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Larijani: Israel wishing Iraq's division



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Iran urges massive rallies on International Quds Day

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian officials have called on people from across the world to participate in the International Quds Day rallies which are held annually on the last Friday of the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

Encouraging the Iranians to attend the annual demonstrations, President Hassan Rouhani said the Palestinian cause will not sink into oblivion.

Rouhani noted that conflicts within the Muslim world would only benefit the Zionist regime and terrorism. "In order to curb Zionism and terrorism in the region, the unity of the Islamic world must be reinforced," he asserted.

The International Quds Day was initiated by the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979 to express solidarity with Palestinians and oppose the Zionist regime.

Rallies are held each year in various cities around the world by both Muslims and non-Muslim communities. Many Jewish people also attend the rallies in order to draw a line between being anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

Days before the demonstrations, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a statement describing Quds as an important piece of Islam. The statement calls on all Muslims across the world to attend the rallies to condemn Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands and its atrocities against the people.

Defense Minister Hossein Dehqan has also said that Israel is the main source of problems in the Muslim world, noting that "a world without violence is a world without the Zionist regime."

Millions of people across Iran and other countries are expected to take part in this year's demonstrations which will be held on Friday, June 23. The event has been brought into media attention by pro-Palestinian groups who have called for a high turnout.

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, or the BDS, is among the top pro-Palestinian groups that is actively campaigning in various countries against Israeli regime's behavior. **➔13**

Rouhani: Missile attack on Daesh was 'essential'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that the missile attack by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps on Daesh territories was "essential", "right" and "proper".

Missile attack on ISIS was a decision on the basis of "national security", he said during an Ifar ceremony with clerics.

The IRGC fired missiles at Islamic State targets in Syria late on Sunday in retaliation for the group's deadly attacks in Tehran.

In two simultaneous terrorist attacks on the administrative building of Iran's parliament and the shrine of Imam Khomeini in Tehran on June 7, 17 people were killed and 56 injured.

Rouhani went on to say that Iran's policy on international issues has not changed and the country will respond firmly to any move that seeks to undermine "the Islamic Republic's greatness".

He also said that the terrorists could

not achieve their objectives in Tehran attacks.

"As stated by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, those who think they can slap the Islamic Republic of Iran will be slapped, because we have not changed our path and we will respond those who seek to betray our country and people," the president stated.

He added Iran will follow its path with "dignity" and "greatness", "unity" and "integrity".

Tillerson pursuing Israeli foreign policy: ex-CIA officer

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Robert David Steele, former CIA clandestine operations officer, tells the Tehran Times that U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson "is pursuing the foreign policy of Israel, not the foreign policy of the United States of America."

Following is the text of the interview:

■ Rex Tillerson recently announced that the U.S. backs those groups who try for change the Iranian regime. Why has Trump's government focused on the expired policy of "regime change in Iran"?

A: Secretary Tillerson is pursuing the foreign policy of Israel, not the foreign policy of the United States of America. The U.S. Department of State is controlled today by a mix of Zionists, bankers, neoconservatives, and pedophiles. The U.S. Government at the highest levels does

not do evidence-based decision-making, nor does it pursue the interests of the American public. Evidently President Donald

Trump, after promising to forego elective wars and regime change, has been bribed to betray the best interests of the American people. As

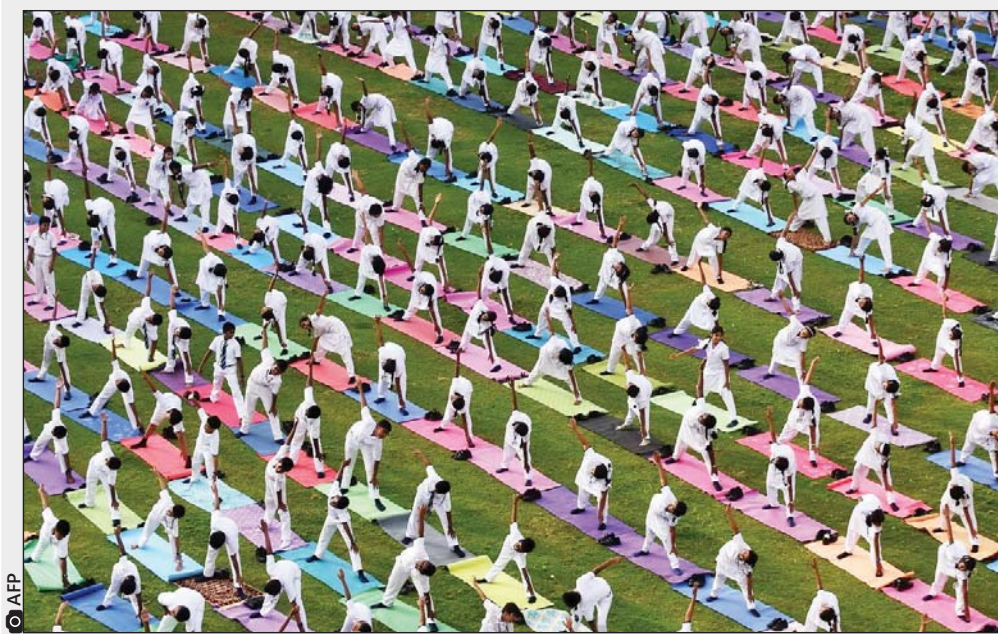
Donald Trump said during the campaign, our policies are "pay to play". The Saudis do the paying and the Zionists do the playing.

■ Regarding the relationship between Iran and its neighbors like Saudi Arabia, which kind of policy has to be adopted by the U.S. government on his aspect?

A: My clandestine services colleague, Robert Baer, ends is excellent book, *Sleeping with the Devil: How Washington Sold Our Soul for Saudi*

Crude, with a description of the U.S. Government lying like a whore on a bed, lusting for the Saudi wallet on the bureau. Precisely. The U.S.

Government has become the whore of Saudi Arabia and Israel, and I for one will no longer tolerate this mis-representation of the best interests of the American public. I single out John Brennan, former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, as a particular individual whose kneeling to the Saudi despots. Brennan is still in charge of the dark side of CIA, much as Allen Dulles was after being fired by John F. Kennedy, and Brennan is using the "playbook" of Allen Dulles, up to and including a planned assassination, against our legitimately-elected President Donald Trump -- I recommend David Talbot's book, *The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government* for a clear understanding of how the secret intelligence services in the USA are now blackmailing our political leaders and controlling the American media narrative in detail. **➔2**



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Intl. Yoga Day celebrated

The United Nations General Assembly declared International Yoga Day official on December 11, 2014. International Yoga Day is celebrated annually on June 21. So far, more than 100 countries worldwide have shown their support for this day.

Began in India 5,000 years ago, Yoga is a physical, mental, and/or spiritual practice attributed mostly to ancient India.

Today, millions of people around the world practice the various maneuvers of yoga to reap its health benefits.

Iran sets sights on 6.5m foreign tourist arrivals

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Iran aims to draw some 6.5 million foreign travelers by the end of the current calendar year 1396 (March 20, 2018), though the country's tourism infrastructure and public services are in need to be improved, a senior tourism official said on Monday.

In 1395, some 5.5 million travelers visited Iran, fetching about \$8 billion for the country, IRNA reported.

"With proper planning and development of infrastructure, it is possible to meet our goals," said Morteza Rahmani Movahhed, the deputy for

tourism at the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization.

"However, it takes time to clean up international image of the county that for years have been tarnished by some Western outlets, the official added.

Following a landmark nuclear deal Tehran and world powers clinched in 2015, Iran is repeatedly named as a hot travel destination by a circle of international media outlets in terms of its rich history, picturesque sceneries, traditions, cuisine and hospitable people. **➔10**

U.S. oil output rise drops prices: Zanganeh

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh has blamed an increase in the U.S. oil production for the plunge in global prices of crude oil.

"The U.S. has increased production by 900,000 barrels per day. This increase was unpredictable and was more than what OPEC members had foreseen," Shana quoted Zanganeh as saying on Wednesday.

"We are negotiating with OPEC members. But it is difficult for members to make an agreement and reach a consensus, because any decision will mean an output cut."

He went on to say that OPEC

should "wait a while and see how the market will form."

OPEC in a meeting in May agreed to extend until March 2018 an oil output cut deal that was sealed last year to help shore up prices.

The cuts would lower the collective production of producers by 1.8 million barrels per day. So far this year, oil has lost 20 percent in value, its worst performance for the first six months of the year since 1997, Reuters reported.

A meeting of the OPEC/non-OPEC joint ministerial monitoring committee is scheduled in Russia in late July, with the exact venue and date still to be determined.

Pro-refugee rally held outside White House

A rally has been held outside the White House in Washington, DC, to mark World Refugee Day and condemn the administration of President Donald Trump for its immigration policy amid the largest refugee crisis in history.

Dozens of immigrants, activists, and allies gathered on Wednesday, chanting slogans such as "No hate, no fear, refugees are welcome here".

Amnesty International and more than 60 other organizations co-sponsored the event.

The activists called for the Trump administration to commit to resettling at least 75,000 refugees in 2018, although the President has capped refugee admittance at 50,000.

The speakers at the rally included refugees from Somalia, Congo, Pakistan, Syria and Liberia as well as faith leaders and representatives of around a dozen organizations that organized the rally.

"So this gathering is not just for us to celebrate but also to reflect on how we can make our country better than what we are today. Our values teach us to welcome strangers, The United states of America has been known to be a heaven for people who are seeking hope and a better life." Imam Johari Abdul-Malik, the Director of Outreach at the Dar Al Hijrah Islamic Center said.

World Refugee Day is observed on June 20 each year and is dedicated to raising awareness about the situation of refugees throughout the world.

Tens of thousands of protesters across the United States have taken to the streets since Trump's inauguration to express their resentment against his controversial immigration and refugee policies.

Wednesday's rally comes on the heels of news that Trump's proposed travel ban was struck down for a third time in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

The executive order would have temporarily halted the refugee program and banned most travel from 6 Muslim majority countries, including some that produce the highest numbers of refugees, such as Syria.

(Source: Press TV)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Any aggression on Iran will face harsh response: top general

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Any aggression against Iran will face harsh response from the Islamic Republic, the chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces said on Wednesday.

Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri lauded a recent Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) missile attack against terrorists in Syria as a “powerful operation” that showed national security is the “armed forces’ red line”, Tasnim reported.

He reiterated the armed forces are fully prepared to defend the country’s national interests and security.



Rouhani inauguration postponed

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The inauguration of Hassan Rouhani as Iran’s next president has been postponed, the Iran Students News Agency reported on Wednesday.

Citing Behrooz Nemati, the spokesman of the Majlis presiding board, the news agency said a new date for the inauguration will be announced later.

No further detail as to the reason for the postponement has been given.

Initial reports said two weeks ago that Rouhani was going to be sworn in on July 6.



Iran present in Indian Ocean, Mediterranean to ensure trade security

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Navy chief said on Wednesday that Tehran has sent warships to the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean to ensure trade security.

“We are out in free waters even as far as 2,500 kilometers away from our borders to safeguard our resources and interests as well as ensure trade security,” Habibollah Sayyari said, ISNA reported.

The rear admiral also said the Navy’s recent joint maneuver with China was an exercise to boost preparedness.



IRGC: More missile raids on Daesh possible

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps spokesperson has raised the possibility of repetition of missile attacks similar to a recent one against Daesh terrorists in Syria’s Deir ez-Zor, saying it would depend on the conduct of the enemies.

In comments on Wednesday, Ramezan Sharif said, “Crushing responses would be formulated and given, proportional to their (enemies’) behavior.”

He also said Sunday’s missile raid sent out a clear signal to “terrorists, their regional and international sponsors, and to everyone who would even think of threatening Iran’s national security.”



‘Electoral crimes existed, but election still healthy’

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The recent presidential election included electoral crimes which nonetheless did not alter the result and the election still remains healthy, the vice president for legal affairs told ISNA on Wednesday.

Majid Ansari said various complaints were made by candidates, from Hassan Rouhani and his rivals, about public media working in favor of a particular candidate.

He said complaints were also made regarding intervention of some state bodies that are legally banned from campaigns.



Iran has drone base near U.S. troops in Syria

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran has established a drone airfield inside Syria not far from a U.S. military base, U.S. officials said on Tuesday.

The airfield may be the source of drones that have recently threatened U.S. troops, NBC News reported.

According to two U.S. defense officials, the Iranian airfield near Palmyra, Syria, has a ground control station for operating drones. The U.S. and the coalition have a base in At Tanf, Syria, close to where the Iraqi, Jordanian and Syrian borders intersect, 80 miles south of Palmyra.

Iran demands release of Saudi-detained fishermen



“It is required that that the Saudi government compensate for the damage incurred, punish those who committed the irresponsible act, and take immediate measures to release the detained fishermen.”

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran’s interior minister called on Wednesday for the immediate release of three Iranian fishermen who were detained by the Saudi navy last week, saying their boats were pushed off course by waves.

“Having fishing and legal permits, three fishing boats departed from (Iranian) Bushehr Port on Thursday toward deep Persian Gulf waters.

“Fishing at midnight, the boats had lost their control due to tumultuous waves, two of which pushed off course into Saudi waters,” read part of the statement by the ministry.

While one of the boats had managed to steer back into Iranian waters, the other two had come under fire from the Saudi coastguard, it added.

One of the fishermen of the boat returning into Iranian waters got killed in the shooting.

“It is required that that the Saudi government compensate for the damage incurred, punish those who committed the irresponsible act, and take immediate measures to release the detained fishermen,” the statement further noted.

Larijani: Israel wishing Iraq’s division

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran’s chief lawmaker said on Wednesday that Iran is against a division of Iraq, noting it is Israel which wants Iraq to split.

“Division of Iraq is the Zionist regime’s wish,” Ali Larijani said in a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi who was on tour of Iran on Tuesday and Wednesday.

“Campaign against separatism is very important to us and we consider it (separatism) as very dangerous for all countries,” Larijani pointed out.

Amid the fight against the Islamic State, the Kurdistan region of Iraq plans to hold a vote on Sept. 25, 2017 to determine its direction on statehood.

In a separate meeting with the Iraqi prime minister late on Tuesday, the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also said “Iraq must remain undivided” and expressed opposition to holding referendum on separating part of the country from the mainland.

Also in talks with al-Abadi on Tuesday, President Rouhani insisted on the need to protect the regional countries’ territorial integrity, saying Iran supports an



integrated Iraq.

Any move to disintegrate the countries in the region is “unacceptable” and “not beneficial”, Rouhani insisted.

■ ‘Quds issue should not be forgotten’

Rouhani also told al-Abadi that the fight against terrorism should not overshadow the Quds issue and

threat of the Zionist regime.

Rouhani said increase in terrorist acts in the region is part of Israel’s devil plan.

The remarks by the president also came as the world is preparing to mark International Quds Day on Friday. Quds Day, an initiative proposed by the late Imam Khomeini in 1979 and held on the last Friday of the fasting month of Ramadan, is intended to highlight the capture of the Palestinian lands by the Zionist occupiers.

■ ‘Mosul liberation marks victory over terror’

Rouhani also said that liberation of Mosul is a celebration of regional people’s victory over terrorism.

Iraqi security forces are now battling the remaining Daesh terrorists to fully liberate Mosul.

The Iranian president said success in fighting terrorism and establishing security in the region depend on “cooperation, coordination and participation” of all regional countries.

He added that Iran will stand beside the Iraqi government and people in fighting terrorism.

Trump might be considering a war against Iran: professor

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A Tehran University professor has said that the U.S. President Donald Trump might be thinking of waging a war against the Islamic Republic through its regional ally Saudi Arabia.

“As long as Trump is in power, Iran will be alarmed,” said Tehran University professor Ahmad Naghibzadeh in an interview with Shargh newspaper. “Because he will be organizing all sorts of conspiracies against Iran.”

“I fear that he might be thinking of waging another war against Iran,” he said, adding that the potential war might be waged through Riyadh and could be similar to the imposed war of Iraq against Iran which was launched by the former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in 1980.

Naghibzadeh also said that Saudi Arabia won’t dare to attack Iran by itself. But the Saudis would do so if Washington gives the green light to them, he said.

In early May, Saudi Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman said there is no space for dialogue with the Iran and accused the Islamic republic of trying “to control the Islamic world”.

He claimed that Saudi Arabia is “a main target of Iran... and we are not waiting until there becomes a battle in Saudi Arabia, so we will work so that it becomes a battle for them in Iran and not in Saudi Arabia.”

On Wednesday morning, the prince was appointed by his father, King Salman, as the new crown prince, a move that could intensify tensions with Iran.

Turkish diplomat calls ties with Iran dynamic

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Riza Hakan Tekin, Ankara’s ambassador to Tehran, has said that the Iran-Turkey ties entered a new phase of dynamism during the first term of Hassan Rouhani’s presidency.

Turkey hopes that this dynamism will continue based on a win-win approach, he told IRNA in an interview published on Wednesday.

“In spite of some differences especially on regional issues, we have never stopped having interaction and dialogue with Iran aimed at reducing differences,” the ambassador said.

The diplomat said his country attaches great importance to interaction with Iran given the regional challenges.

He also said that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will visit Iran in the current year.

“We are making efforts to hold the 26th meeting of joint economic commission in Tehran to provide the grounds for the visit,” Hakan Tekin explained.

Elsewhere, he said the conclusion of the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was a “turning point” in Rouhani’s first term of presidency.

He expressed hope that the signatories to the nuclear agreement would not refrain from fulfilling their commitments.

Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council – the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia – plus Germany and the European Union finalized the text of the JCPOA in July 2015. The nuclear deal went into effect in January 2016.

Tillerson pursuing Israeli foreign policy: ex-CIA officer

New sanctions against Iran ‘represent the complete idiocy of the U.S. government’

➔ **■ Will the Senate’s new anti-Iran sanctions fulfill interests of the West?**

A: No. Everything the West is doing serves Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Wall Street, which desperately wants a war in the Middle East to both drive the price of oil up -- Goldman Sachs made some bad bets on oil futures -- and to secure the oil under the Golan Heights that belong to yria. Apart from being unenforceable, the sanctions represent the complete idiocy of the U.S. Government. There is no grand strategy, no mature focus on all ten high-level threats to humanity among which proliferation is number eight, a complete collapse of intelligence (decision-support) and a total lack of integrity. I anticipate four Republican Senators, two Republican Governors, and perhaps the Vice President of the United States to be swept away in the next year by a pedophilia/child murder/Satanic blood drinking scandal. President Donald Trump will be left impotent and will almost certainly be impeached in 2019.

Donald Trump said during the campaign, our policies are “pay to play.” The Saudis do the paying and the Zionists do the playing.

■ Some experts believe that new non-nuclear sanctions against Iran by the U.S. are intended to restore any dismantled nuclear sanctions in new forms. What is your opinion?

A: My opinion is that everything the U.S. Government is doing both overseas and at home lacks both intelligence and integrity. Our legitimately elected President Donald Trump is surrounded by traitors, pedophiles, and incompetents of his own choosing. His son in law is probably a Mossad agent who was targeted against Ivanka Trump on the basis of psychological and taste profiling done

by known Mossad agents Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell. There are ten Goldman Sachs bankers on Trump’s intimate staff, and over fifty Ashkenazi Jews controlling every aspect of economic and foreign policy in favor of the Zionists and Wall Street and City of London (which are in turn controlled by the Rothschilds and the Jesuit Black Pope), and against the best interests of the U.S. public or the U.S. Constitution which has been dishonored for a quarter century.

ON A POSITIVE NOTE: Dr. Cynthia McKinney, a six-term former Congresswoman, and I have formed a new movement, #UN-

My opinion is that everything the U.S. Government is doing both overseas and at home lacks both intelligence and integrity.

RIG: Summer of Peace, and we are hoping that a majority of the American public will execute a non-violent revolution this summer, demanding that each Member of Congress agree to sponsor the Election Reform Act of 2017 that would eliminate all sources of corruption in the US electoral and governance system, and make possible transparent and honest decision-making. Our Mission and Vision Statements are below:

MISSION: To restore integrity and truth to governance, with the informed will and wisdom of We the People at its heart.

VISION: To enjoy a transparent government by 2022, that operates with honesty, respecting our planet and the human spirit, so that we may create a healthy, prosperous America rooted in truth with peace as our shared condition.

This is the future of America the Beautiful, and the future of US relations with Iran, which I consider the honest adult in the region. We encourage donations to our educational campaign at <http://tinyurl.com/IndieGoGo-UNRIG>.

Saudi king deposes crown prince, picks new heir

The Saudi King, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has replaced Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al Saud with his own son, Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, the deputy crown prince and defense minister.

According to a royal decree, Mohammed bin Salman, 31, was also named deputy prime minister, and shall maintain his post as defense minister, the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported on Wednesday.

Saudi regime media say King Salman has called for a public pledge of allegiance to the new crown prince in the holy city of Mecca on Wednesday night.

The SPA also confirmed that 31 out of 34 members of Saudi Arabia's succession committee chose Mohammed bin Salman as the crown prince.

Just days ago, the Saudi regime king stripped Nayef of his powers overseeing criminal investigations and designated a new public prosecution office to function directly under the king's authority.

In a similar move back in 2015, the Saudi regime king had appointed his nephew, then deputy crown prince Mohammed bin Nayef as the heir to the throne after removing his own half-brother Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz Al Saud from the position.

Under the new decree, King Salman further relieved Mohammed bin Nayef of his duties as the interior minister. He appointed Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef as the new interior minister and Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Salem as deputy interior minister.

Mohammed bin Salman is already in charge of a vast portfolio as chief of the House of Saud royal court and chairman of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs, which is tasked with overhauling the country's economy.

The young prince was little known both at home and abroad before Salman became king in January 2015.

However, King Salman has significantly increased the powers of Mohammed, with observers describing the prince as the real power behind his father's throne.

Power struggle in the House of Saud

There had long been speculations that Mohammed's rise to power under his father's reign might also accelerate his ascension to the throne.

On Wednesday, a well-known Saudi online activist, known on Twitter as @mujtahidd, predicted that King Salman would renounce power in favor of his son.



The whistleblower has already leaked documents indicating high-level corruption inside the Saudi royal family.

The power struggle inside the House of Saud came to light earlier this year when the Saudi king began to overhaul the government and offered positions of influence to a number of family members.

In two royal decrees in April, the Saudi regime king named two of his other sons, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman and Prince Khaled bin Salman, as state minister for energy affairs and ambassador to the United States, respectively.

Mastermind of brutal, futile war

As the defense minister, Mohammed bin Salman has faced strong international criticism for the bloody military campaign he launched against neighboring Yemen in 2015 amid his rivalry with bin Nayef, the then powerful interior minister.

The campaign was launched with the aim of restoring the former Yemeni government, a close Riyadh ally, and crushing the country's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement. On the domestic political stage, the offensive was also viewed as an attempt by Mohammed bin Salman to steal the show and sideline the then crown prince.

However, despite spending billions of petrodollars, the Riyadh regime has achieved none of its goals during the campaign, which has killed over 12,000 civilians, left much of Yemen in ruins and empowered the Takfiri terrorist groups operating there.

On the economic front, Mohammed has been a key backer of the kingdom's so-called Vision 2030 program, under which the Saudi leaders seek to reduce reliance on oil exports.

The plan is known as the most extensive and jarring economic shake-up of the country in decades, with economy experts describing it as too ambitious.

Mohammed bin Salman, according to analysts, appears to have orchestrated the Persian Gulf diplomatic crisis, which has seen a Saudi regime-led bloc of countries cutting ties with Qatar and imposed an economic siege on the country.

The diplomatic spat broke out days after a summit in Riyadh attended by the United States President Donald Trump, a staunch supporter of the House of Saud regime rulers and, in particular, Mohammed bin Salman.

(Source: agencies)

France's Macron faces balancing act after losing MoDem allies

President Emmanuel Macron's allies from the under-fire MoDem party quit the government, complicating what had been billed as a routine ministerial reshuffle days after his party emphatically won parliamentary elections.

With MoDem caught up in a judicial investigation into claims it misused EU parliamentary funds, the party's leader Francois Bayrou - a significant ally since backing Macron's presidential bid in February - quit as Justice Minister on Wednesday.

The center-right party's two other ministers have also quit Macron's administration since Tuesday.

Macron, elected on an independent centrist ticket on May 7, had crafted a first government that comprised ministers of the left, right and center, reshaping France's political landscape as he extended his support base.

But the flurry of departures indicates that a reshuffle he has scheduled for later on Wednesday will be more far-reaching than expected as the new president seeks to maintain that balance.

Macron's Republic On the Move (LREM) party won 308 seats in the 577-strong National Assembly on Sunday, while MoDem gained 42.

That means the president does not depend on the smaller party to get his legislative program through parliament.

But he may have to replace MoDem ministers with politicians from the conservative Republicans, which could give ammunition to leftist opponents who call him a right-winger in disguise.

"We have a majority after Sunday's night win and we have the wherewithal to govern," government spokesman Christo-



phe Castaner told Europe 1 radio. "So now it's get to work everyone, let's get to work."

Raising standards?

The prime minister's office confirmed Bayrou's departure and sources told Reuters Junior European affairs minister Marielle de Sarnez, another top MoDem official, was also leaving government. That followed the resignation on Tuesday of MoDem defense minister Sylvie Goulard.

While Bayrou and de Sarnez have not commented yet, Goulard on Tuesday said she was leaving because of the investigation, into whether MoDem used European Union parliament funds to finance jobs carried out by party officials in France.

The resignations add to signs that federal tolerance of allegations of misuse of public funds by politicians has become much weaker in France.

On Monday, the government announced that Richard Ferrand, a minister for territorial planning and key member of LREM was leaving to chair the party's group in parliament. He is the target of a separate judicial probe.

Being a target of a preliminary investigation in France is not an indication of guilt. Prosecutors can decide to either drop the probe or proceed to a full-fledged investigation.

(Source: Reuters)

Ukrainian president says held 'effective' talks with Trump on arms provision

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko says he has had "very effective" talks with the United States President Donald Trump during a visit to Washington about the U.S.'s provision of "defensive" lethal weapons to Ukraine.

Poroshenko said on Wednesday that he had had "very effective negotiations for defensive weapons" with his American counterpart in the meeting in Washington on Tuesday.

"We talked that we don't need to attack anybody but we want to have an effective mechanism to defend by radioelectronic warfare, by drones, by everything," Poroshenko told FOX news.

After the meeting with Poroshenko, Trump said "a lot of progress has been made" in the relations between the two countries and that the two had "very, very good discussions."

Poroshenko had said earlier in Washington, "We received strong support from the US side, support in terms of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the independence of our state." But he declined to directly answer a question by reporters about whether it was time for Washington to start selling lethal arms to Ukraine.

The government in Kiev has been engaged in an armed conflict with pro-Russia forces in eastern Ukraine.

Kiev has repeatedly requested more advanced weaponry from the United States. The administration of former U.S. president Barack Obama had refused to supply it with lethal weaponry and instead provided Kiev with \$600 million in military assistance, including training, equipment, and advice.

In September 2016, the U.S. House



approved legislation to allow the supply of lethal "defensive" arms to Kiev, but it still needs to be approved by the U.S. Senate and signed by the U.S. president.

The Pentagon said earlier that the Trump administration did not rule out the option of providing Ukraine with lethal weapons.

Moscow has several times warned Washington against supplying Kiev with such weapons, arguing that the move could seriously affect the balance of power in the region.

The Trump-Poroshenko meeting took place on the same day that the U.S. added more Russian individuals and entities to its list of those facing sanctions over Moscow's alleged role in the Ukrainian crisis.

The economic sanctions against Moscow were originally introduced in March 2014, after the strategic Black Sea peninsula of Crimea joined Russia following a referendum.

Since then, the U.S. and some other Western countries have imposed several more rounds of sanctions against Russia over accusations that Moscow has been involved in the deadly crisis in Ukraine, which has so far killed more than 10,000 people. The Kremlin has, however, strongly rejected the accusations.

(Source: Press TV)

Iraqi forces advance on Mosul mosque where ISIL declared caliphate

Iraqi forces on Wednesday began a push towards the mosque in Mosul where the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group declared a self-styled caliphate three years ago, military officials said.

The forces had encircled the terrorist group's stronghold in the Old City of Mosul, where the mosque is located, they said.

Iraqi officials have privately expressed the hope that the mosque could be captured by Eid al-Fitr, the festival marking the end of Ramadan, the Muslim fasting month. The first day of the Eid falls this year on June 25 or 26 in Iraq.

Iraqi government forces have registered more territorial gains in the militant-held Old City of Mosul as they continue their operations to push ISIL terrorists out of their last urban stronghold in the country.

Staff Lieutenant General Abdulghani al-Assadi, a senior commander in the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS), said on Tuesday that the counter-terrorism offensives are proceeding as expected but the progress is slow.

"Things are good and the battle is going as planned. We have many obstacles - the nature of the land, the nature of the construction, the roads and the civilian population - all of which make us slow down our work," he stated.

The high-ranking Iraqi military commander further noted that civilians are fleeing heavy fighting between ISIL terrorists and army soldiers in the Old City, and up to 400 people approached the positions of government forces.

(Source: agencies)

Video of U.S. police killing black driver sparks outrage

Police car video of a Minnesota officer shooting a black motorist, whose dying moments were live streamed on Facebook, has been made public for the first time, just days after the officer was acquitted at trial.

The footage captures the fateful exchange between Philando Castile, a 32-year-old black motorist, and police officer Jeronimo Yanez in an incident that sparked nationwide protests last year.

The dashcam video - part of a trove of documents, images and audio from the investigation - shows Yanez approaching Castile's car and explaining that he was pulled over for broken brake lights.

The 29-year-old Yanez, who was found not guilty of manslaughter and other charges, began shooting only seconds after Castile told the officer he had a gun.

"Sir, I have to tell you, I do have a firearm on me," Castile said. Before Castile finished that sentence, Yanez began pulling his weapon out of the holster.

Yanez said, "OK. Don't reach for it then".

There is shouting, and Yanez screamed "don't pull it out" before firing into the car.

The dashboard camera footage taken from St Anthony police officer Jeronimo Yanez's squad car illustrated how a simple traffic stop shifted in an instant to a deadly confrontation.

When Yanez opened fire, another officer near the car jumped back, and Yanez began yelling at the driver.

Castile, an elementary school cafeteria worker, had a permit to carry the weapon.

As more police and an ambulance arrived, Yanez could be heard breathing heavily and swearing and trying to explain his actions to fellow officers.

Although the squad-car footage was described repeatedly and was shown to jurors in the courtroom, it had never been released publicly.

The shooting on July 6, 2016, gained widespread attention because Castile's girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, live streamed its gruesome aftermath on Facebook.

The release of the video made some people even angrier about the death.

"One thing that it suggests is that the officer may have taken those actions because Castile was black," Melanie Sloan, former prosecutor, told Al Jazeera.

"It's unlikely that someone would warn an officer that he was armed before shooting that officer"

Steven Belton, the black president and CEO (chief executive officer) of the Minneapolis Urban League, said the video showed "a 21st century lynching" and was "powerfully painful".

He said it is a reminder of black men "hanging from trees, black men being shot, beaten, stabbed for being black".

He said Castile was "gunned down like a rabid animal".

Yanez's acquittal prompted days of protests, including one in St Paul last Friday that attracted thousands and shut down Interstate 94 for hours. Eighteen people were arrested.

According to the Guardian newspaper's The Counted database, at least 1,092 people were killed by police in the United States last year.

Nearly a quarter of those killed were African Americans although the group accounts for roughly 12 percent of the total U.S. population.

Civil rights campaigners and activists say the disproportionate number of black Americans killed by police is part of a broader pattern of racial discrimination in the country's justice system. According to a watchdog group The Sentencing Project, African American men are six times more likely to be incarcerated than white men.

People of color make up around 67 percent of the 2.2 million people in U.S. prisons and jails.

These disparities, particularly the killing of African Americans by police, has prompted the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, a popular civil rights movement aimed at ending police violence and dismantling structural racism.

On Tuesday, hundreds of activists and mourners gathered in Seattle to protest the police killing of Charleena Lyles, a 30-year-old African-American woman who was pregnant at the time of her death.

Police claimed that Lyles, who had a history of mental illness, had been armed with a knife. But her relatives and critics questioned why the officers did not use non-fatal weapons.

(Source: agencies)

Narrow escape for Brussels after 'nail bomb misfires'

The man shot dead at Brussels Central Station on Tuesday, after an abortive detonation of a nail bomb in a bag, was a 36-year-old resident of the Molenbeek district, who had not previously been considered a "terrorist" suspect, a Belgian prosecutor said.

Speaking at a news conference on Wednesday following the reopening of the station, Eric Van Der Sypt told reporters that the initials of the man, who had Moroccan nationality, were O.Z., and that his home in Brussels' Molenbeek district had been searched.

On Tuesday night, Belgian soldiers shot and killed the suspect after he set off a small explosion at the central train station in the capital. The blast was believed to be the caused by the detonator of a larger device.

There were no other casualties in the attempted attack.

Belgium's Prime Minister Charles Michel said that the shooting of the suspect "could have been potentially very dangerous".

He said there were more explosives that the suspect carried into the station than the small detonation that alerted the pa-



trolling military to the man before they killed him.

Michel said more security measures would be put in place for large public events like the Coldplay concert at the King Baudouin stadium later on Wednesday.

Prosecutors said the suspect was carrying a backpack be-

fore he was shot by one of the routine military patrols active in Brussels since attacks more than a year ago.

But the man was not wearing an explosive belt as was previously thought, Van Der Sypt said.

"We consider this a terrorist attack," Van Der Sypt said after the attack.

Police had cleared streets around Brussels' landmark Renaissance town square after the blast, which occurred around 8:30pm (18:30 GMT) as tourists and locals were enjoying a hot summer's night.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group claimed those attacks, which were carried out by the same cell behind the November 2016 Paris attacks that killed 130 people.

Soldiers have been stationed at railway stations, government buildings and European Union institutions in Brussels since the aftermath of the Paris attacks when a link to Belgium was first established.

(Source: agencies)

Amazon goes back to the future of groceries

By John Gopper

Just when we thought we understood Amazon, it surprises us. We are used to observing an online retailer that cuts prices relentlessly to undermine brick and mortar stores. It has now decided to buy Whole Foods Market, a premium chain for Americans who can afford fancy cheese and fish.

If it wanted to turn physical, the Amazon of our imagination might have followed Aldi, the private German retailer, by investing \$5bn to expand its US discount stores, or have directly taken on Walmart's 3,500 grocery and hardware Supercentres. Jeff Bezos, Amazon's founder, is instead entering the top end of the grocery market by offering \$13.7bn for Whole Foods.



This suggests either that Mr Bezos has lost his bearings or that many people think about Amazon in the wrong way. In fact, it is not so much an online discounter as a vast convenience store. Making things easier, either by cutting prices or by delivering goods simply, is his master plan.

The Whole Foods deal brings to mind not Walmart, Aldi, or Kroger, the largest traditional US supermarket, but a company that predated them: the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company. A & P was a precursor of US supermarkets and the way that it combined efficient technology with high street grocery outlets provides clues to Mr Bezos's thinking.

Before A & P, Americans shopped at small-town stores that were "often run in a haphazard manner" and purchased their supplies from "a byzantine collection of jobbers and middle men that was rife with corruption", according to Paul Ellickson, an economics professor at Rochester university.

Like an early 20th-century Amazon, A & P cut through all of that. In 1913, it opened "economy stores" on high streets, supplying them through its own network of warehouses and delivery trucks. It offered its own private label brands, which were fresher and less likely to be out of stock. A & P expanded to 16,000 stores in 1930 as economies of scale allowed it to undercut independents.

It eventually became a victim of its own success. Smaller operators lobbied for it to be curtailed and price discrimination was banned by the 1936 Robinson-Patman Act to stamp out discounting. It went into decline, replaced by large supermarkets built by Kroger and Safeway in warehouse districts and away from high streets.

But the combination of Amazon and Whole Foods suggests that history is starting to repeat itself. The supermarket itself has reached an apotheosis in huge suburban stores run by Walmart, as well as Carrefour and Tesco in Europe, and many shoppers are looking for alternatives. Amazon's Whole Foods deal is an experiment rather than the solution, but it is intriguing.

The supermarket's strength is becoming its vulnerability in an age when technology is changing the rules of retailing. It reduces costs and prices by grouping together many kinds of goods in one place, from tins of beans to fresh fish and meat, and persuading shoppers to bear the cost of final delivery. They drive to stores to load their trolleys and purchase everything at once.

Technology now offers a way to unbundle the traditional supermarket — to sell different things in different ways. Instead of having to shop for bulk household items, dried pasta and rice, and fresh fish all at once, the shopper's leisure time can be allocated more enjoyably and effectively. Routine goods can be ordered online and delivered directly, leaving time to pick the choicest produce in person.

It is more complex than that, of course. For one thing, people's shopping habits and sense of convenience vary according to where they live. Online grocery providers such as Ocado in the UK and FreshDirect in the US do best in cities, where people want to avoid traffic jams on the way to the supermarket. In the suburbs, it is often easier to drive to a Walmart or Kroger store.

Shopping habits also depend on income. Whole Foods and chains such as Trader Joe's draw people who can afford fresh and organic produce and can pay higher prices. They are also likely to be busy professionals who might buy the same food online if they were offered freshness and variety.

The challenge for online grocers is that freshness and variety are hard to combine — if they sell one type of tomato, their stock will turn over fast and be very fresh. If they offer 20 types, the choice is wider but the tomatoes will sit in warehouses longer. The supply chain for groceries is trickier and costlier than for non-perishables.

Having experimented with Amazon Fresh, its online grocery service, in cities in the US and elsewhere, Amazon has clearly realized that it needs a physical network as well. It has to expand in order to attain what Chris Baker, a partner of the consultancy Oliver Wyman, calls "a virtuous cycle of volume, turnover and freshness".

Beyond the Whole Foods acquisition lies a tantalizing vision of the 21st-century A & P, an enormous, efficient retail enterprise that deliver a wide array of fresh, cheap groceries to a network of small and large outlets, as well as directly to homes. That would be the ultimate convenience store and I imagine that Mr Bezos knows it.

(Source: Financial Times)

Iran's crude steel output up 8.8% in May: WSA

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Iran's production of crude steel stood at 1.620 million tons in May, with 8.8 percent rise from 1.565 million tons in April, according to the latest report published by the World Steel Association (WSA).

The WSA report also put the country's crude steel output at 7.232 million tons during January-May.

According to a January report published by the WSA, Iran produced 17.89 million tons of crude steel in 2016, registering an 11 percent growth compared to the figure in 2015.

The country's crude steel output stood at 18.466 million tons in the past Iranian calendar year 1395, showing 11 percent rise from 16.656 million tons in 1394.

Of the mentioned figure, 14.419 million tons have been produced by the state-run companies and the rest 4.047 million tons by the private sector.

The country exported 5.5 million tons of crude steel in the past year, with 27 percent increase from the figure of its preceding year.

Iranian Steel Manufacturers Association's Secretary Rasoul Khalifeh-Soltan believes that while the country's steel industry's growth has been 5.7 percent on average in the recent years, the figure can reach 10 percent this year, given the promising condition the sector enjoys at present.



Russia's Sukhoi Civil Aircraft looking at opening mission in Iran by 2018

The manufacturer of Russia's Sukhoi SuperJet (SSj-100) planes, Sukhoi Civil Aircraft, is looking at opening an office in Iran, the company's president, Vladislav Masalov, told TASS on Tuesday.

"We are looking at possible opening of an office in Iran jointly with the United Aircraft Corporation (UAC).

We have agreements with two companies. There is a big demand a big interest in regional planes in that country," he said.

According to Masalov, the office may be opened by 2018. "Probably, we will open the mission earlier [than 2018 - TASS]," he added.

Earlier, Sukhoi Civil Aircraft planned to open a mission in China but, according to the company's CEO, the sides have decided to postpone the implementation of the framework agreement to analyze the terms and prospects of the project more thoroughly.

(Source: TASS)

Qatar Airways named best airline in the world



Gulf-based carrier Qatar Airways was named Best Airline in the World at the 2017 Skytrax World Airline Awards during the Paris Air Show.

The airline, which travels to destinations across Europe, the Middle East, Asia Pacific, Africa, North America and South America, was honored with the accolade during an awards ceremony Tuesday. It had come in at second place in 2016.

"In a relatively short time, Qatar Airways has grown to more than 140 destinations worldwide, offering levels of service excellence that helped the award-winning carrier to become

best in the world," leading consumer aviation website Skytrax, which led the awards, said in a statement.

Qatar Airways' prestigious award comes at a time when the gas-rich country is coping with an isolation attempt by neighbors Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt — who imposed a regional blockade on Qatar two weeks ago.

Other carriers included in this year's top 10 airlines list include Singapore, Cathay Pacific, Emirates, Etihad and Lufthansa. Qatar was also awarded Best Airline in 2015, 2012 and 2011.

(Source: The Fortune)

Uber CEO Travis Kalanick resigns under investor pressure

Uber Technologies Inc Chief Executive Travis Kalanick, co-founder of one of the most influential technology companies of its generation, resigned on Tuesday under mounting pressure from investors over his leadership.

Kalanick's departure caps a tumultuous period for the world's largest ride-services company, which upended the taxi industry and transportation regulations globally with Kalanick at the helm.

"I love Uber more than anything in the world and at this difficult moment in my personal life I have accepted the investors' request to step aside so that Uber can go back to building rather than be distracted with another fight," Kalanick said in a statement first reported by the New York Times and verified by an Uber spokesman.

Kalanick, 40, has faced increased scrutiny in recent weeks following an investigation into the culture and workplace practices at a company he helped start in 2009 and is now the world's most highly valued startup.

But it was a chorus of demands for changes at the top from some of Uber's biggest investors that ultimately forced Kalanick out, according to a source familiar with the matter.

Venture capital firm Benchmark, whose partner Bill Gurley is one of Uber's largest shareholders and sits on its board, as well as investors First Round Capital, Lower



case Capital, Menlo Ventures and Fidelity Investments, all pressed Kalanick to quit.

They delivered a letter to Kalanick while he was in Chicago, the New York Times reported, citing people with knowledge of the situation. The newspaper, which was first to report Kalanick's resignation, said he would remain on Uber's board.

Kalanick's decision "was a surprise to everyone", a second Uber spokesman said.

Kalanick's departure comes after a lengthy investigation led by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

Uber hired Holder to look into its culture and workplace practices after a female former employee publicly accused the company of what she described as brazen sexual harassment.

Privately held Uber has been valued at \$68 billion, shattering the norms for Silicon Valley startups, and the company embodied many of Kalanick's aggressive and pugnacious personality traits.

(Source: Reuters)

UK budget deficit set to increase this year amid living standards squeeze

The government's spending deficit is on course to worsen this year after official figures showed that the economic slowdown is beginning to bite on the public finances.

As ministers struggle with demands for higher spending on health, the police and social care, the Office for National Statistics said that public borrowing was narrowly lower in May on the same month last year. Public sector net borrowing excluding the nationalised banks was £6.7bn in May, down from £7.1bn a year earlier and slightly below the consensus expectation of £6.8bn.

But analysts said this still meant the government would fail to meet its previous plan of reducing the deficit in every year of the parliament, with the gap between government income and spending heading towards £58bn compared to last year's total of £47bn.

The economy has slowed dramatically since the beginning of the year as the prospect of Brexit negotiations unnerved businesses and the higher-valued pound fed through into increased inflation, hitting living standards.

Philip Hammond revised the government's pledge to bring down the deficit in his autumn statement last year when he set a target for a balanced budget by the middle of the next decade rather than his predecessor's forecast of 2020.

The Office for Budget Responsibility, the Treasury's independent forecaster, expects public sector net borrowing to increase this year and then resume its downward path.

Revisions by the ONS to last year's deficit show it was better than expected at 2.4% of GDP compared with the previous estimate of 2.6%.

Scott Bowman, the UK economist at Capital Economics, said last year's figures were flattered by a series of one-off sources of revenue and the prospects for 2017/18 were for the deficit to increase for the first time since 2010.

"We still think that borrowing for the fiscal year as a whole will increase by several billion pounds as a number of one-off factors that lowered borrowing in 2016-17 unwind.

"What's more, the election result suggests that the planned forthcoming fiscal squeeze may be scaled back slightly," he said.

Yael Selfin, the chief UK economist at the accountancy firm KPMG, said: "Since the Great Recession we have seen a period of gradual improvements, but expected headwinds are now likely to put significant pressure on public finances.

"A slowing economy, a potential hefty exit payment to the EU, and an eventual gradual rise in borrowing costs are all com-

ing the UK's way. Taken together, this may leave little room for the government to satisfy public demands for an end to austerity."

A Treasury spokeswoman said: "We have reduced the deficit by three-quarters since 2010, but there is still further to go. We are committed to bringing the public finances back to balance by the middle of the next decade, building a stronger economy that can deliver higher living standards for people across the country."

Bowman said Hammond's speech at the Mansion House earlier this week showed that he intends to stick to the fiscal rules set out in the November autumn statement, meaning that "fiscal policy is still set to provide a significant drag on GDP growth over the next few years."

Ross Campbell, the public sector director at accountants' body ICAEW, warned that any easing in the government's austerity should be directed at boosting growth.

"The hung parliament increases the uncertainty associated with Brexit, while also diverting resources and attention away from the economy. This could negatively impact the health of the public finances. As a result, and in order to deliver credible fiscal plans, it's important that government puts strong financial leadership at the top of its priority list," he said.

"There have been signals from govern-

ment that we are likely to see an end to austerity and therefore a possible increase in public spending. With the economy still in a fragile state, it's important that any increased expenditure is allocated to areas that will help to drive economic growth — infrastructure, training, and fiscal stimulus."

The fall in borrowing announced on Wednesday was due to an increase in central government revenue of £2.6bn outweighing higher expenditure of £2.2bn. The strong revenue growth partly reflected a 4.3% rise in VAT receipts, though recent shopping trends appear to show this will weaken in the coming months.

The Bank of England said in a separate report that higher food prices were leaving consumers with less money to spend on non-essentials such as furniture and eating out.

Households were also starting to feel the pinch from higher clothing prices and utility bills according to the latest snapshot from the Bank's team of regional agents, based on discussions with businesses across the UK.

The sharp fall in the pound since the Brexit vote a year ago has driven a rapid rise in the inflation rate, from 0.3% a month before the vote to a four-year high of 2.9% in May.

(Source: The Guardian)

India keen to set up ammonia urea plant in Iran

Indian state-owned Gujarat State Fertilizers and Chemicals (GSFC) today said it was exploring the possibility of setting up an ammonia-urea plant in Iran.

"We are keen to set up an ammonia-urea plant in Iran due to the availability of natural gas, which is a raw material for ammonia at cheaper rate there. This plant is expected to cost around Rs 5000-6000 crore, (about \$700 million-\$900 million)" GSFC Managing Director A.M. Tiwari told PTI.

He said this decision comes in the wake of the pact signed between India and Iran in May 2016 to develop the strategic Chabahar Port in Iran.

"One of the important things about this development is free trade zone. Indian companies would set up a range of industries from aluminum smelter to urea plants in the region," he added.

Meanwhile, Tiwari said, GSFC is also exploring a possibility of setting up of ammonia-urea plant in Republic of Congo in Africa.

He said, this will be a part of enhancing bilateral trade and strengthening ties between both the countries as was desired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a recent visit to Congo.

(Source: Outlook India)



India found Farzad B field set to go to Iran

Amid reports that Iran has awarded the prolific Farzad B gas field to Russia's Gazprom, Indian petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan said India would not mind if the asset in the Persian Gulf is denied to it.

The field in the Farsi block, which was discovered by India's ONGC Videsh (OVL) ten years back, has an in-place gas reserve of 21.7 trillion cubic feet (tcf), of which 12.5 tcf are recoverable. However, the deal has been delayed as the two countries could not agree on a price and a rate of return for OVL-led consortium's investments. The other partners of the consortium include Indian Oil and Oil India.

Pradhan said there is no point in wondering whether the deal is on or off till a financial model is not in place. "I need assurance on my investment," added Pradhan.

Though India maintains that the negotiations with Iran is still on, Iran's oil minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh,



as reported, has said the country has signed an agreement with Gazprom for the prolific field in the Persian Gulf.

"Iran is a sovereign country and we expect that since we were with it during its challenging days, Iran should reciprocate. We will only make investment if we see returns," said Pradhan. Despite western sanctions which were lifted recently, India was among the few countries which continued trade even then.

(Source: Financial Express)

Oil falls as bulls discount OPEC cuts, set for worst first-half since 1997

Oil fell to seven-month lows on Wednesday, set for its largest price slide in the first half of any year for the past two decades, as investors discounted evidence of strong compliance by OPEC and non-OPEC producers with a deal to cut global output.

August Brent crude futures were down 12 cents at \$45.85 a barrel by 0838 GMT, after falling nearly 2 percent in the previous session to their lowest settlement since November.

U.S. crude futures for August were down 7 cents at \$43.44, having hit their lowest since September on Tuesday.

So far this year, oil has lost 20 percent in value, its worst performance for the first six months of the year since 1997.

Compliance with an agreement by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other producers to cut output by 1.8 million barrels per day from January reached its highest in May since the curbs were agreed last year.

"The slide in oil prices seems to be



unstoppable," said Julius Baer commodities research analyst Carsten Menke.

Data from the American Petroleum Institute on Tuesday showed U.S. crude stockpiles last week had dropped more than forecast. Gasoline and distillate inventories rose.

A government report on inventories is due at 10:30 a.m. EDT (1430 GMT) on Wednesday and the official figures often differ sharply from those of the industry group.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil bears are back as prices fall and driller shares take a hit

This week on Tuesday, oil slid into its first bear market in 10 months, falling 21 percent from its high for the year. The swoon dragged down driller shares amid concern that unceasing production from U.S. shale fields is overwhelming OPEC efforts to ease a global supply glut.

Explorers who came of age at a time when ever-increasing production was rewarded with ever-higher prices are now having a bit of a déjà vu from their fall from grace in 2014.

The S&P 500 Energy Index has lost 14 percent this year, while West Texas Intermediate crude, the U.S. benchmark, has fallen 19 percent. Buoyed by prices that hit \$54.45 a barrel in February, U.S. explorers have boosted the number of rigs drilling for oil to the highest since mid-2015, and expanded their production to 9.33 million barrels a day.

"A lot of faith and hope and belief was put into" the deal by OPEC, Russia and other exporters to cut their production as a way to balance the market, said John Kilduff, a partner at Again Capital LLC, a New York-based hedge fund. But "it's proven ineffectual."

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries failed to impress investors with a deal to extend output curbs in May as it didn't include deeper cuts, additional allies or an exit plan for when the limits expire in March. American supplies of crude and fuel that remain high even as the summer driving season kicks in are proving the skeptics right.

The rout worsened with recent reports that Libya is pumping the most crude in four years, while the



amount of oil stored in tankers reached a 2017 high earlier this month.

Crude futures declined 2.2 percent in New York on Tuesday, closing at \$43.23 a barrel, the lowest since mid-September.

A report on a decline in American inventories wasn't enough to improve the mood. While the industry-funded American Petroleum Institute was said to report that U.S. crude stockpiles fell by 2.72 million barrels last week, gasoline supplies rose by 346,000 barrels.

If we don't see a crude draw in this week's U.S. inventory report, "we'll probably start kissing \$40 pretty quick," James Williams, an economist at London, Arkansas-based energy-research firm WTRG Economics, said in a telephone interview.

Brent for August settlement, meanwhile, slipped 89 cents to settle at \$46.02 a barrel on the London-based ICE Futures Europe exchange. The global benchmark crude traded at a premium of \$2.51 to August WTI.

"People are getting a little fatigued waiting for the production cuts to have effect," Michael Lynch, president of Strategic Energy & Economic Research in Winchester, Massachusetts, said by telephone. Traders are "very nervous about the near-term prospects."

Another factor feeding trader angst is a rise in the number of drilled-but-uncompleted wells in U.S. oilfields. At the end of May, there were 5,946 wells in this category, the most in at least three years, according to estimates by the EIA. In the last month alone, explorers drilled 125 more wells in the Permian Basin than they would open, meaning production could surge when they turn on the spigots.

"We still have a lot of oil," Tariq Zahir, a New York-based commodity fund manager at Tyche Capital Advisors, said by telephone. "Libya is coming on a little bit more than people expected. And the bottom line is that the glut that's here in the United States doesn't look to be" slowing anytime soon, he said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Gulf of Mexico Storm Cindy disrupts shipping, crude imports

Tropical Storm Cindy has halted service at a major oil terminal in the Gulf of Mexico, prompted some evacuations at rigs and platforms and put states from Texas to Florida on notice for flooding rains.

Cindy was 350 miles (560 kilometers) southeast of Galveston, Texas, with top winds of 45 miles an hour late Tuesday.

The storm has triggered watches and warnings along the Texas-Louisiana coast including Galveston Bay, the entrance to the Houston Ship Channel and Sabine Pass, the site of the only active liquefied natural gas export terminal in the lower 48 states. Storms in the Gulf can often

oil energy markets because offshore rigs and platforms account for about 17 percent of U.S. crude oil output and 4.1 percent of gas production.

Vessel offloading at the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port marine terminal were suspended. The rest of the company's operations, including deliveries from its Clovelly, Louisiana, hub, were expected to continue, according to the company's website.

Enbridge Inc. evacuated non-essential workers from some platforms in the Gulf. Royal Dutch Shell Plc suspended "some well operations" in the region, though production is unaffected, according to company spokesman

Curtis Smith. BP Plc and Anadarko Petroleum Corp. also evacuated non-essential personnel. BHP Billiton Ltd suspended non-essential operations and "demobilized" non-essential workers.

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator Inc. declared a severe weather alert for the southern part of its electric grid, including Louisiana and Mississippi.

It's been a year since the U.S. Gulf Coast took a hit. Tropical Storm Colin and Hurricane Hermine struck Florida last year. The last storm to reach the western Gulf was Tropical Storm Bill in June 2015.

Power outages caused by the storm and subsequent flooding may have

the largest market impact. Entergy Corp. said restoration workers in Louisiana and Texas are prepared to respond and that teams in Arkansas and Mississippi are ready to relocate if needed.

"It's essentially a demand destroyer for the Deep South," said Matt Rogers, president of the Commodity Weather Group LLC in Bethesda, Maryland. "No production concerns really."

Cindy could bring 6 to 9 inches (15 to 23 centimeters) of rain across parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, with some areas getting as much as 12 inches, the center said. Lesser amounts are forecast in Texas.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Why is Saudi Arabia desperate for higher oil prices?

As one of the largest crude oil producers in the world, Saudi Arabia typically exerts considerable power over global energy market trends. Yet for the last year, the oil giant has been largely reacting to events outside of its control: surging U.S. shale production, OPEC-member cheating and non-compliance, uncertain demand and a persistent supply glut that has kept prices at or below \$50 a barrel.

Now, questions are being raised over the state of Riyadh's big next move: the IPO of Saudi Aramco, the world's largest and most valuable oil company, which Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman once projected as being worth \$2 trillion.

Analysts have doubted the veracity of the official Saudi estimate, with third-party valuations coming in much lower. The Financial Times has estimated the company to be worth between \$880 billion and \$1.1 trillion, while last March Bloomberg thought an IPO valuation would be closer to \$1 trillion. Rystad Energy predicted \$1.4 trillion, but only if prices recovered to \$75 a barrel.

With prices stagnant and OPEC's recent decision to extend production cuts having a minimal impact on market optimism, greater pressure is being placed on the IPO, which will put 5 percent of Saudi Aramco up for sale in early 2018.

The Crown Prince and his supporters within the Saudi government are gambling that the IPO can provide the first injections of capital into a massive sovereign wealth fund, which will then provide the financial basis for Vision 2030, a long-term economic development project.

It is the hope of the Crown Prince and others that Saudi Aramco will gradually become privatized and the Saudi economy pulled away from its current dependence on the oil industry, which provides 70 percent of Saudi state revenue (when prices were at their highest, oil accounted for more than 90 percent).

That will also mean diminishing Aramco's role in Saudi society, which is massive. Cutting away non-oil related businesses could preserve the company's value before the big IPO next year, according to analysis from Financial Times.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Oil supply to outpace consumption in 2018: IEA

The International Energy Agency (IEA) stated that the output of non-members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) would grow in 2018.

According to the agency, "For total non-OPEC production, we expect production to grow by 700,000 barrels per day (bbl/d) this year, but our first outlook for 2018 makes sobering reading for those producers looking to restrain supply."

"In 2018, we expect non-OPEC production to grow by 1.5 million bbl/d, which is slightly more than the expected increase in global demand."

It stated that Brent crude futures extended losses after the report, falling 64 cents on the day to \$48.08/bbl from around \$48.26 prior to the release.

The agency noted that oil inventories across the world's most industrial nations rose in April by 18.6 million barrels to 3.045 billion bbl.

It indicated that this was attributed to higher refinery output and imports, with stocks at 292 million bbl above the five-year average.

The agency stated that slowing demand growth in China and Europe in particular, as well as increasing supply, meant the deficit should narrow to 500,000 bbl/d from a prior estimate of 700,000.

It stated that OPEC and 11 rival exporters, including Russia, have agreed to extend a deal to limit supply by 1.8 million bbl/d to March 2018, in order to cut global inventory levels.

"We have regularly counselled that patience is required on the part of those looking for the rebalancing of the oil market, and new data leads us to repeat the message. 'Whatever it takes' might be the mantra, but the current form of 'whatever' is not having as quick an impact as expected."

"Indeed, based on our current outlook for 2017 and 2018, incorporating the scenario that OPEC countries continue to comply with their output agreement, stocks might not fall to the desired level until close to the expiry of the agreement in March 2018."

"Crude output from OPEC nations rose by 290,000 bbl/d in May to a 2017 high of 32.08 million bbl/d, still within the confines of the supply deal, after comebacks in Libya and Nigeria, which are exempt from cuts," it added.

(Source: Vanguard)

Solar energy is killing coal, despite Trump's promises

The rapidly falling cost of solar energy is going to make it difficult for President Trump to deliver on his promise to put coal miners back to work.

Trump has taken steps to ease the burden on coal country by ripping up environmental rules and pledging to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate accord.

But those deregulatory steps do little to offset the mounting long-term challenge that coal faces from cleaner forms of energy, especially solar.

By 2040, U.S. power generation from renewable energy is likely to skyrocket by 169 percent, according to a recent forecast from the research firm Bloomberg New Energy Finance. Coal-fired power is projected to plunge by 51 percent in the United States over the same period.

"The greening of the world's electricity system is unstoppable," wrote Seb Henbest, the lead author.

Despite Trump's promises, more and more electric utilities are expected to dump coal as businesses and individuals adopt solar panels. That's because of a simple economic reality: Renewable energy costs are poised to continue dropping thanks to a gush of investment.

The Bloomberg researchers measured energy costs by calculating the lifetime expenses of generating power from a new plant, including permitting and expenses.

(Source: CNN)

Can you kill the ISIL?

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-appointed caliph of the self-described Islamic State (ISIL), might have been killed. Again.

In announcing last week the airstrike that may have felled the ISIL's leader, Russia wisely hedged its bets. If Baghdadi's death is confirmed, though, this would be a positive development. The resulting leadership vacuum, and the scramble to fill it, would no doubt hasten the coming disintegration of the ISIL. In truth, however, the handwriting was on the wall long before last week's announcement.



From its inception, the Islamic State's real power resided not in religious extremists like Baghdadi but in a corps of former Saddam Hussein loyalists behind the scenes who had linked up with convicted terrorists when they were together in American-run prisons in the mid-2000s. These ex-Baathists, with a talent for eye-catching violence and unsurpassed knowledge of the inner workings of Iraqi society, kept the ISIL alive through lean years before leading it to sweeping victories following the American departure from Iraq.

Now almost all of the ex-Baathist leaders are dead, as are most of their immediate lieutenants. This represents a key difference between the ISIL today and Al Qaeda in 2011: When Osama bin Laden died, many of his deputies were around to keep the organization running.

This ISIL, by contrast, has been robbed of any strength in depth it may once have possessed. With Mosul mostly back in Iraqi hands and United States-backed forces encroaching on Raqqa, the ISIL's de facto capital in Syria, it is only a matter of time before the group will cease to be.

The real question is what happens next. One fact can be taken for granted: Its thousands of fighters will not melt away. Instead, like generations of terrorists before them, they will seek alternative outlets for violence. As previously demonstrated by Al Qaeda, territorial loses don't necessarily limit a group's ability to inspire supporters far from the battlefield.

The ISIL's most obvious successors might seem to be its network of affiliates. The biggest of these, based in Eastern Libya, has several thousand members and may have helped train the Manchester Arena bomber Salman Abedi. There is precedent for a terrorist group morphing from a proto-state into a global network: Al Qaeda managed just that after the fall of the Afghan Taliban. Again, however, Al Qaeda had the benefit of a surviving cadre of senior leaders capable of providing continuity and centralized direction; the ISIL does not. At this point, it seems unlikely that its web of franchises, always loose to begin with, will hold together without the "caliphate" in Syria and Iraq.

■ The impending destruction of the caliphate
Unfortunately, that is far from the end of the matter. The impending destruction of the caliphate raises another dangerous possibility: reconciliation between the ISIL and Al Qaeda. The dispute between the two groups has always been both ideological and personal. Ideologically, the ISIL claims to represent the reborn caliphate, and therefore demands the allegiance of all Muslims — fealty that Al Qaeda refuses to offer. Once there is no caliphate, this ideological dispute will fall away.

On a personal level, the ISIL loathes Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of Al Qaeda, whom it views as a usurper. They never forgave Zawahiri for supporting the Nusra Front, Al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, when it broke from their group.

A popular trope among ISIL members is their claim to represent "bin Laden's Al Qaeda," as opposed to "Zawahiri's Al Qaeda." But the day may not be far off when Al Qaeda's emir will once again bear the name of its founder. In an audio message in 2015, Zawahiri introduced a man he called "a lion from the den" of Al Qaeda. The next voice on the tape was that of bin Laden's son Hamza, now in his late 20s.

On audio messages Hamza sounds remarkably like his father, with the same hushed intensity and much of the same phraseology. Recently, Al Qaeda has begun according him the title of "sheikh," a mark of his growing power. Perhaps most significantly of all, while Zawahiri continually rails against the ISIL's leadership, Hamza is careful not to say anything that might antagonize Baghdadi's followers.

We should not be surprised if Hamza replaces Zawahiri as emir. With the caliphate consigned to history and a bin Laden once again at the top of Al Qaeda, the door would be open for former ISIL terrorists to rejoin the fold, bringing with them months or years of front-line experience.

With or without Baghdadi, the ISIL in its current form is doomed. Bin Laden's ideology, however, is destined to survive well into the future.

(Source: The NYT)

Power struggle may arise in Saudi Arabia after Mohammad bin Salman's promotion

By Nyshka Chandran

A power struggle in Saudi Arabia cannot be ruled out following the promotion of deputy crown prince Mohammad bin Salman to crown prince, analysts said.

The elevation of Saudi Arabia's deputy crown prince Mohammad bin Salman to crown prince, a position that places the 31 year old next in line to the throne, could be met with resistance at home.

Announced by a royal decree published by state news agency SPA on Wednesday, bin Salman's promotion comes at the expense of 57 year-old crown prince and interior minister Muhammad bin Nayef, who has been relieved of all positions, SPA said.

■ Violent power

A potentially violent power struggle in the future cannot be ruled out as it's not clear whether bin Nayef will go quietly, Peter Sluglett, visiting research professor at the Middle East Institute of the National University of Singapore, told CNBC on Wednesday.

"Generally speaking, the (royal) succession has proceeded in a fairly orderly manner, first through sons of the Kingdom's founder Abdulaziz and then to grandsons more or less in order of age, so this is quite a shocker in terms of precedence."

Bin Salman, one of the King's 12 sons, has been making international waves over the past year, with his Vision 2030 statement and the related National Transformation Plan — a program aimed at diversifying the Saudi economy away from energy over the next decade. He was also deemed a key player in Riyadh's decision to isolate Qatar amid allegations that Doha's ruling family supported terrorism.



Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman takes over from prince Mohammad bin Nayef.

Bin Salman's tapping as the Kingdom's next leader comes before King Salman's death, that could cause further divisions within the royal family and lead to a contested royal succession turning violent, the Council on Foreign Relations wrote in May.

Bin Nayef, meanwhile, has maintained a low profile since his accession to the nation's number-two post and the contrast between his quiet attitude and his cousin's high profile has been widely commented on at home, the Brookings Institution said in a 2016.

Known for his work as Saudi's counter-terror chief, bin Nayef still maintains a loyal following within the state apparatus, so it was not immediately clear whether he would comply with the royal decree or

launch a soft coup in retaliation.

■ Further divisions

Because bin Salman's tapping as the Kingdom's next leader comes before King Salman's death, that could cause further divisions within the royal family and lead to a contested royal succession turning violent, the Council on Foreign Relations wrote in May in response to speculation about a possible promotion for the young prince.

"His growing portfolio of responsibilities,

which ranges from defense minister to head of the economic council, has been gained at the expense of more senior members of the royal family, reportedly causing considerable resentment," the think-tank warned in that note.

Whether or not bin Salman's succession turns into a more serious matter will depend on the success of recent domestic reform initiatives, the note continued.

(Source: CNBC News)

Trump is cutting into the bone of American leadership

By Michael Fuchs

The recent resignation of David Rank, a 27-year career Foreign Service officer who was serving as acting U.S. Ambassador to China, is just the latest U.S. diplomatic casualty of American leadership under President Donald Trump.

Much has been written about the damage that Trump has already done to America's role in the world.

From undermining alliances to ignoring human rights to withdrawing from international agreements forged by American leadership — including the Paris climate agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal — Trump has made clear that he wants to upend America's place in the world, seeing many of America's alliances, trade deals and partnerships as ripping off America economically.

Just months into his presidency, Trump himself is no longer trusted by leaders around the world. Sure, many will continue to try to adapt and placate him, but governments make policy based on assumptions about what other governments will do, and few believe that Trump will live up to previous U.S. commitments, including longstanding alliances, or that Trump can be taken at his word for fear he will change his mind.

■ Axis of Adults

Enter the "Axis of Adults," as some have collectively referred to a handful of Trump's top national security officials, including National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly.

These were the officials who were going to interpret, smooth over, and translate Trump's campaign promises, tweets and unpredictable actions in office into reasonable American foreign policy.

But in doing so, they have largely ruined their own credibility, while at the same time convincing few people at home or abroad that they speak for the president on policy matters.

Part of the job for McMaster and Kelly has been to publicly defend of some of the Trump administration's worst impulses. McMaster was selected to explain Trump's impulsive decision to share highly classified intelligence with Russia without permission from the source country.

Meanwhile, Kelly has not only executed Trump's draconian immigration policies, but he has also answered the White House call of duty on matters outside of his purview at the Department of Homeland Security. For example, he defended Jared Kushner's reported attempt at setting up covert communications with Russia.

Mattis has managed to maintain his independence, and therefore his reputation remains mostly untainted. But his independence largely stems from the fact that his views are conspicuously divergent from Trump's.

He's a staunch supporter of NATO, highly critical of Russia, and just last week expounded on the benefits of a "rules-based order" during a speech in Singapore, making clear that he does not necessarily speak for his boss on fundamental issues, such as America's commitments to its allies.

Tillerson stands out amongst this group as a quiet follower of Trump's dismantling of America's role in the world, neither willing to make clear publicly if his views diverge from Trump (as Mattis does) nor fight on behalf



Just months into his presidency, Trump himself is no longer trusted by leaders around the world.

of his own agency's resources and influence in the policymaking process.

As Tillerson tows Trump's line everywhere he goes, at home he is gutting his own department, slowly depleting America's leadership capabilities.

■ Weakening of the State Department

Which brings us back to the resignation of David Rank, and perhaps the most dangerous, long-term impact of the Trump era on American foreign policy to date — the weakening of the State Department.

While presidents, secretaries of state, and other senior officials set policy and direction for U.S. foreign policy, the career foreign and civil service officers that represent the United States around the world bridge two gaps that no elected officials or appointees could ever fill.

First, career diplomats carry out policies determined by the president and secretary of state. Without the support of the career diplomats, few if any presidential initiatives could be achieved.

Private talks provided the opening for a nuclear deal with Iran, for instance, but career experts were needed to lobby the world to tighten sanctions on Iran to get it to the negotiating table, and then again to hammer out the specifics of the nuclear deal.

Second, career diplomats are the bridges between administrations, ensuring that enduring U.S. interests continue to be advanced around the world. They are often the ones who have years-long relationships with their counterparts in other countries, forming the connective tissue of peaceful international relations. The presence of career officials also remind governments around the world of the continuity of American leadership — those same career officials will one day move on and up to take on ambassadorships, positions as assistant secretaries and undersecretaries of state — and therefore earn respect and influence abroad. Foreign governments hoping to strike a better deal with the next team can wait out presidential administrations, but career officials will be present in both.

While America's economic and military strength provide leverage and power, America's diplomats are the ones who figure out how best to use that power to advance America's interests.

From advancing the interests of U.S. businesses in almost every country on earth, to playing key roles in

defusing conflict, to spearheading humanitarian work, U.S. diplomats do the invisible work of maintaining U.S. interests abroad. And interests like supporting human rights, boosting U.S. economic growth, and preventing conflict endure — presidents alone cannot choose to disregard them.

The acting U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, Lew Lukens, made clear in recent days how U.S. diplomats represent the best of America.

After the terrorist attack in London, as President Trump responded by criticizing the mayor of London and America's judiciary for not implementing his Muslim ban, Lukens sent the message that America stood with England with clear statements of support — simple yet vital aspects of American leadership and diplomacy that President Trump couldn't muster.

This last line of defense for American leadership around the world is in danger. In just the first few months of Trump's tenure, some of America's most distinguished career diplomats — such as Dan Fried and Tom Countryman — have retired.

Tillerson is backing Trump's attempt to hollow out the State Department through massive budget cuts, which will hurt the department's capability to retain, hire, and train future diplomats. And Tillerson does not even rely regularly on those career officials continuing to man their posts.

Media speculation over Rank's resignation suggests that his motivation to leave stemmed from his unwillingness to deliver the Trump administration's rationale for withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement to Chinese officials. Whether or not this is true — and whether or not other career officials are resigning because of Trump — it is clear there continues to be a precipitous exit of veteran Foreign Service officers.

If seasoned career diplomats continue to flee the State Department — combined with the administration's intention to unilaterally disarm America's diplomatic toolkit — the Trump administration will have stripped America of its first and last lines of diplomatic defense.

These public servants are out there preventing threats like pandemic disease and proliferation of WMD from ever harming Americans, while also serving as the last chance to stave off violent conflicts before they begin. They will begin cutting into bone.

(Source: Newsweek)

Quds Day binds world on land protection, fight against oppression

INTERVIEW
By Lachin Rezaian

American counter-terrorism analyst describes the beauty and power of International Quds Day in its ability to unite people in a bond of spiritual brotherhood and singing the harmony of political stability and peace.

The legacy of the late founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran Imam Khomeini, International Quds Day rallies is held by Iranians and other Muslims worldwide to show support for the oppressed people of Palestine and opposition to the occupation of the Palestinian territories by the Zionist regime of Israel.

In an exclusive interview with Tehran Times' Lachin Rezaian, a former U.S. army psychological operation officer and counter-terrorism analyst Scott Bennett said International Quds Day magnetizes people together around the central idea of creating and protecting their families, lands, and nations by standing together against terrorism, oppression, prejudice, and violence.

Through virtues and convictions, Quds Day inspires the people of other nations to join the struggle with their hearts, minds, and hands, and apply themselves to the struggle for peace and liberty, he told Tehran Times correspondent:

■ **How do you evaluate the importance of International Quds Day rallies and keeping the Palestinian cause alive?**

International Quds Day is an annual event held on the last Friday of Ramadan, was initiated by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 to express support for the Palestinians and oppose Zionism, as well as Israel's control of Jerusalem. In a time of relentless regime change imposed by the cannibalistic U.S.-Zionist-Wahhabi machine, International Quds day reminds us of our humanity, of God's purity, and of our quest for justice. Like a single star shining in night's black sky, the International Quds Day is a beacon for nations to follow and find their way out of darkness. It is the light of hope, which Palestinians, and all people crushed under oppression, can raise their eyes to-



Quds Day inspires the people of other nations to join the struggle with their hearts, minds, and hands, and apply themselves to the struggle for peace and liberty.

wards, and through patience and faith, achieve a purification from their struggles; and it is the music of holiness, which all nations of the world can hear and admire as a heroic sacrifice.

■ **What impacts does International Quds Day rallies have on the unity, security and stability of the region?**

The beauty and power of International Quds Day lies in its ability to unite people in a bond of spiritual brotherhood and sing the harmony of political stability and peace. Amidst the flag-waving, confetti rains, and smiling joy, International Quds Day magnetizes people together around the central idea of creating and protecting their families, lands, and nations by standing together against terrorism, oppression, prejudice, and violence. It serves as a reminder to the nations of the world that freedom and justice and truth are inviolable blessings upon humanity by God, which no person or nation has the right to steal or oppress.

■ **How do you consider the direct and indirect effects of Iran's Islamic Revolution on the Palestinian issue and the role of Imam Khomeini in shaping the resistance movements in**

Palestine?

One of the key parts of history which is conveniently forgotten by Western universities, schools, and politicians, is the fact that in 1953, the United States and the United Kingdom, in order to secure Iran's oil fields for Western oil companies, forcibly removed Iran's government and replaced it with the dictatorship of the Shah. The Shah imposed harsh conditions upon the Iranian people, and corrupted much of the conservative culture in Iran. The Islamic Revolution in 1979 was the Iranian people collective act of unifying their convictions and values, and overthrowing this foreign imposed dictatorship. With their successful liberation, the Iranian nation assumed a position unique in the world, and is one of the last great nations to wield sovereignty and independence amidst a world full of enslaved peoples.

■ **How do you think the achievements of Quds Day rallies are, since its establishment by the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran Imam Khomeini?**

Imam Khomeini is the voice and the face through which the public perceive the

spirit of Quds Day, and the person who inspires and directs their actions as to how best achieve liberation and peace. One Western writer named Hannah Arendt wrote, "Two things are needed for great revolution: a new sense of freedom, and a sense of creating something." The people must be communicating and acting in ways, which clearly demonstrates they are achieving a new level of freedom with each step, each shout, each wave of the banner; and they must perceive that through this exercising of their freedom they are creating a new destiny for themselves and their progeny. It is also important to communicate a fearless confidence in the religious righteousness and moral excellence of their cause or message. This attracts people and persuades them to support the message, whereas anger, violence, chaos, and negativity often inspires fear in people and resentment and intimidates them, which stops their ability to consider the message being broadcast. Demonstrations, parades, protests, and public marches serve two purposes: Firstly, to define and unite the voice of the people into one expression of socio-political values and vision; and secondly, proclaim this unified message to the world watching in order to share, protect and advance it. To do this, the demonstration and its message must be viewed as reasonable, passionate, achievable, and spiritually liberating.

■ **Does the idea of Quds Day rallies have any influence on the fight against Zionism in the western countries?**

Quds Day is a reminder to western countries that true freedom and peace comes from two things: absolute love and devotion to God, and independence and disentanglement from the laws, customs, activities of nations, and people of the world who offend God. Quds Day is a reminder of man's proper calling to stand up and defend his purity, and seek to always do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. Through these virtues and convictions, Quds Day inspires the people of other nations to join the struggle with their hearts, minds, and hands, and apply themselves to the struggle for peace and liberty.

It is a true story: "Trail of the Wolf"

Many years ago, when the World War I reached the Arab States territory, a British Zionist politician wrote a letter including a proposition to both the British Cabinet and House of Commons of the United Kingdom, saying:

"A Jew state under supervision of Britain would be developed in Palestine, where a total of three to four million Jew people who are scattered across the Europe can be settled. On the other hand, the British Empire will find a protectorate which may protect the Britain's interests across Egypt and Suez Canal and will control some sensitive points in the region."

As a member of British Zionist Federation, Herbert Samuel was the man who had proposed this proposition. The Federation's president in the time was Chaim Azriel Weizmann, who used to teach chemistry at the University of Manchester. He was also very popular and influential among British elites and politicians because of his invention, acetone, a chemical substance used by British army for manufacturing explosives during WWI. Since then, Dr. Chaim Azriel Weizmann became the most serious defender of Herbert Samuel's proposition and taking advantage of his influence on the top authorities of the British Empire, he started to negotiate to realize the Jew protectorate project. The British Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a letter to Baron Edmond Rothschild (head of the Rothschild banking family) on Nov. 2, 1917. The letter's text which is the first result of diplomatic activities and negotiations between British Zionist Federation (presided by Chaim Azriel Weizmann) and British economic and political leaders is as follows:

Dear Lord Rothschild!

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation [as executive branch of "Zionists International Congress"].

Yours sincerely,

Arthur James Balfour

Zionists treat the mentioned letter, which is recognized as the Balfour Declaration in the world's political literature, as the formal and valid document which provides Jews with sovereignty over Palestine.



At the time, Rothschild Family was the Europe's kings without crown and throne and their strongest branch, i.e. London's Rothschild, was known as the Jews King. Baron Edmond Rothschild, head of French Rothschilds, was the most important economic and political sponsor of Zionism Movement and "Zionism International Organization". So, it is natural that the letter of British Foreign Minister, including His Majesty's message, (to closest and most dependent state on Jew King) to one of heads of Rothschild's Empire, which starts with "Dear Lord Rothschild" is considered as a definite promise.

Within next years the British politicians enticed the naïve Arab emirs (Sharif in Hijaz and Faisal in Iraq) with numerous promises and agreements which have never been fulfilled (e.g. Sykes-Picot Agreement) and ensured them that it would not impose any changes on Palestinian Muslims' status quo and it would be only a peaceful coexistence.

Initially in January 1918, a Diplomat, Hogart, was tasked with meeting and convincing the Mecca's Sharif. Hogart travelled to Jeddah and ensured Mecca's Sharif about the British support for the Arab nation's unity. He said that in Palestine, Arabs and Jews would live separately and no one would be subdued by the other. The Jerusalem would be governed through an "international system", Al-Aqsa Mosque would belong to Muslims and Britain would support "Jews return" as far as it was safe for freedom of "Palestine aboriginal population" both in terms of political and economic considerations. He never denied the Balfour Declaration. Taking advantage of Arab emirs' extreme and unwise good will and naïveté, British elites controlled their possible reactions with some rootless promises and conventions.

At the same time on Jan. 19, 1918, a delegation consisting three members was chosen by the "Middle East committee of British foreign affair" who along with Weizmann were sent to Palestine in order to analyze political results of Balfour Declaration and how should it be implemented in association with an officer from British foreign affair ministry, Ormsby-Gore. The three-member delegation became known as "Zionism Commission".

But the fact is that since issuance of Balfour Declaration, the Zionism soft movement to devour a free land, directed by British government, has accelerated. It is almost a century from the date and only a strait, named Gaza and the West Bank, have remained from that territorial geography for Palestinians and other regions have been usurped through genocide, disturbing discipline and unity of Palestinian warrior groups, inequality of Arab emirs and Muslims states and also support of world colonial system.

The pivotal role of English government to support Zionists with the aim of preventing depiction of Islamic-Arab United Geography in the region and to pave the ground for a continuous and depressive fight among Muslim Ummah through issuing Balfour Declaration, hefty wealth of Jew families and insanity of Arab emirs are amongst the most important factors of the rise of a cancerous gland, named fake government of Israel.

It seems that this monetary and power current is going to continue this trend, and preventing any new measure against Muslim nations and supporting territorial right of Palestinian people need intelligence and wisdom of Muslim Ummah and attracting sympathy of other nations in the world in favor of an oppressed nation.

Adapted from Muhammad Ali Samadi's article

Another step toward a devastating war: Washington's pretense that it is fighting ISIS

By Dr. Paul Craig Roberts

An idiot American pilot shot down a Syrian fighter that was attacking ISIS, thus confirming that Washington is not fighting ISIS, as Washington claims, but is protecting ISIS, its agent sent to Syria by Obama and Hillary to overthrow the Syrian government. General Michael Flynn revealed on a TV interview that Obama and Hillary had, over his objection as director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, made the "willful decision" to send ISIS to Syria.

Washington's pretense that Washington is fighting ISIS, rather than supporting it, is the excuse for Washington's illegal presence in the Syrian conflict. Russia and Iran are in Syria legally, invited there by an elected government. The Americans are there uninvited as war criminals. Under international law established by the Americans themselves, it is a war crime to initiate aggression against a country that has not raised a fist against you.

So, to be in Syria, Washington has to pretend to be "fighting terrorism" rather than supporting it. The lie has been given to this claim many times, but now that an American pilot has proven that the U.S. is in Syria to support its agent, ISIS, not even a Megyn Kelly preststitute can honestly claim to believe that Washington is fighting ISIS.

The Russians, Syrians, and Iranians have known this from the beginning. However, these official sources are all suspect in the preststitute Western media. So with the preststitutes' complicity, Washington's lie has stood until the idiot American pilot blew the lie out of the sky along with the Syrian fighter and its pilot.

Washington, of course, will lie through its teeth. It is the only thing Washington knows how to do. Washington will claim that it was a "coalition fighter," that is, someone else was flying the U.S. F-18. It wasn't us. Or they will claim that the Syrian fighter was attacking women and children, or a transgendered compound or a maternity ward for women raped by Assad's "brutal troops." Washington will spin it in some way to make an aggressive war crime into a heroic defense of a victim group.

One question is: Did the idiot U.S. pilot do this on his own, a hot shot playing Top Gun, or was this a planned provocation of the military/security complex outside of channels to begin a conflict between the U.S. and Russia that would prevent any possibility of President Trump reviving his goal of defusing the high level of tensions with Russia? A \$1 trillion, 100 billion annual military/security budget paid by American taxpayers is at stake.

We don't know if the pilot acted on his own or on orders.

What we do know is that it did not go down well with the Russians. The Russian Defense Ministry said today that it regards the decision by "the U.S. command as an intentional violation of U.S. obligations in the framework of the memo on avoiding incidents and the safety of aviation

flights during operations in Syria signed on October 20, 2015."

Surprise! Surprise! The Americans broke yet another agreement Washington signed with Russia.

How many agreements with Russia does Washington have to break before the Russians finally understand that a signed agreement with Washington is meaningless? Will the Russians ever learn? The American Indians never did. There is a famous American T-shirt: "Sure you can trust the government. Just ask an Indian."

Perhaps the Russians finally have learned that any agreement with Washington is worthless at best and a death warrant at worst. The Russian Defense Ministry announced today that Russia is halting all interactions with the U.S. within the framework on the memorandum of incident prevention in Syrian skies. Additionally, the Russian Defense Ministry stated that Russian missile defense will intercept any aircraft in the area of operations of the Russian Aerospace Forces in Syria and:

"In areas where Russian aviation is conducting combat missions in the Syrian skies, any flying objects, including jets and unmanned aerial vehicles of the international coalition discovered west of the Euphrates River will be followed by Russian air and ground defenses as air targets."

In other words, in Russia's understated way, Russia has declared a no-fly zone over all areas of Syria in which Syrian and Russian forces are operating. Any intruder into that area will be blown out of the sky. American, Israeli, whoever, they are dead meat.



There is no intelligence in Washington. Only arrogance and hubris. The quarter century I spent there was with the most utterly stupid people on the face of the earth.

As it is Russia, not Washington, who has air superiority in Syria, all that is required is one more dumbshit American pilot, who will get his stupid ass blown out of the sky, and the utter morons in Washington will have to back off or make a mistake. As stupid as Washington is and as full of hubris, the morons will make a mistake.

There is no intelligence in Washington. Only arrogance and hubris. The quarter century I spent there was with the most utterly stupid people on the face of the earth.

I expect Russia to win this, because Russia has intelligent leadership, and Washington does not.

Nevertheless, perhaps mistakenly, as no one can know everything, I blame Russia for letting the Syrian crisis develop. Russia and Syria would have won the war long ago, except Russia kept declaring premature victory, pulling out, having to go back, always hoping to reach an agreement with Washington. Indeed, reaching an agreement with Washington was more important to the Russian government than winning the war or anything else.

Regardless of the evidence, the Russian government's hope simply could not die that Russia and Washington could reach an agreement to fight terrorism together. What utter nonsense. The terrorism in the Russian province of Chechnya was instigated by Washington. The Russian government does not seem to understand that there are no independent terrorists. Terrorism is a Washington weapon. So how can the Russian government make a pact against terrorism with the country that is using terrorism as a weapon against Russia?

What does Russia think the neoconservatives' plan to conquer Syria and Iran is about if not to bring more terrorism to Russia.

Vladimir Putin is a knowledgeable, strong, and able leader of a country. Perhaps he is the only one outside of China. Clearly there are none in the West, a wasteland of leadership.

Little doubt that Putin is a moral leader who is opposed to war and wants the best for all countries. However, by sacrificing the advantage every time he gains it to the nonsensical idea of making an agreement with Washington simply conveys to Washington weakness. Washington thinks Putin is just another person who Washington can walk over. This is a miscalculation, and it will result in war. It would be much better if Putin laid down the gauntlet and made it completely clear that "if you want war, it will be there in 30 minutes." Suddenly, Russia would be taken seriously.

I admire Putin. But he is playing the wrong game. Instead of parrying Washington's aggression, he should be aggressive and force Europe and Washington to come to him for a solution.

Putin, the leader of the free world, should not be on the defensive from a bankrupt, two-bit punk, washed up government in Washington that wallows in evil.

(Source: Global research)

The toxic state of America

By Christoph Scheuermann

Once the attacker was dead and the injured cared for, once quiet had returned to Congress and the investigation had begun, a hint of harmony briefly descended over Washington. Democrats said prayers for Republicans, adversaries found warm words for each other and even Donald Trump acted like a statesman. America is strongest, he said, "when we are unified and when we work together for the common good."

It sounded as if he had forgotten recent months -- the tirades and hate-filled speeches. As if there were no gaping rift between the opposing political camps, right and left, long since unbridgeable. For a moment, it seemed the president had swept aside all the rage -- and the nation was thankful.

What happened on Wednesday in Alexandria, a Washington suburb, was not Donald Trump's fault. The attacker opened fire on Republican members of the House and Senate. It was not an attempted political assassination, but it was an act that was at least partly motivated by politics. The perpetrator, James Thomas Hodgkinson, was a disturbed Bernie Sanders supporter who considered Trump to be a "traitor."

It was an attack on democracy, but above all provided evidence of just how toxic the political environment in the United States has become. And of course, this president, both directly and indirectly, bears his share of the blame for this climate.

■ Political battle raging

A political battle is raging in the United States in which the competing camps are no longer engaging in debate. Instead, each side is denying the other's right to participate in the democratic process. Both sides are raising the specter of treason as a way of justifying violence. The rage against elites has become impossible to contain, with ring leaders on the right speaking of "war" and those on the left of "resistance." The two sides are united by the thirst for confrontation and by the occasional repudiation of their opponents' humanity. Eric Trump, one of President Trump's sons, recently said that critics of the American leader are "not even people."

Debates have often been shrill in the United States. And violence has reared its head in political life before -- and not just since the assassinations of JFK, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

But today, a man is sitting in the White House who profits from the polarization and is further fanning the flames. It is

not the language of moderation that is spoken in Trump's Washington -- it is one of revolt, revenge, rage and cynicism, and that isn't by chance. Journalists have become "enemies of the state," judges are ridiculed, government prosecutors getting too close to the president are threatened with dismissal and the head of the FBI is fired.

But Trump isn't sowing the seeds of rage on his own. His opponents are also doing a fine job of escalating this rhetorical arms race with talk of street battles, as if guerilla warfare were the solution. Comedienne Cathy Griffin had herself photographed recently holding Trump's fake decapitated head by the hair. At the point in a debate when the physical well-being of one's opponent is no longer sacred, there are no boundaries left.

■ Ideological divide

The ideological divide between Democrats and Republicans has never been as wide as it is today. The most dangerous aspect of this development is that the two sides are no longer able to agree on basic facts. One wonders whether Republicans and Democrats could even agree that the sky is blue. If everything is relative and nothing is certain, when a president lies so openly, then who can you trust? When the language of this government is so corrupt and misguided,

what is one to do?

There are few institutions left that both sides accept as being nonpartisan. At the moment, Trump's helpers are busy casting aspersions at independent special counsel Robert Mueller, who has been tasked with investigating Russian influence on the presidential campaign and potential ties between Moscow and the Trump team. Until his appointment, he had been accepted by Republicans and Democrats alike as an independent official with integrity. The campaign against Mueller is destroying any possibility, at least on this question, that one side's version of the truth might ultimately be accepted.

The harmony following the attack in Alexandria didn't last long. The next morning, Trump tweeted he was the victim of a "WITCH HUNT." He was referring, of course, to special counsel Mueller.

Debate is one of the foundations of democracy, but in the U.S. it's hardly possible anymore. And when the people of a country are no longer capable of speaking to each other, when they constantly believe their opponents are involved in a conspiracy, then a country's institutions are also imperiled. And with them, democracy itself.

(Source: Spiegel)

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Lead found in 20% of baby food samples, especially juices and veggies



By Lydia Zuraw

Pediatricians and public health researchers know they have to be on the lookout for lead exposure from paint chips and contaminated drinking water. A new report suggests food -- particularly baby food -- could be a problem, too.

The Environmental Defense Fund, in an analysis of 11 years of federal data, found detectable levels of lead in 20 percent of 2,164 baby food samples.

The toxic metal was most commonly found in fruit juices such as grape and apple, root vegetables such as sweet potatoes and carrots, and cookies such as teething biscuits.

The organization's primary focus was on the baby foods because of how detrimental lead can be to child development.

"Lead can have a number of effects on children and it's especially harmful during critical windows of development," said Dr. Aparna Bole, pediatrician at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital in Cleveland, who was not involved with the report. "The largest burden that we often think about is neurocognitive that can occur even at low levels of lead exposure."

Lead can cause problems with attention and behavior, cognitive development, the cardiovascular system and immune system, Bole said.

The samples studied were not identified by brand, and the levels of lead are thought to be relatively low. Still, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, no

Lead can cause problems with attention and behavior, cognitive development, the cardiovascular system and immune system.

safe blood lead level in children has been identified.

In a draft report released earlier this year, the Environmental Protection Agency estimated that over 5 percent of children consume more than 6 micrograms per day of lead -- the maximum daily intake level set by the Food and Drug Administration in 1993 -- in their diet.

This surprised Tom Neltner, Environmental Defense Fund's chemicals policy director, who has spent 20 years researching and working to reduce lead exposures. His further analysis of the EPA report was that food is the major source of lead exposure in two-thirds of toddlers.

This spurred the organization to examine data from the FDA's Total Diet Study for specific sources of exposure for kids.

In the resulting report, released Thursday, Neltner found that the baby food versions of apple juice, grape juice and carrots had detectable lead more often than the regular versions. Researchers could determine how frequently contamination occurred, but not at what levels.

According to the FDA, lead makes its way into food through contaminated soil, but Neltner suspects that processing may also play a role.

"I can't explain it other than I assume baby food is processed more,"

Neltner said.

The Environmental Defense Fund report notes that more research on the sources of contamination is needed.

FDA has set guidance levels of 100 parts per billion (ppb) for candy and dried fruit and 50 ppb for fruit juices. The allowable level for lead in bottled water is 5 ppb.

Concern over fruit juices flared up in 2012 when Consumer Reports found that 1 in 4 samples of apple and grape juices had lead levels higher than the FDA's bottled-water limit of 5 ppb.

"The FDA is continuing to work with industry to further limit the amount of lead in foods to the greatest extent feasible, especially in foods frequently consumed by children," read an agency statement in response to the report. "The agency is in the process of reevaluating the analytical methods it uses for determining when it should take action with respect to measured levels of lead in particular foods, including those consumed by infants and toddlers."

Neltner said he's glad the FDA is working on the issue but wants them to "get it done. Move quicker."

The Environmental Defense Fund isn't recommending that parents avoid certain foods or brands for their children but does advise that they consult their pediatrician about all means of lead exposure.

"In many American communities, the most significant route of lead exposure is from paint and soil," Bole said. "Avoiding all sources of exposure of lead poisoning is incredibly important ... but the last thing I would want is for a parent to restrict their child's diet or limit their intake of healthy food groups."

She added that pediatricians recommend limiting or eliminating fruit juices from children's diets, anyway, for nutritional reasons. "There are good reasons to limit juice other than this particular report," Bole said.

But she said she wouldn't want parents to avoid root vegetables altogether. "The benefits of those nutritious foods far outweigh any risk," she said, especially in the context of where kids are most exposed to lead.

In response to a request for comment, Gerber said that samples of its baby foods and juices "consistently fall well within the available guidance levels and meet our own strict standards." And samples of Gerber juices were all below the EPA standard for drinking water.

"We know parents may be concerned about a recent report on lead in foods and want to reassure them that Gerber foods and juices are safe," the statement read.

The Environmental Defense Fund report was ultimately directed at the food industry and FDA in the hopes of getting limits and standards updated.

But lead in paint and drinking water shouldn't fall by the wayside, Neltner said. "You've got to deal with this issue on multiple fronts."

(Source: CNN)

Can unprotected sun exposure be good for you?

By Naveed Saleh

Most of us know to use sunscreen when we're outside. After all, sunscreen minimizes the risk of skin cancer. However, constant use of sunscreen while outside prevents your skin from producing vitamin D. Although vitamin D is found in the foods that we eat, nearly one billion people worldwide are vitamin D deficient.

In addition to bone health, adequate levels of vitamin D may also mitigate the risk of various other diseases, such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and cancer.

Research suggests that spending several minutes a week in the midday sun sans sunscreen may help your body make the vitamin D that it needs and may currently be lacking.

Balancing sunscreen use and adequate sun exposure

UV radiation from the sun is a cancer-causing agent (i.e., carcinogen) that is directly responsible for the majority of the 1.5 million skin cancer cases occurring in the United States each year. Moreover, ultraviolet radiation also is the major contributor to the 8000 deaths due to metastatic melanoma that occur each year. Metastatic melanoma is the worst type of skin cancer.

In addition to causing skin cancer, during a lifetime, the ultraviolet radiation in sunlight can lead to skin damage, cosmetic changes, and dryness.

Most of the time that you're outside, you should definitely lather on a thick layer of sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15. Apply this sunscreen to any areas of your body exposed to the sun, including your face, arms, and legs.

Also, don't forget to have a friend cover your back.

Even if it's cloudy or cool outside, you should wear sunscreen. Sunscreen reflects, scatters, or absorbs ultraviolet radiation and protects you from its harmful effects. Make sure to avoid using sunscreen that's expired.

You should also reapply sunscreen as needed.

For instance, after swimming, sweating, or toweling off, reapply sunscreen. You should also reapply sunscreen after being outside of the sun for two hours or more.

Although it's a good idea to wear sunscreen with an SPF of 15 for most of the time that you're outside, according to the NIH:

It has been suggested by some vitamin D researchers, for example, that approximately 5–30 minutes of sun exposure between 10 AM and 3 PM at least twice a week to the face, arms, legs, or back without sunscreen usually lead to sufficient vitamin D synthesis and that the moderate use of commercial tanning beds that emit 2%–6% UVB radiation is also effective. Individuals with limited sun exposure need to include good sources of vitamin D in their diet or take a supplement to achieve recommended levels of intake.

In other words, a couple times a week, you may want to go out in the sun for a brief walk without the protection of clothing or sunscreen. Please note that you don't need to sunbathe per se—simply expose yourself to the warmth of the midday sun, since sunscreen does its job so well that much-needed vitamin D isn't getting through.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is more akin to a hormone than a vitamin; vitamin D receptors are found on a nearly every cell in the body.

In the body, vitamin D has many roles including the following:

- bone metabolism
- immune function
- inflammation reduction
- cell growth
- nerve and muscle function

Of note, vitamin D helps with the absorption of calcium in the gut and maintains adequate concentrations of calcium and phosphate in the blood to mediate bone mineralization, bone growth, and bone remodeling.

In the body, vitamin D is first produced in the skin when the skin is exposed to the ultraviolet B (UV-B) radiation in sunlight. It's then transported to the liver where it's further metabolized. More than 90 percent of human vitamin D supply comes from sunlight.

Most people get at least some of their vitamin D from sunlight. Concentrations of vitamin D in the blood are the best indicators of potential deficiency.

During the past 20 years, vitamin D levels among American men but not American women have slightly declined. These declines in men are likely secondary to increased body weight, greater use of sun protection, and decreased consumption of milk.

Vitamin D is naturally found in just a few foods that we eat including the following:

- egg yolks
- fatty fish (e.g., salmon, tuna, sardines, trout, and mackerel)
- cod liver oil
- beef liver
- portabella mushrooms

Vitamin D is also added to many (fortified) foods including the following:

- milk
- cheese
- cereal
- infant formula
- orange juice

Dietary vitamin D is first absorbed in the small intestine then is further metabolized by the liver and kidney before making its way into the circulation.

Vitamin D deficiency

Common causes of vitamin D deficiency include not enough exposure to sunlight, inadequate dietary intake, and problems with absorption. Because vitamin D is fat soluble, people with conditions that interfere with fat absorption, such as inflammatory bowel disease and gastric bypass, are at greater risk for deficiency.

The amount of UV-B radiation exposure that your skin receives depends on various factors including the following:

- season
- time of day
- latitude
- age
- skin pigmentation
- clothing
- sunscreen use

By Susie Moore

No Regrets With Susie Moore "Julia has a certain magic, doesn't she?" I heard a co-worker say over margaritas a few years ago. Julia's side hustle as a writer had recently taken off, she was in a loving relationship, all the managers adored her (her next promotion was inevitable) and, well... we adored her too.

You'd think there would be a pang of envy when we contemplated Julia's awesomeness. But there wasn't—just affection from everyone. Why? Because Julia was irresistible to everyone. You probably know a Julia or two yourself.

Here are some qualities that irresistible people possess:

1. They are nice to you. An ego, simply put, ain't good. When someone is sizing you up, one-upping your achievements or grossly overstating their success has the opposite effect. The most likeable people have no airs about them. They're delightfully comfortable in their own skin, and that confidence translates to kindness.

2. They know their worth Nicole Moore, relationships coach and founder of Love Works Method, says attractive people have an attitude of, "I know what I'm offering, and it's valuable." This can appear in a quiet, resolute, confidence.

She also suggests owning what she refers to as a "power attribute," which you can simplify into your own, unique word. Are you brainy? Witty? Soulful? Nurturing? Playful? Knowing your worth (and your word) is powerful.

3. They make you feel comfortable. Ever notice how, when you are in the presence of people who make you feel relaxed and like yourself, you blossom? Irresistible people give you the comfort and space to be who you are. They don't try to change you. They look for the good in people, and they draw it out of them too.

4. They stay away from drama and negativity. There is nothing appealing about pessimistic, downbeat types. And energetically, we cannot help but mirror those around us, so it's the uplifters we naturally gravitate towards. We seek them out. We invite them to meetings, parties, and coffee. We linger around them because we can't help but enjoy their affirmative vibes.

5. They elevate others. Irresistible humans love to give compliments. They share the credit. They are quick to say a kind word or even help out. Irresistible people want to make life pleasant and positive for everyone.

6. They don't compete; they collaborate. Recently I was at a breakfast full of entrepreneurial women. In a heartbeat, you could tell who among us was sizing others up with an aggressive "who's who?" vibe, versus those who were simply and enthusiastically introducing themselves to others.

The latter group were eager to learn about the people they were meeting. They had open smiles, warm body language, and an inquisitive way about them. I learned

There is nothing more isolating (or exhausting) than trying to project a false sense of strength.

later that two of the warmest and most sincerely passionate women within the group also happened to have the most successful businesses, thanks in large part, to partnerships with other people like them. No surprise.

7. They are not afraid to be vulnerable. There is nothing more isolating (or exhausting) than trying to project a false sense of strength. When meeting new people, I've noticed that most don't about talk topics that really matter. Whenever I bring up my early divorce, my late father, or my modest upbringing, people tend to open up to me too, and it's because we all want to make deeper, more sincere connections with others.

Connection has nothing to do with exotic vacations or million-dollar career stories—it's about being secure enough to talk about tough parts of life. Because we all have them.

8. They accentuate their strengths. Irresistible people use words with intention. They use statements like, "I love, I do, I can" versus "I should, I try, I don't know." When you use stronger, more intentional language, it impacts your mood, your confidence, and how other people perceive you. And irresistible people focus on playing up their talents versus complaining about their weaknesses.

9. They make an effort. Irresistible people make an effort to look presentable. To do the research before a meeting. To bring a gift when they visit a person's home. These things don't need to be overthought, and they don't have to be perfect. But the effort is noticeable, and it's lovely. It encourages us to do things with a little more effort too.

(Source: greatist.com)

Iran eyes boost in marine, agritourism co-op with Vietnam

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran is interested in ramping up cooperation with Vietnam in the areas of marine traveling and agritourism, ISNA reported.

Iran's tourism chief Zahra Ahmadipour and Vietnam's Ambassador Nguyen Hong Thach discussed ways to attain the goal during a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday.

"Vietnam has worthy experiences in marine tourism so that it is considered as one of the appropriate platforms for increased interaction between the two countries," Ahmadipour said.



Iran's tourism chief Zahra Ahmadipour (R) presents a gift to Vietnam's Ambassador Nguyen Hong Thach in Tehran, June 20, 2017.

Agritourism is one of other issues that should be taken into account in the light of the successful experiences of Vietnam in this regard, she said.

Hong Thach for his part pointed to cultural and historical themes that the two nations have in common, saying the ground is fertile for further tourism cooperation.

Vietnam and Iran established diplomatic relations in 1973. The relationship was strengthened with the establishment of the Vietnam-Iran Friendship Association in September 2009.

NGOs helping restore historic sites in Kerman

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A patchwork of historical places scattered across the southern province of Kerman has been or being restored to their heyday glory by the assistance of non-governmental organizations, CHTN reported on Monday.



A view of Shah Nematollah Vali Shrine in Kerman province

A total sum of over 400 billion rials (nearly \$11m) has been channeled into refurbishing projects at Aminian Mansion, Haj Aqa Ali Caravansary, Vakili Caravansary, Haj Ali Rafsanjan Mansion, and Shah Nematollah Vali Shrine amongst others, the provincial tourism chief said.

Mahmoud Vafai added that [general] attitude towards the historical places has been shifted toward opportunities for developing tourism since President Hassan Rouhani assumed office in 2013.

The Revitalization and Utilization Fund for Historical Places plans to cede tens of historical structures to the private sector every year to become operational as traditional tourism lodgings.

The vast province is home to numerous natural and historical attractions and one of the oldest inhabited regions in the Middle East. The ancient land is a paradise for archeologists and fellow anthropologists as well.

Italy tourism minister says crowds should be limited at famous sites

Tourist flows should be monitored at famous sites in Italy in cities like Rome and Florence, with access limited when crowd numbers swell, the culture and tourism minister said on Tuesday.

Italy's 51 UNESCO World Heritage sites include whole city centers and town squares which have been increasingly worn out by the footfall of visitors over the centuries.

Conscious of the money-spinning power of places like St Mark's Square in Venice, some officials have floated the idea of charging for access to currently public areas. But Culture and Tourism Minister Dario Franceschini has other ideas.

"You cannot pay entry to a city, or a street, or a town square," Franceschini said at an event in Rome.

Instead, the problem should be addressed with "new, non-invasive technology that counts people entering ... when the number reaches a maximum access is stopped until they flow out."

In Venice, one of Italy's most high-profile examples of architectural beauty under strain, campaigners have been demanding for years that the number of visitors be limited.

Last year, heritage protection group Italia Nostra said 30 million tourists were coming to the canal city every year, and proposed a ceiling of 13.8 million annually.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran sets sights on 6.5m foreign tourist arrivals

1 → Iran's brilliant goal is to lure 20 million foreign travelers annually by 2025. However, with only eight years to go, according to some experts, the target seems to be somewhat unachievable.

At the moment Europeans travelers from countries including France, Italy and Germany, who account for the majority of Western tourists, can now get visas on arrival in Tehran, and at the main sites they mingle with sightseers from China, Japan and elsewhere.

With countless natural beauties, deeply-rooted-in-time history and culture, as well as abundance of tourist sites, 21 of which have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, Iran seeks to acquire greater share of the global tourism industry.

The government has also announced plans to create sufficient accommodation and transportation for the growing number of tourists. There is a plan to increase the number of higher-end hotels from 130 to more than 1,000 in 10 years.



An undated photo shows a circle of foreign and domestic visitors to the ruins of Persepolis, a UNESCO World Heritage site in southern Iran.

Italian runner to defy Iran's hot desert with eye on world record

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Italian marathon runner Paolo Venturini is slated to run across Iran's Lut Desert, known as the hottest spot on Earth, to try and set a Guinness World Record, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

The athlete is scheduled to try hand at running an 80-kilometer course on July 21 when the temperature in the desert reaches about 70 degrees centigrade, said Moein Afzali who is coordinator of the program.

The scorching Lut Desert would have the highest possible temperature late in July so that Venturini has chosen this date in order to seize the record, Afzali added.

The event will also record name of the Lut Desert in the Guinness Book of Records, Afzali said, adding that two Guinness experts and a cameraman with Italian satellite TV Sports will accompany the runner.

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, the Lut Desert is one of the two deserts that dominate the landscape of eastern Iran.

Rich in magnificent scenery and unparalleled serenity, it has always lured travelers who are in search of new adventures.

Seven years of satellite temperature data analyzed by NASA show that the Lut Desert is the hottest spot on Earth. Based on the research, it was hottest during 5 of the 7 years, and had the highest temperature overall: 70.7°C in 2005.



Italian marathon runner Paolo Venturini in an undated photo.

Five amazing and overlooked travel sites in Iran

It might not be on everyone's travel radar, but Iran has a well-worn tourist circuit, encompassing attractions in the ancient cities of Shiraz and Isfahan.

For those wanting to get off the beaten path, the country has a wealth of lesser-known destinations that rival the stunning beauty and historical significance of their more famous counterparts.

Here are five of the best:

■ Rudkhan Castle



Hidden in the humid green forests of Iran's northern Gilan province is Rudkhan Castle, a medieval military fortress whose origins predate the rise of Islam in Iran.

Few foreign tourists have visited the site, which is a popular attraction among Iranians.

Work started on the castle during the Persian Sassanid era, between 224 CE and 651. Followers of the Ismaili sect (the infamous "Assassins" or "Hashashin") are believed to have renovated and completed the fortress during the late 11th to 12th centuries.

The hike up to the castle, which is situated along two peaks of a verdant mountain, takes more than an hour, prompting many locals to call Rudkhan the "Castle of a Thousand Steps."

■ Bekhradi Historical House

Located in central city of Isfahan, this 400-year-old inn built in Persia's Safavid era features four tastefully decorated multi-roomed guest suites and is the oldest house to be restored in Iran.

Its renovation and artistic restoration took local interior designer and restoration specialist Morteza Bekhradi five years to engineer and complete.

Peppered with stained-glass windows and original artwork from the Safavid and subsequent Qajar eras, the house sits between two gardens replete with fruits



and wildflowers.

■ Soltaniyeh Dome

A UNESCO World Heritage site in the northwestern province of Zanjan, the mausoleum of Oljaytu at Soltaniyeh is topped by one of the world's largest domes.

Built between 1302 and 1312 in Soltaniyeh, the capital city of the Mongols' Ilkhanid Dynasty, the monument is a mausoleum for Il-khan Oljeitu, the Ilkhanid's eighth ruler. Though much of the structure's exterior coloring and tiles have faded through the centuries, the intricate brickwork, tilework and vibrant designs inside the mausoleum have remained largely unscathed.



The unique double-shelled structure of the Soltaniyeh Dome is also believed to have influenced the design of India's Taj Mahal mausoleum.

■ Laleh Kandovan Rocky Hotel

About 30 miles outside the northwestern city of Tabriz lies the troglodyte village of Kandovan. People here live in cone-shaped caves cut out of volcanic rock at the foot of Mount Sahand, a dormant volcano.

Nestled within the 800-year-old village, the Laleh Kandovan Rocky Hotel has been literally hand-carved

into the rocky landscape, with each of the luxury hotel's 16 modernized rooms encompassing a cave, or "karaan." According to local lore, mineral water sourced from Mount Sahand, long valued throughout Iran for its medicinal properties, originated in the biblical Garden of Eden.



Guests of the hotel can take a relaxing soak in this precious liquid. If there's a spa tub in the room, the mineral water gets pumped in directly.

■ Toghrol Tower

Toghrol Tower is a Seljuk-era monument situated in the city of Rey, on the southern outskirts of Iran's capital city, Tehran.

Often overlooked by visitors who tend to stick to the higher-income northern and central areas of the Iranian capital, Rey is the oldest county in Tehran province and is speckled with historical monuments, including a 500-year-old Safavid-era bazaar. The tower is said to serve as the mausoleum for Seljuk king Toghrol Beg, who established Rey as a major administrative center of the Seljuk Dynasty until its destruction by Mongol armies in the early 13th century.



World heritage reefs at risk of coral bleaching, UNESCO says

Almost 75 percent of world heritage coral reefs have been exposed to heat stress that causes coral bleaching in the past three years, UNESCO says.

The draft report on climate change released overnight is outlined in the agenda paper ahead of a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) meeting in Poland next month.

It states three-quarters of coral reefs over the past three years of the 29 world heritage coral reefs were exposed to conditions that cause bleaching.

"Coral mortality during the latest global bleaching event most likely has been the worst ever observed, including at world heritage property reefs," the paper said.

It states the Great Barrier Reef bleaching

event as the most widely reported and it would need to be assessed by the World Heritage Committee.

Other reefs that suffered severe bleaching were in Seychelles, New Caledonia and the United States.

UNESCO expressed its "utmost concern regarding the reported serious impact from coral bleaching that have affected world

heritage properties in 2016-17 and that the majority of world heritage coral reefs are expected to be seriously impacts by climate change".

The UNESCO draft paper reiterated the importance of governments to implement and ratify the Paris Agreement as soon as possible.

(Source: ABC News)

Persistent, deadly heat at the equator could be the norm by 2100, researchers say

Phoenix was projected to reach of 120 degrees Fahrenheit, a near-record for the desert city, and hot enough that small planes cannot generate enough lift to fly. Phoenix and other cities have experienced similar conditions before, but only rarely — for now.

The grounded passengers got to sit inside an air-conditioned terminal, at least. But in other parts of the world where temperatures are set to soar regularly above 100 degrees this summer, prolonged heat waves are likely to result in more deadly consequences.

Right now, roughly one-third of the world's population experiences more than 20 days of deadly heat a year. That number is estimated to rise to at least 50 percent by 2100, and if carbon emissions continue unabated, dangerous heat waves could strike as much as three-fourths of the world's population. That's the sobering analysis outlined in a new study from University of Hawaii researchers, published in Nature Climate Change.

■ **Heat waves**

The researchers looked at heat waves from 1980 to 2014 and identified a threshold past which they say conditions of heat and humidity can kill. Pairing their findings with climate predictions for the next 80 or so years, they say that heat-related deaths will become more commonplace.



A week of abnormally high temperatures in July of 1995 killed an estimated 700 people in Chicago, while more recent events have been even more deadly. The 2003 European heat wave killed an estimated 20,000 people across the

continent, although the number could be as high as 70,000. In 2010, scorching heat in Russia killed some 10,000 people, many from air pollution caused by wildfires. Hundreds more smaller heat waves around the world have caused fatalities

The researchers looked at heat waves from 1980 to 2014 and identified a threshold past which they say conditions of heat and humidity can kill.

Scientists turbocharge high-resolution, 3-D imaging

You may not have heard of optical coherence tomography, or OCT. But if you've visited an ophthalmologist recently, chances are your eye came within an inch or two of a scanning device employing the technology. Tens of thousands of these devices are in place in doctors' offices, where they're widely used to check for eye diseases.

Now, Stanford University scientists have figured out how to retrofit these high-performance machines with off-the-shelf components, increasing OCT's resolution by several-fold and promising earlier detection of retinal and corneal damage, incipient tumors and more.

The relatively simple, low-cost fix—entailing a pair of lenses, a piece of ground glass and some software tweaks — erases blemishes that have bedeviled images obtained via OCT since its invention in 1991. This improvement, combined with the technology's ability to optically penetrate up to 2 millimeters into tissue, could enable physicians to perform "virtual biopsies," visualizing tissue in three dimensions at microscope-quality resolution without excising any tissue from patients.

■ **Available OCT devices**

In a study to be published online June 20 in Nature Communications, the researchers tested the enhancement in two different commercially available OCT devices. They were able to view cell-scale features in intact

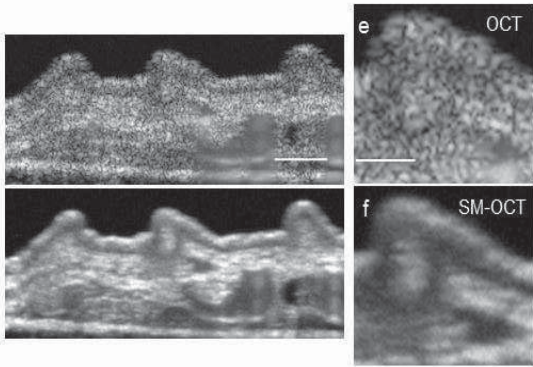
tissues, including in a living mouse's ear and a human fingertip, said the study's senior author, Adam de la Zerda, Ph.D., assistant professor of structural biology. The study's lead author is electrical-engineering graduate student Orly Liba.

"We showed that you can take effectively any OCT system out there and, with minimal changes, boost its resolution to the point where it can detect anatomical features smaller than the size of a typical cell," de la Zerda said.

This movie shows the extraordinary detail which can be visualized owing to SM-OCT. As a demonstration for this capability, we can image an intact region of mouse ear. At the very top, we see the epidermis, which is the surface of the skin. The dark area in the center is the cartilage of the ear.

■ **Hair follicles**

A conventional OCT image would be filled with salt & pepper noise, called speckle, which hides most of the fine structures inside the tissue. This noise is removed by SM-OCT, revealing small structures inside and beneath the skin. For example, we are now able to see the hair follicles, which include the follicle shaft (yellow) and the follicle bulb (blue). We can also see the structure of glands connected to the follicles (red). By segmenting these structures, we can closely examine their shape and



how they connect to each other.

Owing to the unique capability of SM-OCT to remove speckle noise, we are able to image through the skin at the resolution of a microscope.

OCT is a billion-dollar business. Every year, more than 10 million OCT scans are performed to diagnose or monitor conditions from age-related macular degeneration to melanoma. The technology has been adapted for endoscopic use in pulmonary, gastrointestinal and cardiovascular medicine.

(Source: phys.org)

Yellowstone supervolcano hit by a swarm of more than 400 earthquakes in one week

Yellowstone supervolcano has been hit by a series of earthquakes, with more 400 recorded since June 12. The latest was recorded on Monday, June 19, with a magnitude 3 earthquake striking 8.6 miles north northeast of West Yellowstone, Montana.

The swarm began last week, and on June 15 saw a magnitude 4.5 earthquake take place in Yellowstone National Park. The "epicenter of the shock was located in Yellowstone National Park, eight miles north-northeast of the town of West Yellowstone, Montana," scientists from the University of Utah, which monitors Yellowstone Volcano, said in a statement.

The "earthquake was (reportedly) felt in the towns of West Yellowstone and Gardiner, Montana, in Yellowstone National Park, and elsewhere in the surrounding region."

This earthquake was the largest to have hit Yellowstone since March 30, 2014, when a magnitude 4.8 earthquake was recorded 18 miles to the east, near the Norris Geyser Basin.

■ **Larger earthquakes**

The "4.5 earthquake is part of an energetic sequence of earthquakes in the

same area that began on June 12," the statement continued. "This sequence has included approximately thirty earthquakes of magnitude 2 and larger and four earthquakes of magnitude 3 and larger, including today's magnitude 4.5 event."

As of June 19, 464 events had been recorded. Most of these ranged in the magnitude of 0 to 1, with five less than zero, indicating they occurred at depths ranging from about 0 miles to about 9 miles. "This is the highest number of earthquakes at Yellowstone within a single week in the past five years, but is fewer than weekly counts during similar earthquakes swarms in 2002, 2004, 2008 and 2010," scientists said.

The University of Utah is part of the Yellowstone Volcano Observatory (YVO), which monitors volcanic and earthquake activity in Yellowstone National Park.

Seismic activity at volcanoes can signal an eruption is due to take place, although predicting exactly when a volcano will erupt is, at present, impossible.

■ **Color code**

Experts at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) say the risk of an eruption at Yellowstone supervolcano is low — the cur-



rent volcano alert level remains normal and the aviation color code, which provides information on the potential risk to flights, is green — meaning the volcano is in a normal, non-eruptive state.

A spokesperson from the USGS and YVO tells Newsweek the current activity appears to be "slowly winding down" and that "no other geological activity has been detected."

The probability of a large eruption at Yellowstone in the next year is currently calculated at one in 730,000.

But what would happen if it did erupt? In 2014, scientists with the USGS published a report where they modeled what would happen if a large, explosive eruption took place at the supervolcano.

(Source: Newsweek)

How cats conquered the world

Modern domestic cats all descend from a single type of wild cat: *Felis silvestris lybica*. From archaeological studies, researchers believe that *F. s. lybica*'s reign begins in the Near East, in a region stretching from modern-day Turkey down to Lebanon. Around 10,000 years ago, farmers began storing grain, which attracted pesky mice. Cats, it turned out, could help out with that.

But *F. s. lybica* also ruled in Ancient Egypt, where they left their traces in cultural artifacts from cat mummies to statues and paintings. Researchers wanted to know: How did these two separate cat-doms lead to today's global feline success?

■ **Cat genetics**

That wasn't a question that could be answered with

modern cat genetics alone. Around the world, the gene pools of modern cats are surprisingly similar, thanks to millennia of tagging along with human travelers and interbreeding wherever they went. The "modern domestic cats in Australia are the same as in Europe and as in America," says Eva-Maria Geigl, paleogeneticist at the Institut Jacques Monod, CNRS and University Paris Diderot, and an author on the study.

So for this latest study, the team turned to the genetics of ancient cats around the globe to untangle their collective rise to power.

By sifting through 9,000 years of genetic data, the researchers found that there were two separate waves of human-cat coexistence, with cats befriending both farmers and Vikings in their quest to spread around the

globe. It also seems that over the course of this relationship, domestication happened fairly late in the game — if at all.

■ **Enough samples**

To collect enough samples, the researchers reached out to other scientists around the world for feline bones or teeth, whose toughness and stability make them most likely to harbor useable DNA. They ultimately analyzed over 200 ancient cat skeletons that spanned roughly 9,000 years. They also collected samples from modern cats for comparison. For each of these samples they looked at mitochondrial DNA, genetic material found in every cell that is passed on from mother to child, making it a useful tracer of evolution.

(Source: smithsonian.com)

Mountain lions terrified of humans, study shows

Humans fear predators like mountain lions, but what we often fail to realize is how much they may fear us. After all, humans hunted and extirpated the animal from most of the United States, while fatal puma attacks on humans are rare.

New research shows that the pumas—also known as panthers, cougars, mountain lions or catamounts—immediately flee large deer prey that they've killed, upon hearing humans. In a study to be published June 21 in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B, scientists show that their response to the sound of human voices is immediate and lasting.

Justine Smith, a post-doctoral researcher at UC-Berkeley and colleagues followed 17 radio-collared mountain lions in the Santa Cruz Mountains of Central California to a spot where they'd killed a deer. They installed a camera nearby that could also play the sound of humans or a native frog, and videotaped the results. In 83 percent of cases, the animals immediately fled, and nearly half of these animals didn't return to the site to finish feeding on their deer-meal, says Smith, who completed the study as a PhD student at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

One of the animals that didn't run away was a very old male that died not long after the study. The researchers think that due to his age, it may have been more difficult than usual to catch a deer, and he thus was less willing to give it up, Smith says.

The researchers randomized their playback so that the animals either first heard the sound of a frog calling, or people. For humans, they picked clips of people on talk radio, though they chose non-combative segments from "both conservative and liberal hosts" Smith says, laughing, noting that the animals appear to be non-partisan. No pumas could be immediately reached for comment.

(Source: Newsweek)



Deceleration of runaway electrons paves the way for fusion power

Fusion power has the potential to provide clean and safe energy that is free from carbon dioxide emissions. However, imitating the solar energy process is a difficult task to achieve. Two young plasma physicists at Chalmers University of Technology have now taken us one step closer to a functional fusion reactor. Their model could lead to better methods for decelerating the runaway electrons, which could destroy a future reactor without warning.

It takes high pressure and temperatures of about 150 million degrees to get atoms to combine. As if that was not enough, runaway electrons are wreaking havoc in the fusion reactors that are currently being developed. In the promising reactor type tokamak, unwanted electric fields could jeopardize the entire process. Electrons with extremely high energy can suddenly accelerate to speeds so high that they destroy the reactor wall.

It is these runaway electrons that doctoral students Linnea Hesslow and Ola Embr us have successfully identified and decelerated. Together with their advisor, Professor T nde F l p at the Chalmers Department of Physics, they have been able to show that it is possible to effectively decelerate runaway electrons by injecting so-called heavy ions in the form of gas or pellets. For example, neon or argon can be used as "brakes".

(Source: EurekAlert)

These household products could cause birth defects

Although we've known for a while that many common household products can make us sick, it can be hard to switch up longstanding cleaning routines. But if you're looking for another reason to ditch some of those chemical-heavy products, a new study suggests that the use of two compounds in particular could result in birth defects.

Research out of the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine and the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech found a connection between two chemicals used in products containing disinfectants and preservatives and neural tube birth defects in both mice and rats — the kind that results in spina bifida and anencephaly in humans.

The chemicals, known as quaternary ammonium compounds — or "quats" — are found in products we use every day, like cleaners, laundry detergent, fabric softener, shampoo, conditioner and eye drops.

"These chemicals are regularly used in the home, hospital, public spaces, and swimming pools," said Terry Hrubec, associate professor of anatomy at the VCOM-Virginia campus and research assistant professor in the veterinary college's Department of Biomedical Sciences and Pathobiology. "Most people are exposed on a regular basis."

Hrubec and her team found that the birth defects occur when both males and females — or just one parent — were exposed to the chemicals. This is significant, Hrubec said, because the fact that birth defects were seen when only the father was exposed to the chemicals means that we need to rethink our concept of prenatal care to include fathers.

(Source: SheKnows)

Iranian fundraisers donate \$15m to free prisoners

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A total of 600 billion rials **d e s k** (nearly \$15 million) has been collected since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan in Iran to help free prisoners who had committed involuntary crimes.

The money was collected by over 300 charity fund ceremonies across the country, Blood Money Organization's director Asadollah Jolaei told IRNA on Wednesday.



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

The holy month of Ramadan began on May 27.

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

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, President Hassan Rouhani, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, and Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani donated 3 billion rials (\$75,000), 2.5 billion rials (\$62,500), 500 million rials (\$12,500), and 500 million rials (\$12,500) to the event respectively.

Pakistan arrests man for driving pet lion through Karachi streets

Police in Pakistan have arrested a man who took his pet lion for a night-time drive through the streets of the bustling southern port city of Karachi after video of the incident went viral on social media, police said.

Keeping wild cats as pets is not uncommon in Pakistan, where wealthy businessmen have been known to operate private zoos and sometimes parade the animals for the public.

The brief clip shows a docile lion lounging in the back of a pick-up truck, restrained by a leash and collar, as curious onlookers walk past in the city of about 20 million people.

Businessman Saglain Javed was arrested on Wednesday but later freed on bail.

"The man was driving around with his lion near a local market and it was a matter of endangering public life and property," senior police superintendent Muqadas Haider told Reuters.

Javed has a license to run a personal zoo and raise lion cubs, Haider added, but is not allowed to transport the animal on city streets.

The lion has been returned to its home as police consult the wildlife department on further action.

(Source: Reuters)

LEARN ENGLISH The Office - Small Talk

James: So Michelle, let me **introduce** you to Maria. She's my **colleague** from Brazil. Maria, this is Michelle.

Maria: Hi Michelle. So what do you do here in Shanghai? I mean, what work do you do?

Michelle: I work in advertising right now. How about you?

Maria: I'm actually in the coca business.

Michelle: That sounds really great. I love coca myself! Is this your first time to Shanghai Maria?

Maria: No actually, I often visit. I usually come to China for business at least once a year. Also, I love the restaurants in Shanghai, so that's a good reason to come.

Michelle: Me too. Actually, there's a great Brazilian restaurant I **recommend**. I mean, the food is delicious but the **service** isn't so good. I often like to get together with friends and have a great **barbecue** there.

James: We should go together some time.

Michelle: Wonderful idea! I'd love that!

■ Key Vocabulary

introduce: to present (a person) to another so as to make acquainted

colleague: the person who works with you together

recommend: say something deserves to be chosen

service: an act of help or assistance

barbecue: a framework, as a grill or a spit, or a fireplace for cooking meat or vegetables over an open fire

■ Supplementary Vocabulary

acquaint: to become more or less familiar, aware of something

advocate: to speak or write in favor of; support or urge by argument

impression: a strong, favorable, or remarkable effect

picnic: excursion or outing in which the people carry food with them and share a meal in the open air.

(Source: irlanguage.com)



FAO hosts Intl. Seminar on Drought co-organized by Iran and Netherlands

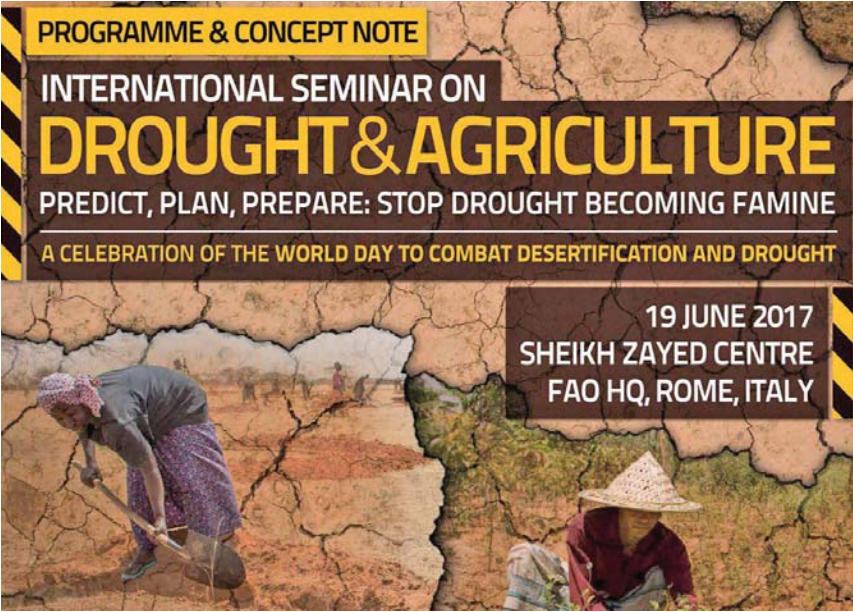
Investing in preparedness and building the resilience of farmers is fundamental to facing situations of extreme drought, FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva said on Monday.

According to a press release published by the FAO Representation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, "Saving livelihoods means saving lives - this is what building resilience is all about," he said in a speech at the start of an International Seminar on Drought and Agriculture organized by Iran, the Netherlands, and FAO and held at the UN agency's Rome headquarters.

Recalling the 2011 drought in Somalia that saw over 250,000 people perish from hunger, Graziano da Silva said: "People die because they are not prepared to face the impacts of the drought - because their livelihoods are not resilient enough."

"For years, the focus has been responding to droughts when they happen, rushing to provide emergency assistance and to keep people alive," Graziano da Silva said, noting that while "of course, that is important," investing in preparedness and resilience is essential. Doing so puts countries on a footing to act quickly before it is too late, means that farmers and rural communities are better positioned to cope with extreme weather when it does hit.

During today's seminar, experts from



the academic, science, humanitarian, and policymaking communities took part in a number of break-out sessions focusing on what needs to change in terms of drought management and how to make that change happen; ways to connect farmers to improved technologies to better cope; options for shifting from reactive to proactive responses, and how to slot drought management into the 2030 development agenda. A final seminar

communiqué will report on outcomes and make recommendations for moving forward.

"WMO provides guidance and scientific information to strengthen national services responsible for addressing drought risks to agriculture," said WMO Secretary General Petteri Taalas. "We encourage countries to take early action against drought and to move towards a more proactive approach."

Ditch the wicker basket and wash your fruit and veg: how to picnic safely

Ah, the joy of picnics! The luscious grass, the fragrant breeze, the seductive crunch of carrot batons loaded with warm supermarket hummus. Inside was always overrated. But, wait, have you considered the myriad dangers lurking beneath your never-cleaned fleecy blanket with handy Velcro straps? Well, roll it up and read this first. It might even save your life.

■ Wicker ban

Sure, wicker hampers look the business – if you're mad enough to plastic-fork out for one. But, according to timely advice from the Food Standards Agency, they can be laboratories for bacteria. Perishable food can turn nasty within an hour of being stored in a hamper in a car boot, the agency says, singling out soft cheese and dips as well as mayonnaise and mousses, as potentially stomach-bothering foods. The advice: stick to harder cheese and get a less aesthetically pleasing but more practical cool bag or box.

■ Bugs strife

A picnic is an invitation to feast for a gallery of winged and multi-legged rogues, from wasps to red ants and dive-bombing birds. Consider deploying a jar of sweet liquid with a cling film cover and poke a hole in it. Or



take the advice of biologist Seirian Sumner, AKA "wasp woman", who suggests taking hostage the first wasp who turns up to the party. By detaining it, the theory goes, it can't go back to its nest with news of your picnic. Be sure to let it free once you're done.

■ Gone grill

When does a picnic become a barbecue and vice ver-

sa? The lines become blurred in the age of the disposable grill. But if you do go down the budget BBQ route, the danger levels start to heat up. If you're even allowed one, don't stick it on grass or a bench or anything else that will burn. And when you have finished your average-at-best burgers, City Fire Protection, a commercial fire safety firm, recommends leaving the grill to cool for several hours before dousing it in water and binning it. Also: never use a disposable barbecue inside – that includes tents – unless you want to serve a fatal side dish of carbon monoxide with your sausages.

■ Soap springs

Tempting as it might be to throw all caution to the wind (the same wind that is most likely blowing all your plastic cups over) when eating al fresco on ground typically reserved for peeing dogs, don't forget basic hygiene. There is a reason that food poisoning peaks in the summer. Wash your fruit and veg before you set off, stick your picnic blanket in the washing machine occasionally and, if you don't have access to water, use hand sanitizer and anti-bacterial wipes where appropriate.

(Source: theguardian.com)

Secrets from super-centenarian to living longer

Bessie Camm - who became Britain's oldest person last year, following the death of Gladys Hooper - is 113 years-old today.

Her secret to a long and healthy life? "Hard work, knowing lovely people and good food."

Here are some other tips from super-centenarians on how to live a long, healthy life...

■ Avoid men

Emma Morano, from Northern Italy

was 117 and was the world's oldest person until she died in April this year. She said that avoiding men gave her health and happiness. This was also supported by Jessie Gallan (from Scotland, lived to 109), who informed journalists that men are "more trouble than they're worth".

■ Be nice

Gertrude Weaver, from the U.S., lived to 116. Her words of wisdom encompassed the values of being kind to others and treat-

ing them as you would wish to be treated.

■ Stay fit

Duranord Veillard, from Haiti, aged 110, wakes up at 5am everyday in order to complete his daily task of five to seven push-ups. Which is five to seven more than we can manage.

■ Eat anything

Junichiro Misawa, from Jamaica, aged 117 says that being a non-fussy eater helped her reach her the current title of

the world's oldest person.

■ And regularly...

Nabi Tajima, from Japan, aged 116, says the key to longevity is eating three meals a day. So forget your 5:2 diet.

■ Look after yourself

Bernardo LaPallo, from the U.S., lived to 114 and massaged his feet with olive oil on a daily basis to keep them looking and feeling young.

(Source: The Telegraph)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ €

Tehran to host pet accessories exhibit

The3rd Pet Accessories Exhibition will be held from July 25 to 28 at Tehan's Milad Tower.

The exhibit aims to introduce citizens with their environment with the theme of "Be Kind with Urban Animals", the secretary Amir Hossein Khojasteh announced.

Experts, representatives from eco-friendly NGOs and vets attend the event, he said.

At the exhibit, twenty Iranian and ten foreign participants will render accessories for pets as well as medicines, foods, supplements and vitamins for cattles, birds, fish and exotic pets, Khojasteh explained.

ENGLISH PROVERB

(Two) wrongs don't make a right

■ **Explanation:** It is wrong to harm someone because they have harmed you

■ **For example:** You shouldn't embezzle from your employer who cheats on taxes. Two wrongs don't make a right!

PHRASAL VERB

Zone out

■ **Meaning:** to stop paying attention because you are bored or tired, or because you have taken drugs

■ **For example:** What? Oh, sorry - I was just zoning out there for a minute.

ENGLISH IDIOM

(It's) your call

■ **Explanation:** You say this to someone when you think that the final decision on a matter should ultimately be theirs.

■ **For example:** I prefer the other location for our new offices but you're the boss, so it's your call!

Russian defense minister’s plane buzzed by NATO jet

A Russian fighter jet has reportedly chased away a NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) plane that was trying to approach an aircraft carrying Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu over the Baltic Sea.

A NATO F-16 fighter jet was trying to approach Shoigu’s plane on Wednesday, but a Russian Su-27 chased it away, the TASS news agency reported.

The NATO jet had to change direction and retreat.

It was not clear why the NATO plane was approaching the plane carrying Shoigu.

In a separate incident, Russian and the United States aircraft were engaged in a dangerous encounter over the Baltic Sea. The Russian Defense Ministry said its fighter jets have intercepted two U.S. spy planes in separate incidents on a single day.

The ministry said in a statement on Tuesday that a Baltic Fleet Su-27 jet was scrambled on Monday to intercept a U.S. RC-135 spy plane that was flying toward the Russian border.

“While being escorted, the RC-135 attempted to move closer towards the Russian interceptor, making a provocative turn towards the Su-27,” read the statement.

It said the pilot of the Russian jet “reacted to the RC-135 maneuver” and continued to escort it until the spy plane turned away from the Russian border.

The intercept occurred 40 kilometers from the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad.



The ministry said that “in just 10 minutes [after the incident] another RC-135 entered the same zone and it was intercepted by a Russian Su-27 as well.”

The Pentagon had on Tuesday accused Russia of carrying out an “unsafe” intercept of a U.S. jet over the Baltic Sea a day earlier. Pentagon spokesman Navy Captain Jeff Davis accused the Russian pilot of flying too fast and having “poor control” over his jet. He claimed that the U.S. aircraft “did nothing to provoke this behavior.”

Earlier on Tuesday, Fox New had reported that the Russian Su-27 jet, which had air-to-air missiles under its wings, approached the U.S. plane “rapidly” and flew “erratically” within 1.5 meters of it.

U.S. officials claimed that the American jet was on a “routine” mission over the Baltic Sea in international airspace.

The Russian Defense Ministry, however, said that, “All flights of Russian interceptors over international waters of the Baltic Sea are carried out strictly in accordance with international rules.”

■ Tensions in Syrian skies and elsewhere

The ministry said that, during the past week, U.S. and NATO jets had carried out more than a dozen flights over the sea “for reconnaissance purposes in close proximity to the Russian border.”

There have been more than 30 interactions between U.S. and Russian jets and ships in the Baltic Sea since the beginning of this month, CNN reported.

The recent encounter occurred only a day after a U.S. warplane shot down a Syrian fighter jet over the Syrian province of Raqqah. Russia has been conducting an aerial bombardment campaign in Syria on a request by Damascus. But the U.S. forces in Syria are there without any permission from the Syrian government or a United Nations (UN) mandate.

Reacting to the downing of the Syrian jet, Russia said it was “a cynical violation of the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic” and “military aggression.” Russia also threatened to treat coalition aircraft potentially flying in areas west of the Euphrates River in Syria “as air targets.”

The Pentagon responded, “We will not hesitate to defend ourselves or our partners if threatened.”

Russia accused the U.S.-led coalition of “complicity with terrorism” after the drone was downed in southern Syria.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has warned that the incidents in Syria could be “very dangerous” and lead to an escalation of the war.

Russia and the U.S. have been supporting opposite sides in the six-year conflict in Syria. Washington has been backing some of the militant groups opposed to the Syrian government.

The U.S. has also been leading dozens of its allies in a coalition purportedly targeting the positions of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists in Syria.

(Source: TASS)

Extremist militants take hostages at Philippine school

Extremist militants occupied a primary school and took hostages in a southern Philippine village on Wednesday, a few hours drive from a city where other militants were fighting a month-long war, authorities said.

Hundreds of gunmen initially attacked a lightly guarded military outpost at dawn, with many withdrawing but about 30 then taking over the school and using civilians as human shields, the military said.

“As of now they are in the school holding the civilians. They are using them as human shields,” Captain Arvin Encinas, spokesman for the army division with responsibility for the area, told AFP by phone.

He said the gunmen had planted improvised bombs around the school.

Encinas said he did not know how many hostages had been taken, or if they included children.

The unrest occurred in Pigkawayan, a farming town about 160 kilometers (100 miles) from Marawi city where fighters linked to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group have been battling troops for a month in a conflict that has claimed hundreds of lives.

Armed forces spokesman Restituto Padilla earlier said the attackers on Wednesday belonged to the Bangsamoro Freedom Fighters (BIFF), one of four groups in the southern Philippine region of Mindanao that have pledged allegiance to ISIL.

Local police said the BIFF attack may have been intended to help the militants in Marawi by distracting the military.

Padilla said the gunmen attacked the outpost at daybreak, then exchanged fire with troops in the morning before re-treating in a hit-and-run assault typical of BIFF fighters.

“It’s already resolved. The enemy has withdrawn... they failed,” Padilla said late on Wednesday morning.

However about six hours later Encinas reported the hostage crisis at the school. Padilla then appeared on television and confirmed militants were occupying the school.

Encinas and Padilla said there had also been skirmishes throughout the day outside of Pigkawayan, which is surrounded by marshlands, mountains and farmlands.

Pigkawayan mayor Eliseo Garsesa said about 200 gunmen were involved in the initial assault.

■ Hardline groups

Muslim rebels have been fighting for more than four decades for an independence or autonomous region in the south of the mainly Catholic nation, with the conflict claiming more than 120,000 lives.

The major rebel organizations have signed, or are pursuing, peace deals with the government, but small hardline groups such as the BIFF have vowed to continue fighting.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law across Mindanao on May 23 immediately after fighters flying the ISIL flag rampaged through Marawi.

Their assault on Marawi ignited an unprecedented urban war that has claimed hundreds of lives and which Duterte has warned is part of an ISIL campaign to establish a base in Mindanao.

The fighting has left Marawi, the most important Muslim city in the Philippines, largely in ruins.



The militants involved in the Marawi fighting are mostly from the Maute and Abu Sayyaf organizations, which have united with the BIFF under the ISIL umbrella, according to the government.

The military has said foreign fighters, including those from Chechnya, Indonesia and Malaysia, have also joined the Marawi conflict.

ISIL terrorist outfit has ambitions of setting up a caliphate in Southeast Asia -- home to largely Muslim nations like Indonesia and Malaysia -- as the group loses territory in Iraq and Syria.

The BIFF was blamed for attacking at least nine Mindanao towns in 2008, with the assaults claiming about 400 lives and forcing 600,000 people to flee their homes.

(Source: AFP)

Iran urges massive rallies on International Quds Day

➡ According to Tasnim news agency, the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has called for a huge turnout in the Friday demonstrations to condemn Israel’s aggression against Palestine and its sanctities.

Tensions between Palestinians and the Zionist regime have surged in the aftermath of new restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshippers into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem (al-Quds) in August 2015.

Over 300 Palestinians have lost their lives at the hands of Israeli forces since the beginning of the tensions in October 2015.

‘Dozens killed’ in CAR’s Bria despite ceasefire deal

Around 50 people have been killed in Bria, in the Central African Republic (CAR), when clashes broke out between rival armed factions despite the signing a day earlier of a truce deal, the mayor of the town has said.

Bodies lay in the streets of Bria, around 580km north-east of the capital, Bangui, and dozens more people were treated for shotgun wounds after fighting erupted at dawn on Tuesday.

“I can say there are around 50 dead. There are 42 bodies that were taken to the hospital. There are also bodies

in the neighborhoods that have not been picked up yet,” Maurice Belikoussou, mayor of Bria, told the Reuters news agency.

Witnesses said houses were looted and set on fire during the clashes. The medical charity Doctors Without Borders, known by its French initials MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières), said it had already received 35 wounded by 9:30am (08:30 GMT) at the hospital it runs in the town. Most had been shot.

The country, one of the poorest in the world, has

been plagued by conflict since 2013 between the mainly Muslim Seleka rebels and the Christian Anti-Balaka militia that started after the overthrow of leader Francois Bozize.

Tuesday’s clashes broke out just a day after the CAR government and 13 of the 14 rebel groups agreed to an immediate ceasefire. The deal was brokered by the Catholic community Sant’Egidio in five days of negotiations in Italy’s capital, Rome.

(Source: agencies)

Can unprotected sun exposure be good for you?

➡ People living in New England, the Midwest, and the Pacific Northwest don’t receive enough UV-B to produce vitamin D during winter months. Furthermore, proper application of sunscreen with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15 or more prevents 99 percent of vitamin D synthesis in the skin. In fact, sunscreen with an SPF of 8 or above blocks vitamin D synthesis in the skin. Moreover, veils, headscarves, and other protective clothing prevent exposure to UV-B radiation and production of vitamin D in the skin.

Cloud cover reduces exposure to UV-B radiation by 50 percent, and shade—including that caused by pollution—reduces

exposure by 60 percent. UV-B radiation doesn’t pass through glass; thus, sitting indoors in the sun won’t result in vitamin D production in the skin.

In adults, vitamin D deficiency presents as pain and muscle weakness. Pain in the hip, ribs, thigh, foot, and pelvis is typical of deficiency. Muscle weakness affects the limbs and back and can be confused with either fibromyalgia or depression.

Without adequate amounts of vitamin D, bones can become brittle, thin, and misshapen. Vitamin D deficiency results in rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults. In elderly people, vitamin D along with calcium protects against osteoporosis.

Some debate exists as to whether ample amounts of vitamin D can curb the risk of nonskeletal disease. Researchers are currently investigating the role of vitamin D in autoimmune disorders, heart disease, respiratory disease, cancer, infections, and fractures.

The recommended dietary allowance of vitamin D for all people between 1 and 70 years old is 600 IU (15 mcg). People older than 70 require 800 IU (20 mcg).

■ Vitamin D supplements

People at risk for vitamin D deficiency should be screened by their primary care physicians. At-risk individuals include elderly people, those who receive limited sun exposure, those with darker skin, and those

with certain illnesses (e.g., Crohn’s disease, celiac disease, and kidney disease).

In addition to limited unprotected sun exposure, people who are vitamin D deficient can take supplements. Vitamin D should also be given with calcium so as to promote bone health. Supplements can contain two iterations of vitamin D: vitamin D3 and vitamin D2. Vitamin D3 may be more beneficial than vitamin D2. Specifically although at nutritional doses, vitamin D2 and vitamin D3 may be equally beneficial, at higher doses, vitamin D2 is less potent. And people taking vitamin D supplements take high doses (i.e., 6000 IU daily).

(Source: verywell.com)

Egypt’s top court temporarily halts decisions on Red Sea islands

Egypt’s top court has temporarily halted all verdicts on a contested deal to transfer two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia until it decides who has jurisdiction, a spokesman said on Wednesday.

Egypt’s parliament last week backed plans for the uninhabited islands under an accord that attracted widespread public criticism. But the deal has been caught in a dispute over which institution has the final say after Egypt’s highest administrative court rejected it last year.

A separate court suspended the Supreme Administrative Court’s verdict. The agreement now sees two courts and parliament in a battle over jurisdiction.

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi’s government last year announced a maritime demarcation agreement that cedes control of Tiran and Sanafir islands to the House of Saud regime, an ally which has given billions of dollars of aid to Egypt.

Supreme Constitutional Court spokesman Ragab Saleem said: “The Constitutional Court, in cases of contradictory judgments, looks at who has jurisdiction.”

“It might see one side has jurisdiction, or that neither side has. It might be under the jurisdiction of another entity.”

He said the court was not examining whether the deal was constitutional and did not give a timeframe for a decision. State media earlier reported the ruling was made to allow time to decide on the constitutionality of the islands deal.

Wednesday’s decision only applies to the two courts involved, not to parliament, which has approved the deal.

The Egyptian and the House of Saud regime say the islands are Saudi but have been subject to Egyptian protection since 1950.

But the plan caused street protests last year from many Egyptians who say their sovereignty over the islands dates back to a treaty from before the House of Saud regime was founded.

Parliamentary leaders and government lawyers say the House of Representatives is the only entity allowed to rule on matters of sovereignty. But in June last year the country’s highest administrative court ruled Egypt’s sovereignty must stand.

The Red Sea deal has become politically sensitive for Sisi’s government. The House of Saud regime helped Sisi with aid since he toppled President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013.

But Egyptians are eager for economic revival after years of political upheaval and after a devaluation of the Egyptian pound, tax rises and subsidy cuts introduced by Sisi’s government that have put pressure on their living costs.

The islands issue touched national pride, prompting thousands of protesters to take to the streets in April chanting “people want the fall of the regime”, a slogan little heard since the Arab Spring (Islamic Awakening) uprisings of 2011.

(Source: Reuters)

UN raises alarm over rise in contacts between Israeli troops, Syrian militants

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has expressed concerns about a spike in contacts between Israeli armed forces and Syria militants in recent months.

In a report released recently, Guterres warned that the growing interactions between the two sides could lead to escalation and cause harm to members of the UN Disengagement Observer Force deployed to the Golan Heights.

According to the report, UN observers listed 16 meetings between the Israel forces and the Syria militants in the border area, including on Mount Hermon, in proximity to UN outposts in Syria’s Quneitra Province and the Golan Heights, from March 2 to May 16.

“Relative to the previous reporting period, there has been a significant increase in interaction” between Israeli soldiers and individuals from the Syrian side of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, “occurring on four occasions in February, three in March, eight in April and on one occasion in May,” the report said.

In its previous report released in March, the UN listed at least 17 interactions between the two sides between November 18, 2016, and March 1, 2017.

The figures show a significant increase when compared with only two such meetings recorded between August 30 and November 16, 2016.

The report said people likely affiliated with the militant groups, some of them armed, arrived at an Israeli outpost accompanied by mules and were greeted by the soldiers.

“In some instances, personnel and supplies were observed to have been transferred in both directions. On all occasions, the unknown individuals and mules returned to the Bravo (Syrian) side,” it added.

The UN chief said such interactions have “the potential to lead to clashes between armed elements and the Syrian Arab Armed Forces.”

“All military activities in the area of separation conducted by any actor pose a risk to the ceasefire and to the local civilian population, in addition to the United Nations personnel on the ground,” he wrote.

Earlier this week, The Wall Street Journal reported that Israel has been providing Takfiri terrorists in Syria’s Golan Heights with a steady flow of funds and medical supplies.

Citing militant commanders and people familiar with Israel’s thinking, the paper said Israel’s “secret engagement” in the war aims to install a buffer zone on the Syrian border with elements friendly to Tel Aviv.

The Tel Aviv regime regularly attacks positions held by pro-Damascus forces in Syria, claiming that the attacks are retaliatory.

The Syrian army has on several occasions confiscated Israeli-made arms and military equipment from terrorists fighting the government forces. There are also reports that Israel has been providing medical treatment to the extremists wounded in Syria.

(Source: Press TV)

WADA imposes partial ban on US anti-doping lab

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) said Tuesday it has issued a three-month partial accreditation suspension to the Los Angeles Olympic Laboratory for analyzing certain banned substances.

The University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) lab suspension began last Wednesday, according to a WADA statement, and was a result of WADA quality assessment procedures that "identified non-conformities with best practice."

During the suspension, the UCLA Laboratory can continue all regular anti-doping activities, but it must obtain a second opinion from another WADA-accredited lab before reporting any adverse findings for glucocorticoids "prednisolone" and "prednisone" and the anabolic steroids "boldenone" and "boldione".

The limited suspension to certain substances has been applied to labs previously in other situations, WADA said, and allows for proper monitoring of the lab to ensure improvements aimed at returning the lab to full WADA compliance are fully implemented.

WADA will conduct a site visit in a time frame that allows the UCLA lab to implement changes.

An independent WADA Disciplinary Committee advised by WADA's Laboratory Expert Group delivered its recommendation for the limited suspension to WADA's executive committee chair on June 14 and it was accepted.

Two days later, the UCLA Laboratory was notified of the decision. The lab has 21 days from that notification to appeal the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

(Source: France 24)

Thanasi Kokkinakis stuns Milos Raonic in straight sets at Queen's

Australian 21-year-old Thanasi Kokkinakis stunned Milos Raonic in straight sets in the Aegon Championship at Queen's on Tuesday.

Kokkinakis has been blighted by injury problems, but the talented youngster looked in blistering form in west London, trading blows with Raonic in a meeting of two extremely big hitters.

A 7-5 victory in the first set tie-break set Kokkinakis on his way to the win, and he held his nerve to take the second set tie-break 8-6.

Raonic said he would spend time on the practice court and in the gym after his defeat by Kokkinakis.

It was the Australian's first win over a top 10 player as he began the long road back from playing only one match in 2016. A series of injuries over the past two years have sent his ranking to 993 from 69.

"I've been out of the game for so long, it's huge for me," the 21-year-old, now ranked 698, said.

"I'm trying to look forward now and get myself going week by week, and I can't wait to play my next round."

The result backs up comments by Kokkinakis' compatriot Nick Kyrgios from Monday, with the Australian No. 1 saying:

"For me, apart from Zverev and Thieme, I think Thanasi is right up there with those guys. He can still play such a high level that as soon as he gets his body right and as soon as he has a bit more luck, he'll be right up there. Hitting with him today, his level is still so high."

The young Australian will play either Daniil Medvedev or Nicolas Mahut in the next round.

(Source: Eurosport)

Man United and Chelsea both keeping an eye on unhappy Bayern Munich striker

Manchester United will rival Chelsea for Robert Lewandowski should Bayern Munich agree to sell this summer.

The 28-year-old is understood to be unhappy at Bayern with his agent Maik Barthel claiming that the management and teammates didn't support him enough towards the end of the season when he wanted to finish as top scorer and played through the pain barrier with an injured shoulder.

Lewandowski extended his contract last December to 2021 and the likelihood of Bayern selling the prolific Poland international has always been considered remote.

However, Barthel's comments have alerted clubs to enquire about the chances for this summer.

Real Madrid have long been recognized as favorites for the Poland international but it is understood he would be keen on testing himself in the Premier League and living in London does appeal.

Bayern have batted away huge bids for their players before with United offering £86million for Thomas Muller two years ago but much will depend on how strongly Lewandowski wants to push for a move.

With Monaco pricing 18-year-old Kylian Mbappe at £115million, a price of £120m would not be surprising should Bayern relent.

(Source: Daily Mail)

The billionaire owner of Leicester City has spent £2 million on 6 horses

Leicester City owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha spent £2.05 million (\$2.5 million) on six horses in a bid for success at Royal Ascot this week.

Srivaddhanaprabha bought the horses at Goffs's London Sale on Monday, according to theRacing Post.

Srivaddhanaprabha's bloodstock agent, a person who buys and sells thoroughbred horses, Alastair Donald said: "He's looking to build up his stable and he was attracted by the prospect of having runners at Royal Ascot.

"He loves his horses, he's also big into polo and has around 150 polo ponies. He's had huge success with Leicester City and now he's looking to expand his racing interests here."

Srivaddhanaprabha, who has a net worth of £3.64 billion, has a seventh horse but Baldovina, which cost £300,000, is not running this week.

(Business Insider)

Cristiano Ronaldo reportedly no longer wants Madrid exit after public support

Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo reportedly no longer wants to leave the club after president Florentino Perez's public show of support.

Reuters's Richard Martin shared the report, based on information from an AS journalist: "AS's closest journalist to Jorge Mendes saying today that Ronaldo has been calmed down by Perez defense of him and no longer wants to leave"

Transfer speculation mounted in the wake of tax-fraud allegations, per A Bola. Manchester United, Paris Saint-Germain and AS Monaco were all linked with the Portugal international, who reportedly felt persecuted by the Spanish media.

He's not the first player to consider leaving La Liga in the wake of a tax scandal. In 2015, the father of Barcelona star Neymar advised his son to do the same, citing "attacks," per Cadena SER.

Neymar never followed through on those plans, and it seems Ronaldo won't do so, either. On Tuesday, Perez spoke to Onda Cero (and made it very clear Real will support the 32-year-old forward:

"It has affected me how the media treated Cristiano; the presumption of innocence was not respected.

"I believe everyone must comply with their tax obligations, and I know that Cristiano always does things the right way.

"Cristiano has the same corporate structure he had in England, where he spent many years without problems.

"I am sure that Cristiano complies with



his tax duties, it must be a confusion that will be cleared."

He added Ronaldo's buyout clause is £1 billion, and no clubs have made any

offers so far.

Ronaldo has been with Real Madrid since 2009 but is linked with a return to United almost on a yearly basis. He remains one of

the world's best forwards and scored two goals in the UEFA Champions League final win over Juventus.

(Source: Bleacher Report)

Djokovic to search for form on Eastbourne's grass



Three-times Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic has broken with tradition and taken a wildcard into the Aegon International at Eastbourne next week as the Serb battles to rediscover some form ahead of next month's grass court grand slam.

Djokovic, who has struggled this year and suffered an early exit at the French Open, has not played a grass court warm-up tournament ahead of Wimbledon since 2010. Since then he has triumphed three times at the All England Club.

"This will be my first trip to Eastbourne, I have heard great things about the tournament," Serbian Djokovic, who will be the tournament's top seed, said in a statement from the tournament on Wednesday.

"I am looking forward to fine-tuning my grass court game there ahead of Wimbledon."

Djokovic has endured a turbulent 12 months since becoming the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to hold all four grand slams at the same time following

his French title last year.

He went out early at Wimbledon to American Sam Querrey, lost his number one ranking to Britain's Andy Murray, fell in the second round at the Australian Open to Uzbek wildcard Denis Istomin and split with his entire coaching staff last month.

At the French Open he was beaten in the quarter-finals by Dominic Thiem -- losing the fourth set 6-0 in 20 minutes.

The 30-year-old dropped outside the top two in the world rankings for the first time since March 2011.

Shortly before the French Open he announced that he would be working with American great Andre Agassi, although Agassi only stayed in Paris for the opening week and it is not clear whether he will be at Wimbledon throughout.

Djokovic will be joined on England's south coast by France's Gael Monfils and American duo John Isner and Steve Johnson as well as Spaniard Feliciano Lopez. Wimbledon starts on July 3.

(Source: Reuters)

Zlatan Ibrahimovic attracting interest from Serie A and MLS



Zlatan Ibrahimovic has offers from Italy and the United States after being released by Manchester United, according to the striker's agent Mino Raiola.

United decided not to offer Ibrahimovic a contract extension at Old Trafford with the former Sweden international facing six months on the sidelines following knee surgery.

The 35-year-old will continue his rehabilitation at Carrington and sources have told ESPN FC there remains a possibility he could sign a short-term deal once he is fully fit.

However, Ibrahimovic can sign for another team at any time, and Raiola has said there is interest from Major League Soccer in the United States and Italy's Serie A.

Ibrahimovic has been linked with moves to both LA Galaxy and former club AC Milan, although Raiola has all but ruled out a transfer to Napoli.

"Many clubs are interested in Ibrahimovic, from MLS in the USA, but also in Italy would be possible," he told reporters. "Napoli? Everything is possible, but I think

Napoli will not be his next club."

Ibrahimovic, asked by the VG newspaper how his knee injury was during a trip to Norway this week, replied: "Very good. Everything is very good."

United are on the lookout for a striker to replace Ibrahimovic.

Alvaro Morata is Jose Mourinho's preferred choice, and sources have told ESPN FC that the Spain international would welcome a move to the Premier League.

There is hope that a move for Morata could speed up after reports in Spain suggested former United player Cristiano Ronaldo is now prepared to stay at Real Madrid. Sources had told ESPN FC that United were treating reports Ronaldo would welcome a return with caution amid concerns that the uncertainty surrounding him could delay a move for Morata.

Andrea Belotti is also an option for United although Torino are insisting that the €100 million release clause in his contract, available for clubs outside Italy, is met before letting the 23-year-old leave.

(Source: Soccer.net)

Andy Murray faces confidence crisis after Queen's shocker

Andy Murray admits he will have to improve dramatically to mount a successful defense of his Wimbledon title after the world number one suffered an embarrassing Queen's Club exit.

Murray crashed to one of the worst defeats of his glittering career on Tuesday as Australian world number 90 Jordan Thompson ended his reign as Queen's champion with an astonishing 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 first round victory.

Making the 30-year-old's humiliation even worse, Thompson, originally beaten in the qualifying rounds, was only playing as a last minute replacement for the injured Aljaz Bedene.

It was the worst possible preparation for Wimbledon, with the grass-court Grand Slam set to get under way on July 3.

Having reached the French Open semi-finals earlier this month, Murray must have hoped he was back on track after his poor run during an injury-plagued first half of the season.

But instead the three-time Grand Slam winner plans to go back to the practice courts with coach Ivan Lendl in a last-ditch bid to find a solution to his struggles.

"I said before the tournament there was still a



lot of work to be done, and after the French Open I knew that I was still quite far from where I needed to be," Murray said.

"One tournament doesn't change all of what had gone on just beforehand. So that's why I got back on the practice court quite soon after the French.

"But I was certainly feeling better in the build-up here than I was going into the French. I would have expected to have played and done a bit better."

Murray has now failed to get past the second round in three of his last four tournaments. and has lost before the quarter-finals six times this year.

It is a remarkable crisis for a player who just eight months ago was sitting on top of the world after a golden year that including titles at Wimbledon, the Olympics and the ATP Tour Finals.

■ Confidence factor

Murray looks bereft of form and focus at present and he conceded a lack of confidence was a factor.

"I don't feel like loads of my game has changed, but obviously right now I'm not playing as well as I was 12 months ago," he said.

"Most of that comes down to confidence in matches. It's not so much that I have changed my serve or my technique.

"It's just when you're playing a lot of matches and winning consistently helps you make better decisions at important moments.

"Hopefully I get enough time on the court to work on some things, because I'm going to need to.

"If I play like that, I certainly won't win Wimbledon, but I can play better than that."

Murray has traditionally been at his most formidable on grass and his two Wimbledon titles in 2013 and 2016 were both preceded by Queen's Club triumphs.

(Source: AFP)

On This Day...Iran beat the U.S. in 1998

Kuala Lumpur: The FIFA World Cup France 1998 is remembered for many things: Zinedine Zidane cementing his place amongst the all-time greats, Ronaldo's pre-final meltdown and David Beckham's dismissal against Argentina that was followed by scathing criticism in his homeland.

Yet 19 years ago to this day, on June 21 1998, the Islamic Republic of Iran went head-to-head with the U.S. for the first time ever in a match that carried arguably as much significance as any during the four-week competition.

A World Cup return

Having first appeared at the FIFA World Cup in 1978 in Argentina, Iran would have to wait a further 20 years to progress to the tournament again – and they did so the hard way.

After coming second to Saudi Arabia in their qualifying group, the Iranians then lost 3-2 after extra-time to Japan in the continental play-off to leave them facing a two-legged encounter with Australia for the right to advance to the competition.

A 1-1 draw in the first leg at Azadi Stadium in front of well over 100,000 spectators was then followed by a 2-2 scoreline in Melbourne as Iran secured their place on away goals.

Iran 1 Australia 1

The draw

The U.S. were appearing in their third successive World Cup – having hosted the tournament four years earlier – but it was the first time the two nations had been represented at the same competition.

And as fate would have it, a match billed as the most politically charged in World Cup history and described as “the mother of all games” by the US Soccer Federation would take place in Lyon as Iran were paired with the U.S. in Group F alongside powerhouses Germany and Yugoslavia.

The build up

Fresh from reaching the last 16 on home soil at the 1994 edition of the tournament, and with a number of players now plying their trade in Europe, the U.S. had seen their reputation grow in recent years.

The trio of Ali Daei, Karim Bagheri and Khodadad Azizi, meanwhile, all played their club football in Germany, but elsewhere the Iranians remained somewhat of an unknown quantity.

Team Melli kicked off their World Cup just over 20 years to the day since their last fixture in the competition but, after running a star-studded Yugoslavia side close, lost 1-0 in their opening game in Saint-Etienne.

The U.S. would begin their campaign with a 2-0 defeat to Germany in Paris to mean both teams went into the clash in Lyon needing a win in order to maintain their hopes of reaching the knockout phase.



The match

Just under 40,000 turned out for the crunch encounter at Stade de Gerland to witness Hamid Estili give the Iranians the lead five minutes before the interval with a superb header from 15 metres after being picked out by Javad Zarincheh from the right.

Then, with 10 minutes to play, Iran's all-time leading scorer Daei slotted through to a surging Mehdi Mahdavia, who kept his cool to toe-poke past Kasey Keller in the American goal and spark joyous celebrations among Iranian players and fans.

Brian McBride pulled a goal back with three minutes to play to ensure a nervy finish but Iran managed to hold on to wrap up their first and to date only World Cup win and, in turn, eliminate the U.S. after just two games.

What happened next

With Germany and Yugoslavia drawing 2-2 in their second match of the competition, Iran went into their final fixture with the Germans knowing only a win would guarantee progression to the next round.

It was a tough ask but Jalal Talebi's team performed admirably in the first half in Montpellier by keeping their more illustrious opponents at bay to go in level at the interval. Germany's superiority shone through after the restart, though, as Oliver Bierhoff opened the scoring

on 50 minutes before Jurgen Klinsmann made it two soon after.

Iran's exit was confirmed following the 2-0 defeat, but Team Melli returned home with their heads held high having secured their finest result on the global stage.

The aftermath

Although there were legitimate concerns about a game between countries who'd endured a fraught political relationship over the previous two decades, the match was said to have done far more good than bad.

The Iranian players took white roses – a symbol of peace in their homeland – on to the pitch to present to their opponents, before the two teams then posed for photographs prior to kick-off.

In January 2000, Iran would travel to play the U.S. in a friendly at Los Angeles' Pasadena Rose Bowl in a match that ended 1-1 and which is widely believed would not have taken place had the teams not been paired together in France 18 months earlier.

Having now secured their progression to the FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 with a highly regarded team, the next aim for modern-day Iran will be to add to that famous first win and create a new chapter of history for Team Melli.

(Source: AFC)

Iran to face Italy at FIVB Volleyball U-21 Worlds Championship opener



S P O R T S Iran will start the **d e s k** 2017 FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship with a match against Italy on Friday.

The Iranian team will face the European rival in Pool C in the Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic.

The FIVB Volleyball U-21 World Championship will run from June 23 to July 2 in two cities Brno and Ceske Budejovice.

Iran have been drawn with Italy, Ar-

gentina and Ukraine in Pool C.

Pool A features host Czech Republic, Poland, Canada and Morocco.

Russia, Turkey, Cuba and USA are in Pool B and China, Brazil, Egypt and Japan are drawn in Pool D.

The World Championship will be the nineteenth edition of the international volleyball tournament and the world championship for men's national teams under the age of 21, organized by the sport's world governing body, FIVB.

IWF Junior World Championships: Iran's Ourameh snatches bronze



S P O R T S Iranian weightlifter **d e s k** Rahman Ourameh seized a bronze medal on Wednesday at the 2017 International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) Junior World Championships.

The 94kg weightlifter came third after lifting 159kg in the snatch and 205kg in the clean and jerk for a total of 364kg.

Uzbek lifter Farkhodbek Sobirov lifted 180kg in the snatch and 210kg

in the clean and jerk, winning the gold medal with a total of 390kg.

Belarusian Yauheni Tsikhantsou finished second overall on 378kg, posting best attempts of 171 kg and 207kg in the snatch and clean and jerk respectively.

A Total of 265 (108 Women / 157 Men) athletes from 50 countries started their competition in Tokyo, Japan.

Women will represent 31 countries while the number will be 45 for Men.

Cameroon boss Broos hits out at Confederations Cup organization

Hugo Broos has criticized Confederations Cup organizers after Cameroon's tardiness was questioned in St Petersburg.

The African champions were 40 minutes late for a scheduled training session on Tuesday and failed to show up punctually for a media conference the next day, prompting one sarcastic Russian journalist to query whether they would be ready for their kick-off against Australia on Thursday evening.

The usually affable Broos took umbrage and laid the blame for Cameroon's timekeeping issues squarely at the door of the tournament organizers.

The Belgian said: "The answer is it is not our fault.

"I have been annoyed twice already. First of all in Moscow because we arrived an hour late to the stadium for our match because of traffic and on Tuesday we had the same problem.

"The bus arrived 45 minutes late at the hotel and then we got stuck in traffic here in St Petersburg so it is not our fault and I think the organization team must review the way teams are transferred from the hotel



to the stadium.

"I was extremely annoyed once again because when you have to train and you have a program and then you arrive back at the hotel and have to have

dinner at 10pm it is really unpleasant, so from that point of view it must be reviewed.

"They have to review the transfers for the World Cup next year and how you will move teams from the hotel to the training stadium and for the matches."

Cameroon played well in their opening game before going down to late goals from Chile's Arturo Vidal and Eduardo Vargas on Sunday in Moscow.

And Broos believes the experience gained from playing against different nations, and different styles, will only help his side in the long run.

He added: "To take part in this tournament is a great experience for us. Every time you play against a team with a different style it brings more wealth to our group so I am happy to see we played well against Chile and I hope this will be confirmed in the next two matches.

"I hope we can get through the group phase but if we play the same as we did against Chile and we don't qualify for the semi-finals I will not be disappointed."

(Source: Soccerway)

Iran sabre team runner-up at Asian Fencing Championships

Iran men's sabre team finished in second place at the 2017 Asian Fencing Championships on Tuesday.

The men's sabre team of Ali Pakdaman, Mojtaba Abedini, Mohammad Rahbari and Mohammad Fotouhi lost to the Korean team 45-42 in the final match.

Mohammad Rahbari had already won a silver medal in the individual sabre and Ali Pakdaman claimed a bronze medal in the event.

The event in Hong Kong offered fencers a final chance to hone their preparations before the World Championships in Leipzig.

Competition in the German city is scheduled to run from July 19 to 26

South Korea won the title, winning seven gold medals, six silvers and five bronzes.

China finished in second place with four gold medals, one silver and six bronzes.

Kazakhstan came third, claiming one gold. Iran came fourth with two silvers and one bronze.

(Source: Tasnim)



Iran's Faghani to officiate Germany-Chile in Confederations Cup

Alireza Faghani from Iran has been chosen as referee of Group B match between Germany and Chile in the 2017 FIFA Confederations Cup.

The match will be held in Kazan, Russia on Thursday.

Faghani will be assisted with his countrymen Reza Sokhandan and Mohammadreza Mansouri.

Alireza Faghani made history by becoming the first Asian referee to officiate the final of a Men's Olympic.

Faghani, 39, became a FIFA referee in 2008, only a year after officiating in the top flight league in Iran.

(Source: Tasnim)

The billionaire owner of Leicester City has spent £2 million on 6 horses

Leicester City owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha spent £2.05 million (\$2.5 million) on six horses in a bid for success at Royal Ascot this week.

Srivaddhanaprabha bought the horses at Goffs's London Sale on Monday, according to the Racing Post.

Srivaddhanaprabha's bloodstock agent, a person who buys and sells thoroughbred horses, Alastair Donald said: "He's looking to build up his stable and he was attracted by the prospect of having runners at Royal Ascot.

"He loves his horses, he's also big into polo and has around 150 polo ponies. He's had huge success with Leicester City and now he's looking to expand his racing interests here."

Srivaddhanaprabha, who has a net worth of £3.64 billion, has a seventh horse but Baldovina, which cost £300,000, is not running this week.

(Business Insider)

Hamilton determined to deliver in Baku

Azerbaijan, a new race last year, is the only grand prix on Formula One's current calendar that Lewis Hamilton has yet to win and the Briton heads back to Baku determined to deliver this weekend.

After a dominant weekend in Canada where he led a Mercedes one-two to regain momentum after a stinging defeat to Ferrari in Monaco, Hamilton is on a high and with the praise of team boss Toto Wolff ringing in his ears.

"Lewis is in the best place I have seen him during any of the last five years since he joined the team," the Austrian said this week.

"Not only because he had a great weekend in Montreal, but because he is coping so well with the difficult days. This is what the very best are made of."

Hamilton will also be keen to banish the memory of a disappointing first visit to the anti-clockwise track running along the shores of the Caspian Sea and around the walls of the medieval old town.

"Last year I think I was very quick there; I just didn't deliver. So the plan is to make sure I deliver," he said in Montreal after closing the gap between him and Ferrari's championship leader Sebastian Vettel to 12 points.

Hamilton hit the barriers in qualifying in Baku last year, lining up 10th on the grid. He then struggled with engine modes before eventually finishing fifth.

His then team mate and eventual champion Nico Rosberg, who retired at the end of last season, took pole, fastest lap and victory in a race that was designated the European Grand Prix but has since changed name.

That means that nobody on the current starting grid is a previous winner in Baku and only Vettel, who was a distant second that day, and Force India's Mexican Sergio Perez have stood on the podium there.

(Source: Reuters)



Iranian cartoonist Shahram Rezai runner-up at Aydin Dogan competition

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 34th Aydin Dogan International Cartoon Competition awarded its second prize to Iranian artist Shahram Rezai for his work on international migration, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

Ross Thomson from the United Kingdom won the first prize and Raimundo Rucke Santos Souza from Brazil was selected as third winner during a meeting of the international jury at Bodrum I?l Club on Monday.

Santos Souza and Thomson also were among a group of artists honored with lifetime achievement awards.

Iranian cartoonists Ehsan Ganji and Dokshid Qodratipur along with Luc Descheemaeker from Belgium, Muhamed Djerlek from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Darko Drljevic from Montenegro, Vasco Gargalo from Portugal, Alessandro Gatto from Italy, Krzysztof Grzondziel from Poland and Silvano Mello from Brazil were also honored.

The competition is held every year by the Ayd?n Do?an Foundation that promotes the education and empowerment of girls and gender equality in all its efforts.

This year's Special Award "Empowered Girls, Empowered Futures" was presented to Turkish cartoonist Fethi G?rcan Mermerta?.

The winning cartoons and a selection of submissions are currently on display in an exhibit at the Milta Bodrum Marina Ottoman Shipyard Governorate Art Gallery. The exhibition will run June 27.

The 34th Aydin Dogan International Cartoon Competition will be celebrated with an award ceremony in Istanbul during November.



This work by Iranian cartoonist Shahram Rezai won the second prize at the 34th Aydin Dogan International Cartoon Competition in Istanbul, Turkey on June 19, 2017.

Young thespians to perform “Mephisto” in Tehran

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A troupe of young actors selected by director Masud Delkhah from across Iran will perform an adaption of “Mephisto”, a novel by German writer Klaus Mann, in Tehran.



Director Masud Delkhah attends a press conference at Molavi Hall in Tehran on June 21, 2017 to brief the media about “Mephisto” that he will stage based on a novel by German writer Klaus Mann.

The play is due to go on stage with about 32 actors at Molavi Hall in early July, Delkhah said in a press conference on Wednesday.

“Those who are collaborating in this project are from different cities and have been selected through a national announcement,” he said.

Delkhah added that the Molavi Hall, which is mostly dedicated to student theater, has had good cooperation with the troupe and has supported the young actors.

“This is not a commercial project and we have tried to make use of young actors instead of famous figures,” he remarked.

“Mephisto” is the sixth novel by Klaus Mann, which was published in 1936 while he was in exile in Amsterdam.

The novel adapts the Mephistopheles/Dr. Faustus theme by having the main character Hendrik Hofgen abandon his conscience and continues to act and ingratiate himself with the Nazi Party to keep and improve his job and social position.

Iranian movies to go on screen at Anima Mundi 2017

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Five Iranian animated movies have been picked to go on screen at the Anima Mundi 2017, an international animation festival in Brazil.



A poster for “Jamshid, a Lament for a Myth” by Moin Samadi

“Entracte” by Mohammadreza Kheradmand and “Jamshid, a Lament for a Myth” by Moin Samadi are the two entries at the Short Film category of the festival, the organizers have announced on the website.

“Inflated Head” by Puya Afzali, “W.A.R.” (War Always Ruins) by Moin Mansurifard, and “Maned and Macho” by Shiva Sadeq-Asadi will go on screen in the International Panorama category.

The organizers selected 345 animations from 45 countries for the 25th edition, which will take place in July in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

“Star Wars” Han Solo Spinoff Film loses directors

LOS ANGELES (AP) — There's been a disturbance in the force and the young Han Solo film is suddenly without a director. Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy said Tuesday that the Star Wars spinoff is pathing ways with directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller due to different creative visions on the film.

Kennedy said a new director would be announced soon.

Lord and Miller had been filming the untitled project in London since January 2017 with stars Alden Ehrenreich as the young Han Solo and Donald Glover as Lando Calrissian. The supporting cast includes Woody Harrelson, Emilia Clarke and Thandie Newton.

“Unfortunately, our vision and process weren't aligned with our partners on this project. We normally aren't fans of the phrase ‘creative differences’ but for once this cliché is true,” the directors said in a joint statement Tuesday. “We are really proud of the amazing and world-class work of our cast and crew.”

Tehran theaters to welcome audience for French plays

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian troupes are scheduled to perform two plays by French writers at Tehran's theaters in two weeks.

A group composed of Iranian students of the French language will stage Albert Camus' play of the Absurd “The Misunderstanding” (“Le Malentendu”) in its original language at Baran Theater for seven nights beginning July 1.

“I have been always been interested in Camus' works,” director Javad Molania told the Persian service of MNA on Wednesday.

“I wanted to stage the play a few years ago, but I could not obtain cultural officials' permission as they argued that the story of the play is bitter,” he added.

He expressed his satisfaction that his dream will finally come true in the near future.

Afterwards, his troupe will also give performances in Isfahan, which he called a major center for Iranian students of the French language.

“The Misunderstanding” is about a man who has been living overseas for many years and then returns home, only to find his sister and widowed mother are making a living by taking in lodgers and murdering them. Since neither his sister nor his mother recognize him, he becomes a lodger himself without revealing his identity.



A poster for “The Misunderstanding”

Saqui Atai is also scheduled to direct Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt's “Enigma Variations” (“Variations Enigmatiques”) at Paytakhat Theater from July 5.

“The play has the hidden meaning of Schmitt's special manly, psychological view of love,” she told the Persian service of Honaronline on Wednesday.

“This is the reason why I chose the play,” she added.

Vahid Aqapur and Hooman Kiai are the main members of the cast.

Triple Oscar winner Daniel Day-Lewis retiring from acting

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Three-time Oscar winner Daniel Day-Lewis is retiring from acting, his spokeswoman said on Tuesday, ending a storied movie career that includes performances in “Lincoln” and “Gangs of New York”.

Day-Lewis, 60, the only man to have won three best actor Oscars, gave no reason for his decision, calling it private.

“Daniel Day-Lewis will no longer be working as an actor,” his publicist, Leslee Dart, said in a statement. “He is immensely grateful to all of his collaborators and audiences over the many years.”

The statement said there would be no further comment.

He has one more movie in the works -- “Phantom Thread,” which is set in London's 1950s fashion world and is due to be released in December.

Day-Lewis, who was born in Britain and holds dual Anglo-Irish citizenship, won his third best actor Oscar in 2013 for playing U.S. President Abraham Lincoln in “Lincoln”.

His win made him the first man to be awarded three best actor Oscars in the history of the Academy Awards.

He previously won Academy Awards for his roles as a paraplegic Irish writer in “My Left Foot” (1989) and a greedy early 20th century oil baron in “There Will Be Blood” (2007).

The tall, intellectual actor keeps a low-key profile and is known for choosing



Daniel Day Lewis accepts the Oscar for best actor for his role in “Lincoln”, at the 85th Academy Awards in Hollywood, California, February 24, 2013. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

his roles carefully and taking long breaks between films.

In the late 1990s, he took time off from acting to work as an apprentice shoe-maker in Italy. After his 2013 Oscar win for “Lincoln”, London's Sunday Times reported that he planned to take a sabbatical at his farm in Ireland.

Day-Lewis is known for his meticulous preparation. For “Lincoln”, he spent months researching Lincoln's political and personal life and before shooting began he was texting his screen wife, Sally Field, in 19th century vernacular.

“For My Left Foot”, he spent weeks living in a wheelchair, and while shooting “Gangs of New York” he was known for sharpening knives between takes to capture the menace of his character Bill “The Butcher” Cutting.

Berlin-based international artists take works to Isfahan



Art enthusiasts visit the exhibition “Copy Paste” at Tarrahan Azad Gallery in Tehran in a file photo on April 21, 2017. (Honaronline/Sharareh Samei)

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Three galleries in Isfahan will be hosting an exhibition of mixed media by a number of Berlin-based international artists, opening on Friday.

The (Center for Contemporary Creation) CC Art Space, Aknoon Art Gallery and the Safavi Gallery are the three galleries to display works by over 130 world artists in the exhibit named “Copy Paste”, co-curator Zartostt Rahimi said in a press release published on Wednesday.

Some of the artists will attend the exhibit, while others have supervised their works, which are exact copies of their original artworks, Rahimi has said.

The month-long exhibit will open a new window to contemporary art, Rahimi said.

“Ideas and concepts speak first in

contemporary art, and this exhibit aims to highlight the identity of contemporary art, which offers a more public art to the visitors. Installation, photo, video art and performance art are among the works to be shown,” he added.

“Copy Paste” aims to review the phenomenon of duplication, repetition and copy in art. A familiar issue that bears different meanings in different parts of the world,” reads part of the statement of the exhibit.

Candice Breitz (South Africa), Vadim Zakharov (Russia), Monica Bonvicini (Italy), Christian Jankowski (Germany) and Anatoly Shuravlev (Russia) are among the artists whose works will be on display in the Isfahan exhibit.

The Tarrahan Azad Gallery in Tehran hosted the same exhibit in April but with fewer artists, numbering about 12 to 15.

Parenting expert sues Disney, says it stole ‘Inside Out’ idea

NEW YORK (Reuters) — A parenting and child development specialist has sued Walt Disney Co and its Pixar unit, accusing them of stealing from her the concept for their 2015 blockbuster movie, “Inside Out”.

In a complaint filed on Monday in Los Angeles federal court, Denise Daniels said the animated film, featuring color-coded characters representing individual human emotions, mirrors a children's program called “The Moodsders” that she conceived and pitched to Disney every year from 2005 to 2009.

Daniels, who lives in Minnesota's Twin Cities area and has appeared on TV shows including “Today” and “Oprah”, said she had an “implied-in-fact” contract with Disney requiring that she be paid from box office, DVD, Blu-Ray, iTunes and merchandise revenue from “Inside Out”.

The film has grossed more than \$850 million worldwide since its June 2015 release. Daniels said this “extreme success” was not possible without her work, and that Disney should pay her because it is “custom and common in the entertainment industry.”

A Disney spokesman, however, said “Inside Out” was an original Pixar creation. “We look forward to vigorously defending against this lawsuit in court,” the spokesman said.

Ronald Schutz, a lawyer for Daniels,



‘Joy’ and ‘Sadness’, characters of the animation film “Inside Out”, pose at its premiere at El Capitan theatre in Hollywood, California, U.S. on June 8, 2015. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

declined to comment. Daniels was unavailable to comment.

The lawsuit is at least the second in three months accusing Disney of stealing a concept for a blockbuster film.

In March, the Hollywood screenwriter Gary Goldman, whose credits include the Arnold Schwarzenegger film “Total Recall”, sued Disney for allegedly copying its Oscar-winning animated film “Zootopia” from his work.

“Inside Out” follows 11-year-old Riley, voiced by Kaitlyn Dias, as she tries to cope with her family's move to San Francisco from Minnesota.

It also shows her dealing with personifications of five emotions: Joy (yellow), Sadness (blue), Fear (purple), Anger (red) and Disgust (green), voiced by Amy Poehler, Phyllis Smith, Bill Hader, Lewis Black and Mindy Kaling.