continent's social cohesion and public services in unprecedented ways. A two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also a more distant prospect than ever. Europe simply cannot turn its back on the turmoil in the Middle East, and urgently needs to help foster a stabilizing regional order for its own well-being.

Following the conclusion of the JCPOA, Europe has the opportunity to shift towards a more constructive approach towards Iran.

In the face of all this disorder, Iran is a strong state with functioning institutions and significant influence throughout the region. It has a pluralistic political system, by regional standards, and regularly holds elections. It is at the forefront of the fight against ISIS and other terrorist groups, and is engaged in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. Simply stated, Iran stands to be an effective partner in helping the EU alleviate the trifecta of serious challenges it faces today: terrorism, migration and a stumbling economy. The differences that once existed between Iran and the EU are either no longer pertinent or can be mitigated through deeper engagement.

On the issue of terrorism, Iran is among the few countries in the Middle East fighting terrorist groups that have been responsible for the deaths of many Americans and Europeans, including ISIS, al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra (now Jabhat Fatah al-Sham). By contrast, US Vice President Joe Biden has accused US regional allies of supporting extremists in Syria in their eagerness to oust Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Former secretary of state Hillary Clinton also stated at the Brookings Institution last year: 'Much of the extremism in the world today is the direct result of policies and funding undertaken by the Saudi government and individuals. We would be foolish not to recognize that.'

The nuclear deal also resolved, at least for the moment, the long-standing issue of Iranian nuclear proliferation. Through diplomacy, the EU, Iran and other world powers not only managed to reach the most comprehensive agreement on nuclear non-proliferation in history, but also established a model that can be used to address proliferation concerns in other countries, particularly in the Middle East. The initiative of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (MENWFZ) was first proposed by Iran and Egypt in 1974. If the principles of the JCPOA are implemented regionally, it would finally be realized.

On the issue of human rights, differences will undeniably continue to exist. However, there is also room for dialogue on human rights that focuses on identifying ways to minimize differences and cooperate on common interests. One possible area for cooperation is the refugee crisis, which has had unique

consequences for both the EU and Iran. Europe has found itself taking in more than one million refugees and migrants in 2015 alone, posing unprecedented security, political, demographic and economic challenges. Iran, on the other hand, is surrounded by several of the failed states from which many of the refugees are fleeing, greatly threatening its national security. Iran and the EU both stand to benefit from changing this status quo, and could work together to foster stable orders in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan in order to allow refugees to return.

On other human-rights issues, it is important for the EU to hold Iran to the same standards it does other regional countries, of which Iran is often far ahead on human rights. For example, whereas Iranian women are active in nearly all walks of professional life, vote and seek elected office, women in Saudi Arabia are not even allowed to drive.

An agenda for cooperation

Strategic EU-Iran engagement would entail deep and long-lasting cooperation in economics, security and regional stability. Iran is strategically located at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia and Europe, and in between

Iraq. While cooperation in Syria is highly unlikely until a settlement is reached between the Syrian government and members of the opposition, the EU can work more closely with Iran in Iraq to combat ISIS and strengthen the Iraqi government. Formal intelligence sharing is one possible and immediate step the EU and Iran could pursue.

Strategic engagement between the EU and Iran also promises to be a great boost to regional security. Iran and the E3+3 could agree to a model for crisis management based on the template of the nuclear negotiations, which succeeded in large part because the end state was agreed to at the beginning of the negotiating process. The conflicts raging in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain all share a common root cause: the social and political marginalization of a major group within society. In Syria, this group was the majority Sunni Arab population; in Bahrain, the majority Shia population; and in Yemen, the Zaydi Muslims who constitute a large minority. EU-Iran cooperation on solving the discord in these countries should center on bringing about a solution that emphasizes majority rule, minority rights, power sharing and free elections.

EU leaders should be aware of the fact that the free flow of hydrocarbons out of the Persian Gulf is dependent on regional stability. While the EU imports most of its oil and gas from Russia, Central Asia and North Africa, stability in the Persian Gulf would ensure a lower price for energy and provide the EU with a viable alternative energy source, thereby lowering the leverage of its current suppliers. To ensure the continued secure flow of energy resources out of the region and boost regional stability at the same time, the EU could work with Iran and the GCC countries to develop plans for regional energy interconnectivity. Iran's natural-gas endowment, in particular, could serve as a source of energy for GCC countries whose own energy exports are being cut by their growing domestic energy demands. This would give countries on all sides of the Gulf a real stake in each other's well-being, promoting regional cooperation.

The EU can also help bring order to the region by supporting the establishment of a system that allows Iran and the GCC to have substantive dialogue on security issues. Establishing a regional security structure was once the initiative of former German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who pushed for a system of cooperation that would include Iran and the GCC states. Such a system would, importantly, allow Saudi Arabia and Iran to mend their differences, take into account each other's interests and cooperate to stabilize the region. It would help to end the proxy wars that have for so long tormented the region, and usher in a durable peace.

Another fruitful area for dialogue and increased cooperation between the EU and Iran



caught with British passports. Iranian authorities subsequently tried Rassam for espionage. The British government vigorously denied the charges.

A day after the bill was passed in 2011, a group of angry young protesters surrounded the British embassy in Tehran, chanting slogans and pushing up to the embassy walls. They eventually overcame police guards and stormed the embassy, setting fire to the first floor and causing extensive damage to the rest of the compound. The action spurred outrage across the world. The foreign ministry called it 'unacceptable'. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei later said of the protesters, 'The feelings of the youth were correct, but their behavior was not correct.' The British government argued, however, that the protests could not have taken place without a degree of institutional consent.

The 2011 attack on the British embassy exemplified the vehement animosity against Britain that continues to exist in segments of Iranian society. It also contributed to escalating EU-Iran tensions and tipped the EU into firmly supporting additional US sanctions against Iran. As a result, the EU's total trade with Iran dropped to €6 billion by 2013, down from a high of roughly €27bn in 2011.

With the election of President Hassan Rouhani in June 2013, and a decision by second-term President Obama to pivot from a position of no enrichment in Iran to no nuclear weapons, the path to reconciliation between Iran and the UK, and by extension the EU, was cleared. The British embassy in Tehran reopened one month after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was reached, near-

creation of a regional cooperation system. This would have a stabilizing effect in the region and benefit Britain by diminishing the threat of terrorism, stemming refugee flows and securing the Persian Gulf as an economically prosperous area where investments can be made and safe passage for energy resources is guaranteed.

A new relationship with Europe

Iran and the rest of the EU have a different history, and the opportunity exists for deeper, strategic engagement between them. Since 1979, tensions between EU member states and Iran have centered on four major issues: terrorism, human rights, weapons of mass destruction and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When I became Iran's ambassador to Germany in 1990, I tried to establish a joint working group to address these differences. These efforts led to a 'critical dialogue' between Iran and the EU from 1992-97 followed by a 'comprehensive dialogue'. While then-German chancellor Helmut Kohl was receptive to these initiatives, he was met with opposition from the United States. Nevertheless, the EU and Iran developed amicable ties over time, and Europe even became Iran's largest trading partner, until the nuclear crisis emerged.

While EU-Iran relations suffered greatly during the nuclear-crisis era, especially from 2011 to 2013, the EU played an instrumental role in the diplomacy that eventually led to the JCPOA. EU foreign-policy chief Catherine Ashton and her successor, Federica Mogherini, spearheaded the negotiations between the E3+3 and Iran, and the EU's High Representative now holds the decisive role of Coordinator



the energy-rich Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf. Its geographic position also makes it an ideal alternative to conventional shipping routes to Asia, Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In short, Iran is a significant regional player that the EU can no longer afford to ignore.

Iran is resource-rich, with the fourth-largest oil reserves and the largest natural-gas reserves in the world. It could be an integral part of Europe's efforts at energy diversification. In order to foster broader energy cooperation, a working committee of European and Iranian energy executives could be set up to explore opportunities for EU companies to become commercial partners in investing in and developing Iran's energy sector.

On the security front, there is a vital need for the EU and Iran to cooperate in the fight against terrorism. Since ISIS and other terrorist groups established a foothold in Syria, there has been a dramatic rise in both the number and scope of terrorist attacks around the world. Whether in ISIS-inspired attacks like the Orlando shooting that left 49 dead, or the ISIS-directed attack at Istanbul's Atatürk Airport, which killed 44, it is clear that the group's reach is not limited to any specific territory. Terrorism from ISIS and likeminded groups is now the number-one security threat not just to the Middle East, but also to Europe. Iran is leading the fight on the ground against terrorist groups in Syria and

The most immediate potential obstacle to strategic Iran-EU cooperation would be a failure to live up to JCPOA commitments.

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UNDER VISITORS' EYES
Glassware and Ceramic Museum of Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Housed within an elegant Qajar-era edifice in downtown Tehran, the Glassware and Ceramic Museum of Iran also known as Abgineh Museum offers its visitors a wide range of glasswork, brickwork, plasterwork, mirrorwork as well as inlaid artworks.

The premises which have been turned into the museum roughly date back to a century ago. It was originally constructed upon the orders of the 20th-century politician Ahmad Qavam better known as Qavam-ol-Saltaneh for his personal lodging.



A view of the two-story octagonal building of the Glassware and Ceramic Museum of Iran

Situated a short walk northward of the National Museum of Iran on Si-e Tir St., the museum puts on display nationwide relics that date from the 2nd millennium BC to the modern day.

The two-story octagonal structure itself retains a lot of charm as seamlessly blends genuine Iranian architecture with the 19th-century European motifs.

Here is a select of comments that visitors to the museum have posted to TripAdvisor, one of the most popular travel websites in the world:

■ "Nice little museum"

You'll love the Abgineh Museum if you're interested in glass and pottery. The building is pretty and the interior is exquisite. (Egoissimo from Romania, visited August 2016)

■ "Museum housed in a beautiful house!"

I am glad I visited this place, although I am not a big fan of ceramics and glassware, but the building itself is beautiful. It is a nice museum to visit if you have spare time ... (Maksamaan from Hong Kong, visited September 2016)

■ "It's OK"

Set in what must have been a magnificent house in its day. The grounds need to be maintained. The items were nice but I think this is missable. (Craig G. from London, visited June 2016)

■ "A Boutique Museum"

Very close to the National Museum, this museum is housed in a former residence. The collections of glass and ceramics are modest, but the building itself is of architectural interest. The circular grand staircase is the central feature of the building. (KC. C from Kuala Lumpur, visited November 2015)

IN THE NEWS

Weak pound helps 'boost' Scottish tourist industry

Scotland's tourist industry has been boosted through the summer season, with the help of the weaker pound, according to a business survey.

The findings come in the quarterly monitor carried out this month for Royal Bank of Scotland.

It showed business confidence had risen, suggesting a modest growth in output from the economy in the second half of this year.

This runs counter to talk of business gloom over Brexit. The findings also add to some confusion about business thinking on Britain's split from the European Union.

The survey of opinion from 450 businesses showed slightly more firms reporting a boost to output volumes than those seeing decline, by 33% to 30%.

Expectations of the next six months are also positive, with 33% of firms foreseeing a rise in volumes and 26% expecting a decline. Almost as many, on both sides, expected to see change in new business volumes. (Source: BBC)

EU parliament backs visa-free travel for Ukraine, hurdles remain

Ukrainians' hopes of securing visa-free travel to the European Union received a boost on Monday when a key committee of the European Parliament backed their cause, but further hurdles remain.

Ukraine, an ex-Soviet republic of 45 million people, faces stiffer resistance from some EU member states at a time of heightened public concern over immigration after more than a million migrants and refugees arrived in the bloc last year.

The European Parliament's Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs committee backed the proposal for visa-free travel for Ukraine by 38 votes to four against.

A team of lawmakers will now start negotiations on the matter with the European Council, which brings together representatives of the EU member states.

The powerful duo of Germany and France oppose granting more visa-free movement before the bloc has beefed up an emergency mechanism that will allow the swift suspension of more lenient travel rules in the event of a sharp increase in immigration. (Source: Reuters)

Foreign tourist arrivals fetches Iran \$24b in 3.5 years: official

The official made the remarks at a ceremony to mark the World Tourism Day, which was held a day ahead of its specific date, at the IRIB International Conference Center in Tehran.

He also attached great importance to the domestic tourism industry, saying the government is making effort to expand [tourism] infrastructures for domestic travelers.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rahmani-Movahhed said that tourism is amongst the few sectors that have reflected positive effects of the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

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 deal went into effect in January 2016.

Meanwhile, the official hinted at the motto of the World Tourism Day, "Tourism for All, All for Tourism," expressing hope that tourism industry in Iran would maintain its progress throughout the years ahead.

In August 2015, Iran extended visa on arrival for foreign tourists from 15 days to 30 days.

CHTHO Director Masoud Soltanifar



Travelers visit the ruins of Persepolis adjacent to the southern Iranian city of Shiraz in an undated photo provided by Irantravelingcenter.com. The UNESCO World Heritage site was once the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BC).

said the easing of visa rules was opening the door for the return of foreign tourists to Iran.

In 2014, the country hosted over five million tourists, bringing in some \$7.5 billion in revenue. Moreover, last year,

official figures put the number of incoming tourists at more than 5.2 million, generating over \$8 billion.

Tehran hosting Children, Peace and Cultural Heritage Festival

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Concurrent with the World Tourism Day on September 27, the Children, Peace and Cultural Heritage Festival opened its doors to the public at Park-e Shahr, literally City Park, located in the heart of Tehran.

Storytelling sessions exploring the themes of peace and friendship, puppet shows, and musical performance are among the highlights of the festival that

runs through October 2.

Youngsters are also being offered with several specialized workshops which touches on subjects ranging from archeology, restoration and conservation of potteries, to formation of the alphabet in the course of history.

Puppets and dolls handcrafted by inhabitants native to South Khorasan and Qazvin provinces as well as handiworks by Tehrani nomads are on sale at the fes-

tival as well.

On the sidelines, few local charities are collecting donations mainly to raise funds for homeless young people and to reduce the child labor.

The festival has been jointly organized by Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, Tehran Municipality, and Tehran Peace Museum, in collaboration with the International Council of Museums (ICOM).



A poster for the Children, Peace and Cultural Heritage Festival

Chinese tourists pump cash into a hot destination: China

SANYA, China (The New York Times) — When Stephan Stoss arrived here six years ago, little more than lush foliage lined the roads leading to the 492-room Hilton where he is now general manager.

Few other international hotels had been built along the town's picturesque bays. Mr. Stoss and his colleagues from those that were operating would meet regularly for dinner around a small table.

Today, they would need a banquet hall. St. Regis and MGM hotels have joined the Hilton on a stretch of white-sand beach on Yalong Bay. Elsewhere in Sanya, Hyatt, Westin, Shangri-La and other prominent chains have built properties. Hilton alone has three hotels in town.

Those once-quiet streets around the Hilton are clogged with tour buses. Upscale apartment blocks and gated communities of multimillion-dollar villas have replaced the wild brush.

"The speed things go here, you don't have that in any other destination," said Mr. Stoss, 54. "Only China."

Against the backdrop of China's slowing economy, tourism is a bright spot. Many Chinese families are still getting wealthier, and spending that extra income on travel.

Groups of Chinese tourists are already a common sight, from Times Square to Buckingham Palace to Angkor Wat. But a bigger part of the travel story is the boom within China. Last year, Chinese tourists took four billion domestic trips, twice as many as in 2010 and significantly more than the 122 million journeys abroad, according to government statistics.

The government has been encouraging Chinese families to pack up and go. As the economy's traditional export and investment engines have been slowed by feeble demand and excess factories, policy makers are trying to shift toward services and consumption.

Tourism is central to that transition. The government hopes China's swelling middle class will spend more on leisure and entertainment to create jobs in hotels, airlines and restaurants.

"Here it is becoming more important for people to have quality spare time," Mr. Stoss said, "and they are willing to pay for that."

Beijing is counting on travelers like Leng Zhichen, 28. Mr. Leng, an entrepreneur from Qingdao in Shandong Province on the east coast of China, travels with his wife and 2-year-old daughter nearly every month, often for long weekends and usually within China.

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SpaceX chief envisions 1,000 passenger ships flying to Mars

On a personal quest to settle Mars, SpaceX founder Elon Musk envisions 1,000 passenger ships flying en masse to the Red Planet well within the next century, "Battlestar Galactica" style.

Musk outlined his zealous plan Tuesday to establish a self-sustaining city on Mars, complete with iron foundries and even pizzerias. He wants to make humans a multiplanetary species, and says the best way to do that is to colonize the Red Planet.

"I think Earth will be a good place for a long time, but the probable lifespan of human civilization will be much greater if we're a multiplanetary species," he said.

Musk, who also runs electric car maker Tesla Motors, received a wildly warm reception at the International Astronautical Congress in Guadalajara, Mexico. Many in the crowd were avid space buffs.

For now, the aerospace company he founded in 2002 is focusing on satellite deliveries, as well as space station cargo runs for NASA and a future crew capsule for U.S. astronauts. Its Falcon rocket, though, is grounded for the second time in a year because of devastating accidents.

During his address, Musk did not mention the Sept. 1 launch pad explosion that destroyed a Falcon rocket and its satellite.



Instead, he noted that SpaceX already has begun work on the Mars Colonial fleet, recently test-firing a powerful new rocket engine named Raptor. The system ultimately could take people to the

moons of Jupiter and beyond, he said.

■ Super-exciting adventure

SpaceX founder Elon Musk spoke during the 67th International Astronautical Congress in Guadalajara, Mexico, Tues-

Musk said it would be a "super-exciting" adventure to Mars but also dangerous, at least for the first few trips.

day. In a receptive audience full of space buffs, Musk said he envisions 1,000 passenger ships flying en masse.

Musk said it would be a "super-exciting" adventure to Mars but also dangerous, at least for the first few trips. His goal is to get the price down so anyone could afford to go, with a ticket costing no more than a house on Earth.

Would he go, someone asked? Perhaps ultimately, but it would depend on whether he had a good succession plan in place. As for being the first Martian, the risk of fatalities will be high — "there's just no way around it" — and he wants to see his five young sons grow up.

"It would be basically, are you prepared to die? If that's OK, then you're a candidate for going," he told the audience.

In April, Musk announced plans to send an unmanned Dragon capsule to land on Mars as early as 2018. NASA is offering technical support, but no money. The space agency has its own program to get astronauts to Mars in the 2030s, using its own hardware.

SpaceX currently is spending a few tens of millions of dollars on the enterprise, and the amount will soon grow, he said.

(Source: phys.org)

How food production and climate change are intertwined

When it comes to global warming, major media tend to focus on industrial emissions, but agriculture is still the world's leading driver of climate change, which in turn can decimate the world's forests, farms, and fields — putting our entire food supply at risk. Here's a primer on the tumultuous relationship between food and climate, and how we can make that relationship a happy one.

For the first time, the 2016 World Economic Forum's global risks report ranks the failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation as the most impactful risk to countries and industries, with water crises coming third.

Agriculture is undoubtedly one of the most climate-sensitive sectors. The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) showed that climatic changes over the last 30 years have already reduced global agricultural production in the range of 1–5 percent, and that extreme weather events affecting major agricultural producers have helped to drive global food price volatility in recent years.

The report confirms that developing countries will continue to be hit hardest as climate change gathers pace — the very same countries from which many food and beverage companies source their raw ingredients.

For example:

In Vietnam, rice production has decreased because of saline intrusion in the soil due to rising sea levels.

In West African countries in or near the Sahel, decreases in growing areas are projected for 70 percent of crops by 2050, and by more than 50 percent in the case of bananas, maize and beans.

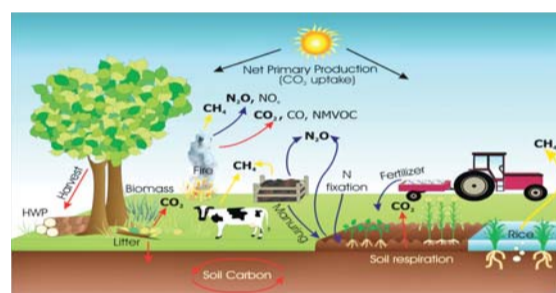
In Nicaragua, climate change has contributed to stagnating yields for maize and beans, while drought and heavy rain have led to crop losses.

Across the world, farmers face decreasing yields and need larger areas for production, forcing the price of commodities to rise.

■ World's soybeans

A new study on the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso, which as of 2013 supplied 10 percent of the world's soybeans, found that a temperature increase of 1°C will lead to a 9–13 percent decrease in soy and maize production, largely due to farmers putting less land into production or only planting one crop at a time.

Higher temperatures will increase heat stress among livestock and, where combined with decreases in precipitation, will reduce the amount of water available for



irrigation.

The increase in the frequency and/or severity of extreme weather events will be particularly damaging to small-scale farmers and people living in or at risk of poverty, because they generally lack access to social safety nets.

Price volatility is especially damaging to small-scale food producers, whether prices are too low when harvests are good or too high in times of scarcity and when disaster strikes. Any decreases in production in such circumstances affect both levels of income and food consumption.

(Source: Ecosystem Marketplace)

Could ornamented skulls have helped dinosaurs get big?

Tyrannosaurus, allosaurus, and gigantosaur were among the most humongous predatory beasts that ruled the prehistoric Earth, and they all had strange bony structures sticking out of their skulls.

But these cranial ornaments likely weren't just the fashion statements of dinosaur kings, say paleontologists. They might also have something to do with why these fearsome predators came to be so huge.

theropod dinosaur lineages with horns, crests, knobs and other bony cranial orna-

mentation evolved to gigantic body sizes about 20 times faster than those without such flashy adornments, according to new research published Tuesday in the journal Nature Communications.

Study lead author Terry Gates, a paleontologist at North Carolina State University and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Science, normally studies the crests of duckbilled dinosaurs. So when he was looking at a different group of dinosaurs, the two-footed predatory theropods, "of

course I was looking at the ornamentation on them because that's what I tend to look at on dinosaurs," he tells The Christian Science Monitor in an interview.

That's when Dr. Gates noticed a strange pattern: a lot of the larger theropods had bony cranial ornamentation, but he didn't see any on the smaller theropods. Gates' interest was piqued so, along with two other paleontologists, he began to collect dinosaur heads.

■ Dinosaur skulls

After examining 111 theropod dinosaur

skulls, the team realized they were onto something. All the theropods that weighed under about 80 pounds had no evidence of bony cranial ornamentation. And just 2 of the largest theropod dinosaurs lacked crests, horns or knobs on their skulls.

And, says Gates, "it turns out that the optimum body size for ornamented theropods, according to our analysis anyway, is about 1,300 kilograms," or about 3,000 pounds. That's what a Volkswagen Beetle weighs.

(Source: The CSM)

Iran's "SINA Bank" and Omani's "Bank Muscat" Keen to Broaden Cooperation

Chief executives of Iran's SINA BANK and Omani's Bank Muscat rolled up their sleeves for broadening and enhancing mutual cooperation in various banking fields.

Given the above issue, euro and rials accounts of

SINA BANK were activated in Bank Muscat, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

From now onwards, suitable ways will be provided for the notification of Letters of Credit (L/Cs) issued

by SINA Bank, issuance of various types of currency guarantee letters, arrangements of payments and also notification of L/Cs with regard to the export of Iranian products to Oman, the report added.

"Mehdi Jahangiri" Named Exemplary Tourism Industry Entrepreneur

"World Tourism Day" was observed in Iran at IRIB International Conferences Center in the presence of President Rouhani and Iran Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization (CHTHO) Chief Masoud Soltanifar, a number of managers and activists in tourism industry of the country, Public Re-



lations Department of Tourism Financial Group reported.

Given the above issue, Mehdi Jahangiri Head of Tourism Financial Group was introduced as exemplary entrepreneur in tourism industry of the country and was awarded with a Plaque of Honor and Statue.

Top and model entrepreneurs

in tourism industry of the country were honored in this prestigious ceremony in line with emphasizing the key role of this industry on generating sustainable employment and respecting the significant role of private sector in growth and development of this industry, the report ended.

Iran's SUNIR Inks MOU with German "SAG" Co.

Iran Power & Water Equipment & Service Export Company (SUNIR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with prestigious German "SAG" Company for broadening and enhancing cooperation.

With its long-year experience, German SAG Company is one of the leading and reliable European companies which is busy active in the field of engineering and constructing power transmission, generation and distribution lines and has expressed its readiness to cooperate with Iranian company, Public Relations Dept. of SUNIR Company announced.

Intl. Engineering and Planning Manager of German SAG Company Ralph Timir in contract signing ceremony said: "With the studies made in this regard, this

reliable German company made up its mind to clinch a deal with professional and large companies working in energy industry such as SUNIR Company."

Cooperating and participating in upcoming projects and tenders jointly, financing, training and transferring technical knowhow and knowledge have been cited as the main topics followed up by the company, he maintained.

Chief Executive of SUNIR Company Bahman Salehi pointed to the amicable and good relations between Islamic republic of Iran and regional countries and said: "With more than 22 years of fruitful experience in the field of energy and also construction of more than 220 development projects, SUNIR Company has significant

status in regional countries."

Turning to the operation of 500-kV power transmission line in Shikarpur, Pakistan, he said: "It is the first 500-kV power transmission line that has been constructed by Iranian engineers overseas."

Benefitted from 21 shareholders including producers, contractors, and reliable consulting engineering companies in various fields of energy such as water, power, sewage, oil, gas and construction, SUNIR Company has thus far constructed a number of 220 development projects, costing over \$1.7 billion, in different parts of world ranging from Asian to Central American continent, the chief executive of the company ended.

Mercury is tectonically active and shrinking, scientists say

NASA researchers discovered that Mercury is tectonically active and shrinking.

The scientists discovered scarps small enough that they believe they are still geologically young, meaning Mercury is still contracting.

Mercury already holds the title as the smallest planet in our solar system, but a new study reveals the planet is undergoing "Mercuryquakes" and shrinking even further. Researchers believe it is the second tectonically active planet in our solar system.

Images from NASA's Mercury Surface, Space Environment, Geochemistry, and Ranging (MESSENGER) spacecraft mission show previously undetected small stair-shaped fault scarps, according to a release from the agency.

The study recently published in Nature Geoscience, said the mission "confirmed that the planet's past 4 billion years of tectonic history have been dominated by contraction expressed by lobate fault scarps that are hundreds of kilometers long."

The scientists discovered scarps small enough that it's believed they're still geologically young, meaning the Swift Planet is still contracting.

The "young age of the small scarps means that Mercury joins Earth as a tectonically active planet, with new faults likely forming today as Mercury's interior continues to cool and the planet contracts," lead author Tom Watters said in the release.

Small graben, or narrow linear troughs, have been found associated with small fault scarps (lower white arrows) on Mercury, and on Earth's moon. The small troughs, only tens of meters wide (inset box and upper white arrows), likely resulted from the bending of the crust as it was uplifted, and must be very young to survive continuous meteoroid bombardment. Large fault scarps were first discovered on Mercury during flybys of the Mariner 10 spacecraft in the mid-1970s, according to the release.

(Source: The Weather Channel)

Ring-shaped geoglyphs found near ancient town in Peru

One of the complex circular geoglyphs the team mapped at Quilcapampa, in the Sihuas Valley in Peru, has at least six rings arranged in an irregular pattern.

Dozens of circular geoglyphs, some comprising several intertwined rings, have been identified and mapped near the ancient Peruvian town of Quilcapampa, revealing that these earthen designs were created near ancient pathways used for trade.

Geoglyphs are designs, which often form shapes or images, on the landscape. They are found all over the world; the most famous examples are located at Nazca, where thousands of such designs — from real and imaginary creatures to geometric shapes — have been etched into the Peruvian desert.

The newly mapped geoglyphs may have had symbolic significance, possibly representing the flow of people and goods through the town at the time, according to Justin Jennings, a curator at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto who is one of the team leaders.

Jennings and his colleagues mapped the geoglyphs at Quilcapampa, in the Sihuas Valley, using a combination of satellite imagery, unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) and ground surveys. The smaller geoglyphs are visible from the ground, while the larger ones can be better seen from above. The archaeologists are trying to map as much of the landscape as they can before the area is developed for agriculture.

One geoglyph they mapped has at least six rings designed in an irregular pattern, with smaller circles embedded inside larger circles so that the overall design looks a little like a swirl. Also, some of the geoglyphs contain rock piles called cairns located beside or within them, the archaeologists said.

(Source: Live Science)

Taking the environmental bite out of salmon farming

In a peaceful bay off Norway's Hitra Island, massive nets teem with salmon destined for dinner tables worldwide -- an export boon for the Nordic nation that comes with a long list of environmental side-effects.

But the harm it causes has been widely documented, ranging from spreading parasites to pesticide pollution, and escaped fish muddying the wild salmon gene pool.

"It cannot be said that with a million tons of fish produced in this country there is no impact," admitted Henri Lapeyriere, a French representative of Norwegian aquaculture giant Leroy Seafood Group, on a visit to Hitra.

At the Hitra plant, for example, cultivated salmon are fed a diet that is two-thirds plant-derived and one third fish meal and fish oil -- a reversal of the previous ratio, in a bid to limit depletion of marine resources.

To combat disease in the animals, "thanks to the vaccines we administer to each salmon, we hardly need to use any antibiotics anymore," Lapeyriere added.

And instead of using the anti-lice pesticide diflubenzuron -- banned by the European Union but allowed by Norway -- the farm uses tiny, parasite-eating fish instead.

These steps follow guidelines set by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), a non-governmental body created in 2010 to encourage responsible seafood farming with as little impact as possible on water quality and wildlife.

(Source: AFP)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Child laborers to celebrate Children's Day in Tehran

SOCIETY TEHRAN — A joyous ceremony to mark Children's Day will be held today for 1,500 child laborers in Tehran, the director of Tehran's Municipality social services organization has said.

The day, which falls on October 8 in the national calendar, is coincided this year with the mourning month of Muharram (October 3-31). So, it is decided to celebrate the event a week earlier, Reza Qadimi said, Mehr news agency reported on Tuesday.

Child laborers are extremely vulnerable and such events are occasions to direct special attention to these lovely children, Qadimi noted.

There will be flurry of recreational activities for the children to take part in such as games and competitions and additionally their favorite TV groups hosting children's programs would be entertaining them throughout the ceremony, he added.



Iran's population exceeds 80 million:

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran's population exceeded 80 million by the end of the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (September 21), Civil Registration Organization director has said.

Currently Iran's population is growing at a rate of 1.43 percent per annum regardless of the number of the immigrants, Hamid Derakhshaninia said, Nasimonline reported on Tuesday.

He went on to say that average birth rate in Iran is 19.8 per 1000 of a population yearly and with more than 783,230 births registered over the first half of the year (March 20-September 21) the population reached some 80,307,000.

Iranian woman give birth to their first born at age 28.5 on average and mothers aging 25 to 29 constitutes the biggest population of mothers among other aging groups, he added.

He further commented on the number of the deaths occurred over the same period saying some 182,254 died specially of cardiovascular diseases at the age of 63 on average.

LEARN ENGLISH

Living With Insects and Spiders

Judith: Ahh! **Get it off me!**
Murad: It's just a tiny spider. Don't **freak out**.
Judith: I hate spiders. What is this place you've brought me to?
Murad: It's one of the most beautiful spots in the world and we'll be staying here tonight.
Judith: You mean we'll be **roughing it** in this **cabin**? Is that a **cockroach** that just ran across the floor?
Murad: Maybe. In this place, you'll see some of the most amazing things. It's the **next best thing** to sleeping in the open.
Judith: Great. Can you close that window? There are **flies** and **moths** everywhere, and I think those were bees and **wasps** just outside the door.
Murad: They won't bother you if you don't bother them. Listen to that! We can fall asleep to the sound of **crickets**.
Judith: Ouch! I think I've just been bitten by a giant **mosquito**.
Murad: You're imagining things. Look at those butterflies just outside the window. Don't you think they're beautiful?
Judith: Do you know what would look beautiful to me right now? A really big **mosquito net!**

(Source: espod.com)

- Words & phrases**
- get something off:** used to tell someone to stop touching something or someone
- rough it:** to live for a short time in conditions that are not very comfortable
- cabin:** a small house, especially one built of wood in an area of forest or mountains
- cockroach:** a large black or brown insect that lives in dirty houses, especially if they are warm and there is food to eat
- next best thing:** something that is not exactly what you want but is as similar to it as possible
- in the open:** outdoors
- fly:** a small flying insect with two wings
- moth:** an insect related to the butterfly that flies mainly at night and is attracted to lights. Some moths eat holes in cloth
- wasp:** a thin black and yellow flying insect that can sting you
- cricket:** a small brown insect that can jump, and that makes a rough sound by rubbing its wings together
- mosquito:** a small flying insect that sucks the blood of people and animals, sometimes spreading the disease malaria
- mosquito net:** a net placed over a bed as a protection against mosquitoes

Iran launches pharmaceutical raw material production line in Russia

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran desk launched a production line for raw material of Fingolimod, a drug used in treatment of multiple sclerosis (MS), in Russia on Wednesday, Health Ministry official website reported.

Fingolimod is a drug, mostly used for treating multiple sclerosis by reducing the rate of relapses in relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis by approximately one-half over a two-year period.

The production line was launched with Iranian Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi in attendance in Saint Petersburg.

Qazizadeh Hashemi will also meet with the Minister of Healthcare of the Russian Federation Veronika Skvortsova on his two-day trip to Russia.



It is scheduled for the Iranian minister and his counterpart to sign 15 documents, protocols, and action plan on Thursday.

12 documents will be signed between the Iranian and Russian private sectors as well as two protocols on increasing pharmaceutical ties and medical equipment and one action plan on healthcare co-operation.

The agreements will be inked within a framework of a memorandum of understanding signed between the two countries over the Russian president Vladimir Putin trip to Iran last November.

Forming joint working group for pharmaceuticals and medical equipment are of the other achievement of the MOU which was agreed upon last year.

President Obama will meet with Leonardo DiCaprio to talk climate change

President Barack Obama will meet with Leonardo DiCaprio for a publicized conversation about climate change next month, the White House announced Sunday.

The discussion will also include climate scientist Dr. Katharine Hayhoe and take place on Monday, Oct. 3 for South by South Lawn, a play on SXSW that refers to a "festival of ideas, art, and action" taking place at the White House.

The conversation will revolve around "the importance of protecting the one planet we've got for future generations," and it will be followed by a screening of DiCaprio's National Geographic documentary Before the Flood, making its U.S. debut on the South Lawn.

Directed by Fisher Stevens, the film chronicles DiCaprio's international campaign to raise awareness of



the dangers of climate change as a U.N. Ambassador of Peace. The actor also made the topic a centerpiece of his Oscar acceptance speech earlier this year.

"Climate change is real. It is happening right now," he said. "It is the most urgent threat facing our entire species, and we need to work collectively together and stop procrastinating. We need to support leaders around the world who do not speak for the big polluters or the big corporations, but who speak for all of humanity, for the indigenous people of the world, for the billions and billions of underprivileged people who will be most affected by this, for our children's children, and for those people out there whose voices have been drowned out by the politics of greed."

(Source: The Time)

IN FOCUS IRIB/ Sohrab Seyyed Jalali



The eighth seasonal flower and plants exposition is underway in Goftogu Park, northern Tehran. The four-day event will last until Friday.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

400 tons of smuggled goods destroyed in Tehran

Some 400 tons of smuggled goods, worth of 150 billion rials (nearly \$4.3 million), were destroyed in Tehran on Wednesday, the director of the Task Force to Combat the Smuggling of Commodities and Currency has said. It was the biggest smuggled goods destruction since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and goods such as foodstuff, clothing items, and hygiene products weighing some 400 tons were destroyed, IRNA news agency quoted Ali-Akbar Pourahmadnejad as saying.

۴۰۰ تن کالای قاچاق در تهران امحا شد

دبیر کمیسیون مبارزه با قاچاق کالا و ارز استان تهران گفت: ۴۰۰ تن کالای قاچاق به ارزش ۱۵۰ میلیارد ریال روز چهارشنبه در استان تهران نابود شد. به گزارش خبرگزاری ایرنا، علی اکبر پوراحمدنژاد گفت: این بزرگ ترین امحای کالای قاچاق بعد از انقلاب بود که شامل ۴۰۰ تن انواع کالای غذایی، بهداشتی و البسه می شد.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Never trouble troubles till trouble troubles you

Explanation: never look for trouble
For example: Ellen: My daughter's teacher is going to be troublesome, I should go to the school and talk to her. Jane: Why not wait till she actually does something? Never trouble troubles till trouble troubles you.

PHRASAL VERB

Bear with somebody/ something

Meaning: to be patient or continue to do something difficult or unpleasant
For example: It's boring, but please bear with it.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Give your right arm

Explanation: if you say "I'd give my right arm for that", you mean that you want it a lot and would do almost anything to obtain it
For example: I'd give my right arm to have an apartment on Central Park.

Russia has strongly dismissed alleged involvement in the 2014 downing of a Malaysia Airlines flight over the skies of Ukraine after a Dutch-led investigation indicated the blame rests with Moscow.

In a statement published on Wednesday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova expressed disappointment with the findings of the probe, denouncing the inquiry as biased and politically motivated.

"To arbitrarily designate a guilty party and dream up the desired results has become the norm for our Western colleagues," Zakharova said.

International investigators ignored "incontestable evidence" from Russia and prevented Moscow from playing a full role in the investigation while allowing Ukraine to fabricate evidence and turn the case to its advantage, she added.

The Russian diplomat further expressed hope that new radar data from the Russian military would trigger a revision of the findings.

In July 2014, all 298 people on board Flight MH17 were killed after it was blown from the skies over Ukraine during a flight from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Dutch-led Joint Investigation Team (JIT), comprising prosecutors from the Netherlands, Australia, Belgium, Malaysia and Ukraine, said the missile that slammed into the plane was fired from an area in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russia forces are active.

Russia rejects downing Malaysia plane, refutes probe findings



"Based on the criminal investigation, we have concluded that flight MH17... was downed by a BUK missile of the series 9M38, that came from the territory of the Russian Federation," said Wilbert Paulissen, the head of the Dutch national detective force.

Afterwards, the missile launcher system "was taken back to Russia," Paulissen claimed, adding that over 100 people were under investigation in connection with the incident.

However, Russian arms manufacturer Almaz-Antey rejected the findings of the

probe, arguing that they were not supported by technical evidence.

The company also noted that the BUK missile, which downed Flight MH17, was fired from territory held by the Ukrainian army, Russia's RIA news agency reported.

Additionally, General Eduard Basurin of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic echoed Moscow's position on the issue, saying, "The forces of the People's Republic of Donetsk could not have fired at the plane from a BUK system, because we have no such sort of weapons."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov also insisted that Russia had provided "exhaustive information" which investigators should take into account.

"The data is unequivocal and on that data, there is no missile. Therefore, if there was a missile it could have been launched only from a different territory," Peskov added.

The downing incident came at a critical time in Ukraine and strained relations between the West and Moscow.

The Ukrainian army has been engaged in deadly clashes with pro-Moscow forces.

The self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk have witnessed deadly clashes between pro-Moscow forces and the Ukrainian army since Kiev launched military operations in mid-April 2014 to crush pro-Moscow protests there.

The crisis has left more than 9,400 people dead and over 21,500 others injured.

(Source: Press TV)

Fresh Saudi raids claim four Yemeni civilian lives

At least four civilians, including a child, have lost their lives and several others sustained injuries in Saudi air strikes against residential areas across conflict-ridden Yemen.

Saudi military aircraft struck an outdoor market in the Haydan district of the northern mountainous province of Sa'ada, on Wednesday, leaving three people dead and three others injured, Arabic-language al-Masirah television network reported.

A child was later killed when Saudi fighter jets bom-

barded al-Sharqabi village in the same Yemeni district.

Additionally, the House of Saud regime warplanes bombed a fuel station in the Majz district of Sa'ada. The massive explosion shook the area and caused material damage to a number of nearby buildings.

Saudi warplanes also carried out multiple air strikes against Bayhan District in the central province of Shabwah as well as Attan, Hafid and Nihm districts in the west-central province of Sana'a.

The developments took place a day after three civilians, including an elderly woman, were killed and another two injured in a Saudi aerial attack against the Kitaf wa Al Boqe'e district in Sa'ada Province.

Yemeni army soldiers also thwarted an attack by militiamen loyal to former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi against the Usaylan district in Shabwah Province, killing scores of pro-Saudi gunmen in the process.

(Source: Press TV)

No confusion why Saddam started war on Iran in 1980: peace activist

At that time, the major obstacle to the U.S. plans was the existence of the Soviet Union, which was supportive of states that opposed U.S. foreign policy. With the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 1989-91, the U.S. saw its opportunity. In 1991 it invaded Iraq. The results of that war were inconclusive, so it returned in 2003, destroying the country.

What followed was a succession of U.S. offensives in the region, in Libya, then Syria, indirectly in Yemen, along with increased military support for Israel. The result has been the rise of extremist organizations rushing in to fill the political vacuum left by the U.S. wars.

Today the Islamic Republic of Iran stands as the single strong state in this region of the world opposing U.S. hegemony. Fortunately, it is now far from isolated, having developed close ties with progressive and non-aligned governments in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe.

Thirty-seven years after their revolution, the Iranian people and their government continue to shine like a beacon of independence and sovereignty in an area of the world desperately coveted by U.S. corporations and their government.

■ Do you think the countries that supported Saddam in the war against Iran should be paying damages to Iran?

A: Earlier this year President Barack Obama boasted that the United States spends more money on its military than the next eight countries in the world combined. That's three times more than China and seven times more than Russia. With 5 percent of the world's population, the U.S. is responsible for a third of the world's military expenditures. The U.S. government and the banks and corporations it represents should pay reparations to all the countries where they have waged imperialist wars, as well as to the African-American people whose enslaved ancestors provided the labor that produced the capital on which the United States economy was built; the indigenous peoples whose land was stolen and whose people were targeted for genocide; the Mexican people who lost half their country in the totally unjustifiable U.S.-Mexican War; and to all the working

people of the United States whose labor has been cruelly exploited in order to create the fabulous fortunes of the U.S. One Percent.

■ As someone who has traveled to Iran, how did you find Iranian people's anti-U.S. sentiments?

A: I toured Iran for 10 days in 2007 and returned in 2011 for a two-week stay in Tehran. On both occasions I experienced nothing but friendship and hospitality from the Iranian people, whether speaking with university students in Shiraz, goat herders in the Zagros Mountains, religious leaders in Qom, businesspeople in bazaars in Esfahan or working people throughout the country. Our 2007 delegation of U.S. peace activists was even warmly greeted with cries of "Peace!" and "Friendship!" when we ran into a group of some 300 Revolutionary Guards on a historical and cultural tour in Yazd. Any hostility we heard was directed solely at the U.S. government, with the critics pointedly emphasizing that they were not angry with the American people. That said, Iranians would be perfectly justified in being angry at the U.S. public, which should be doing more to oppose their own government's actions in the world. And I do believe that, if Americans knew the truth about U.S. wars and interventions in other countries, they would oppose it. Instead, they are fed a constant stream of lies from the news media, almost all of which is controlled by giant corporations with an interest in an aggressive foreign policy.

■ What is your prediction of the next U.S. president's policy toward Iran?

A: If the next president is Hillary Clinton, the world can expect an even bloodier and more aggressive foreign policy. Her record has been that of a war hawk, supporting the 2003 invasion of Iraq, pushing for the devastating bombing of Libya, cheering on the intervention in Syria. She is an ardent supporter of Israel and its criminal policies toward the Palestinian people. Her proteges in the U.S. State Department were behind the 2014 right-wing coup in Ukraine. She is one of the most vocal promoters of an increasingly hostile policy toward Russia. With regard to Iran specifically, despite her bellicose rhetoric, she will face the same obstacles as her predecessor. It is my view that, despite its severe deficiencies, the nuclear treaty Iran agreed to was

to Iran's advantage, in that it reduced the danger of a military confrontation with the United States. Washington's hostility toward the Iranian Revolution - which is what is really behind its hostility toward the Iranian government - led it to impose increasingly harsh sanctions of its own, while pushing other countries and the United Nations to do the same. But even though the sanctions were taking their toll on Iran's economy, they were not producing their desired effect, which was to make the lives of the Iranian people so difficult that they would turn against their own government in a pro-Western uprising. Having failed in that objective, the U.S. found itself moving closer and closer to its only remaining option: war. And war with Iran could not be an air war alone. It would require a military occupation, something the U.S. could not accomplish, bogged down as it was in its ongoing wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries. Even if it ordered Israel to attack Iran, the U.S. would have to become directly engaged in occupying the country. Faced with this reality, the U.S. government decided it needed to downgrade the issue of Iran, at least until it was in a better position to wage a war. So I think the treaty, with all its injustices, was beneficial to Iran, in that it postponed a military confrontation with the United States. But if the U.S. is able to consolidate its position in the Middle East, the issue of Iran will come back to the center stage of U.S. foreign policy. It is to be hoped that when and if that time does come, Iran will be even better prepared to defend itself, both diplomatically and militarily.

If Donald Trump is elected president, it will be as if the most advanced aircraft carrier in the U.S. Navy were suddenly taken over by a deranged, drunken captain with no military or maritime experience, but burning with an insane curiosity to see what would happen if he were to suddenly push all those shiny buttons ...

■ How much effective have the anti-war movements been in preventing a confrontation with Iran?

A: During the years of increasing tensions between the United States and Iran, there was a concerted effort to develop a tendency within the U.S. antiwar movement that was hostile to the Iranian gov-

ernment. This tendency developed most dangerously in 2009, in the aftermath of Iran's presidential elections. In my own organization, the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), there were heated arguments, at times approaching physical confrontations, between some of these groups and those of us who consider ourselves anti-imperialists. Fortunately, these groups were defeated in open debates, but it took considerable effort on the part of the anti-imperialists. Having failed at turning UNAC against the Iranian Revolution, those groups are no longer around. But the same thing is happening now with the issue of Syria. UNAC is being criticized by organizations that believe the U.S. has the right to and should intervene in Syria. Again, the anti-imperialists are standing strong, but this will be an ongoing struggle. While the U.S. antiwar movement as a whole is relatively weak, at least compared to the early days of the second Persian Gulf War, it can still play a role in influencing U.S. public opinion, which can be a defense against the U.S. government launching an all-out war against Iran. And there are signs that the antiwar movement will grow stronger under the next president, whoever it is. It would be a mistake to think the antiwar movement in the United States can actually prevent or stop a war. We do not live in a democracy here and public opinion only matters so much. But we can make a difference. I saw this during the Vietnam War. That war was won by the Vietnamese people under the leadership of the National Liberation Front, but President Ho Chi Minh himself stated that the antiwar movement in the U.S. played an important supporting role. The antiwar movement today is much weaker than it was then, but I don't believe this weakness will last. The key to moving forward is to unite the movements promoting solidarity with the targets of U.S. imperialism with the movements here at home against police shootings, low wages, the destruction of the environment and other domestic issues. This is why UNAC promotes the overall slogan of "Stop the Wars at Home & Abroad!" For the sake of the peoples of the world, I hope we will be successful in once again becoming a powerful voice for Justice and Peace.

Unpaid workers protest in Saudi Arabia

Hundreds of angry laborers in Saudi Arabia, not paid for months, have staged a protest in Eastern Province.

The oil-rich kingdom employs millions of foreign workers in various sectors. But facing a cash crunch, fueled by the steep fall in oil prices as well as the costly military offensive against Yemen, it has been unable to pay a large number of foreign staff for months.

The protesters blocked the road linking Dammam, which is the largest city and capital of Eastern Province, to Abqaiq community on Tuesday, arguing that they were owed more than six months worth of unpaid wages, Arabic-language Akhbaar 24 news website reported.

Security forces were later deployed to the protest site, and dispersed the crowd. No reports of casualties or arrests were available.

The protesters are reportedly employees of a subsidiary of Alsaad, a Jeddah-based general contracting company.

On Monday, Saudi authorities announced a series of cut-backs in the public bonuses and the salaries of ministers.

The House of Saud regime, once known for its lavish public spending, has been badly hit by the plunge in oil prices. Petrodollars account for the bulk of the kingdom's income.

Additionally, the Riyadh regime has spent billions of dollars to purchase various types of munitions from Western allies, which is used to strike neighboring Yemen.

The large population of expatriate workers has been affected by the Saudi budget deficit, with frequent reports that many have not been paid in months. Major companies have started discharging their foreign workers.

The Embassy of Pakistan in Riyadh said on Monday that hundreds of its nationals, who have been waiting for months to receive their salaries from a Saudi construction firm, would fly home without any payment.

Back in April, 50,000 foreign laborers were sacked by Bin-ladin Group, and told to leave the kingdom without being paid for several months' work.

The mass sacking constituted a 25 percent reduction in the private company's 200,000 workforce, according to its LinkedIn page.

Angry former employees, in return, set fire to seven buses in Mecca, without causing any fatalities.

(Source: Press TV)

U.S. police kill mentally ill black man

The United States Police in the California city of San Diego shot and killed a mentally ill, unarmed black man after his sister called the department for assistance.

Police from the El Cajon suburb released a statement late on Tuesday night, several hours after the shooting outside the Broadway Village Shopping Center, confirming that the man died in hospital. His family have named him as 30-year-old Alfred Olango.

Police had been called over by Olango's sister, who said that he was acting strangely and not himself. The aftermath of the fatal shooting was filmed by a bystander who posted the clip live to Facebook. That video has been viewed almost 40,000 times.

"Why couldn't you take him? I told you he is sick. And you guys shot him!" Olango's sister can be heard telling officers in the video. "I called police to help him, not to kill him."

El Cajon Police Chief Jeff Davis said that the man was not armed. He added that Olango ignored calls to remove his hands from his pockets and pulled out an object out. Olango then pointed the object in a "shooting stance" toward two officers, prompting one of the officers to open fire, Davis said.

Local news agency CBS8 reported that "several witnesses alleged that the officers were unduly quick to open fire and suggested that their actions had been influenced by the fact that they were dealing with a black man, one they described as mentally challenged".

"One man angrily told reporters at the news conference that the victim was suffering a seizure prior to the shooting, and another described seeing him with his hands raised at the moment the shots sounded," CBS8 said.

(Source: AFP)

FAO joins UNHCR to improve livelihood of Afghan refugees in Iran

FAO has also invested considerable resources and technical assistance to integrate nutrition and health into schools to promote lifelong healthy eating and has been for decades promoting garden-based learning in schools for improved knowledge on nutrition and healthy life styles and agricultural skills not only among school children, but also among teachers and parents, and has been encouraging schools to create moderate-sized learning gardens for the production of a variety of fruits and vegetables -with a focus on producing micronutrient-rich vegetables and fruits- using simple techniques that are environmentally friendly.

Considering the peaceful coexistence of Afghan refugees and Iranians in the host community, FAO is also working on another project called "School Gardens for Better Nutrition in Iran for Afghan Refugees" that sees schools as golden opportunities for children of both the host community and the refugee community, to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for them to develop into healthy, self-reliant and productive members of society.

The Government of Islamic Republic of Iran is contributing significantly to support a large community of Afghan refugees hosted in the country offering them with various livelihoods opportunities, recognizing the need to empower them to earn a decent living and to positively contribute to the society during their stay in Iran.

FAO officially entered the SSAR partnership at the end of August, bringing the total number of partners to 29 including governmental organizations, UN agencies, National and International Non-Governmental Organizations.

Great powers not responsive to ICC: Amsterdam University professor

■ Why do political interests still shape the course of investigations into many criminal acts such as genocide?

A: Well, because we live in an imperfect world where states pursue their political interests, and the UN Security Council permanent 5 members don't want prosecution for themselves, or their client states. One example is France's role in the Rwandan genocide, another exam-

ple is the Bush administration's illegal war on and occupation of Iraq, and another example is Russia's support for the Assad regime. None of these major powers want to be held accountable, so only weak states are held to the accountability of the ICC, like Kenya, or Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

■ Destruction and damage to environment has been announced as a crime against humanity. What

is the significance of this approval?

A: Environmental destruction and human destruction seem to be closely related. Think of indigenous peoples in the Amazon, or the fight for water in Sudan, or the relationship between resource conflicts in Eastern DRC. We are realizing more and more that human coexistence is under pressure in the coming decades and centuries, and man-made climate change is part of the problem.

Europa League Ukrainian underdogs to visit Manchester United

PARIS (AFP) — Manchester United host unheralded Ukrainians Zorya Luhansk at Old Trafford on Thursday with Jose Mourinho's side aiming to get their Europa League campaign off the ground after a bumpy start.

Mourinho's reluctant contenders in Europe's second-tier club competition kicked off their campaign with a 1-0 defeat at Feyenoord in Rotterdam a fortnight ago.

That Dutch disaster, which left United bottom of Group A, was the second of three consecutive reverses in between Premier League losses to Manchester City and then Watford.

But United welcome the side who sit second in the Ukrainian Premier League with a renewed spring in their step after their weekend rout of English champions Leicester City.

Captain Wayne Rooney missed the trip to Feyenoord and Mourinho also left him on the bench for Saturday's emphatic 4-1 victory.

If he returns and scores Rooney will join Ruud van Nistelro as United's all-time top scorer in Europe with 37 goals.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic misses the tie after being granted time off by Mourinho who could welcome back Henrikh Mkhitaryan.

The 27-year-old Armenian playmaker, a £26 million (\$34.5 million, 30.7 million euros) signing from Borussia Dortmund, has missed United's last four games with a thigh problem.

Zorya travel to Manchester after an opening 1-1 draw with Fenerbahce. Midfielder Zeljko Ljubenovic spelt out the task facing him and his teammates.

"I watched their last match against Leicester. Hopefully we will manage to play better than Leicester did," the Belgrade-born 35-year-old told his club's website.

He added: "We need to play very carefully in defence. I hope we'll be able to get a positive result."

"But I'm happy anyway that we will have a chance to test ourselves against such an opponent. And if we make mistakes we'll have a chance to do our homework for the return leg."

Group A rivals Fenerbahce and Feyenoord meet in Istanbul with Dirk Kuyt, now the captain of the Dutch side, going back to face the club he represented for three years until 2015.

Unlike United, Premier League rivals Southampton enjoyed the perfect start to their campaign with a 3-0 home defeat of Sparta Prague.

That was Claude Puel's first win as Saints' manager and the Frenchman will be looking for more of the same from his Group K leaders against Hapoel Beer-Sheva in Israel.

Sparta are in turmoil after firing their coach Zenek Scasny on Monday ahead of Inter Milan's visit.

It's a must-win game for both sides after Inter were stunned 2-0 at home by Hapoel in their opener.

Hapoel's fellow Israeli side Maccabi Tel-Aviv are in Dublin to take on Dundalk, who are trying to become the first team from the Republic of Ireland to win a group stage game.

Stephen Kenny's side came away with a hard-earned point in their Group D opener, a come-from-behind 1-1 draw at AZ Alkmaar, substitute Ciaran Kilduff netting the equaliser with a minute to go.

Maccabi are still shaking their heads wondering how they let go a three-goal lead to lose 4-3 at home to Zenit St Petersburg as the Russian former UEFA Cup winners produced the standout performance on the opening night.

Elsewhere on Thursday, Young Boys create a slice of Swiss history when they embark on a 9,100-kilometre Group B return trip to Kazakhstan to face Astana -- the furthest away game any club from Switzerland has ever played.

Sassuolo, who enjoyed a dream 3-0 win over 2012 finalists Athletic Bilbao to kick off their first ever Europa League campaign, are at Genk, while French Ligue 1 leaders Nice are at Russian outfit Krasnodar.

Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo undecided on career in management

Cristiano Ronaldo does not want to become a manager when he retires, although he may change his mind in several years and pursue a career in the dugout.

Speaking after scoring his 98th European goal for Real Madrid in their 2-2 Champions League draw against Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday night, the 31-year-old insisted he was focused on his playing career.

"I think a lot about it," he is quoted as saying by AS. "Right now I don't want to be a manager. In a few years people will say that I have the right profile but I don't want to be."

"It's too complicated. At the moment I just want to focus on my football, my passion. Nobody knows what the future holds."

"In five, six, seven years I might change my mind and become a manager."

The question of management rose following Ronaldo's animated performance in the Euro 2016 final in which he spent a large part of the game encouraging his teammates from the manager's technical area having been forced out of Portugal's game against France through injury.

Portugal's victory followed on from Champions League success with Real, and Ronaldo believes the two honours combined to give him the best campaign of a distinguished career.

"Last year was probably my best season," he said. "As far as titles go, I think so. Every year of my career has been incredible but this one was special."

"We won the first major trophy in Portuguese history and also because Real Madrid won the Champions League."

Ronaldo would now like to become a member of the first team to retain the Champions League.

"I think we can win the Champions League twice in a row," he said. "When you play for Real Madrid you have to believe that you can. We have a great team and a great manager. We have the experience from last year."

"We know it's a tough competition and that you need a bit of luck but it's a good challenge for us and the club. I'm confident that we can win it again."

(Source: ESPN)

'Silly' Allardyce says error of judgement led to shock exit

An emotional and apologetic Sam Allardyce headed for the airport on Wednesday, blaming entrapment for his shock exit as England manager but recognising that an error of judgement had led to his downfall.

The 61-year-old, who told reporters outside his home in northern England that he was going abroad "to chill out and reflect", refused to rule out an eventual return to soccer.

"Who knows? We'll wait and see," he said.

Blasted by the media for hubris and greed, Allardyce was shown the door by England on Tuesday for seeking a lucrative sideline role while talking to undercover reporters from Britain's Daily Telegraph.

The paper said it had hundreds of pages of transcripts from the meeting in which 'Big Sam' had discussed a deal worth 400,000 pounds (\$520,000) to represent a Far East firm seeking advice on the transfer market.

Allardyce, an old-school manager famed for helping unfashionable clubs avoid relegation, said it had been a "silly thing" to do but he had been trying to do a favour for someone he had known for 30 years.

"Unfortunately it was an error in judgement on my behalf. I have paid the consequences," he said.

"Entrapment has won on this occasion and I have to accept that. I've apologised to (the Football Association) and all concerned."

Allardyce, who replaced Roy Hodgson after England's dismal Euro 2016 campaign, said it had been a great honour to be appointed in July.

The former centre half recognised in an earlier statement that he had made



comments which had caused embarrassment to the FA and others.

A glance at the morning's newspapers will have given him little comfort, with scant sympathy and lashings of scorn for a manager that ex-FA chairman Greg Dyke said had been 'grubbing around' for money.

"I didn't think England could stoop any

lower from what happened in the summer at the Euros," commented former England striker Alan Shearer. "Now here we are, a laughing stock of world football."

Allardyce won his only game in charge of England, a World Cup qualifier in Slovakia earlier this month, by 1-0. He will be replaced by under-21 coach Gareth

Southgate for the next four matches as the FA searches for a successor.

"I'm going to go away and reflect on it. I'd like to wish all the England lads, Gareth, and the staff all the very best," he said, telling reporters that he could say no more due to a confidentiality agreement with the FA.

(Source: Reuters)

Higuain slowly approaching top form



Juventus striker Gonzalo Higuain feels he is slowly approaching top form following his transfer from Napoli.

The Argentina international joined Juventus in a deal worth €90million, but struggled for match fitness in his first few weeks in Turin.

He netted his fifth goal in all competitions in Tuesday's 4-0 Champions League win over Dinamo Zagreb, though, and is pleased with the way things are going.

"I'm in good form and getting better little by little," Higuain told the club's official website.

(Source: Goal)

"I feel great, everyone at Juventus has made me feel welcome from my very first day here. I'm really happy."

"We're all improving. I understand my team-mates and they understand me, even though I've only been here two months."

"Of course, when you're winning it's much easier."

"We're working hard all the time and our new signings are becoming more and more comfortable with the playing system. We have lots of room for improvement, though."

Mor thanks Ronaldo for being his 'motivation'



Borussia Dortmund starlet Emre Mor has revealed that he looks up to Cristiano Ronaldo, calling the Real Madrid icon "a motivation".

The pair went head to head during a 2-2 draw in the Champions League on Tuesday, with Ronaldo netting Madrid's opener.

Mor himself came on in the 78th minute as Dortmund fought back to find an equaliser.

The goal eventually came from Andre Schurrle, making it a doubly positive evening for Mor, who was

able to rub shoulders with his idol.

"Don't dream your life. Live your dream. Thank you for being a motivation for me every day Cristiano!" the 19-year-old wrote on his Instagram.

"Thanks to all the BVB fans who gave us massive support tonight."

Mor had cemented his status as one of Europe's hottest prospects at Nordsjaelland before joining Dortmund in the summer.

(Source: Soccerway)

Boca Juniors' Carlos Tevez threatens to retire at season end

Boca Juniors striker Carlos Tevez has admitted that he is considering retirement at the end of the season.

Tevez, 32, had been pondering retirement from the game after Boca Juniors were ousted from the Copa Libertadores semifinals by Independiente del Valle this past summer, but had since decided to continue playing for the club.

Now he has said the Argentina league is a disaster and that he is considering giving up the game.

"This is tiring," he told Ole on Tuesday. "I will be talking with my family and with the people I need to talk to. Yes, I would consider retirement, but I would like to play for the rest of my life with this club. Coming into the Bombonera on Sundays is what makes me happy."

As Boca prepared to face Lanus on Wednesday in the second round of the Copa Argentina, Tevez complained that his three-match ban was unfair and blamed the media.

"I think the penalty was given to me by journalists and not the commit-



tee," he told reporters. "The journalists pushed to give me three matches, it really just should have been a slap on the wrist. So maybe it is good, maybe bad. But we saw in the next weekend that the referee was not consistent and that really bothered me."

Tevez also blamed the league and

team owners for being inconsistent with the scheduling.

"The organisation is terrible. In Europe you know on what date you'll play each team for the first six months. Here you can't plan anything," he said.

Tevez also said that he hasn't performed well enough with Boca to de-

serve a recall from Edgardo Bauza on the Argentina team.

"What one does in one's club is what determines whether one gets called up for the national team," Tevez said. "I hadn't been playing well until the first minutes against Belgrano."

The former Juventus forward said he felt Inter's Mauro Icardi was a good choice because "he has earned it, he has been scoring goals at Inter."

"At the end of the day the decision is up to the coach. Bauza isn't under pressure to pick one or the other. Rather he must call up the one who is the best."

"I don't think I deserve to be there because I hadn't been playing well and I didn't know whether I would have to leave the team or not [due to three-match ban]."

In his career, Tevez has also played for three Premier League clubs, West Ham, Manchester United and Manchester City, where he scored a total of 84 goals in 202 games.

(Source: ESPN)

Kafashian: 'Qatar World Cup will be our World Cup!'

Ali Kafashian, the vice-president of the Iran Football Federation, hopes that Qatar would host a wonderful World Cup in 2022 and also congratulated India for accepting the challenge to conduct the Under-17 world Cup next year.

In an interview with Sportstar, the vice-president of the Iran Football Federation Ali Kafashian, expressed hope that Qatar would host a wonderful World Cup in 2022 and also congratulated India for accepting the challenge to conduct the Under-17 world Cup next year.

■ Do you think Qatar can make a statement by successfully conducting the 2022 FIFA World Cup?

I have no doubt that our brothers and sisters in Qatar can stage a successful World Cup. I include our sisters there too, as I know their youthful population, men and women, are working very hard to break stereotypes and overcoming huge challenges that their young nation is facing. As a young nation, they are going through changes at an incredible pace. This means along the way they may be making a mistake or two. But, they are prepared to face those challenges, listen to constructive criticism and implement positive changes.

■ In your view, what should be the objectives of the second ever FIFA World Cup in Asia and the first ever in the Middle East?

The primary objective of each World Cup is to stage 64 games so that one of FIFA's 209 member associations can have the bragging rights for four years. However, the 2022 FIFA World Cup is a golden opportunity for not just Qatar, or the Middle East, but all Muslim nations and population around the world to show what the true face of Islam is.

In the current political climate, it is vitally important to display the similarities between people of all faith, race and colour. How family values are at the core of our lives. The notion of tolerance and respect, something the likes of Gandhi and Mandela fought for all their lives, should be at the front and centre of the 22nd FIFA World Cup. If you travel across the Muslim world and especially in North Africa and Middle East, everyone; old and young, would smile and utter one English word, WELCOME. And that is the true essence of people in our region.

■ In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, you have said Iran will lend a helping hand to Qatar in conducting the World Cup... In what ways Iran can help the 2022 host?

First and foremost by qualifying for the finals. Our fans are amongst the most passionate in the world. We played the United States in a friendly in Los Angeles in January 2000 and Pasadena's Rose Bowl was packed to the rafters by Iranian fans. At the Asian Cup in Australia, we had the second biggest fan base behind the host nation, with 25,000 regularly supporting us. Can you imagine Iran in Qatar? We will fill the stadiums and bring so much colour to the tournament.

In addition to that, we will give our unequivocal moral support to Qatar. It is an opportunity of a life-time to have



the world's biggest and most important sporting (and not just football) event on our doorsteps. The eyes of the world will be on our region. This will be a great opportunity for us to come together. We have so much in common with each other (and the rest of the world) that has sadly been forgotten as a result of events of the last decade or so. Football and this World Cup can and will be a catalyst for positive change. We will do our utmost to make sure the 22nd FIFA World Cup will not be just about 64 games between 21st November and 18th December 2022.

■ How important is the hosting of the 2017 FIFA Under-17 World Cup to India?

I cannot stress enough what a huge and brave undertaking my colleagues at the All India Football Federation have accepted. India was once a great football nation. I remember the first time Iran qualified for an international event was weeks before my 10th birthday. Iran had to overcome India to reach the football tournament of the 1964 Olympic Games. Defeating India home and away (3-0 and 3-1) signalled our coming of age. It was a huge milestone in Iranian football. Sadly that is no longer the case as Indian football has declined.

Next year's Under-17 FIFA World Cup can reawaken your sense of pride in your rich football history and bring youngsters back to the football fields and simply streets to play pick up football. I followed the fortunes of your Under-16 team in the current AFC championship in Goa. They have showed great signs of progress since I last saw them in Iran during the preliminaries. Having the world's greatest players in the Under-17 age group in your country next year along with AIFF's development programmes will no doubt be the start a long and winding road to regain your glorious past.

■ Besides organising competitions in Asia, another centrepiece of Asian Football Confederation's mission is to develop football in the continent. What is the cornerstone of your ideas for development of the sport in Asia?

First and foremost, we need to get our children onto the streets again. When you travel anywhere across the world (and not just Asia), you tend to see children imprisoned in their bedrooms or living rooms chained to their computer screens or games. We need to get them out and let them have fun playing street football first and foremost. We will then need to set up scouting centres in conjunction with professional clubs to identify raw talent.

Beyond that, we will have to formulate a development programme for these identified youngsters to train and compete at official competitions like the AFC's Festival of football, but at national level. This will have to be a joint project between each national association and their affiliated professional clubs. It will be a win-win situation for all concerned. Our continent of 4.5-billion people, the majority of whom are absolutely mad about football, should be able to produce a world class player or two every now and again.

■ FIFA president Gianni Infantino has been criticised for weakening the independence of the governing body's compliance and ethics committees by giving unprecedented powers to the FIFA Council... What is your take on that?

I know of this subject as much as you do; from the distance. When these allegations were levied against President Infantino, I was (and still am) not part of the newly formed FIFA Council. However, what I gather is the fact that the very people who were accusing Gianni Infantino

of violating or as you put it weakening the independence of FIFA's compliance and ethics committee were leaking their discussion with Infantino on the terms of his employment and salary, even before they had finalised those discussions. Can you call that an ethical exercise on their part? From the outside, it appeared to me some sort of personal feud rather than sticking to principles.

■ When can we see Iran hosting a World Cup?

Not soon enough! We understand China is interested in becoming the next Asian nation after Qatar to host FIFA's flagship event. They have made a bold statement that they want to host in 2030. In reality, even that is far fetched, unless the Chinese have already come to an agreement with UEFA members and in particular front runners; England. In 2030, the World Cup will either go back to Europe after its second 12-year absence from the continent or as per some talks to a co-hosting between Uruguay and Argentina in 2030 to mark the centenary of the World Cup, first staged in Uruguay. In the event of the latter case, the 2034 FIFA World Cup will surely go back to Europe after sixteen years. China can then only hope to stage the World Cup in 2038. Maybe, we will compete with our Chinese colleagues to lure the world to our shores in 2038 and if they outmuscle us, it will be up to our next generation to realise that dream in 2050 or beyond!

But, for the time being, we feel a great stake in the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar. The people in our region and indeed Muslims of the world should cherish this opportunity to foster peace and harmony across the globe. The Qatar World Cup will be our World Cup.

(Source: sportstarlive)

AFC U-16 Championship - SF: IR Iran v DPR Korea preview

Coach Abbas Chamanian insists Islamic Republic of Iran have yet to achieve their target at the AFC U-16 Championship India 2016 ahead of his side's hotly anticipated semi-final clash with defending champions DPR Korea at Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on Thursday.

The Iranians advanced to the last four for the first time since 2012 following a comprehensive 5-0 quarter-final victory over Vietnam and in doing so also secured their passage to the FIFA U-17 World Cup in India next year as one of the tournament's four best-placed teams.

But Chamanian's improving side now have their eyes firmly fixed on Sunday's final as Iran aim to add to the continental crown they won for the first and only time in 2008.

"Our task isn't finished because we haven't reached our final goal; the results so far were just steps towards that," said Chamanian, who will be unable to call on suspended midfielder Vahid Namdari.

"My players all want to get to the final and I expect them to play without pressure and stress and to be better than they were against Vietnam."

Iran opened their campaign by defeating Saudi Arabia 3-2 before following up a 1-1 draw against United Arab Emirates with a 3-0 win over hosts India to top Group A.

Chamanian's team then turned on the style against Vietnam as Allahyar Sayyad, Mohammad Ghaderi, Alireza Asadabadi and Amir Khodamoradi all got on the scoresheet.

"We know DPR Korea are a hardworking and strong team with a big history in Asian tournaments," added Chamanian. "They will play with energy and motivation."

"But we are only thinking of getting to the final and our players will have to play well to do that. All of Iran expects us to be there so we have no other choice except to win."

Holders DPR Korea, meanwhile, scraped through to the last four, while also booking their ticket to the FIFA U-17 World Cup India 2017, by the narrowest of margins after a 4-2 penalty shootout victory over Oman followed a 1-1 draw.

Kim Pom-hyok played a captain's role by equalising with six minutes remaining before netting the decisive penalty as the East Asians continued their quest to win an unprecedented third AFC U-16 Championship.

"The four teams who qualified for the semi-finals are the strongest sides in the tournament," said coach Yun Jong-su. "We have to prepare even better as I think Iran have been one of the best teams."

"We have played four tough matches and physically we're tired so we must try and fully recover. We have to assess our quarter-final performance and again look to improve for the next match."

The 2014 and 2010 champions played out 2-0 and 4-1 wins against Yemen and Thailand respectively before a 3-1 reversal to Uzbekistan saw DPR Korea advance to the last eight as Group D runners-up.

Monday's quarter-final success secured a return to the semi-final for the fifth time in seven attempts and kept alive the Koreans' dream of also becoming the first team to win back-to-back titles.

"No one has ever won the championship two times in a row so we will try our best to become the first," added Yun.

"But you can never be sure. We have to put in a good performance as football is all about playing well on the day"

(Source: AFC)

Spirited Iran fails to qualify for Futsal World Cup final

Iran lost to Russia 4-3 in the FIFA Futsal World Cup Colombia 2016 semifinals in Medellin, Colombia early Wednesday.

The European side led from the start at the Coliseo Ivan de Bedout to reach its first-ever Futsal World Cup final, though Russia was made to work hard for it by the Asian champion, who had shown its pedigree in making it to the last four after victories over reigning world champion Brazil in the Round of 16 and Paraguay in the quarter-final.

Russia took the lead through Dmitry Lyskov but Iran's response came through a stunning free-kick from Ahmad Esmaeilpour, fifa.com wrote.

Russia restored its lead shortly after the breakthrough Sergey Abramov's sumptuous volley for his second of the tournament.

Iran's Aliasghar Hassanzadeh showed great composure to make it 2-2. Yet, seconds later, Russia responded through its captain Vladislav Shayakmetov to leave the Iranians chasing the match once more.

With time winding down, Iran used the flying goalkeeper in a bid to draw level for a third time. Yet, with an empty Iranian net to aim for, Russia scored its match winner through Ivan Chishkala from his own half.

Though the task looked insurmountable, Iran's never-say-die spirit that has been at the foundation of their Colombia 2016 campaign made the final seconds of this semi-final interesting, as Mahdi Javid converted on the rebound to make the scoreline a more accurate reflection of this hard-fought contest.

Russia's triumph sees the team advance to the final in Cali on Saturday 1 October, where it will face the winner of Wednesday's semi-final between Argentina and Portugal.

Iran will play in Saturday's third-place match against the loser of Wednesday's semi-final, also in Cali.

Iran B wins Asian Volleyball Confederation Cup



Sports desk defeated China 3-1 (23-25, 25-23, 25-21, 25-21) at the 5th AVC Cup for Men at the Nakhon Pathom Gymnasium on Wednesday.

The Iranian team had already won the AVC Cup in 2008 and 2010 in the competition.

Iran's Alireza Behboudi was named as the Most Valuable Player of the competition.

Earlier in the day, Japan pulled off a dramatic 3-1 (25-18 17-25 28-26 25-12)

victory over Chinese Taipei in the third-place playoff to claim bronze medal.

The AVC Cup, called the Asian Volleyball Cup between 2008 and 2010, is an international volleyball tournament for Asian and Oceania national teams, organized by the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC).

The first edition for both men and women was held in 2008. It is currently held biannually, after the Olympics Games or the men's and women's World Championships.

Renato Sanches needs time at Bayern - Hitzfeld



Former Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld has defended Renato Sanches following an underwhelming start to life at Allianz Arena and feels the Portugal international needs time to adapt to his new surroundings.

Sanches joined Bayern from Benfica ahead of the 2016-17 campaign, starting three of Bayern's five Bundesliga matches.

"His age will have something to do with his difficult start. Let's not forget that he is still only 19 years old," Hitzfeld told Sport1.

"Plus he was injured when he arrived at

Bayern and he joined Bayern for a big transfer fee, that always leads to high expectations.

"And he did not join just any Bundesliga club. He joined Bayern. He will have to get used to the stiff competitions for places and understand what that means for him."

"I think it is only normal that he needs a bit of time."

Sanches, who came off the bench against Rostov in the Champions League earlier this month, is yet to score his first goal for the German title-holders.

(Source: Goal)



Poem of the day

He whom the shah follows in what he says,
It is a pity if he speaks anything but what is good.

Sadi

Prayer Times

Noon: 11:55 Evening: 6:09 Dawn: 4:35 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:59 (tomorrow)

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Tehran gallery to hold first calligraphy auction

T A R T TEHRAN — Taraneh Baran Art Gallery desk will be holding Iran's first calligraphy and calligraphic painting auction at Tehran's Espinas Palace Hotel on Friday.



The best collection of works by calligraphers such as Mir Emad Hassani (1554-1615) have been selected for the auction, founder and CEO of the auction Mahbubeh Kazemi Dulabi said in a press release published on Wednesday.

"This auction will meet the needs of all interested persons and offers original works by masters of calligraphy along with works by contemporary artists," she said.

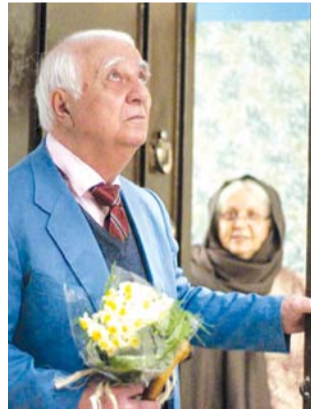
She hoped this auction would turn into an international event in the future, since it mainly focuses on the verses of the Holy Quran, which is the common language of the regional countries.

66 artworks have been put on display for two days and will go under the hammer at the auction.

A calligraphy painting by Mohammad-Hossein Shirazi is the highest priced item offered at the show for 1.8 to 2 billion rials (\$50,000 to \$56,000).

"A Very Ordinary Citizen" crowned best at San Francisco Iranian filmfest

T A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Majid Barzegar's "A Very Ordinary Citizen" won the best film award at the 9th Iranian Film Festival of San Francisco, which was held in the U.S. city on September 24 and 25.



The film also brought the best director award to Barzegar and the best actor award to Suren Mnatsakanian.

The film tells the story of Safari, an eighty-year-old man who has lost his wife and is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Safari falls in love with a young woman who helps him arrange a travel to visit his son abroad.

In other categories, the best actress award went to Samira Hassanpur for her role in "Raspberry" while Saman Salur received the award for best screenwriter for his collaboration on the movie.

Moin Karimeddini's "Atlan" won the best documentary award and "Baher, Her Mind" by Hassan Akhundpur was crowned best short film.

"Amoo Nowruz" by Farkhondeh Torabi was named best animation.

The festival established in 2008 aims to support Iranian films and culture in the Iranian-American community of the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond.

Brad Pitt skips documentary premiere to focus on 'family situation'

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Actor Brad Pitt said on Tuesday he was skipping the premiere of his latest project to focus "on my family situation" and not distract from the educational documentary, following his highly publicized marital split from Angelina Jolie.

Pitt, 52, narrated the 45-minute IMAX documentary film "Voyage of Time", directed by Terrence Malick, which he called "incredibly beautiful".

"I'm very grateful to be part of such a fascinating and educational project, but I'm currently focused on my family situation and don't want to distract attention away from this extraordinary film, which I encourage everyone to see," the actor said in a statement.

It was Pitt's second statement since news of the Hollywood power couple's split broke last week.

He previously said in a statement to People magazine that he was "very saddened" after Jolie, 41, filed for divorce in a Los Angeles court, asking for sole physical custody of the couple's six children.

Jolie's lawyer said the actress made the decision to file for divorce "for the health of the family." She and Pitt had been together for 12 years, and married for two years.

Pitt's next film is "Allied", a war drama coming out in November and co-starring French actress Marion Cotillard.

Last week, Cotillard denied her involvement in Pitt's and Jolie's separation after rumors implied she and Pitt were romantically involved.

Artists opposed to Tehran museum's plan to loan works to German, Italian shows

1 →

She referred to Iran's upcoming presidential election and added, "If Mr. Rouhani fails to win the election, management will change and no one knows what the fate of the artworks will be."

She asked Tehran Museum of Contemporary (TMCA) Director Majid Mollanoruzi and Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Ali Moradkhani, who were in attendance at the meeting, to postpone the implementation of the plan to after the election, which is expected to take place in June 2017.

Rozita Sharaafjahan, the director of Tehran's Tarrahan Azad Gallery, who is among the opponents of the plan said, "Unfortunately, the artworks may be copied at the exhibitions and the copied versions sent back to Iran."

"What expert investigations are scheduled to be done to confirm the authenticity of the artworks after their return?" she asked.

The meeting went on with remarks by Mollanoruzi who tried to convince the artists and experts that everything would go well and according to plan.

He said that the collection will be insured by the Lloyd's of London, which has asked Iran to assign an expert for estimating the value of the artworks.

He also added that a team of experts is scheduled to take samples from the various layers of the artworks. The samples will be sealed and kept in a safe place for comparison with samples to be taken after the return of the works.

According to Mollanoruzi, sending the collection will cost Iran about €2.3 million, which will be provided by sponsors.

He said that Germany is scheduled to pay Iran €1.5 million for loan of the artworks. In addition, the country will allocate fifty percent of the box office receipts.

Mollanoruzi was first selected as the coordinator of the exhibitions, but he was replaced with Moradkhani due to a request from Germany over his appearance in a Holocaust cartoon exhibition in Tehran.



This undated photo show Culture Minister Ali Jannati (2nd R), TMCA Director Majid Mollanoruzi (1st R), Deputy Culture Minister Ali Moradkhani (3rd R), and some of their colleagues visiting the Comprehensible Mentality exhibit, which was held at the TMCA from September to November in 2015.

"Organizing the exhibitions will raise the status of Iran's art and culture," Moradkhani said.

"The TMCA is on a tight budget and loaning the artworks can help it recover from the condition," he added.

However, the opponents remained unconvinced by the arguments. Meanwhile, the first exhibition is set to be

held from December 2016 to February 2017 at Berlin's National Gallery.

The TMCA is home to works by many august artists of the West, including Claude Monet, Francis Bacon, Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, Georges Braque, Alberto Giacometti, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Donald Judd, Andy Warhol, René Magritte, Duane Hanson and Chuck Close.

Fereidun Shahbazian appointed new conductor of Iran's National Orchestra

T A R T TEHRAN — Musician Fereidun Shahbazian has been appointed as the new Conductor of Iran's National Orchestra.

The appointment was announced by Ali-Akbar Safipur, the managing director of Iran's Rudaki Foundation on Tuesday.

"Members of the High Council of Iran's House of Music, including Mohammad Sarir, Davud Ganjei and Hamid Shahangian, made the decision in a meeting held on Monday," Safipur told the Persian service of ISNA.

Former conductor of Iran's National Orchestra Farhad Fakhreddini, who founded the orchestra in 1998, resigned from his position on September 7, 2016 over a lack of cooperation from the officials.

"We also held talks with Fakhreddini, but he had

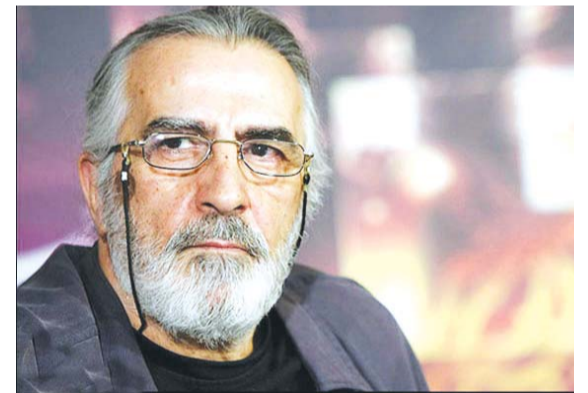
decided to quit and we appointed Shahbazian," Safipur remarked.

He added that with the new programs presented by Shahbazian, good performances are expected in the future.

Shahbazian is a graduate of the Faculty of the Fine Arts of the University of Tehran. He has been the conductor of the Radio Symphony Orchestra and has cooperated with singers such as Mohammadreza Shajarian and Nader Golchin.

Fakhreddini had mentioned in his letter of resignation that the officials did not address requirements concerning the orchestra.

He had also lamented over the lack of pay for the musicians of the orchestra.



PICTURE OF THE DAY

© Mehr/Amir-Ali Razaqji



This photo published on September 28, 2016 shows Ramezan-Ali Chinisaz working in his pottery workshop in the northern Iranian town of Juybar.

Actor Mark Wahlberg hopes "Deepwater Horizon" movie honors victims

LONDON (Reuters) — Actor Mark Wahlberg said "the biggest responsibility" for himself and the makers of the new movie, "Deepwater Horizon", was to honor the real-life victims of the 2010 oil rig disaster.

"The oil can ultimately be cleaned up, (but) those 11 men can't be replaced," Wahlberg told Reuters at the film's London premiere on Monday.

"Those were fathers, brothers, husbands, uncles, cousins. We can't

replace those guys and so when they approached me about doing this film, I thought, 'What better way to promote their story,'" he added.

"Deepwater Horizon", due out in theaters on Friday, focuses on the hours before and after the BP PLC rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico in April 2010, leading to the worst offshore oil disaster in U.S. history. Eleven workers were killed and millions of barrels of oil spewed onto

the shorelines of several states for nearly three months.

In the movie directed by Peter Berg, Wahlberg plays Mike Williams, one of the last people to escape from the burning rig.

The real-life Williams joined Wahlberg at the premiere that was also attended by cast members Kurt Russell, Gina Rodriguez, John Malkovich and Kate Hudson.

"The focus wasn't really on who

made what mistakes and who was responsible. Really, it was about the heroics of the 11 people and the inspiring things that they did to survive and help one another," Wahlberg said.

"Deepwater Horizon" examines the decisions concerning safety made by BP executives leading up to the disaster, highlighting the pressure that workers were under to save money as drilling fell behind.

Filmmaker Hamid Jafari on Apricot Tree festival jury

T A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Hamid Jafari has been selected for the jury of the 2nd Apricot Tree International Ethno Film Festival (ATIEFF), which will be held in the Armenian cities of Yerevan, Gyumri and Udjan from October 1 to 5.

Other members of the panel are Polish documentary filmmaker Rosemarie Blank and Armenian film critic and director Sara Nalbandyan.

Jafari's 2012 documentary "Thus Spoke the Yeoman" won the Union of Cinematographers of Armenia Award at the first edition of the festival. In addition, his 2015 film "The Rock" won the best short documentary award at the Cinema Verite festival in Tehran.