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Iran's exports to EU quintuple in 4 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Imports of EU from Iran increased fivefold during the first four months of 2017 in comparison with the same period in the preceding year, European Union's statistics agency Eurostat reported.

Iran exported €3.41 billion of goods to EU in the said period, while the figure stood at €717 million in the same period of time in 2016.

According to the Eurostat's report, Iran-EU trade stood at €6.55 billion, growing 127 percent in the said time span from that of €2.88 billion in 2016.

From January to April 2017, exports of EU to Iran hit €3.14 billion, boosting 44 percent from the first four months of 2016, i.e. €2.17 billion.

In the said time, Germany was the main exporter to Iran exporting €832 million, while Italy was the major customer of Iranian products, importing €1 billion of goods.

EU's trade with Iran amounted to €13.7 billion in 2016, a 78 percent rise compared to 2015, based on the figures released by the Eurostat in February 2017.

The figure was reportedly €7.68 billion in 2015.

Arab states issue list of demands to end Qatar crisis

By staff & agencies

The House of Saud regime and other Arab states that have imitated the Saudi regime and followed suit and cut ties with Qatar have reportedly issued a list of demands to end the crisis, insisting that Qatar shut down the Al Jazeera network and scale down ties with Iran.

In the 13-point list, the countries also demand that Qatar sever all alleged ties with the Muslim Brotherhood and with other groups including Hezbollah, al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.

Associated Press and Reuters news agencies reported that they obtained the

list from unnamed officials from one of the countries involved in isolating Qatar.

The House of Saud regime, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain have cut ties with Qatar this month over allegations that the country funds terrorism - an accusation that Qatar categorically denies.

Those countries have now given Qatar 10 days to comply with all of the demands, which also include paying an unspecified sum in compensation.

According to the list, Qatar must refuse to naturalize citizens from the four countries and "revoke Qatari citizenship for existing nationals where such citizenship violates those countries' laws". **→13**

Iraq's Kurds brush aside warnings on independence plebiscite

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Kurdistan Regional Government reiterated its pledge to stage a planned referendum in September, warning that any effort to thwart it would result in "catastrophe" and "bloody war."

"I do not know when this kind of thing may occur. However, the current situation is not sustainable between the central government and the regional government, Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan region,

told the France 24 television channel.

"We must do anything we can to avoid bloodshed and if war were to occur, it would be a deadly war."

The 70-year old leader emphasized that there will be "no turning back" on the independence move.

Barzani, however, parried the question on whom the possible confrontation would be between, a reference to the kaleidoscopic scene in Iraq, where a mix of Kurdish

Peshmerga, Shiite forces, Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters (popular mobilization forces), and the Iraqi army have been fighting Islamic State.

The Kurds already run their own autonomous region in northern Iraq.

The September vote, Kurdish officials have said, will be held in the region's three governorates as well as in areas that are disputed by the Kurdish and Iraqi governments, including Kirkuk. **→2**

Mosul to be liberated in a few days: Iraq's Abadi

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi says Iraqi forces will fully recapture the northern city of Mosul, the de facto capital of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit in the country, in the coming days.

"It's a matter of a few days and we will announce the total liberation of Mosul," Arabic-language al-Sumaria television network quoted Abadi as saying on Thursday.

The remarks come as fighting is underway between the Iraqi troops and ISIL terrorists in the historic, densely-populated Old City of

Mosul.

On Wednesday, ISIL elements blew up the iconic 12th-century Hadba (Hunchback) minaret along with the Grand al-Nuri Mosque, where ISIL ringleader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced a self-claimed Takfiri "caliphate" back in 2014.

Abadi stressed that the destruction was an admission by the militants that they were losing the fight in Mosul.

"Daesh's (ISIL) bombing of the Hadba minaret and the al-Nuri mosque is a formal declaration of their defeat," he said.

Biggest letdown since 2011 hits U.S. economy: Citigroup

The performance of the U.S. economy has been disappointing this year to say the least, and in one respect it's the biggest letdown since 2011.

Citigroup's Economic Surprise Index, a widely followed indicator of how the data are matching up to expectations, continues to plumb new depths.

In fact, the index hasn't been this low since late August 2011, when the White House and Congress brought the country to the brink of a debt default, economists worried about a double-dip recession, and the European debt crisis raged on.

The Citi index almost by design zigs and zags — data points miss economists' optimistic projections, sending the gauge lower,

after which they recalibrate their views and adjust their estimates lower. That adjustment then usually prompts a move higher in the surprise index.

However, it's been since January to July 2012 since the index has seen higher highs and lower lows.

A spectrum of indicators is raising a heightened level of pessimism from some of the more contrarian corners of market analysis.

Brad McMillan, chief investment officer at Commonwealth Financial Network, believes the current period is starting to look a lot like the 1999-2000 period — when sentiment indicators and stock market performance peaked, only to lead to a recession.

He points to a number of areas that

topped out in 1999 and slid in 2000: surging business and consumer confidence, spreads between yields on 10-year and three-month government debt, job creation and, finally, the S&P 500.

"With the wisdom of hindsight, though, we know that even as things were great, the seeds of the next downturn were already growing," McMillan wrote in a blog post. "What we really need to know is not what the comparison tells us about today, but what it means for us in the future."

One other factor in play is the Federal Reserve, which is in the process of raising interest rates even though inflation currently remains well below the central bank's 2 percent target. (Source: CNBC)

EDITORIAL
By Hassan Lasjerdi
Tehran Times editor-in-chief

Quds Day since 1979

Imam Khomeini's initiative in naming the last Friday of Ramadan as Quds Day has found its place in the world and rallies are held throughout the world on this day.

This symbolic action, which attaches great importance to the Palestine issue, has globalized Quds issue.

However, it seems the founder of the Islamic Republic had other things in his mind. They can be listed as follows:

- Quds Day is an international issue and not a sectarian or a nationalistic challenge in the Arab world.

- All those who are interested in the Quds issue, and more importantly the Palestine cause, were aware that Quds Day will cause fundamental changes given the effect of the Islamic Revolution on the Middle East.

- Imam Khomeini's intelligence in making the Palestinian issue an international issue free from all sectarian, ethnic and nationalistic clashes helps boost campaign against Israel.

- During the 1980s, the world was divided into the Western and Eastern powers who considered themselves superpowers. Quds Day could and did change the international equations.

- Since the 1979, the dimensions of the Palestinian issue have been expanded and all the world has got familiar with the issue and it is a good start to know the Palestine issue.

- It seems that Quds Day has gained more momentum in the current era in which the social networks are on the rise with a great speed.

- Under Imam Khomeini's new strategy to save the Palestine issue, today we are witnessing more organized campaigns against Israel by various figures, highly talented people, legal institutions and NGOs which have made the campaign more meaningful. Imam Khomeini showed freedom-seeking nations the clear path for struggle against Israel and it is the Palestinian people and all the other freedom-seeking people in the world that have to follow this path as each year the Quds Day rallies are being held with more glory.

ARTICLE
By Ali Akbar Salehi
Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran

If the Iran deal is to survive, the West must change course

Working to negotiate agreements with the west has been a mixed experience for Iran. Often, following some hard-won engagement, some western nations, whether distracted by short-sighted political motivations or the lucrative inducements of other regional actors, walk away and allow the whole situation to return to the status quo ante.

Quite a number of such reversals have befallen Iran when engaging with the US, in particular. The latest case of hard-won progress at risk — which I believe can still be saved from failure — is the historic nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). This was agreed in 2015 between Iran and the permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Germany — the P5+1. The critical question at the present juncture is: how can we rescue this engagement and move out of the familiar vicious circle?

I believe that concentrating on three guiding principles would allow all actors to stay the course. They are as follows.

The first serious stumbling block to engagement between Iran and the west has its roots in the "security dilemma". The actors need to clarify, for themselves and for others, whether they seek power for security or merely pursue power for its own sake. The interests of engagement are certainly better served by the former principle. Pursuing military power beyond what is called for by actual security needs raises suspicions among others and risks destabilization. For example, US arms sales to some traditional regional clients in the Middle East, and ostentatious, lavish arms purchases by the same regional actors just because of the abundance of oil wealth, are provocative. **→13**

TENDER INVITATION NO.96/1003

IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO), Would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of 22000 MT off Grade and 6000 MT Alloy Scrap Ingot on tender basis.

Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till

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Tel: +98 21 88049046-7 Fax: +98 21 88049045

For obtaining tender's documents and more information, please check: www.iralco.ir

Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminum Company

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Imam Khomeini gave priority to Palestinian struggle: ex-UN official

POLITICS TEHRAN — A former UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories and professor of international law has underlined the role of Imam Khomeini in preventing the Palestinian issue from sliding into oblivion. "I believe one of the lasting legacies of Imam Khomeini was to give authoritative priority to the Palestinian struggle and to the importance of Quds to the entire Islamic community," Richard A. Falk said in an interview with Tasnim News Agency published on Friday.



Iran condemns terrorist attack in Afghanistan

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Ministry on Friday condemned a terrorist attack in the southern Afghan province of Helmand in which dozens of people were killed in a car bomb blast.

Expressing condolences to the Afghan government and nation and families of the victims, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said Iran will stand by Afghanistan in the fight against terrorism, Tasnim reported.

In a world in which terrorism has turned into a business, terrorists have shown that they do not abide by any basic humanitarian principles, he underlined.



Rouhani aide says international bodies protean on Palestine

POLITICS TEHRAN — "When the civil rights of Palestinians are violated, international organizations do not show any reaction," a Rouhani aide said on Friday, accusing international bodies of adopting double standards.

Elham Aminzadeh, talking to IRIB on the sidelines of Quds Day rally in Tehran, said the mercurial behavior comes despite the fact that "most international documents point to the rights of Palestinians to decide their fate."



Arabs should consider Israel, not Iran, as enemy: senior MP

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's deputy parliament speaker has called on Arab states to realize that their real enemy is the Zionist regime of Israel and not Iran.

Speaking as he took part in the Quds (Jerusalem) Day rally in Tehran, Ali Motahari said the message of the annual demonstration around the world is for Islamic countries to recognize their real enemy, Israel, ILNA news agency reported.

He emphasized that the rallies are effective in boosting the morale of the Palestinian people in their struggle to liberate their lands from the Israeli occupation.



Al-Abadi office calls trips to Tehran, Riyadh, and Kuwait successful

POLITICS TEHRAN — The office of Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Friday issued a statement in which it said the official's three-legged regional tour has been successful.

According to the statement, al-Abadi's trips to Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait were "positive and constructive, laying important ground for political, economic, and security relations and building regional trust with Iraq."

It added that the leaders of the host countries vowed to cooperate with Iraq in defeating terrorism.



Belief-disbelief battle now turned conspicuous: ex-MP

POLITICS TEHRAN — "It is a fortunate turn from past years that the commanders of proxy wars are now out of their hiding places," a former Iranian MP said on Friday.

"The complicity of the House of Saud, the Zionists, and this newbie in U.S. administration in supporting terrorists of the world... has been known and the belief-disbelief battle is now quite conspicuous," Mohammad Reza Bahonar said, ISNA reported.

"If someone tries to take war in [Iran] he may be able to push his hands and legs in, but they will not go out and are sure to be cut."

Massive rallies in Iran on Quds Day

Iranians unitedly rally against Israel

POLITICS TEHRAN — People poured into streets in large numbers in different cities across Iran to mark International Quds Day on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan.

Iranian officials and people showed their solidarity with Palestinians who have been under Israeli occupation for seven decades.

The demonstrators issued a statement insisting that the only remedy for the old Palestinian wound is "the return of all Palestinian refugees from across the world", holding of a comprehensive and free referendum for shaping the future of Palestine.

The marchers also insisted on the need for resistance by all Palestinian groups against "the child killer Zionist regime". They also voiced their strong opposition against the "Judaization" of Palestinian lands.

The demonstrators also called on regional and international bodies to adopt a strong stance against the Israeli policies in the occupied territories.

Marchers, carrying placards reading "Death to Israel", cried out that "Palestine must be liberated". The people also chanted slogans against the U.S. and Saudi officials.

Resentment against Saudi and U.S. officials comes after Donald Trump's visit to Riyadh in May during which he signed a 110 billion dollars arms deal with Saudi Arabia and also the Saudi kingdom introduced a land, air and sea blockade against Qatar, pushing the Arab world into a new era of uncertainty.

Participating in the rallies, President Hassan Rouhani said the people's message on the Quds Day is hatred toward the Zionist regime of Israel and support for the oppressed Palestinians.

Ali Akbar Salehi, the director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, said that plots to undermine and marginalize the Palestinian issue has failed.



© Tehran Times/Mohammadreza Abbasi

partment of Environment, said that Quds Day is an opportunity not to forget injustices being practiced against the Palestinians.

IRGC Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari expressed hope that such rallies would lead to liberation of al-Aqsa Mosque and annihilation of Israel.

Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, said sympathy with Muslims is Quds Day and not the Saudi blockade of Qatar or the Riyadh summit in May which was attended by Donald Trump.

Defense Minister Hossein Dehqan called the "fake Zionist regime" the source of "instability, insecurity, and conflict in the Islamic world".

'Israel is mother of terrorism'
Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said the recent history knows "nothing more evil than the Zionist regime". Larijani also called Israel the "mother of terrorism".

Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said, "The Zionist regime is the main enemy of Islamic countries and Muslims."

Judiciary chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani also said Quds Day marks campaign against arrogant powers and is not just restricted to the agonies of the Palestinians.

In Tehran samples of the medium-range missiles that Iran fired against Daesh in Syria on June 18 were also put on display. Also, a Shahab 3 missile was displayed.

Iran, Russia, Turkey to deploy personnel in Syria to monitor 'de-escalation zones'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian, Russian and Turkish personnel will be deployed in parts of Syria as part of a de-escalation agreement brokered by Russia last month, Turkish broadcasters quoted President Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman as saying on Thursday.

Russian and Iranian troops will be deployed around Damascus and Turkish and Russian personnel in Syria's northern Idlib region.

Ibrahim Kalin said the de-escalation zones, agreed by Turkey, Russia and Iran, would be further discussed during talks in the Kazakh capital Astana in early July, Haberturk television channel said.

"We will probably be most prominent in the Idlib region with the Russians; mostly Russia and Iran around Damascus, and a mechanism involving the Americans and Jordan in the south in the Deraa region is being worked on," Kalin was quoted as saying.

Vladimir Shamanov, head of the Russian Duma defense committee, told RIA news agency Moscow was discussing proposals to send Kazakh and Kyrgyz troops to Syria with representatives of those countries.

"The negotiation process has begun, there is no decision yet," he was quoted as saying on May 4.

Russia, Iran and Turkey signed a document during the fourth round of the Syria talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, to form four "de-escalation zones" in Syria.

The most significant achievement of a three-pronged diplomatic effort since the beginning of 2017 to reduce bloodshed in a war now in its seventh year, the deal



President Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman says: "We will probably be most prominent in the Idlib region with the Russians; mostly Russia and Iran around Damascus, and a mechanism involving the Americans and Jordan in the south in the Deraa region is being worked on"

brought together three of consequential actors in the conflict from opposite sides.

Russia and Iran back the Syrian government while Turkey supports some of the armed insurgent groups that seek to topple the government.

The top United Nations envoy dealing with Syria, Staffan de Mistura, hailed the memorandum, which took force on May 6, as an "important, promising, positive step in the right direction."

The agreement, which is to last initially for six months, calls for a pause in fighting, including government airstrikes, and for unhindered aid deliveries in and around the four main zones still held by rebels unaffiliated with the Islamic State.

The pact, however, does not apply to militants associated with the Islamic State or a Qaeda-linked group commonly known as the Nusra Front, which were designated as terrorist and hence, left out of the Astana talks.

The de-escalation zones, envisioned as places where displaced Syrian civilians could voluntarily return and settle, include the northern province of Idlib, the central province of Homs, the East Ghouta region outside Damascus, and southern Syria along the Jordanian border.

Neither the Syrian government nor the rebels signed the document although the Syrian government voiced its support for it. Rebel groups objected, arguing it left too many loopholes for the Syrian military to continue what they called indiscriminate bombings of civilian areas.

Iran sends 1,000 tons of food to Qatar daily

POLITICS Iran is shipping more than 1,000 tons of fruits and vegetables to Qatar every day.

The Gulf Times reported that Iran has taken the move after some Persian Gulf Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia cut relations with Doha.

On June 5, Saudi Arabia along with the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt cut ties with Qatar and introduced sanctions on the

country for its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain also closed their air, sea, and land routes to the country.

Qatar imports about 40 percent of its food from Saudi Arabia, the only country that has land border with Qatar.

"We will continue sending such cargos while there is still request from the Qa-

tari side," Iran Air spokesman Shahrokh Nooshabadi said recently.

The Islamic republic has also opened its airspace to about 100 more Qatar flights a day.

Reuters reported on Friday that the four Arab states boycotting Qatar have sent Doha a list of 13 demands including closing Al Jazeera television and reducing ties to Iran, an official of one of the four countries said.

Doha's independent-minded approach, including a dovish line on Iran and support for Islamist groups, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood, has incensed some of its neighbors who see political Islamism as a threat to their dynastic rule.

The list also demands the closing of a Turkish military base in Qatar, the official told Reuters.

Iraq's Kurds brush aside warnings on independence plebiscite

I → Kirkuk lies in an oil-rich and ethnically mixed part of Iraq. Control over the city is contested by Kurdish and Iraqi authorities.

Kurdish forces took over the city in 2014 when the Iraqi army fled during ISIL's summer offensive in northern Iraq.

The U.S.-backed Kurdish Peshmerga forces played an important role in the U.S.-backed campaign to defeat Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

With Kurdish forces controlling wider territory regained from Islamic State, the referendum plan adds to questions about Iraq's unity after the militants have been ousted from Mosul.

Back in April, the two main Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), agreed on the referendum plan, which Kurds would be likely to vote strongly for independence. Baghdad has already rejected the referendum call.

"No party can, on its own, decide the fate of Iraq, in isolation from the other parties," Saad al-Haddithi, Iraqi government spokesman, said earlier this month in a statement.

Reacting to the announced decision, Iraq's parliament rejected a decision to raise the Kurdistan flag alongside the Iraqi flag on public buildings and institutions in Kirkuk.

Iraqi MPs voted in favor of displaying only the Iraqi flag on Kirkuk's buildings.

The referendum bid "will give a strong mandate to the Kurdish leadership to engage in talks with Baghdad and the neighbors in order to get the best deal for Kurdish self-determination," Hoshyar Zebari, a former Iraqi foreign and finance minister said some time ago.



President of the Kurdistan Regional Government Massoud Barzani

President of the Kurdistan Regional Government says current situation is not sustainable between the central government and the regional government ... We must do anything we can to avoid bloodshed and if war were to occur, it would be a deadly war."

The quixotic dream of Iraqi Kurdish independence has been historically opposed by Iraq and also its neighbors, Iran, Turkey and Syria, as they fear the contagion for their own Kurdish populations.

In a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in Tehran on Tuesday, Iran's Leader Ayatollah Khamenei dismissed the independence plan as "unacceptable"

"As a neighbor, the Islamic Republic of Iran is against certain murmurs about the holding of a referendum for the separation of a section of Iraq," he said.

The Leader also branded promoters of the agenda as "opponents of the independence and identity of Iraq."

Iran has its own Kurdish minority in the west of the country. In a statement the Turkish foreign ministry said: "We think this will represent a terrible mistake."

"The maintenance of Iraq's territorial integrity and political unit is one of the fundamental principles of Turkey's Iraq policy," it added.

Kurds form close to 18 percent of Turkish population, nearly 78 million now.

The European Union and the U.S. have also come against the decision.

Last week, the Council of the European Union warned against "unilateral actions" in Iraq.

The Council voiced its "steadfast support for Iraq's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity" and its commitment to the preservation of Iraq's diverse society, following a meeting on Monday on Iraq, according to Kurdish news agency Rudaw.

Barzani told the France 24 that he had pushed back a request by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration to postpone the referendum.

Russia fires cruise missiles at ISIL in Syria, U.S. kept in dark

Russia: Baghdadi's death near 100 percent certain

Russian vessels deployed to the Mediterranean have fired cruise missiles at the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group targets inside Syria, the Russian Defense Ministry says.

The missiles were fired from two Russian warships and a submarine at targets inside the western Syrian province of Hama on Friday, it said.

"As a result of the surprise mass missile strike, command points were destroyed and also large stores of weapons and ammunition of the ISIL terrorists in the area of Aqirbat in the Hama Province," the ministry said.

It added that Russian planes then carried out aerial strikes that "destroyed the remainder of the ISIL fighters and their facilities."

Russia has also been conducting an aerial bombardment campaign against terrorist positions in Syria on a request by Damascus.

Russia has been conducting cruise missile strikes and aerial attacks against terrorist positions in Syria on a request from the Syrian government.

Russia 'nearly 100 percent certain Baghdadi has been killed'

Meanwhile on Friday, Viktor Ozerov, the head of the defense committee in the upper house of the Russian parliament, said Russia was almost 100 percent sure that the leader of the ISIL terrorist outfit, Ibrahim al-Samarrai aka Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, had been killed in an airstrike carried out by the Russian Air Force in Syria last month.

"I think this information is close to 100 percent [in certainty]," Interfax quoted



Ozerov as saying. "The fact that Islamic State [ISIL] has still not shown him anywhere also adds to our confidence that al-Baghdadi has been killed."

On Thursday, the Russian Foreign Ministry had said it was "highly likely" that Baghdadi, had been killed. Deputy Foreign Minister Oleg Syromolotov told Sputnik news agency that the information about Baghdadi's likely death was now being verified through "various channels."

The Friday statement by the Russian Defense Ministry said that Turkish and Israeli militaries "were informed in a timely

manner of the missile launches through communication channels" but made no mention of the United States.

Russia has suspended communications with the U.S., which used to be carried out via a hotline set up to prevent accidental military confrontations over Syrian airspace. The U.S. is present in Syria as part of a coalition that purports to be fighting ISIL but that has not received permission from Damascus.

The suspension of the military contact came after a U.S. warplane hit a Syrian Su-22 aircraft with a missile last Sunday.

The U.S. claimed that it had targeted the plane "in collective self-defense of coalition-partnered forces" in the city of Taqba in northern Syria.

Moscow says Washington had failed to inform it about the hit. A day later, the Russian Ministry threatened to treat aircraft with the coalition "as air targets" if they flew in areas west of the Euphrates River.

The Pentagon responded by saying it would "defend" itself and "our partners if threatened."

(Source: RT)

Theresa May: EU citizens can stay after Brexit

British Prime Minister Theresa May promised European Union citizens now living in Britain they could stay after Brexit but started a dispute with Brussels over the role of Europe's top court.

At a summit in Brussels, May gave "a clear commitment that no EU citizen currently in the UK lawfully will be asked to leave the country at the point that the UK leaves the EU," a British government source said.

"The UK's position represents a fair and serious offer and one aimed at giving as much certainty as possible to citizens who have settled in the UK, building careers and lives and contributing so much to our society," May told EU leaders.

The European Union has made the rights of an estimated three million Europeans living in Britain a priority; their futures have been thrown into doubt by its shock vote last year to leave the 28-nation bloc.

Under May's plan, Europeans who have been living in Britain for five years at the time of a yet to be specified cut-off date would be entitled to a new "settled status" - granting them permanent rights to healthcare, education, welfare and pensions equivalent to British nationals.

Newer arrivals would be allowed to stay until they had amassed the necessary five years to qualify for settled status too.

Those who arrived after the cut-off date will have a "grace period" of up to two years, during which they can apply for another form of immigration status,



such as a work permit.

Collision course

But the Conservative leader, battling to retain her authority after losing her parliamentary majority in a snap vote, also put herself on a collision course with Brussels.

She failed to set a cut-off date for those who are eligible for permanent residence, saying only it would be no earlier than the triggering of the Article 50 process on leaving the EU - March 29, 2017 - and Britain's formal exit, on course for March 30, 2019.

That will leave some new arrivals unsure of their status.

Britain will reject a demand for the European Court of Justice to oversee the process and any resulting disputes.

In its position paper on EU rights

published this month, the European Commission said the court should have "full jurisdiction" over such citizens' rights.

But May is determined to remove Britain from the ECJ's (European Court of Justice) reach, insisting that "taking back control" of its laws is one of the reasons Britons voted for Brexit.

AFP news agency reported a British source saying: "The commitments that we made to EU citizens will be enshrined in UK law and enforceable through our highly respected courts."

Al Jazeera's Neave Barker, reporting from Brussels, said that - although the EU had been hoping that citizens in Britain would gain access to the ECJ - May has at least now made some kind of outline of her plans on what was one

of the vital sticking points of the Brexit negotiations.

"A big hurdle, a big step has been made in the first week of Brexit negotiations - it's really now for the EU to respond," he said.

May said she expected any offer by Britain to be met with a reciprocal offer from the EU for the one million Britons on the continent, but said she wanted a deal to be done as quickly as possible.

Officials said further details, including on the rights of spouses and children of European citizens, would be published in a government paper on Monday.

Barker said May's tough talk on Brexit that preceded the recent snap general election has largely gone.

"She is now very much weakened, and as a result of that bruising election result the kind of attitude and the tone that's being shared here in Europe is being softened too," he said.

"It looks as if the UK is ready for compromise."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called May's offer on citizen rights after Brexit "a good start".

Merkel said there was still a lot of work ahead, including the question of a British financial settlement as well as how to manage the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Meanwhile, EU leaders agreed on Thursday the post-Brexit locations of key bank and medical agencies currently based in London would be decided by November, EU President Donald Tusk said. (Source: Al Jazeera)

Amnesty urges probe into report of UAE torture in Yemen

Human rights group Amnesty International has called on the United Nations to lead an investigation into allegations that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and its allied Yemeni security forces detained and tortured hundreds of people.

In a statement Amnesty called for an urgent investigation after a news report from the Associated Press news agency alleged that the UAE financed, armed and trained Yemeni forces responsible for grave human rights violations during security operations in Yemen.

The AP documented at least 18 clandestine lock-ups across southern Yemen run by the UAE or Yemeni forces, drawing on accounts from former detainees, families of prisoners, civil rights lawyers and Yemeni military officials.

Hundreds of men were swept up in the hunt for al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists and subjected to extreme torture - including the 'grill', in which victims were tied to

a spit like a roast and spun in a circle of fire.

"A UN-led investigation must immediately be launched into the UAE's and other parties' role in setting up this horrific network of torture," Lynn Maalouf, the director of research at Amnesty International in the Middle East said.

"Thousands of Yemeni men have disappeared in those networks. Enforced disappearance and torture are crimes under international law. They must be investigated and those responsible must be held accountable."

A former detainee told AP that one clandestine prison in the city of Mukalla was "gripped by fear."

"We could hear the screams," the man who was held for six months at Mukalla's Riyan Airport said.

Other people who were released from the prison told AP of being crammed into shipping containers smeared with faces.

Senior American defense officials acknowledged on Wednesday that U.S. forces had been involved in

interrogations of detainees but denied any participation in or knowledge of human rights abuses.

Interrogating detainees who have been abused could violate international law, which prohibits complicity in torture.

"Allegations about U.S. forces taking part in interrogations of detainees or receiving information that may have been obtained through torture must also be immediately investigated," Amnesty said.

"It would be a stretch to believe the U.S. did not know or could not have known that there was a real risk of torture."

In a separate investigation, Human Rights Watch accused the UAE of backing the torture and disappearances of dozens of people.

The UAE is part of the House of Saud regime's-led coalition formed to help Yemen's former government to fight the Ansarullah (Houthis) movement, in order to reinstall the resigned government. (Source: Al Jazeera)

Turkey dismisses demand to close Qatar military base

Turkey has rejected a call from four Arab states to shut down its military base in Qatar, saying the base was a guarantor of security in the Persian Gulf and demands for its closure represented interference in its ties with Doha.

Defense Minister Fikri Isik told Turkish broadcaster NTV that he had not yet seen a request for the closure of the base, but made clear his country had no plans to review a 2014 agreement with Qatar which led to it being set up.

His reaction comes after the House of Saud regime and other Arab states boycotting Qatar over alleged support for "terrorism" issued a list of demands, including closing down the military installation.

"If there is such a demand, it will mean interference in bilateral ties," Isik said in an interview on Friday.

"The base in Qatar is both a Turkish base and one that will preserve the security of Qatar and the region."

"It is an important military base and no country should be disturbed by it."

Five armored vehicles and 23 military personnel arrived in Doha on Thursday in a deployment Turkey's armed forces said was part of a military training and cooperation deal.

Some 88 Turkish soldiers were already in Qatar, according to the Hurriyet newspaper.

The newspaper said a joint exercise by Turkish and Qatari forces was expected following the Islamic Eid al-Fitr holiday which starts on Sunday and the number of Turkish soldiers sent to the Persian Gulf state could eventually reach 1,000.



The Turkish military base in Qatar is a first for Turkey in an Arab state.

"Turkey's military agreement with Qatar isn't a new thing, but after the Persian Gulf tensions erupted Turkey just fast tracked a draft bill in the parliament to deploy its troops to Doha and boost Qatar's morale," said Al Jazeera's Sinem Koseoglu, reporting from Istanbul.

"According to the agreement, almost 600 Turkish military personnel will be training Qatar's soldiers."

Turkey has been the foremost supporter of Qatar since the Persian Gulf dispute began on June 5.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has denounced the isolation of Qatar as "inhumane and against Islamic values".

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Monitor: U.S. strikes killed 500 civilians in Syria last month

A London-based monitor says the United States airstrikes on two Syrian provinces killed 472 civilians last month, more than double a previous 30-day toll.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said on Friday the period between May 23 and June 23 saw the highest civilian death toll in the U.S. airstrikes since they began in September 2014.

Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said 222 civilians, including 84 children, were killed in the Dayr al-Zawr. Another 250 civilians, including 53 children, were killed in Raqqah province, he added.

The new deaths brought the overall civilian toll from the U.S.-led aerial attacks to 1,953, including 456 children and 333 women, the French news agency quoted him as saying.

The previous deadliest 30-day period was between April 23 and May 23 this year that claimed 225 civilian lives.

The increase has led human rights groups to question whether changes in procedure are responsible after U.S. President Donald Trump shifted more authority over military operations to the Pentagon.

Several former American security officials warned Pentagon Chief Jim Mattis recently that civilian casualties "can cause significant strategic setbacks" by reducing local cooperation and providing fuel for Takfiri militants.

American-backed Kurdish militants in Syria have been advancing toward Raqqah with heavy support from U.S. airstrikes since November.

Turkey's defense minister on Friday warned that Ankara would retaliate against any threatening moves by the People's Protection Units (YPG/Yekineyên Parastina Gel) militia in Syria after U.S. pledge to take back weapons from the group after the defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit.

Fikri Isik told broadcaster NTV that a letter sent to him by Mattis regarding the weapons given to the YPG was a "positive step" but "implementation is essential".

Ankara has said supplies to the YPG have in the past ended up in the hands of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê), which has fought an insurgency in southeast Turkey since the mid-1980s.

The London-based observatory said on Wednesday Turkey had sent reinforcements, including troops, vehicles and equipment into Syria, towards areas south of Azaz town, which is held by Turkish-backed militants.

Turkey sent tanks and warplanes across the border into northern Syria in August last year, carving out a big portion of the area. (Source: SANA)

Turkish exports to Qatar triple during Persian Gulf crisis

Turkish exports to Qatar have tripled from their normal levels to \$32.5 million since four Arab countries began boycotting the Persian Gulf state on June 5, Turkey's Customs and Trade Minister Bulent Tufenkci announced.

Turkey, which has long tried to play the role of regional mediator, has backed Qatar in the dispute but is also wary of upsetting its other allies, including Saudi Arabia.

"Since June 5 exports to Qatar have amounted to \$32.5 million. Of this \$12.5 million is food. This figure is three times the normal level," Tufenkci told reporters at a Ramadan fast-breaking dinner.

Turkey has sent more than 100 cargo planes of supplies to Qatar but Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci has said it was not sustainable to maintain supplies through an air lift.

On Thursday, Turkey sent its first ship carrying food to Qatar and dispatched a small contingent of soldiers and armored vehicles there, while President Tayyip Erdogan spoke with Saudi Arabia's leaders on calming tension in the region.

Turkey fast-tracked legislation on June 7 to allow more troops to be deployed to a military base in Qatar that houses Turkish soldiers under an agreement signed in 2014.

(Source: Reuters)

Euro zone businesses end second quarter with slower growth: PMI

Roaring euro zone business growth tailed off unexpectedly toward the end of the first half of 2017 following a sudden slowing in the pace of expansion by services firms, a survey showed on Friday.



But with inflation relatively resilient and overall growth still quite strong, pressure will likely be maintained on policymakers at the European Central Bank to pare back soon on their ultra-loose monetary policy.

Earlier this month, the ECB gave up its bias for more rate cuts in a small step towards normalization.

IHS Markit's Flash Composite Purchasing Managers' Index for June fell to 55.7 from the 56.8 it registered in April and May, which was its highest since April 2011. A reading above 50 indicates growth.

A Reuters poll had predicted no change to the index, seen as a good guide to growth, and none of the economists polled had predicted such a big fall.

"At the moment I'm not too worried about it," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit.

"We may be reaching the stage where growth has been strong for quite a few months and we are hitting a few ceilings in terms of degrees to which firms can expand capacity."

Williamson said the PMI pointed to second quarter GDP growth of 0.7 percent, faster than the 0.5 percent predicted in a Reuters poll earlier this month. The PMIs had correctly indicated a 0.6 percent expansion last quarter.

Economic data points to solid growth in the euro zone in the second quarter and inflation will hover near current levels in coming months, the ECB said in a regular economic bulletin on Thursday.

As they have done for the previous seven months, firms increased prices in June, albeit at a weaker pace as input cost pressures eased. The output prices index dipped to 51.8 from 52.4.

Firms operating in the bloc's dominant service industry did not perform as expected. The services PMI fell to 54.7 from 56.3, well below even the most pessimistic forecaster in a Reuters poll of over 40 economists.

"It's not really clear what that's about, there was no single cause we can pinpoint and I'm inclined to treat it just as some payback for the sheer strength of growth in recent months," Williamson said.

In one bright spot, the employment index held at May's 53.8. It has only been higher than that once since early 2008, in March of this year.

Factories had a better month than predicted. The manufacturing PMI climbed to a more than six-year high of 57.3 from 57.0. The Reuters poll suggested it would dip to 56.8.

An index measuring output nudged up to 58.5 from 58.3, its highest since April 2011.

Implying the momentum would continue into July, new orders surged and factories ran down stocks of finished goods at the fastest rate for nine months. The related subindex sank to 47.9 from 49.1.

(Source: Reuters)

3 South Pars platforms complete drilling operations

ENERGY TEHRAN- Drilling operations have been completed by platforms 22, 24A and 24B of Iran's South Pars gas field (in the Persian Gulf), according to project manager Farhad Izadjoo.

Izadjoo also put the progress of drilling operations in platform 23 at 80.4 percent, Shana news agency reported. He said that CRA pipes are scheduled to be installed in the four mentioned platforms once they are received from the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) by the Iranian seventh calendar month of Mehr (starts on September 23), and then the complementary operations of the wells will be conducted by the end of the current calendar year (March 20, 2018).

South Pars is divided into 24 standard phases of development in the first stage. Most of the phases are fully operational at the moment.

The huge offshore field, shared with Qatar, covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.



Inflation rate stands at 7.4% in urban areas

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Statistical Center of Iran announced that the inflation rate in the urban areas for the 12-month period ended in Khordad, the third month of the current Iranian calendar year (May 22-June 21), hit 7.4 percent, Tasnim news agency reported.

The figure shows 0.3 percent rise from

7.1 percent inflation rate in the second calendar month, Ordibehesht.

The center also put the point-to-point inflation rate in the urban areas at 9.4 percent in Khordad, with 0.2 percent drop from 9.6 percent in Ordibehesht.

Also, based on the Statistical Center's report, the inflation rate in the country's rural areas stood at 8.5 percent for the

12-month period ended in Khordad, with 0.4 percent increase from 8.1 percent in Ordibehesht.

Point-to-point inflation rate in the rural areas fell by 1.3 percent to 10.5 percent in Khordad from 11.8 percent in Ordibehesht.

The Statistical Center has put the country's inflation rate at 9.8 percent in the past

Iranian calendar year 1395, showing 4.5 percent drop from its preceding year.

It is while Central Bank of Iran (CBI) had previously put the country's inflation rate at nine percent during the past calendar year.

Iran, accordingly, could manage to experience a single-digit inflation rate after 26 years in 1395.

Two Iranian airlines plan to buy 73 Airbus jets

Airbus said on Thursday two Iranian airlines had committed to buying 73 planes in a last-minute flurry of deals for the European plane maker at the Paris Airshow.

Iranian domestic carrier Zagros Airlines signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to buy 20 Airbus A320neo jets and eight A330neo aircraft, while privatized Iran Airtour signed an MOU for 45 A320neos.

Iran has ordered more than 200 planes

since international sanctions against the country were lifted last year in return for curbs on the country's nuclear activities.

Iran Air has ordered 100 planes from Airbus, 80 from U.S. rival Boeing and 20 ATR turboprops.

Boeing has also signed a deal for 30 737 MAX jets with Iran's Aseman Airlines, which is managed as a private company and owned by Iran's civil service pension foundation.

Iran Airtour was established as a subsidiary of IranAir and privatized in 2011 but maintains a status as subsidiary of the national flag carrier, according to CAPA aviation consultancy.

Zagros Airlines is a private carrier. Airbus Chief Operating Officer and Plane making President Fabrice Bregier said he did not believe the deals were related to political issues.

The company said the MOUs were

contingent upon all necessary approvals, including from the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control. Airbus sales chief John Leahy said he expected the U.S. approvals within the next couple of months.

Airbus said it would continue to act in full compliance with the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action, and associated rules.

(Source: Reuters)

IP gas pipeline project to be completed in 2 years: Pakistani envoy

"I think Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project will be completed in two years," Pakistani Ambassador to Tehran Asif Ali Khan Durrani said in an interview with ISNA.

"Work has already started on the IP Gas pipeline project and we can say that there is progress on the Pakistan part of this project. The real issue was that during sanctions on Iran, no foreign company was ready to invest. With the lifting of sanctions, however, international companies have come forward and work is in progress. I think the project will be completed in two years," the official stated.

Referring to the bilateral trade between the two countries, the ambassador said: "The two countries have maintained close and cordial relations throughout their history. These relations have only deepened and improved over the years, particularly during the last four years of Hassan Rouhani's presidency. In this regard, both President Rou-



hani and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, while stressing on the need to further improve our bilateral and economic

relations, agreed to enhance bilateral trade to \$5 billion in the coming 5 years."

According to statistics published by the Iranian government, during the past year, bilateral trade between the two countries increased to \$1.15 billion during 2016-2017 from \$ 900.68 million a year ago. There was an increase of 28% in bilateral trade between the two countries.

Asked about the Gwadar and Chabahar ports, Durrani said: "These two sister ports complement each other. The goal of China-Pak Corridor is to enhance regional trade. Of course China and Pakistan both will be the major beneficiaries of this project; however, it will also have a great impact on the regional trade, particularly in South Asia and Central Asia as well as the Middle East. I see complementarities rather than competition between the two ports."

(Source: ISNA)

Trump's blunt language sparks fear of an imminent trade war with Germany

A war of words between U.S. President Donald Trump and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in recent weeks has ignited fears that a trade war could be forthcoming, according to a new survey conducted by CNBC.

Chief financial officers (CFOs) from some of the world's biggest firms said they were largely troubled by the strained relationship between Washington and Berlin as stark differences regarding climate, trade and defense have bubbled to the surface.

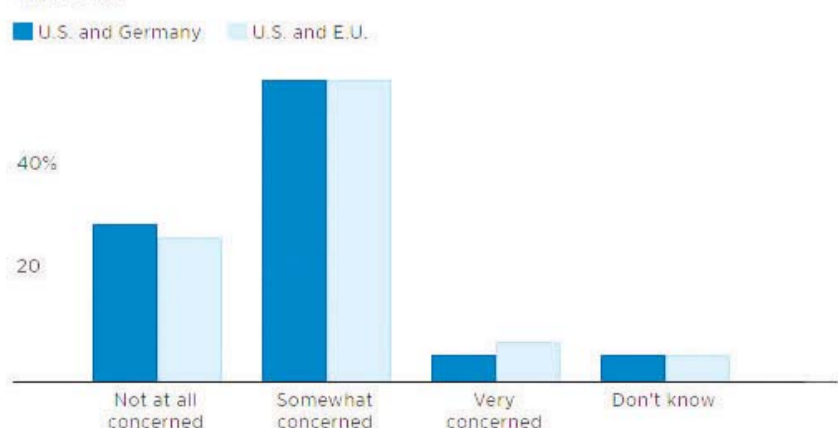
Over 64 percent of global CFOs – across a wide range of industries – said they were either "somewhat concerned" or "very concerned" with the tense atmosphere that has developed between the U.S. and Germany.

However, 30.8 percent of respondents said they were "not at all concerned" that the Trump administration's policies and rhetoric toward Berlin would lead to a trade war. Just over 5 percent said they did not know whether the latest political developments should be a cause for concern.

Responses to the CNBC Global CFO Survey are anonymous. All 39 CFOs who completed the survey responded to this question.

The CNBC Global CFO Council represents some of the largest public and private companies in the world, collectively managing more than \$4 trillion in market

Are you concerned the Trump administration's policies and recent rhetoric toward Germany will lead to a trade war between the U.S. and Germany? Between the U.S. and the European Union?



capitalization across a wide variety of sectors. The quarterly CFO Council poll was conducted from June 2-16.

Trump vs. Merkel

At a meeting with EU officials at the end of May, Trump reportedly described Germany's trade policies with the U.S. as "bad, very bad." While the White House moved to dismiss these media reports, Trump has long voiced his frustrations with Germany's trade surplus with the

U.S., insisting German imports have damaged the U.S. manufacturing industry.

In January, Trump threatened to slap a 35 percent tax on German auto imports.

"If you want to build cars in the world, then I wish you all the best. You can build cars for the United States, but for every car that comes to the USA, you will pay 35 percent tax," he said in an interview with German newspaper Bild.

Merkel responded to Trump's criti-

cism on Wednesday and appeared next to German born U.S. diplomat Henry Kissinger. She said the transatlantic relationship was more about "balancing interests (and) achieving a win-win situation" for both countries.

Brexit optimism

The CNBC Global CFO Survey also asked respondents whether they were now more optimistic or pessimistic regarding the outcome of Brexit one year on from the U.K.'s vote to leave the European Union.

More than one-third of global CFOs said they were either "more optimistic" or "a lot more optimistic" about a Brexit resolution 12 months on from the vote.

Conversely, 23.1 percent said they had become "more pessimistic" over the outcome of Brexit, with more than 40 percent of respondents saying they were either unsure or their view had not changed since June 23 2016.

Official Brexit talks between the U.K. and the EU kicked off on Monday.

Despite British Prime Minister Theresa May's disappointing election result at the start of June, EU leaders appear to have gained renewed confidence since pro-Europe Emmanuel Macron's victory in the French poll last month.

Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, said the EU is "slowly turning the corner."

(Source: cnbc)

Iran starts gas exports to Iraq

Iran has begun exporting gas to Iraq, an Iranian official told the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) on Wednesday, after a several years of delays.

The neighbors, both members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, initially signed a deal in 2013 for Iran to supply Iraqi power stations, but officials in the past blamed poor security in Iraq for hampering implementation.

Exports had started at approximately 7 million cubic meters per day and would eventually reach up to 35 million cubic meters per day, Amir Hossein Zamaninia, the deputy oil minister for trade and international affairs, told IRNA.

Iran signed two contracts to export gas, one for the Iraqi capital Baghdad and the other for southern Iraqi city of Basra, IRNA reported.

Iran, which has huge gas reserves alongside its oil resources, exports small amounts of gas to Turkey but production has struggled to keep pace with rising domestic consumption.

Experts say years of Western sanctions over Iran's disputed nuclear program have also hindered development of gas projects. Some sanctions have been lifted since a nuclear deal was reached with Western powers.

(Source: Reuters)



Russia keeps top spot as China oil supplier in May

For the third month in a row, Russia has maintained its spot as China's top crude oil supplier and Angola clung onto the second spot over Saudi Arabia, data from Chinese customs for May imports showed on Friday. The data release follows the decision from Saudi Arabia and Russia, the world's two-biggest oil producers who are vying for market share in China, to extend a global oil supply cut agreement to bolster prices in an oversupplied market.

Russia supplied a record 5.74 million tons, or 1.35 million barrels per day (bpd), to China last month, the General Administration of Customs said, rising from April's 1.15 million bpd.

Russia was also the largest supplier for the first five months of the year with shipments averaging 1.16

million bpd, followed by Angola at 1.11 million bpd and Saudi Arabia at 1.1 million bpd, customs reported.

Angolan shipments were 5.56 million tons last month, or 1.31 million bpd, up 79.5 percent from a year ago, the data showed.

Saudi exports were 4.43 million tons, or 1.04 million bpd, which was 8.6 percent higher compared to May last year, the data showed. That was down from April's 1.147 million bpd.

China's total crude oil imports rebounded to the second highest on record in May, making China the world's top buyer for the month, but the pace is expected to ease from June through August after some local importers ran out of quotas and as refiners contemplate run cuts.

(Source: Reuters)

Shell's \$1b New Zealand sale said to draw OMV, Vermilion

Royal Dutch Shell Plc's sale of its remaining New Zealand energy assets has drawn interest from companies including OMV AG and Vermilion Energy Inc., people with knowledge of the matter said.

Vermilion has been talking with potential financial partners about bidding together for Shell's stakes in two New Zealand gas fields, one of the people said. Smaller local energy companies including Greymouth Petroleum Ltd. have also been considering teaming up with other investors for joint offers, the people said, asking not to be identified as details are private. The assets could fetch as much as \$1 billion, the people said.

Shell and its adviser, JPMorgan Chase & Co., have asked for indicative bids by next month, said the people. The company expects

choose a winner before the year-end, according to the people.

Chief Executive Officer Ben van Beurden has made debt reduction a top priority at Shell since the purchase of BG Group Plc last year. Its \$30 billion divestment program is on track and a further \$5 billion of asset sales are at an "advanced" stage, the company said in February. Earlier that month it announced the sale of fields in the North Sea and Thailand for as much as \$4.7 billion.

Deliberations are at an early stage, and there's no certainty the suitors will submit indicative offers, the people said. Representatives for Greymouth and OMV declined to comment, while a representative for Vermilion didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil edges up, but still set for biggest first-half fall since 1990s

Oil prices edged up on Friday, recovering some of their steep losses made this week, but crude remained on course for its worst first-half decline in almost two decades as production cuts have failed to sufficiently reduce oversupply.

Brent crude futures were up 28 cents at \$45.50 a barrel at 0830 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures traded at \$43.04 a barrel, up 30 cents on their previous close.

Oil prices have fallen about 20 percent this year despite an effort led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to cut production by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd).

That puts the market on course for its biggest first-half percentage fall since the late 1990s, when rising output and the Asian financial crisis led to sharp price falls.

"There is selective perception in the market at the moment. Bearish factors like higher output in Libya or



Nigeria result in lower oil prices but bullish factors, like the really high OPEC commitment, are ignored," said Frank Schallenberg, head of commodity research at LBBW in Stuttgart.

He added he expects prices to bottom out between \$40-45 per barrel before returning to \$50 until the end of the year, buoyed by higher demand and continued OPEC and non-OPEC production cuts.

Analysts at J.P. Morgan are more skeptical and expect prices to fall again next year.

"By early 2018, the combination of record U.S. production and deteriorating OPEC compliance probably returns average prices to the mid-to-low \$40s," J.P. Morgan analysts said in their half-year outlook.

At the heart of the ongoing glut is that recent efforts to reduce production by OPEC suppliers as well as Russia has been met by soaring output from the United States and OPEC members Libya and Nigeria, which are exempt from the cuts.

Thanks to shale drillers, U.S. oil production has risen by over 10 percent in the last year to 9.35 million bpd, close to the level of top exporter Saudi Arabia.

(Source: Reuters)

China, India, Japan hamper Asia oil demand growth, efforts to balance market

As the global oil market frets about a stubborn supply glut, faltering demand growth in key Asian crude importers is further hampering efforts to restore market balance.

A fuel glut in China, a hangover from demonetization in India, and an ageing, declining population in Japan are holding back crude oil demand growth in three of the world's top four oil buyers.

The three countries make up a fifth of 97 million barrels per day (bpd) in global oil consumption, and any hiccups among them will mean lower-than-expected oil demand growth in Asia, helping to undercut the OPEC-led effort to support prices.

"We are indeed seeing lower demand from more than a few clients - air, marine, road, industrial ... They are actually consuming less fuel than anticipated," said Michael Corley, managing director of Mercatus Energy Advisors.

In China, vying with the United States as the world's biggest oil importer, imports in May were still at a near record of 9 million bpd, but a looming cut in refinery operations is set to hit demand for crude oil in the third quarter.

In India, which overtook Japan as the world's third-biggest oil importer last year, crude imports fell by more



than 4 percent between April and May to around 4.2 million bpd, as after-effects of the country's recent demonetization program hit consumption.

For the first five months of the year, India's imports are about flat to the same period last year, following an annual rise of 7.4 percent last year.

In Japan, Asia's most advanced economy, oil demand has been in structural decline for years due to a declining, ageing population, and

the rise of cars with better mileage or that use alternative fuels.

Japan in April imported around 3.5 million bpd, down from a peak of 5.9 million bpd hit in 2005.

Coupled with plentiful supplies, the stuttering demand in Asia has contributed to a 20 percent price fall for Brent crude oil to around \$45 per barrel, in what is the biggest slump in a first half of a year since 1997.

■ Floating storage

In the latest indicator of a supply

overhang, traders said that five very large crude carriers (VLCCs) have been chartered in recent days to store unsold oil.

Each VLCC can hold around 2 million barrels of oil, and the five chartered for storage add to around 25 supertankers already sitting in southern Malaysian waters.

In a market condition known as contango, where spot crude oil prices are cheaper than those for future delivery, it is profitable to store oil for a later sale.

Currently, spot Brent is almost \$1.50 a barrel cheaper than that for delivery in early 2018.

"If oil prices head lower, floating storage will get more traction," said Ashok Sharma, managing director of ship broker BRS Baxi in Singapore.

The cheap spot price comes despite the effort led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to cut production by 1.8 bpd that has been in place since January.

Doubts over OPEC's compliance with its own targets and soaring U.S. output have led to skepticism that markets will re-balance soon.

"The slide in oil prices continues ... as markets remain skeptical of OPEC's ability to balance supplies," ANZ bank said on Friday.

(Source: Reuters)

Germany's Wintershall likely to collaborate with Gazprom in Iran

Germany's Wintershall does not rule out joint work with Gazprom in Iran, a member of the company's Board responsible for exploration and production in Russia, Libya, South America, Thilo Wieland, said in an interview with Rambler News.

"Our partnership with Gazprom is based on trust, so we are open for possible joint projects. If Iran provides an opportunity, we, of course, will thoroughly consider it," he said, noting that Iran is a country with considerable resources, and therefore is very interesting to Wintershall.

The official added that Iran is part of the company's strategy for targeting key regions. He reminded that Wintershall signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Oil Company of Iran.

(Source: Russianconstruction.com)

Tentative oil price recovery lifts energy stocks

World stocks were poised to eke out slim gains for the week on Friday as a tentative recovery in oil prices spurred investors to hunt for bargains in the beaten-down energy sector and helped commodity-related currencies gain against the dollar.

Crude oil pulled away from this week's 10-month lows, although prices were still set for their worst first-half performance since 1997.

The slide in energy prices worsens the outlook for inflation creating a headache for the world's major central banks looking to normalize rates after years of ultra-loose policy.

"(The) oil price is the 'poster child' for victory of deflation," analysts at Bank of America Merrill Lynch said in a note of weekly investment flows.

Investors were beginning to shift allocations accordingly and moving out of assets typically in favor when prices are rising such as inflation-protected U.S. Treasury funds and bank loans.

Elsewhere inflows into equities slowed with some investors moving into laggard energy shares.

European shares fell 0.2 percent while MSCI's gauge of world stocks rose 0.1 percent.

In currency markets, the bounce in oil helped commodity currencies such as the Canadian dollar.

The dollar weakened against a basket of major currencies .DXY and is now down more than 0.5 percent since this week's earlier highs as doubts about how quickly the Fed will be able to raise rates crept in.

"Inflation is likely to be the theme that moves currencies next week which will see the release of various U.S. indicators. They will be key as this week's slump in crude oil has clouded the U.S. inflation outlook," said Shin Kadota, a senior strategist at Barclays in Tokyo.

In Britain, on the one-year anniversary of last year's shock Brexit referendum in which Britons voted to leave the EU, sterling extended gains.

The pound rose 0.37 percent against the dollar following more comments from Bank of England policymakers calling for a rate hike.

(Source: Reuters)

Kurdish oil appears bound for U.S. again after 3-year pause

An oil tanker carrying Kurdish crude appears to be en route to the U.S., reviving a trade from three years ago that became a symbol of a dispute between the semi-autonomous region in Iraq and the federal government in Baghdad.

The Aframax tanker Neverland, which normally hauls about 650,000 barrels, exited the Mediterranean Sea two days ago, according to vessel tracking data compiled by Bloomberg. A week earlier, it left a port in southern Turkey from where Kurdistan Regional Government cargoes are shipped by traders.

The KRG, which is preparing for a referendum later this year, has long been pushing for greater independence in oil sales, saying the Kurdish region wasn't getting its share of the federal budget. The dispute escalated three years ago when Kurdish deliveries to the U.S. were blocked and Iraq threatened to take action against companies involved. Those tensions simmered down somewhat as both sides worked together to regain control of the country's north taken by Islamic State fighters in 2014.

The Neverland's tracks show it to be heading toward the U.S. East Coast, though it could still go elsewhere. Despite going close to full speed at 13 knots, the vessel's destination is noted by its crew as "for orders," a designation for ships that haven't been given definitive sailing instructions.

Michael Howard, an adviser to the Kurdish minister of natural resources, said he was unaware of the ship's destination.

The ship earlier this month collected cargo from a loading terminal at Ceyhan on Turkey's southern Mediterranean coast, which is used to load cargoes that have come by pipeline from the Kurdish part of Iraq. A small proportion of the crude delivered from the terminal is sold by Iraq's state oil company, known as SOMO, but all such sales this year have been shipped by pipeline to the Kirkkale refinery near Ankara, according to information from a local port agent.

If the Neverland completes its voyage across the Atlantic, it will be following a route taken by only a small number of ships carrying Kurdish crude. In mid-2014, a handful of vessels delivered more than a million barrels from the region, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Iraq's federal government in Baghdad threatened to sue buyers and shippers of crude sold by the KRG after the two sides failed to agree on control of oil flows and payment receipts, dubbing any such shipments "smuggled" oil.

(Source: Bloomberg)

A year on from Brexit, EU leaders have a spring in their step

By Andrew Hammond

European political leaders are meeting in Brussels for a critical summit after a morale-boosting few weeks for the European Union.

After a lot tough talk from Britain over how it plans to leave the EU, the first official Brexit talks -- which began last week -- saw the UK's chief negotiator strike a more conciliatory tone.

David Davis agreed that trade will only be discussed once the issues of how much money Britain owes the bloc and the rights of EU citizens living in the UK have been settled.

On cue, Theresa May confirmed on Thursday that none of the three million EU citizens currently living in the UK would have to leave once Britain leaves the bloc.

So, one year on from Britain's decision to leave the EU, European leaders could be forgiven for feeling more optimistic about the continent's future than they might have earlier this year, when Europhiles feared that Brexit and Trump's victory in the U.S. might fuel a spread of far-right populism and the prospect more member states considering their future within the union.

Following the failure of far-right populists to win in France and the Netherlands, Brussels senses that the current Euro-sceptic wave may have reached its peak.

European unity

While only time will reveal if this is the case, the victories of liberal centrists in France and the Netherlands -- plus the recent defeat of the far-right in Austria -- is a significant turnaround in fortunes for those forces championing European unity and integration across the continent.

It was Macron's victory that proved most decisive here, given the threat to the EU project had French National Front leader Marine Le Pen become France's president.

This political fillip has been reinforced by stronger economic data, too. After several years of slow growth, the Eurozone economies are now expanding faster than expected.

That these political and economic developments have, collectively, changed sentiment is shown by Italy's Europe minister, Sandro Gozi. He remarked this month that we "now have a possibility of launching a new phase... We have to make the best of Brexit negotiations, we have to limit the damage... On the other hand, it is essential that there will be a parallel process of relaunch and deepening of European integration."

The contrast here with the mood music of key European leaders from only a few months ago is striking. For instance, European Council President Donald Tusk said in January that the threats facing the European Union were then "more dangerous than ever." He identified three key challenges "which have previously not occurred, at least not on such a scale" that the EU must tackle.

The first two dangers related to the rise of anti-EU, nationalist sentiment across the continent, plus the "state of mind of pro-European elites," which Tusk then feared were too subservient to "populist arguments as well as doubting in the fundamental values if liberal democracy."

At that stage, it was feared by some not only that Le Pen could pull off an upset victory, but also that the anti-establishment conservative Freedom Party, led by so-called "Dutch Trump" Geert Wilders, could win in the Netherlands.

New geopolitical

While the salience of these two issues has subsided -- though perhaps only temporarily -- the third threat remains. That is what Tusk called the new geopolitical reality that has witnessed an increasingly assertive Russia and China and instability in the Middle East and Africa, which has driven the migration crisis impacting Europe's politics. Intensifying this is uncertainty from Washington, which has publicly endorsed Brexit and attacked the European Union a number of times.

Nevertheless, numerous European leaders will believe that recent economic and political news has brought in at least a temporary respite and potentially a "window of opportunity" to move forward.

And at the summit, item one on the agenda will be how best to improve the internal and external security of Europe.

Here, there is growing consensus around what several European leaders have called a new, 21st-century European security pact, comprising measures to enhance security and border protection and greater EU intelligence cooperation to emphasize the resilience of the EU project.

Given the current disagreements within Europe on the wisdom of wider, grand integration initiatives -- including in the economics and finance area -- security issues are one of the few areas where there is significant consensus across the member states on the best way forward, post-Brexit.

Impetus for movement forward on this security agenda has been provided by recent terror attacks, the ongoing migration crisis, and the launch last year by high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, Federica Mogherini, of a new global strategy on foreign and security policy.

On a related theme, Brussels also now senses a potential window of opportunity to push forward a proposed European Defense Action Plan that advocates greater military cooperation between the EU member states.

Brexit could now also eliminate a longstanding obstacle to greater European cooperation in this area, given that successive UK governments have been opposed to deeper defense integration at the EU level.

European leaders might now sense that the Eurosceptic wave has passed its peak and that at least a temporary window of opportunity exists to move forward with a new EU integration agenda. Decisions taken in coming months, including on the security front, will help define the longer-term political and economic character of the EU in the face of the continuing threats still facing the continent.

(Source: CNN)

Numerous European leaders will believe that recent economic and political news has brought in at least a temporary respite and potentially a "window of opportunity" to move forward.

Saudi Arabia's prince of chaos

By David Hearst

The final act of the palace coup I have been writing about since King Salman took over has just been completed. Everyone was waiting for a coup against Qatar. In fact, the coup was within the kingdom itself.

It took place in the middle of the night after fajr, the Muslim prayer that heralds the dawn of a new day, and millions of Saudis woke to a new reality -- a 31-year-old prince is going to be the next king.

The departure of his father, King Salman -- whose speech carried on live television during Trump's visit to Riyadh was incomprehensible to many who heard him in Arabic -- is now a formality. Bin Salman is now king in all but name.

Step by step, the last obstacle to bin Salman's vertiginous rise to power, his cousin, Mohammed bin Nayef, has been stripped of his power. There was little he could do to stop it, but he fought all the way.

First, his royal court went, then a national security council was created over his head. Then his ministry was stripped of its prosecutorial role. Then the operation to isolate Qatar, one of his closest allies, was launched.

This is a tribal system. So if the sheikh of your tribe goes one way, there is little you can do but follow. Acquiescence should not be confused for consensus. It was foreseen, but make no mistake: this is the biggest shock to the Saudi royal household since King Saud was forced to abdicate by Prince Faisal in 1964.

What does it mean?

All the levers of power are now in the hands of a young, inexperienced and risk-taking man, who in his short time in power as defense minister has established a reputation for recklessness.

He launched an air campaign against the Houthis in Yemen and then disappeared on holiday to the Maldives. It took days before the U.S. defense secretary could reach him. Ten thousand deaths later, the Houthis are still firmly in the capital Sanaa, the liberated south has split from Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi's control, and cholera has broken out.

Each file bin Salman has picked up has found its way into the office shredder.

He first introduced austerity by rolling out deep pay cuts to government employees, warning the country would be bankrupt in five years. Then he reversed the cuts, claiming financial stability had been created. Then he committed himself to up to \$500bn of military purchases from America.

Now all Saudis, in the austerity-driven kingdom, will get an extra week Eid holiday, a total of around two weeks.

The fine detail of any of his impulsive decisions, like how any of them will actually be achieved, is missing. The plan to sell up to five percent of the state oil company Aramco on the New York and London stock exchanges has already produced warnings about the legal risks of a New York listing, from the families of the victims of the 11 September attacks or class action litigation on requirements to declare state reserves. There is opposition too in London.



When King Salman and his son Mohammed came to power, there was hope of sorely needed leadership in the region. Instead, they may have fragmented it beyond repair

It's the same story in Syria. Let's not forget who provided militant groups in Syria with some of their most violent men. It was under Prince Bandar bin Sultan's tenure, as secretary of national security, that 1,239 inmates on death row -- including rapists and murderers -- were released on condition that they go to "jihad in Syria". This is stated in black and white in a memo dated 17 April 2012.

Under bin Salman, the kingdom has gone from micromanaging the Syria opposition (to the extent of telling the head of the negotiating committee in Geneva exactly when the delegation should leave for the airport to ensure the breakdown of talks) to losing interest in the rebels altogether. As a Saudi ally, you can be hung out to dry at any time.

Be it in Yemen, Syria or Qatar, the crown prince has already earned another title: the prince of chaos.

Bin Salman's mentor

He has, however, followed instructions. As Middle East Eye reported at the time, the young prince's mentor, Mohammed bin Zayed, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, gave him two words of advice to speed him on his way to the throne.

The first was to open a channel of communication with Israel. This he has now done, and under his command, the kingdom is closer than it has ever been to starting trade links with Tel Aviv. Both the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir and Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, are reading from the same script on attempting to blacklist Hamas.

The second instruction was to diminish the power of the religious authorities in the kingdom.

Although bin Salman has reduced the influence of the religious establishment on the daily life of the Saudis, he is using it to bolster his authority. A series of tweets by the Ulama, the Saudi Committee of Senior Scholars, demonstrates how religion has been pressed into the service of politics.

This is what this body of scholars said about the Muslim Brotherhood:

"The Brotherhood are not among those who are on the right path. Al-Luhaidan, may Allah protect him"

"The Brotherhood (members) are partisans who just want to seize power; they do not care about calling for correcting the faith. Al-Fawzan, may Allah protect him"

More important is this tweet:

"There is nothing in the Book and the Sunnah that permits the multitude of (political) parties and groups. To the contrary, they both censure such a thing."

The message from this is brutally clear. Political parties are not allowed. We are not giving you democracy, but theocracy and autocracy.

Even the timing of the last act of this palace coup is significant. Prince bin Salman will receive allegiance from his family and the public in Mecca on the 27th night of Ramadan, Laylat al-Qadr, the night of power when prayers are magnified in importance a thousand times. This is the most important night in the Islamic calendar.

This is not a king in waiting who intends to neutralize the role of religion in the affairs of state. He is using it to establish his own autocratic rule.

Yemen next

This is the Trump effect in action. Bin Salman's ambitions to seize the Saudi throne and Bin Zayed's plans to impose dictatorship on the entire Persian Gulf world predated the arrival of the most dangerous president in modern U.S. history. But Trump's visit to Riyadh fired the starting pistol.

Within days, the tanks of the bin Salman-bin Zayed axis started rolling, first against Qatar and then against bin Nayef.

Yemen is their next target. As we have reported, there has been a major fallout between the Yemeni president in exile, Hadi, who is in Riyadh, and local forces in Aden controlled by the Emiratis. The two major partners in the campaign against the Houthis are backing sides that are at war with each other in southern Yemen.

This, I understand, will shortly be resolved. Bin Salman has met Tahnoon bin Zayed, the brother of Mohammed bin Zayed and also his security chief, to tell him to calm the situation down in south Yemen.

Bin Salman told Tahnoon that once he becomes the crown prince, he will ditch Hadi and replace him with Khaled Bahah, who is close to the Emiratis.

Bahah has visited Riyadh recently to reconnect with the new Saudi administration. A full-scale offensive against Islah, the Muslim Brotherhood-related faction in Yemen, will then proceed.

This then is the new dawn that awaits not just the Saudis, but millions in the region. If these plans go ahead, it will subject the region to decades more of turmoil, civil war, proxy conflict and bloodshed.

Thick as thieves?

However, thieves have a habit of falling out with each other. Bin Zayed, the architect of this campaign against political Islam and all forces promoting democracy in the region, has suited bin Salman's purpose until now. He has put him in pole position to become king.

Once, however, bin Salman has come to power, it may no longer suit the young king to be advised by the crown prince of a much smaller state. Their interests may easily diverge. We have seen this already in Egypt, where the Saudis installed a military dictator, only to find their placemen did not back them in their campaign against Iran.

The second factor is that the bin Salman-bin Nayef axis will inadvertently forge new alliances to counter their dominance. The closure of Saudi borders with Qatar has already accelerated the arrival of Turkish troops in Doha. It may also force Turkey, Kuwait and Oman to reconcile with Iran. Divisions created by the Syrian war between Hezbollah and Hamas may also be quickly healed.

When father and son came to power after the death of King Abdullah, there was a hope that they could unite Sunnis and provide leadership when it was sorely needed. Instead, they may have fragmented and polarised it beyond repair.

(Source: Middle East Eye)

North Korea says Trump is a 'psychopath' who may launch a preemptive strike

By Adam Taylor

A commentary published in a North Korean state newspaper Thursday calls President Trump a "psychopath" -- and suggests that he would launch a preemptive strike on North Korea to distract from domestic political problems.

The accusations, published in government mouthpiece Rodong Sinmun, come at an especially fraught time. Just two days earlier, Trump had condemned the "brutality of the North Korean regime" after the death of Otto Warmbier, an American student who was detained in North Korea for nearly a year and a half.

Warmbier's death has considerably strained tensions between Washington and Pyongyang, which have long been at loggerheads over North Korea's nuclear missile program and the installation of a controversial American missile defense system in South Korea.

The Rodong Sinmun commentary suggests that the U.S. government is suffering from its own crisis, which could include "the impeachment of Trump," and that the president is now considering a preemptive strike against North Korea because of his "tough situation" at home. The commentary asserts that President Harry Truman entered the Korean War in 1950 in a bid to distract from economic problems in the United States and that President Bill Clinton launched a military attack on Iraq in 1998 when faced with an investigation of his sex life.

South Korea should realize that "following psychopath Trump ... will only lead to disaster," the commentary concludes.

The United States and its leaders are often the target of threats and insults from Pyongyang's official me-



The Rodong Sinmun commentary suggests that the U.S. government is suffering from its own crisis, which could include "the impeachment of Trump".

dia outlets. However, during the campaign, Trump was largely spared criticism from North Korea -- in one instance, a state media outlet praised him as "wise."

But since entering office, Trump has been on the receiving end of critical commentaries in North Korea's official media. In May, another state newspaper suggested

that he was ignorant about North Korea, while earlier this month an unidentified Foreign Ministry spokesman told Korean Central News Agency that Trump's decision to pull out of an international climate change agreement was "the height of egotism."

(Source: The Washington Post)

Saudi attack on Qatar; U.S. threat to Iran

By Sara Flounders

Two weeks after the grand pomp of President Trump's visit, Saudi Arabia announced the complete blockade of small neighboring state Qatar on June 5. The blockade is an act of war.

Emboldened by Trump's visit, Saudi Arabia quickly gathered eight other countries to participate in the blockade. The action includes cutting all food shipment and all land, sea and air travel; severing all diplomatic relations; freezing Qatari bank accounts; and expelling all Qatari citizens, within 48 hours, from nine countries in the region.

These are devastating acts, as the Doha International Airport in Qatar is a transit point for 37 million people a year. Qatar imports almost all its food and basic supplies, with 600 to 800 trucks a day rolling into Qatar from Saudi Arabia.

Source of terror: U.S. wars

Hardly any political commentator from left to right, or any media from major corporate to alternative, believes Saudi Arabia's official reason for the blockade of Qatar.

The pretext is that Saudi Arabia is carrying out President Trump's demand to end the funding of terrorists in the region. Trump has projected the notion of a grand Arab-NATO military alliance supposedly to fight the Islamic State group and Iran. Trump immediately took credit, in a tweet, for the Saudi action against Qatar.

Of course, U.S. imperialism's wars in the region are the greatest act of terror there. Millions of people have been displaced as refugees. Whole countries lie in ruin due to U.S. bombs. Sectarian militias and mercenary armies, along with tens of thousands of U.S. troops, have wreaked havoc.

Saudi Arabia assisted these U.S. wars by funding, arming and training fanatical religious groups since the 1980s war in Afghanistan.

Qatar is also guilty of funding groups and sending troops to aid in the destruction of Libya and continually funding forces in the war against Syria. At the time of the Saudi decision, Qatar was aiding Saudi Arabia's war against a popular people's movement in Yemen, the poorest country in the Persian Gulf region.

Both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar are repressive absolute monarchies. Almost all the vast oil and gas wealth in each country is owned by one family or extended clan, the House of Saud and the Al Thani family in Qatar. Unions and political parties are banned in both countries.

Almost 90 percent of the 2.5 million population in Qatar and over one-third of the Saudi population of 31 million are migrant workers barred from citizenship. They have no rights to education, health care and all social services.

These conditions are true for each of the six oil-rich Sunni Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf bound together in the Persian Gulf Coordinating Council.

Is the Saudi-Qatar conflict just a falling out among thieves and reactionary forces? Or is there a wider significance?

Ordered to cut ties with Iran

Besides announcing the blockade of Qatar on June 5, Saudi Arabia issued a list of

10 demands that Qatar must immediately meet. These included cutting off all links with Iran; expelling resident members of the Palestinian militant group Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood; closing the Al-Jazeera news channel; and ending "interference" in the affairs of foreign countries.

These add up to an attempt to put a brake on Iran's growing political and economic influence in the region. This is what is motivating both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia to attack Qatar.

Since the massive upheaval of the 1979 Iranian revolution broke with financial domination of U.S. banks and oil corporations, Iran's very existence, despite decades of sanctions, remains a threat to the corrupt Persian Gulf monarchies where all power and privilege is inherited.

When suicide bombers attacked the Iranian parliament and Ayatollah Khomeini's mausoleum in Tehran on June 7, where at least 13 people died, Iran's Revolutionary Guards blamed Saudi Arabia. The terror attack was also tied to Trump's Saudi visit.

While threats against Iran seem to be the primary motivation behind the joint U.S.-Saudi attack on Qatar, there are other immediate financial motivations for this move.

Gas, oil and currency competition

Qatar has become, in 25 years, the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas. The country now has 30 LNG terminals, with six more under construction.

Qatar has diplomatic relations with Iran, not because the Qatari monarchy is forward thinking, but because Qatar shares with Iran the gas field that has made the Al Thani family fabulously wealthy. The South



Pars/North Dome Field is offshore from Qatar and Iran in the Persian Gulf, so the two countries share exploration rights.

It is impossible for Qatar to cut off all relations with Iran and survive. The Saudis understand this all too well.

Qatar has attempted with its new wealth to chart a more independent foreign policy. It is often a go-between and negotiator in the region. It is a host to Arab forces connected to Hamas in Palestine and to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

Qatar is also the first country in the region to open a clearinghouse that allows gas and oil to be traded in yuan, the Chinese currency. This financial hub immediately undercuts the position of the dollar and puts banks in Doha, the capital of Qatar,



Iran's very existence, despite decades of sanctions, remains a threat to the corrupt Persian Gulf monarchies where all power and privilege is inherited.

ahead of other Persian Gulf financial centers.

Meanwhile, the Saudis are desperately concerned with chronically low oil prices. They are spending billions in a losing war in neighboring Yemen, a war that seeps back into Saudi Arabia.

The second largest exporter of LNG gas is the U.S., so U.S. companies would benefit from a blockade of Qatar.

So the immediate economic beneficiaries of a shutdown in Qatar are U.S. and Saudi Arabian oil and financial interests.

Trump, the big corporations and the absolute monarchs of the oil-rich Persian Gulf

sition to the Saudi move, it also seems to have split NATO, the U.S.-dominated military alliance.

From the GCC, Saudi Arabia has pulled in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates behind its anti-Qatar moves. Other countries dependent on Saudi Arabia dutifully signed on to the blockade, including Mauritius, Mauritania, the Maldives, the Saudi-backed government of Yemen and Libya's eastern-based government. But Kuwait and Oman have resisted participation.

Of NATO members, Germany's Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel blasted the Trump-Saudi policy as "completely wrong, and it is certainly not Germany's policy." He warned it could "lead to war." (Reuters, June 7) The Turkish Parliament has approved a plan to deploy troops to Qatar and to provide immediate food and water.

Iran immediately sent aircraft and ships with hundreds of tons of food to Qatar. Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Turkey opened their airspace to Qatari flights now blocked from flying over Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

The U.S. is well situated militarily to enforce demands on Qatar, as the country hosts the biggest concentration of U.S. military personnel in the Middle East at the Al Udeid Air Base. With 11,000 U.S. troops stationed there, the base is the center of U.S. command and control of air power over Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and 17 other countries.

But contradictions in this situation were on full display in two June 9 press briefings in Washington. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, former CEO of ExxonMobil, knows better than Trump what's at stake in the long term. He urged de-escalation and negotiation. Ninety minutes later, Trump took the opposite view, again applauding Saudi Arabia.

President Trump's visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia two weeks before the blockade resulted in a \$110 billion sale of weapons to ramp up military threats against Iran, although this monstrous weapons sale is facing fierce congressional opposition.

It is when old alliances fracture — and glut and overproduction prevail — that the danger of war moves to red alert.

States are products of capitalism in its most vicious, competitive, cutthroat form. They are predators, always on the search for hostile takeovers and mergers. Seizures of assets are the order of the day. Glut and overproduction as well as loss of profit are their greatest fears. War is always on the table.

Dislocation across region, in NATO

The Trump-Saudi scheme to force Qatar to capitulate to their demands or face an internal coup may not succeed so easily. It is instead fracturing alliances in a highly unstable and volatile region, where no U.S. war has succeeded as yet and U.S. domination is already waning.

So far the Saudi action has not only split the six-nation Persian Gulf Coordinating Council. Given German and Turkish oppo-



more difficult for the government forces to attack positions of ISIS terrorists.

In addition, clashes between the Syrian army and the Kurdish units of the SDF also take place in the Jaidin village south of Raqqa.

Nowadays, it becomes obvious that the U.S. main aim is not elimination of the terrorists. Washington intends to take full control over Raqqa.

The ways to restore the Syrian economy

By Sophie Mangal

The EU Council extended last Monday the restrictive measures against the Syrian government up to a year, until June 1, 2018. The event occurred against the background of the latest Syrian Arab Army's success when a weak hope for the end of the conflict in Syria was born. It seems that you shouldn't wait for resolving the conflict, as well as for lifting the the sanctions. However, it is time right now for the Syrians to really think about the restoration and post-war development of the country. Here we should talk not only about food supplies, deliveries of cloth and basic necessities provided entirely free of charge but also about the development of trade and economic ties between the states. But what are the ways to restore the Syrian economy at this stage, today?

The Iranian way

Not so long ago, at a meeting held in Damascus between Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis and Iranian Ambassador to the country Javad Torkabadi bilateral relations in various fields, including in the sphere of economy, were discussed. Imad Khamis made it clear that Syria needs to overcome the full-scale economic war unleashed against the country by Western states and their accomplices in the Middle East. In his turn, the Iranian ambassador confirmed that the relations between Tehran and Damascus have become a model of strategic cooperation between the countries. Probably, Torkabadi even indicated to his colleague that Syria can rely on Iran economically. In addition, Iran has accumulated vast experience in countering 'sanctions war' which also would not hurt to adopt. However, the economic ties between Iran and Syria alone will not solve the problem of Syrian economy's degradation.

Qatari scheme



Given the situation in Qatar, it would be quite a promising option to consider Qatari investments into the Syrian economy. However, it is necessary to create some political tools to settle the conflict and to stimulate investors from Doha first. The possibility of providing certain zones of influence or certain economic niches for Qatar could also contribute to the cardinal turn of the Doha towards Damascus. Qatar is largely responsible for what is happening in Syria, and

Despite the ongoing fighting in Syria, the country's economy moves on. When eliminating sources of instability, terror and the break-up of the state, a number of countries can really help Syria economically.

on this issue is being actively discussed now in business circles from around the world. It would be nice if Qatar, in addition to Syria's allies, would help with its financial capabilities to raise the Syrian economy. It's time for Qatar to address directly Syria, to offer something like Marshall Plan to ensure economic stability. It would calm the economic situation in the post-war period and could bring profit to Qatar in the future. Such a policy will not allow Qatar to become an out-cast No. 1 in the region and responsible for all the evil committed by the radicals on the Syrian soil, especially as the strategy of dismembering Syria seems to have been in limbo for the sixth year and proved ineffective. But these are not all the mutual benefits of cooperation with Syria. In general, such a policy will undoubtedly strengthen the position of Doha in the Islamic world; allow them to bypass the Saudi barrier and to provide a new source of potential revenue. Finally, cooperation with Syria will make it possible to become more independent of the U.S. and the EU. In fact, Doha has its hands untied, because the relations with the competitors are spoiled by diplomatic scheming and the pipelines Turkey are willing to take gas from the kingdom. What remains is to agree with Iran on purchasing some LNG from Qatar for onward transport to external consumers. Iran is now getting closer to Qatar and has strong positions in Syria, so it can become an excellent intermediary.

Economic ties are the main guarantee of success

Despite the ongoing fighting in Syria, the country's economy moves on. When eliminating sources of instability, terror and the break-up of the state, a number of countries can really help Syria economically. Syria is rich in energy resources and minerals including rare-earth metals. At the same time, the country has an advantageous geographical location. Many potential ways of transporting goods to the Mediterranean pass through its territory. All this shows that Damascus can develop rapidly and may reach a new economic level in a relatively short period of time. The stability in the region and the development of trade and economic ties would allow the Syrians to have a source of stable foreign direct investment. The country has been in the grip of war for more than six years, but is full of enthusiasm to rebuild the economy. The hope of a new life and the Syrian Arab Army delivering battlefield successes inspire optimism on the part of Syrian citizens as well as the support of such countries as Iran, China, India, Russia and Armenia. Qatar could also join this friendship if realized considerable mutual benefits from collaborative effort and counted the losses from the economic boycott declared to the emirate by its 'friendly' neighbors. According to recent Reuters reports, for example, Qatar has already shut down its plants producing inert gas in this regard.

Dangerous crossroads: Washington's aggressive game in Syria

By Anna Jaunger

On June 18, 2017, the Syrian Army General Command announced that U.S. F/A-18E Super Hornet had shot down one of aircraft the Syrian Air Force fighter jet. Syrian Ministry of Defense also stressed that the incident had taken place near a village called Rasafah while the aircraft had been carrying out a combat mission against ISIS terrorists.

In their turn, the representatives of the Coalition Command traditionally said the jet had dropped bombs near the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

It should be mentioned that it isn't the first time when the U.S.-led Coalition attacks the government forces in Syria. Over the past month, the U.S. Air Force has struck at the pro-government forces for three times in the city of At-Tanf.

In this regard, the Coalition is accused of supporting terrorists. Besides, it seems quite strange that since the beginning a 'counter-terrorist' operation in Raqqa, ISIS terrorists often hand over occupied areas to the SDF and the U.S. Special Forces without any fight, and then they freely go towards the Syrian Army's positions.

Syrian Ministry of Defense also claimed that the U.S. aggression confirmed that Washington supported terrorism and, at

the same time, tried to weaken the capability of the Syrian Army (SAA), which together with its allies was the only effective force fighting terrorism in the country.

It is noteworthy that not only Damascus strongly criticized the actions of the U.S.-led Coalition. Despite all the statements of the Central Command, Iran and Russia said that the Western Coalition prevented the prompt destruction of ISIS terrorists.

Nowadays, it becomes obvious that the U.S. main aim is not elimination of the terrorists. Washington intends to take full control over Raqqa. Providing terrorists with the right to leave the city is another confirmation of that.

According to many Syrian experts, if Washington manages to capture Raqqa, it will be able to justify an impressive number of civilian casualties suffered as a result of the Coalition's indiscriminate air strikes.

Moreover, to achieve its main goal Washington uses the SDS troops. However, the question arises — what price of such cooperation will be for Kurds?

According to sources, carrying out the U.S. orders, the SDS units intend to cut the Syrian Army off from the road to Deir ez-Zor. They plan to launch an offensive from the town of Resafa. This will make it

This deeply divided nation

By Peter Morici

President Trump inherited a deeply divided and troubled nation.

We have always had regions that lead and others that lag, and sectionalism. However, not since Reconstruction and the Great Depression have economic and cultural divisions been so stark.

Huddled on the two coasts and in isolated metropolises in between are the graduates of elite universities — and worker bees in education, government agencies and supporting services — who exploit the opportunities offered by globalization and hew to a post-exceptionalist vision of America.

To them, a benevolent state that champions free trade, pours compensation — food stamps, subsidized health care and the like — on its victims and subordinates American culture and interests to global community are not merely a liberal prescription for progress but a secular religion. Those who disagree are immoral and to be chastened.

Donald Trump's America First agenda — his penchant for fairer trade deals, pruning entitlements to what federal finances and the imperatives of growth can afford and requiring friends in Europe and the Middle East to be more

realistic about the requirements of security and lasting peace — is not merely wrong but heresy.

■ Cyclical alteration

His election does not represent the cyclical alternation from more liberal Democratic to more conservative Republican presidents. Rather, liberals deny his legitimacy and engage in demagoguery and extra-constitutional obstructionism — for those tactics, they should be disgraced.

The other America, as the 2016 electoral map of blue and red counties shows, is interior, more rural and small city and deeply troubled. Save the shale oil counties, those are bedeviled by losses of factories, mines and distribution centers. They are beset by high unemployment, low wages, drug addiction, rising suicides, poorer health and shorter life expectancies.

Those places benefit most from Washington's welfare machine, and the wealthy on the two coasts gladly pay the taxes to buy social peace and buttress their sense of entitlement and moral superiority.

By financing the social hammock, liberals hope to keep their globalist agenda going — and expand opportunities for their shining cities to sell even more financial services, media and technology products to the world — while jobs

for the interior disappear.

Now the coastal elites are shocked by the outcome of the recent presidential election — and many other local ballots that put Congress, 33 governorships and most statehouses in the hands of Republicans.

■ Ballot-box revolt

The reason for the ballot-box revolt is simple. The great masses of Middle America who went to state colleges — or for whom a college degree worth something is distant and unattainable — want more than generous government benefits.

They want the elements of satisfying lives that the liberal agenda simply doesn't deliver for them — decent jobs, the preservation of American culture and personal security.

They sense Bill Clinton's free trade with Mexico and China, Barack Obama's kumbaya foreign and immigration policies and the ever pervasive enforcement of political correctness through the omnipresent administrative state are significantly responsible for their problems.

In the last several weeks, we have finally seen the Trump presidency put their agenda into action.

Notification to Congress to renegotiate NAFTA, withdrawal from the Paris climate accord, a 2018 budget that would slash the bureaucracy and limit entitlements to mod-

ernize the military, finance pro-growth tax cuts and end excessive regulation, and a more realistic foreign policy, as expressed during Mr. Trump's recent trip abroad.

In the Middle East, he did not lecture about human rights but acknowledged Muslim cultural identities and interests and by derivation asserted ours. He encouraged the Persian Gulf States to genuinely engage Israel and for Israel to respond.

To Europe, he brought a sensible message. The continent can no longer expect America to expend its treasure and risk the lives of its youth to defend its liberty if our allies will not contribute in equal measure.

To the Germans in particular he repeated the basic wisdom of modern economic textbooks: for free trade to be a tide that raises all boats — not one that creates luxury liner accommodations in Frankfurt and New York and throws Athens and middle America overboard — it must be more nearly balanced.

Mr. Trump's policies amplified a cry far from Wall Street, Hollywood and Cupertino — in places like Reading, Pennsylvania, Imperial County, California and Klamath Falls, Oregon. Good jobs not handouts clench the soul, globalism is not the national religion and security can't be bought with diplomacy unaccompanied by muscle.

(Source: The Washington Times)

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Where in the world will the next emerging disease appear?

By Susan Scutti

Some of the world's worst diseases -- think Ebola or AIDS -- start in animals, jump the hurdle of species to enter humans and then get passed from person to person. These are called zoonotic or animal-origin infectious diseases. What if you could predict the location on this vast and spinning globe where the next of these potentially deadly diseases will emerge?

Though they have not presented a flawless crystal ball, a team of scientists has identified factors that might lead to an emerging infectious disease, including viruses, animals and their locations, in research published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

"We actually know from previous studies and from what's happened in the past that most viruses come from mammals ... not birds and not reptiles or other species," said Kevin Olival, lead author of the study and an associate vice president for research at EcoHealth Alliance, a global environmental health nonprofit.

To understand what might create an unexpected pandemic risk, Olival and his colleagues tried to address several pieces of this puzzle.

"So the first piece is, really: What makes some species in the world better hosts for viruses or zoonotic viruses than other species?" he said. Some animals are better reservoirs -- or sources -- of viruses than others.

■ Pieces of the puzzle

He and his colleagues created a database that included 754 mammal species -- 14% of the mammal diversity on the planet -- and 586 unique viral species, every recognized virus found in mammals.

Next, they analyzed 2,805 mammal-virus associations. For instance, about 45% of the total 586 viral species have been detected in humans, and of those, nearly 72% have been detected at least once in a human and at least once in another species.

Applying mathematical models to the database, the researchers discovered that the risk of a virus leaping from a mammal to a human varied based on how related the animal species was to humans as well as the frequency of contact with humans.

Yet there was also an entirely independent variable. Simply belonging to one category of animals as opposed to another made it much more likely that a particular creature might be a source of zoonotic viruses. For example, bats may not be closely related to humans, but they carry a "significantly greater proportion of zoonotic viruses than any other mammals," said Olival.

The researchers also used the database and mathematical tools to predict the number of viruses each specific animal might carry.

The second piece of the puzzle was geography: Where might unknown zoonotic diseases be hiding? Naturally, the location of each zoonotic virus' animal host answered this question. Zoonotic viruses arising from bats would cluster in South and Central America



"The speed of travel allows an infection from one side of the globe to appear on another side when, in the past, it would not have been possible for an infected person traveling that far to make the trip."

and parts of Asia, while primate viruses would be found in Africa, Central America and Southeast Asia. Zoonotic viruses carried by rodents would mostly be found in North and South America and Central Africa. Olival and his colleagues mapped this information.

The third and final piece of the puzzle was "what makes some viruses more likely to jump into people than others," Olival said. "I think that's a really important piece, and there's a lot more work that can be done, but we really provided a framework to move that predictive field forward."

Overall, Olival said, the new study, which took about six years to complete, "provides a roadmap for where in the world we should prioritize for finding and stopping the next emerging virus, and that road map includes what species we should focus on and what locations are most important and what viruses should we be looking out for."

Amesh Adalja, a spokesman for the Infectious Disease Society of America, said the research is "very important."

"We are going to continue to have infectious disease threats, and it's basically one of the great scientific and medical challenges to keep pace with that," said Adalja, also a senior associate at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security who was not involved in the study.

■ Shifting risks

Not everyone risks catching a zoonotic infection. Some people -- including hunters, people who work in slaughterhouses and those who work in agricultural settings -- are "basically at the leading edge of the human-animal interface," Adalja said, and so are more likely to become infected with a

zoonotic virus.

For this reason, there's a lot of interest in doing active surveillance of these populations, he said.

Generally, the new study tries to develop "some type of analytical way of assessing the risk of these types of infections," he added, and "does, hopefully, make this a much easier prospect."

"As human beings expand their reach and live in many different areas where they traditionally haven't lived in, you will see more opportunities for novel viruses to appear," Adalja said. "You can think about Lyme disease as a zoonotic infection," he said, observing that Lyme became a big health issue only when people started to live in places "that are more wooded."

Olival said human behaviors are a key factor in the emergence of these zoonotic infectious diseases.

"Anything that puts us into contact with these mammal species that most people have never heard of, right, that might be living deep in the forest," he said. "So things like deforestation and road building and hunting -- all those factors are good examples of interactions that can actually cause diseases to come out of their natural habitat and jump into the human population."

Though contact makes a difference, so too does temperature. Certain viruses, such as flu, are more likely to spread in cold conditions as opposed to hot, Adalja said.

"We know, for example, that diseases like yellow fever, which people now, in today's world, think of as a tropical disease, used to occur in Boston," he said, explaining that it is also known that "mosquitoes have thrived in areas that aren't traditionally associated with

mosquitoes."

During Washington's presidency, Adalja said, a yellow fever outbreak in Philadelphia basically shut the whole government down because no one could meet in the former capital city.

And while it's true there's a lot more diversity of animal species in jungle or rain forest areas, there's a danger in believing that emerging diseases could happen in only some parts of the world. "Flu viruses might do better in colder temperatures, but other viruses might do better in tropical climates," Adalja said.

"The world is a very, very small place," he said. "It's very easy to be in a jungle in Africa or South America or the Indian subcontinent one day and in a Western city the next day."

This speed of travel allows an infection from one side of the globe to appear on another side when, in the past, it would not have been possible for an infected person traveling that far to make the trip, Olival noted.

"My biggest fear is that a disease may emerge anywhere in the world, even in the most remote region of the world, and can arrive to a major US city in less than 24 hours," Olival said.

The best way to handle this potential infectious threat is to really home in on the viruses that are at the highest threat level and then try to intervene once you've identified that, Adalja said.

"We have to continue to refine the way we basically sift through all these viruses on this planet and understand which are most likely to cause" emerging infectious diseases, he said. "So you can be much better prepared for infectious diseases and maybe even prevent them from occurring."

(Source: CNN)

The best way to wash your face, according to experts

By Rachel Nussbaum

Washing your face is one of those things we assume everyone does the same way--until we hear someone does it differently. And then we start to wonder: Hot or cold water? Gentle cleanser or a grainy scrub? Use an expensive electronic face brush that we read about on the Internet?

Turns out we had more questions about face washing than we realized. To get some answers, we went to the experts for a step-by-step guide to getting a clean, clear complexion.

■ The tools

First things first: If you wear makeup, take it off with an oil-based makeup remover, says Karen Hammerman, M.D., a dermatologist at the Schweiger Dermatology Group. Makeup won't come off with just gentle cleansing of the skin, and if it stays on too long, it can lead to blocked pores and future zits.

As for a cleanser, we know it's tempting to grab the one covered in marketing promises, but it's a better idea to go for one labeled "gentle," "pH-balanced," and "fragrance-free," recommends Yasmine Kirkorian, M.D., an assistant professor of dermatology at Children's National Health System. Something basic like Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser (\$9.89; drugstore.com) is a safe bet, although she says the brand isn't as important as that it's non-abrasive (sayonara, microbeads).

■ Need more help navigating the face wash aisle? Read on.

● If you have dry skin:

Kirkorian suggests cream-based cleansers. These provide moisture for the skin thanks to glycerin or shea butters, Hammerman says. Try Dove White Beauty Bar (\$9.39 for 8 bars; target.com). Despite bar soap's drying reputation, she says it's the super-gentle way to go.

● If your skin is fairly normal, or you're just not sure:

A gentle, pH-balanced cleanser like Cetaphil will do the job. Or try a cleansing "water," like Simple Cleansing Micellar Water (\$6.99; drugstore.com). The oil-based components remove oil, grease, and sebum from our skin, without being harsh or over-stripping, Schlosser says.

● If you have oily skin:

Foaming cleansers, like CeraVe Foaming Facial Cleanser (\$10.80; amazon.com), will leave you feeling super clean--although only temporarily. (If you're naturally oily, a quick cleanse isn't going to change your skin type.) Somewhat counterintuitively, oil-based cleansers like Boscia Makeup-Breakup Cool Cleansing Oil (\$30; sephora.com) may be a good choice for oily skin ("like dissolves like"), but it's hard to generalize how well your skin will react. If you have seriously oily skin and don't want to pass it off as that coconut oil glow, talk to a dermatologist--Kirkorian says that's where medications like spironolactone can come in.

● If you have acne-prone skin:

It's even more important to stay gentle if you're battling acne with spot treatments, so Hammerman recommends something like Neutrogena Ultra Gentle Daily Cleanser (\$9.99; ulta.com). Overdoing it with an acne-specific cleanser and other acne medications can leave you with dry, irritated skin (and more frustration than you started with).

Not using additional acne-related products? Then you can turn to chemically exfoliating cleansers, says Bethanee Schlosser, M.D., Ph.D., a dermatologist and director of the Women's Skin Health Program for Northwestern Medicine. With ingredients like benzoyl peroxide, glycolic acid, and salicylic acid, the effectiveness can rival leave-on treatments for acne. Look for Clean and Clear Continuous Control Acne Cleanser (\$5.39; drugstore.com) or Murad AHA/BHA Exfoliating Cleanser (\$36; sephora.com).

■ The temp

Once you've got your ammo, turn the faucet to lukewarm--no steaming temperatures or arctic water necessary. "Warm is better than the extremes of either cold or hot to remove oil from our skin," Schlosser says. (Think about cleaning your dishes--cold water doesn't remove grease very effectively.)

Plus, while cold water can tighten pores temporarily, it won't have a lasting effect. Meanwhile, hot water, despite making you feel super clean, can lead to dry and irritated skin.

Most dermatologists recommend washing your face twice a day, and a small 2006 study comparing people who washed their face once, twice, or four times a day found that acne improved at twice a day. While skin condition didn't get worse at four times a day, it didn't get much better--and that's a lot of time to spend at the sink.

■ The method

Splash that lukewarm water on your face and use your fingertips in a circular motion to apply the cleanser--enough to work up a good lather in your chosen medium. Schlosser recommends paying special attention to the T-zone (nose and forehead territory) and U-zone (the area around and just under your jawline), where people tend to miss.

No washcloth or grainy scrub needed: Gentle is the key word here, and washcloths just aren't as gentle as our hands, says Kirkorian. "You actually don't need to scrub your face. If you did a Tough Mudder, that's a different story--but for day-to-day cleansing, you don't really need to use a washcloth."

Instead, save it for a gentle pat down to dry off after rinsing off your cleanser. And make sure to hang it in a dry place (a.k.a. not the shower): Hammerman says that any moisture can be a breeding ground for bacteria and germs that can cause breakouts.

Finally, if you've heard wonders about the \$99-and-up facial brushes, relax. However tempting it is to imagine they're taking your cleansing routine to a deeper, skin-changing level, Schlosser says that's probably not the case. Since facial skin is not thick, physical exfoliation isn't required for penetration. Bottom line: You'll be fine with or without one.

■ The takeaway

Twenty-step regimens are fun if you're into them, but a simple routine can be just as effective. Gentle is pretty much always better, and although it can be tempting to exfoliate your way to a new tomorrow, chances are a mild touch will get you there faster. Just choose wisely, young Padawan: Try every topical this side of Sephora, and things might not work out as you intended.

(Source: greatist.com)

Foods linked to better brainpower

By Don Rauf

Just as there is no magic pill to prevent cognitive decline, no single food can ensure a sharp brain as you age. Nutritionists emphasize that the most important strategy is to follow a healthy dietary pattern that includes a lot of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. Try to get protein from plant sources and fish and choose healthy fats, such as olive oil or canola, rather than saturated fats.

That said, certain foods in this overall scheme are particularly rich in healthful components like omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins, and antioxidants, which are known to support brain health. Incorporating many of these foods into a healthy diet on a regular basis can improve the health of your brain, which could translate into better mental function.

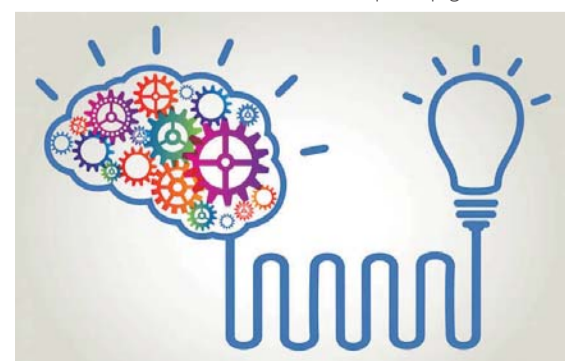
Research shows that the best foods for your brain are the same ones that protect your heart and blood vessels, including the following:

● **Green, leafy vegetables.** Leafy greens such as kale, spinach, collards, and broccoli are rich in brain-healthy nutrients like vitamin K, lutein, folate, and beta carotene. Research suggests these plant-based foods may help slow cognitive decline.

● **Fatty fish.** Fatty fish are abundant sources of omega-3 fatty acids, healthy unsaturated fats that have been linked to lower blood levels of beta-amyloid--the pro-

tein that forms damaging clumps in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease. Try to eat fish at least twice a week, but choose varieties that are low in mercury, such as salmon, cod, canned light tuna, and pollack. If you're not a fan of fish, ask your doctor about taking an omega-3 supplement, or choose terrestrial omega-3 sources such as flaxseeds, avocados, and walnuts.

● **Berries.** Flavonoids, the natural plant pigments that



Caffeine might also help solidify new memories, according to other research.

give berries their brilliant hues, also help improve memory, research shows. In a 2012 study published in *Annals of Neurology*, researchers at Harvard's Brigham and Women's Hospital found that women who consumed two or more servings of strawberries and blueberries each week delayed memory decline by up to two-and-a-half years.

● **Tea and coffee.** The caffeine in your morning cup of coffee or tea might offer more than just a short-term concentration boost. In a 2014 study published in *The Journal of Nutrition*, participants with higher caffeine consumption scored better on tests of mental function. Caffeine might also help solidify new memories, according to other research. Investigators at Johns Hopkins University asked participants to study a series of images and then take either a placebo or a 200-milligram caffeine tablet. More members of the caffeine group were able to correctly identify the images on the following day.

● **Walnuts.** Nuts are excellent sources of protein and healthy fats, and one type of nut in particular might also improve memory. A 2015 study from UCLA linked higher walnut consumption to improved cognitive test scores. Walnuts are high in a type of omega-3 fatty acid called alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), which helps lower blood pressure and protects arteries. That's good for both the heart and brain.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

Here are high rated IT titles in the world that reviewed by savvy tech users:

1 IBM-powered DNA sequencing could find bacteria in raw milk. They plan to sequence the DNA and RNA of milk and the microbes it typically gets in contact with. They'll sequence and analyze the DNA and RNA of dairy samples from Cornell's farm, as well as of all the microorganisms in environments milk tends to make contact with, including the cows themselves, from the moment it's pumped.

2 Nissan teases self-driving features for the next-gen Leaf. It's no Tesla Autopilot, but it'll remove highway cruising tedium. The next generation Leaf EV will be the first with ProPilot driver assist in North American and Europe, and Nissan has just showed how that will look. Activated by a button on the steering wheel, it can control steering, braking and acceleration, but only in a single freeway lane. The driver can see exactly what's going on with the aid of a fancy animation front and center in the largely digital dashboard.

3 FCC may fine robocall spammer \$120 million for illegal spoofing. Miami timeshare advertiser used "neighbor spoofing" to trick people into answering. Everyone hates those robocalls that target our phones to sell things we don't need. They're universally reviled, with Republicans backing legislation for ringless voicemail, the FTC offering a \$25,000 reward for anti-robocall tech and AT&T and Burner both creating automatic robocall blocking systems for their customers. Now, an individual robocall scammer is facing a \$120 million proposed fine from the FCC for his massive caller ID spoofing operation.

4 Google urges Congress to revise outdated overseas data laws. Access to data stored overseas has become a contentious issue with tech companies and the US government. Today, in a speech given to the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, Google's senior vice president and general counsel, Kent Walker, urged Congress to update the laws concerning this topic.

5 On this front, Microsoft scored a major victory last year. A New York court ruled that the company had to release data stored on servers located in Ireland, but that was later overturned by a federal appeals court.

6 Trump's infrastructure proposal includes rural broadband expansion. The president wants to "rebuild rural America."

7 Tesla is reportedly trying to build its own music streaming service. Sources say the carmaker wants its own streaming audio solution that it can bundle with its vehicles.

8 BabelOn is trying to create Photoshop for your voice. One day, an app could translate your words into another language -- in your own voice. Speech synthesis -- the process of artificially creating the human voice -- isn't anything new.

9 Unlocked LG G6 now costs less than \$500 that you need to buy its international version from eBay. While you're not getting specific US warranty, this is the 64 GB dual SIM version of the device.

10 Evernote adds fingerprint support in its beta app. A new feature has been added to popular note-taking app Evernote. The functionality in question lets users unlock the application using their fingerprints. Prior to this, the only way of authentication was a four-digit PIN.

'Russian hackers traded' passwords of senior British politicians and diplomats

Passwords belonging to British politicians, diplomats and senior police officers have been traded by Russian hackers, it has been reported.

Security credentials said to have belonged to tens of thousands of government officials, including 1,000 British MPs and parliamentary staff, 7,000 police employees and more than 1,000 Foreign Office staff were in the troves sold or swapped on Russian-speaking hacking sites.

The majority of the passwords are said to have been compromised in a 2012 hacking raid on the business social network LinkedIn, in which millions of users' details were stolen. The National Crime and Security Centre (NCSC) confirmed that its cyber security advice has been highlighted to departments in light of the discovery by The Times. Among those whose credentials were stolen were Justine Greening, the education secretary, and Greg Clark, the business secretary, the newspaper reported.

"If these people used the same credentials . . . elsewhere — potentially on government systems — that's not good," Rob Pritchard, a cybersecurity specialist at the Royal United Services Institute, told The Times.

The warning was repeated in 2016 when it emerged the compromised passwords were being sold by criminal gangs. A Government spokesman said it was a "historical incident". Anybody who is no longer using the password will not have had their account breached." (Source: Telegraph)

Is it safer to use an app or a browser for banking?

By Jack Schofield

Over the past five years or so, I feel the consensus has changed to using apps. However, it depends on the devices, banking software and browsers, what else is loaded on the device (either knowingly or not), and the communications network.

Browsers are risky because there are trojans designed to collect banking information. Apps are risky because most banking apps probably have security flaws, and because fake/malware apps sometimes appear in app stores.

If you are a careful user with a secure PC, and if you only use it on your secure home network, you should not have any problems. However, if you want to perform banking transactions from wherever you happen to be, without taking too many precautions, then it should be safest to use an app over 3G/LTE (turn off wifi and Bluetooth).

Systems that use two-factor authentication, preferably with a separate device that generates new passwords on demand, are really the way to go.

What is an app?

When personal computers first went on general sale in the 1970s, the VisiCalc spreadsheet was hailed as a "killer app", which was short for "application program". However, the past decade has seen a huge growth in app stores for smartphones and tablets. These apps are different from traditional PC programs in that they are vetted by and downloaded from secure online stores. Further, these apps run in sandboxes to prevent them from doing bad things.

PCs, by contrast, can run unvetted software from any source, including malware-infected websites, unless your anti-virus software blocks them.

When Microsoft redesigned Windows 8 to run on tablets and smartphones, it introduced a similar subsystem for apps. This enabled Windows to run sandboxed apps installed by the Windows Store. These apps are much safer than the old programs, because there are limits to what they are allowed to do.

Today there are quite a few Windows banking apps — Alliance, Citibank, FNB, RMB, HDFC, BNP Paribas, UBI, Westpac etc — but none that I can see from UK banks. They are rather slow to catch on . . .

The Edge browser in Windows 10 is a new sandboxed app, so it's much better for banking than Internet Explorer. Otherwise, Chrome is the most secure alternative, be-



cause it runs in Google's own strong sandbox. Some security companies also provide add-ons, such as Kaspersky Safe Money and Bitdefender Safepay.

The browsers on smartphones and tablets are also sandboxed, but like their desktop counterparts, they may be at risk from phishing and "man-in-the-middle" attacks.

Compromised devices

The biggest threat to banking security comes from using a compromised device: one with malware that captures logons etc and sends them to someone else without your knowledge. On Windows, the main banking malware comprises trojans such as "Zeus and its variants Neverquest and Gozi". Zeus has been around since 2007.

Zeus is usually delivered as an email attachment with a text that persuades some users to click on it. It may say your bank or email account has been hacked and that you need to log on to confirm or change your password, etc. Zeus collects your logon details, or puts up a fake screen that mimics a legitimate website, or redirects you to a fake website. The malware captures your keystrokes as you try to log into your bank. Variants such as Gozi can even imitate your typing style and mouse movements, to defeat banks that use this kind of information to identify real users.

Banking trojans can also be hidden in Microsoft Word documents, pdfs or fake invoices. Some are distributed as "drive by" installations from websites that host exploit kits.

Smartphones and tablets are more likely to be compromised by fake or lookalike apps that have evaded the vetting process.

Sometimes, devices are compromised by apparently simple apps that demand loads of "permissions" to run. (How can a flashlight app be allowed to monitor your network connections or modify the contents of your USB storage?)

Insecure banking apps

Banking apps ought to be more secure than browsers, but it ain't necessarily so. In 2014, Ariel Sanchez tested 40 home banking apps and found that 90% included insecure links (ones that didn't use SSL), 40% didn't check the validity of SSL certificates, 50% were vulnerable to cross-site scripting, and 40% were vulnerable to man in the middle attacks.

In a typical hack, the user might get a message to say that their session or password had expired and they needed to re-type their user name and password. (Don't.)

Today's banking apps should be much more secure, but I wouldn't bet on it.

Compromised networks

If you use public hotspots, your communications could be monitored, or you could mistakenly log on to a copycat hotspot run from a nearby PC. It's not always easy to identify the correct network for a coffee bar, hotel or airport. These networks make you potentially vulnerable to monitoring and "man in the middle" attacks.

In fact, someone may be able to hijack an account without knowing your name or your password. This was demonstrated by a "network sniffer" called Firesheep, which could identify and steal the unencrypted "session cookies" some websites used to store information after you had

logged on. This only works if you are on the same network as the attacker, but when you use a public network, you have no idea who else is logged on.

Whatever device you are using, the best solution is end-to-end encryption, shown by "https" addresses and a padlock in the browser. The whole of ecommerce — and egovernment — is totally dependent on encryption, which is why it's insane to think about banning it.

Secure booting and SSL

Online banking depends on secure booting and secure communications. The secure booting system tries to ensure that the device starts in an uncompromised state. To do this, it uses secure hardware on the device that uses cryptography to verify the bootloader code, which uses cryptography to verify the secure loading of the operating system. This is built into smartphones and tablets. If buying a Windows PC, choose one with a UEFI system that securely boots Windows 10.

The secure chain is broken when people use exploits to "jailbreak" devices. Banking systems should detect and block them, but 90% of Sanchez's 40 home banking apps didn't.

Once the device is running, it must connect to your bank via an SSL/https connection, though it may not be easy to tell if does. (I assume that 3G and LTE mobile connections are secure enough.)

The simplest solution is to install the EFF's HTTPS Everywhere extension in Chrome, Firefox or Opera. Not every website supports https, but if not, the extension should redirect you to the unencrypted site.

Dedication works

You can increase your banking security in Windows 10 by keeping one browser for financial transactions and never using it for anything else. Also, either use a private browsing/incognito mode or delete all caches and cookies after use. Indeed, you could use a separate standard user account (not an administrator account) for financial transactions. Switching between accounts isn't arduous nowadays, and you can leave your original account open while you do it.

Going even further, you could keep a password protected Apple iPad at home for banking. Do not download any other apps and, out of the box, that's one of the most secure home systems you can get. Government security services could hack you, but it's unlikely that they would.

(Source: Guardian)

WhatsApp will soon let you share any type of file



You will be able to send any type of file to your WhatsApp contacts or groups. That's a marked improvement compared to what the situation is now: while you can send files, you're limited to specific types, like PDFs, Word documents, spreadsheets, and slides.

It's unclear why this limitation has existed so far, but the good news is that it's almost gone.

Do note that you'll be limited to a maximum file size of 128MB on iOS, 100MB on Android, and 64MB on WhatsApp Web.

(Source: gsmarena)

1.5 billion logged-in monthly users use YouTube



YouTube's CEO Susan Wojcicki gave some metrics about the ongoing success and growth of YouTube. The most notable number was that YouTube has 1.5 billion active monthly logged-in users. Given that many folks may not even be logged into the YouTube, the actual number of monthly YouTube users is even higher.

The company also said that the TV is the fastest growing medium on the platform, which is thanks to the mass adoption of connected-TVs and Wi-Fi connected streaming sticks that brought YouTube to the living room.

(Source: youtube)

Snapchat's Snap Map shows you where your friends are and what they are doing



Snapchat has a new feature called Snap Map that will show you on a map where your friends are, and what they are doing.

To get to the map, you simply go to the camera tab and pinch to zoom out to view it. Tap on your friends if you want to start a chat, or to see when their location was updated last.

If your friends have their Bitmoji account linked, you'll be able to see if they are driving, walking or doing other things.

(Source: Snapchat)

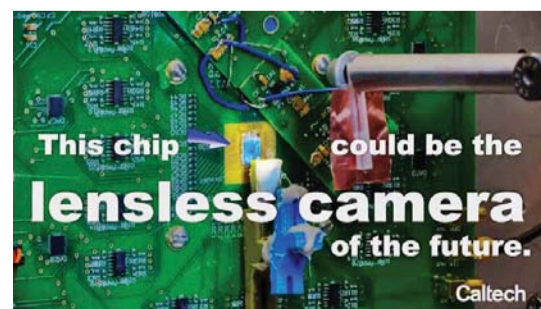
Google Glass gets first update in nearly three years



Google Glass has received an update to version XE23. No, this is not an old headline from a few years ago. Google continues to sporadically support its wearable spectacles. The new update allows a Glass user to use Bluetooth to pair an input device like a QWERTY keyboard to Google Glass. After the update, Glass wearers with the right accessory will be able to type in commands instead of using their voice and other controls.

(Source: Phandroid)

New Chip may one day replace today's digital cameras



The engineers have created an ultra-thin and ultra-small chip, which, according to them, may one day replace today's digital cameras and make them really, really thin.

The researchers have actually created an electronic replacement of the traditional lenses, which is almost completely flat.

The researchers have created a prototype chip with an 8x8 optical phased array grid containing 64 pixels.

(Source: Caltech)

Android O to be oatmeal cookie, not Oreo?



Originally, it was believed that the "O" in Android O would stand for those luscious Oreo sandwich cookies. In fact, one could see Google making a deal similar to the one it made to use the KitKat name for Android 4.4 back in 2013. But it now appears that Oreo will not be the name for Android 8.0. Android source code was examined and it revealed several references to 'oc-dev'. That combination of letters (oc) could be "oatmeal cookie", especially since "oatmeal cookie" was found on several slides shown during Google I/O.

(Source: MYCE)

Another Earth-size world may lurk in the outer Solar System

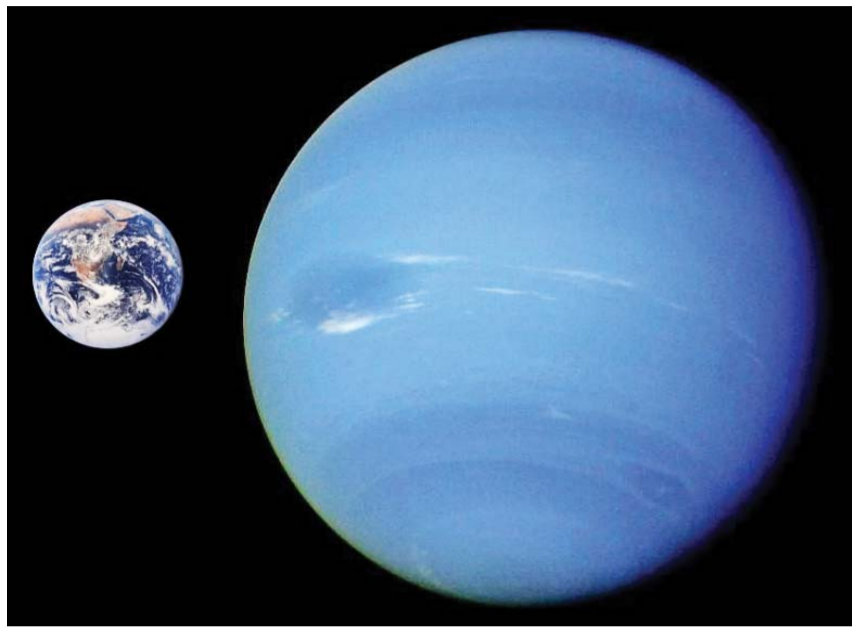
Scientists at the University of Arizona's Lunar and Planetary Laboratory (LPL) have determined that an unseen object with a mass somewhere between that of Earth and Mars could be lurking in the Kuiper Belt, a region beyond Neptune filled with thousands of icy asteroids, comets and dwarf planets.

In January 2016, a separate group of scientists predicted the existence of a Neptune-size planet orbiting the sun far, far beyond Pluto — about 25 times farther from the sun than Pluto is. This hypothetical planet was dubbed "Planet Nine," so if both predictions are correct, one of these putative objects could be the solar system's 10th planet.

The so-called "planetary-mass object" described by the scientists from LPL appears to affect the orbits of a population of icy space rocks in the Kuiper Belt. Distant Kuiper Belt objects (KBOs) have tilted orbits around the sun. The tilted orbital planes of most KBOs average out to something called the invariable plane of the Solar System.

More massive objects

But the orbits of the most distant KBOs tilt away from the invariable plane by an average of 8 degrees, which signals the presence of a more massive object that warps its surroundings with its gravitational field, researchers said in a study



due to be published in The Astronomical Journal.

The "most likely explanation for our

results is that there is some unseen mass," Kat Volk, a postdoctoral fellow at LPL and the lead author of the study,

A group of scientists predicted the existence of a Neptune-size planet orbiting the sun far, far beyond Pluto — about 25 times farther from the sun than Pluto is.

said in a statement. "According to our calculations, something as massive as Mars would be needed to cause the warp that we measured."

These KBOs act a lot like spinning tops, Renu Malhotra, a professor of planetary sciences at LPL and co-author of the new study, said in the statement.

Fast-spinning tops

"Imagine you have lots and lots of fast-spinning tops, and you give each one a slight nudge ... if you then take a snapshot of them, you will find that their spin axes will be at different orientations, but on average, they will be pointing to the local gravitational field of Earth," she said. "We expect each of the KBOs' orbital tilt angle to be at a different orientation, but on average, they will be pointing perpendicular to the plane determined by the sun and the big planets."

It may sound a lot like the mysterious Planet Nine, but the researchers say the so-called planetary-mass object is too small, and too close, to be the same thing. Planet Nine lies 500 to 700 astronomical units (AU) from Earth, and its mass is about 10 times that of Earth. (One AU is the average distance at which Earth orbits the sun — 93 million miles, or 150 million kilometers. Pluto orbits the sun at a maximum distance of just less than 50 AU.)

(Source: space.com)

Yearning for new physics at CERN, in a post-Higgs way

The world's biggest and most expensive time machine is running again.

Underneath the fields and shopping centers on the French-Swiss border outside Geneva, in the Large Hadron Collider, the subatomic particles known as protons are zooming around a 17-mile electromagnetic racetrack and banging into one another at the speed of light, recreating conditions of the universe when it was only a trillionth of a second old.

Some 5,000 physicists are back at work here at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, watching their computers sift the debris from primordial collisions in search of new particles and forces of nature, and plan to keep at it for at least the next 20 years.

Science is knocking on heaven's door, as the Harvard physicist Lisa Randall put it in the title of her recent book about particle physics.

Physics community

But what if nobody answers? What if there is nothing new to discover? That prospect is now a cloud hanging over the physics community.

It's been five years and more than seven quadrillion collisions of protons since 2012, when the collider discovered the Higgs boson, the particle that explains why some other elementary particles have mass. That achievement completed an edifice of equations called the Standard Model, ending one significant chapter in physics.

A 2015 bump in the collider data hinted at a new particle, inspiring a flood of theoretical papers before it disappeared into the background noise as just another fluke of nature.

The "feeling in the field is at best one of confusion and at worst depression," Adam Falkowski, a particle physicist at the Laboratoire de Physique Théorique d'Orsay in France, wrote recently in an article for the science journal Inference.



"These are difficult times for the theorists," Gian Giudice, the head of CERN's theory department, said. "Our hopes seem to have been shattered. We have not found what we wanted."

The golden apple

What the world's physicists have wanted for almost 30 years is any sign of phenomena called supersymmetry, which has hovered just out of reach like a golden apple, a promise of a hidden mathematical beauty at the core of reality.

Theorists in the 1970s posited a relationship between the particles that carry forces, like the photon that conveys electromagnetism or light, and the basic constituents of matter, electrons and quarks.

If the theory of supersymmetry is correct, there should be a whole new set of elementary particles to be discovered, so-called super-partners of the quarks and the electrons and the other particles we already know and love.

Clouds of them left over from the Big Bang, moreover, could make up the mysterious dark matter that astronomers say constitutes a quarter of the universe and whose gravitational pull controls the fates of galaxies.

(Source: The NYT)

And why are still other eggs pointy, but only on one end?

Now researchers have made a serious attempt to answer this deceptively simple question. Their conclusion: Egg shape is related to how much time a bird spends in flight, according to a report in Friday's edition of the journal Science.

Scientists have long hypothesized about the reasons for eggs to have the shapes they do. Even Aristotle had a theory: "Long and pointed eggs are female; those that are round, or more rounded at the narrow end, are male," the Greek philosopher wrote in "The History of Animals" in the fourth century B.C.

More recently, scientists have proposed that there were practical reasons for eggs to have certain shapes. For instance, perhaps eggs that are pointy on one side offer an evolutionary advantage to birds that nest in tall cliffs because such eggs will roll in a tight circle, preventing catastrophic tumbles over the cliff edge.

Mostly speculative studies

But these studies have mostly been speculative, or used small sample sizes that focused on limited types of birds.

The new study, led by evolutionary biologist Mary Stoddard from Princeton University, considered vast amounts of egg shape data to understand what, exactly, determines the shape of an egg.

Stoddard and her colleagues started with a database of egg images from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at UC Berkeley. The pictures were taken in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in places all over the world.

The research team developed software capable of scanning these images and extracting detailed information on each egg's size and shape. The software analyzed a total of 13,049 pictures containing 49,175 individual bird eggs. These eggs



represented 1,400 different species, including members of every bird family.

Next, Stoddard's team mapped out the full range of egg shapes, graphing them according to their asymmetry (how "pointy" they were on one side) and their ellipticity (how elongated they were).

Then they consulted the map to see if characteristics like body weight, nest type and wing shape were correlated with an egg's location on the graph. Two stood out those factors out.

Egg size

The first was total egg size. This made sense to the researchers because the larger an egg, the more it has to be compressed to fit through its mother's narrow oviduct.

The second, to their great surprise, was the bird's hand-wing index. This is a measure of how pointed and elongated a bird's wings are, and biologists use it as a proxy for flight strength, which is higher in birds that fly frequently or over large distances.

For instance, birds that fly a lot, like barn swallows, tend to have eggs that are more elongated or pointy. Birds that fly less often or more weakly, like the screech owl, have eggs that are more round and symmetric.

(Source: LAT)

Extra virgin olive oil staves off Alzheimer's, preserves memory: study

Temple University research shows extra-virgin olive oil protects against memory loss, preserves the ability to learn and reduces conditions associated with Alzheimer's disease.

Researchers at the college's Lewis Katz School of Medicine found mice with EVOO-enriched diets had better memories and learning abilities compared to the rodents who didn't eat the oil.

The real effect of EVOO appeared in the inner-workings of the mice's brains. Neuron connections in the brain were better preserved in those on an EVOO diet.

Also, olive oil reduces brain inflammation and activates the autophagy process, whereby intracellular debris and toxins are removed. Such debris and toxins are firm markers of Alzheimer's disease. A reduction in autophagy, researchers claim, is suspected to be the beginning of Alzheimer's disease.

Mediterranean diet

Olive oil is the cornerstone of the Mediterranean diet, which is praised for its various health benefits. This study, which was published Wednesday in the Annals of Clinical and Translational Neurology, adds to that previous research.



"The thinking is that extra-virgin olive oil is better than fruits and vegetables alone," said senior investigator Domenico Pratico, a professor at the Lewis Klein School of Medicine. "As a monounsaturated vegetable fat, it is healthier than saturated animal fats."

The two groups of mice didn't differ in appearance after months on their respective diets. The mice were

tested at 9 and 12 months with those on an EVOO diet testing better on working and spatial memory and learning abilities.

Common form of dementia

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia in the United States and affects a person's thought, memory and language. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the disease typically starts after age 60 with mild memory loss. There is no cure.

Alzheimer's cases are on the rise. In 2013, 5 million Americans had the disease. That number is expected to triple to 14 million by 2050.

Pratico said the "exciting" finding sets researchers up for another experiment. The next step is to introduce EVOO later in the aging process.

"Thanks to the autophagy activation, memory and synaptic integrity were preserved, and the pathological effects in animals otherwise destined to develop Alzheimer's disease were significantly reduced," Pratico said. "We want to know whether olive oil added at a later time point in the diet can stop or reverse the disease."

(Source: USA Today)

Mars rover's AI is really good at selecting rocks to analyze

If we truly want to go to Mars, then we really need to know what it's made of -- it's hard to bring everything you need from Earth. NASA's Curiosity Mars rover has been using specialized AI software to zap soil and rocks on the planet this past year to discover what each is made of.

The software that guides the rover's efforts is called AEGIS, or Autonomous Exploration for Gathering Increased Science. AEGIS allows the rover to get more science of this nature done while Curiosity is out of contact with its human controllers, according to a new paper published by NASA in Science Robotics.

"Time is precious on Mars," said lead system engineer Raymond Francis in a statement. "AEGIS allows us to make use of time that otherwise wasn't available because we were waiting for someone on Earth to make a decision."

The AEGIS software operates in two different ways: autonomous target selection and autonomous pointing refinement. Basically, these two systems allow the rover to select targets and refine its own laser targeting to analyze samples chosen according to the parameters scientists have selected beforehand.

The software has performed at a very high level, exceeding 93 percent accuracy when choosing the correct materials to analyze. According to the paper, the AEGIS autonomous system has "substantially reduced lost time on the mission" and increased the speed of data collection. Before AEGIS was implemented last year, the rover carried out blind targeting, just in case it hit something worthwhile. "Half the time it would just hit soil -- which was also useful, but rock measurements are much more interesting to our scientists," Francis said.

(Source: Engadget)



The link between job stress, junk food and sleep

Stress during the workday can lead to overeating and unhealthy food choices at dinnertime, but there could be a buffer to this harmful pattern.

A good night's sleep can serve as a protecting factor between job stress and unhealthy eating in the evening, indicates a new study co-authored by a Michigan State University scholar.

The study, published online in the Journal of Applied Psychology, is one of the first to investigate how psychological experiences at work shape eating behaviors.

"We found that employees who have a stressful workday tend to bring their negative feelings from the workplace to the dinner table, as manifested in eating more than usual and opting for more junk food instead of healthy food," said Chu-Hsiang "Daisy" Chang, MSU associate professor of psychology and study co-author.

"However, another key finding showed how sleep helped people deal with their stressful eating after work," she added. "When workers slept better the night before, they tended to eat better when they experienced stress the next day."

The research involved two studies of 235 total workers in China. One study dealt with information-technology employees who regularly experienced high workload and felt there was never enough time in the workday. The second study involved call-center workers who often got stressed from having to deal with rude and demanding customers.

The study proposed two potential explanations, Liu said. "First, eating is sometimes used as an activity to relieve and regulate one's negative mood, because individuals instinctively avoid aversive feelings and approach desire feelings," he said. "Second, unhealthy eating can also be a consequence of diminished self-control."

(Source: Eureka Alert)

Millions of glowing tropical sea creatures have started to appear in the Pacific Northwest

Millions of strange-looking glowing sea creatures called pyrosomes have started to "bloom" off the coast of the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. and Canada, filling up fishing nets, clogging hooks and research gear, and befuddling scientists who have no idea why populations of the tube-like organisms are exploding, flooding the water column.

"Call it the invasion of the pyrosomes," writes Michael Milstein in a post on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Northwest Fisheries Science Center website.

They started to show up in the spring and in the past month or two, swarms of the animals been spotted all over the region.

Pyrosomes are odd creatures — they're technically tunicates, colonies of individual organisms known as zooids that feed off of plankton and other small organisms. They have little bumps, are about as firm as a cucumber or pickle, and are gelatinous like jellyfish. They're translucent and bioluminescent, which gives them a glow (the word pyrosome means "fire body").

And while they can occasionally be found further north, they typically inhabit tropical waters, which makes the appearance of these massive quantities strange and disturbing to fishermen who worry that they could devastate a fragile food network.

(Source: Business Insider)

READ AND WATCH!



Els mons de Coraline

The book has been compared to Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and was adapted into a 2009 stop-motion film directed by Henry Selick.

The Iranian website ketabak.com introduce the Persian version of the book and the animation for children and young adults. "Els mons de Coraline" is translated into Persian by Atousa Salehi and released by the Ofoq Publication.

What is it about?

A little girl named Coraline. When she explores her new home, she steps through a door and into another house just like her own... except that it's different.

It's a marvelous adventure until Coraline discovers that there's also another mother and another father in the house. They want Coraline to stay with them and be their little girl. They want to keep her forever!

Coraline must use all of her wits and every ounce of courage in order to save herself and return home.

TIME OUT IN TEHRAN



The Magic of Puppet

Play time: June 6-July 7, 2017

Director: Amir-Mohammad Ensafi

Location: Honar Hall, Tehran

The play is inspired from "Tutinama", a 14th-century series of 52 stories, and is Siah-bazi, a type of Iranian folk play featuring a blackfaced harlequin who stirs the audience to laughter with amusing improvisations.

It is about a man named "Yaghut" who has three children who have learned different occupations and want to go back to their birthplace Mobarakabad, however, they faced some problems and obliged to stay in a village.

M&Y LITTLE BOOKSHELF



Why do you sing, cricket?

Author: Babak Saberi
Illustrator: Negin Ehtesabian
Publisher: Fatemi

The book is about the encounter of a musician and a cricket in a garden. They both sing and play songs to express themselves and this is a good reason to be friend with each other! The book is amongst Iran's list, which was submitted to Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB) 2017.

WORLD OF TALES

The goat with a bell-foot



There was a goat that had a bell on his foot. For that they called him a goat with a bell-foot. This goat had three children called Shangool, Mangool and Hap-e angoor. Shangool was gold, Mangool was color of Hana and Habbeh-angoor was black. The goat would go to the field so have some food for the little goats. One day she called her children and said: my dears when I am not home if someone came and wanted to visit, tell them to come back later when mommy is home and if I knocked look at my hands and they are the color of Hanna.



Lady goat went and on the other side the wolf saw that she left and was happy. He rubbed his tummy and said yum, yum, what delicious meal, I should go and tick them and have them for lunch and supper. He went to the house and knocked. Who is knocking? Wants to walk in? The wolf changed his voice and said: it's me your mom, I have milk for you. Open the door my dears. Shangool said: If you are our mother show us your hand from under the door! The little goats said all together: Go, go you shameful wolf. The hand of our mother, the goat with the bell-foot, is the color of Hanna.



The wolf went and washed his hands and put Hana on them, and came back to their house. He knock and said that my children open the door, it's me the goat with the bell-foot. I have milk in the breast, and grass on teeth. Open the door mom has come from the far with a load. The children said: Show us your hands from the bottom of the door. The wolf showed them his hands. Habbeh-angoor said: kids wait. But They went and opened the door and as soon as the door opened the wolf jumped inside the house. The kids were scared and were trying to escaped but the wolf got Shangool in one paw and Mangool in the other.



Habbeh-angoor went and hid in the closet and the wolf couldn't find him. The wolf was full and went home to sleep. It was around the sundown that their mom arrived and saw the door open and was worried. She came inside and saw the house upside down. She called her kids: My Shangool, my Mangool where are you my Habbeh-angoor? Habbeh-angoor recognized her mother's voice and came out of the closet and hugged her mother. She asked what happened and Habbeh-angoor told her the whole story. She said I know what to do. I'll do something that he'll never forget and went to the wolf's house and with her feet banged on the door.



She said it is me the goat with a bell foot. Who ate my Shangoolak who has my Mangoolak, who come to fight me. The wolf said: I ate your Shangool and Mangool and I'll come to fight you. The wolf came to fight the goat and he was coming to get her neck when she ripped his stomach with her antlers and Shangool and Mangool came out. The kids went home with their mother and promised to never open the door to strangers.

(Source: koodakan.org)

LITTLE HANDS

Wonderful pumpkin seed mosaic art!

You can use any large seeds like those from a pie pumpkin, or hard squash that you may have from cooking this fall. Dying them is simple. All you need is dried pumpkin seeds, food coloring, and vinegar. Place 1/4 to 1/2 cup water in small cups. Add a TBS of vinegar, and several drops of food coloring to the cups. Allow the dried seeds to soak in the colored water for 2 to 4 hours, then remove them from the water & allow them to dry over night. You then have a colorful, natural, free, craft item. You can make mosaics or necklaces with them. Some will dye a solid color & others will be speckled. Use a nice heavy paper like poster board or card stock to glue the mosaics to.

(Source: kidactivities.net)



PLAY AREA

Let's have fun at home!

Here you can find ideas for having fun time while the weather is hot or your parents don't have time to bring you out!



Try to be a responsible zookeeper!

Overturn some laundry baskets over stuffed animals, with a large bowl for some rubber duckies, food and water bowls, leashes, etc. and take care of the animals!



Be a nice postman!

Take some envelopes from your parents, add some stickers for stamps. Craft and decorate a mailbox out of a tissue box or shoe-box, then write mail to deliver to family and friends.



You are an innovative producer!

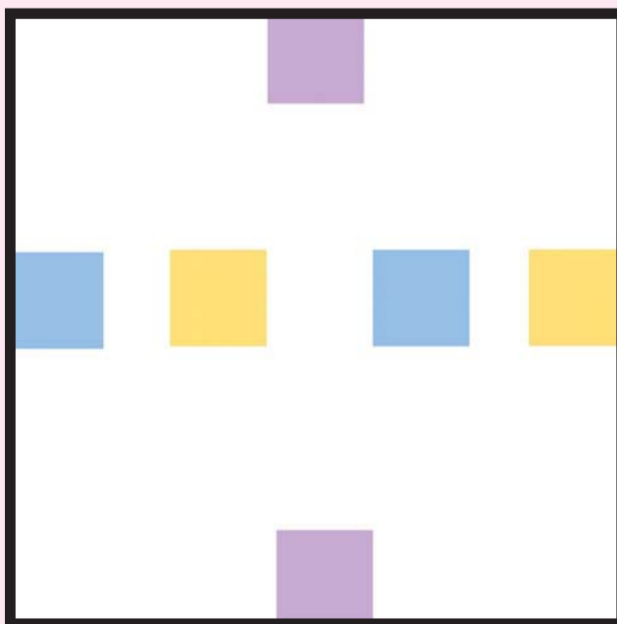
Grab some rinsed-out recycling—old containers, etc.—with some paper brads, masking tape, and other fairly harmless items to attach one thing to another. You have a mission, like creating a boat, or a device to keep an egg from breaking when it's dropped from counter height.

(Source: momlifetoday.com)

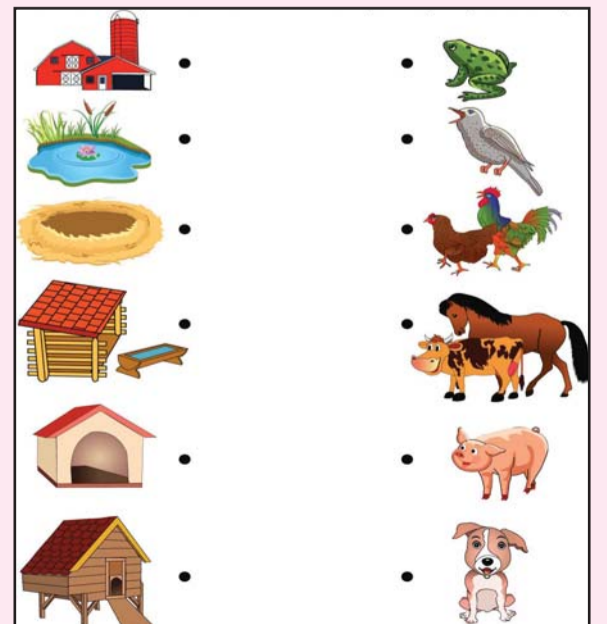
PLAY TIME

Join the matching colored boxes with single lines.

Rules:
1. One line cannot cross another line
2. You must stay inside the big box



Where do these animals live?
Match the images on the left with their corresponding images on the right



Arab states issue list of demands to end Qatar crisis

Shut down Al Jazeera Network and its affiliate stations, Arab states ask Qatar

➔ Earlier this week, the United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson insisted that Qatar's neighbors provide a list of demands that was "reasonable and actionable".

The Iran provisions in the document say Qatar must shut down diplomatic posts in Iran, expel any members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard corps (IRGC), and only conduct trade and commerce with Iran that complies with the U.S. sanctions.

The demands regarding Al Jazeera state that Qatar must also shut down all affiliates and other news outlets that Qatar funds, including Arabi21, Rassd, Al Araby Al Jadeed and Middle East Eye.

If Qatar agrees to comply, the list asserts that it will be audited once a month for the first year, and then once per quarter in the second year after it takes effect.

For the following 10 years, Qatar would be monitored annually for compliance.

The document does not specify what the countries will do if Qatar refuses to comply.

Disgrace for Arab states

Well, the whole Qatar issue in general is a disgrace. I do not want to bother and argue if Qatar or the House of Saud regime-led group of states are righteous or not, actually this is not the first priority in dealing with the case and it has to be dealt with in due time, rather the issue which one has to focus on is history and the conduct of the Saudi regime that regards itself as a follower of true Islam.

The House of Saud regime claims to be the beacon of divine Islam and conducts in that manner, however one who is not even well acquainted with the divine religion of Islam and its teachings finds this claim in contrast with the Saudi claim. It would be very time consuming to delve in to history and find facts about the misconduct of the Saudi regime when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932. Just to remind few facts, one can say the issue of Salafis and the Wahhabis which is widely preached in Saudi Arabia is the motive and the ideology behind the Takfirist terrorists that have created havoc all around the globe. To many analysts surprise why the world is silent? In many cases the intelligence services around the world have given proven facts that the House of Saud regime, in a way, directly or indirectly had been behind many acts of terrorism.

Why the American nation as well as the United States politicians and officials forget that 19 people on board the planes that hit the U.S. soil and killed many inno-



cent people were Saudi national.

Why the U.S. officials forget that the Saudis threatened to pull out their petro-dollars out of the U.S. banks, which was the main reason that the U.S. officials changed course.

Many terrorist that have been caught have clearly confessed that they were somehow supported and funded by rich Saudi Princes or people connected to the Saudi royal family.

The Yemen war that has claimed many innocent lives of defenseless women and children, however the world and many advocates of peace and human rights have kept silent.

Did we forget how the Saudis threatened to cut funds to the United Nations after then Secretary General Ban Ki Moon put the Saudi regime on the list of child killers?

Can you imagine a country that women cannot drive, are deprived of many essential needs, have to be attended by a male companion in many places and have to tolerate many domestic violence is surprisingly on the United Nations commission on the Status of Women?

Well, that is Saudi Arabia. Add to few items that were mentioned, one has to take a close look at the situation in the House of Saud, where many analysts consider it as a coup d'état.

However, the list of demand is very illogical and depriving a sovereign country from the basic rights. Many politicians, statesmen, analysts and even ordinary people now want to see what happens, not the action that Qatar takes rather the world reaction to such double standards.

List of demands by Saudi regime, other Arab states

1) Scale down diplomatic ties with Iran and close the Iranian diplomatic missions

in Qatar, expel members of IRGC and cut off military and intelligence cooperation with Iran. Trade and commerce with Iran must comply with the U.S. and international sanctions in a manner that does not jeopardize the security of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council.

2) Immediately shut down the Turkish military base that is currently being built, and halt military cooperation with Turkey inside Qatari territories.

3) Sever all ties to all the "terrorist, sectarian and ideological organizations", specifically the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIL, al-Qaeda, Fateh Al-Sham (formerly known as al-Nusra Front) and Lebanon's Hezbollah. Qatar needs to formally declare those entities as terrorist groups based on the list of groups that was announced by the Saudi regime, Bahrain, UAE and Egypt, and concur with all future updates of this list.

4) Stop all means of funding for individuals, groups or organizations that have been designated as terrorists by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Bahrain, the U.S. and other countries.

5) Hand over "terrorist figures", fugitives and wanted individuals from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain to their countries of origin. Freeze their assets, and provide any desired information about their residency, movements and finances.

6) Shut down Al Jazeera Network and its affiliate stations.

7) End interference in sovereign countries' internal affairs. Stop granting citizenship to wanted nationals from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain. Revoke Qatari citizenship for existing nationals where such citizenship violates those countries' laws.

8) Qatar has to pay reparations and compensation for loss of life and other

financial losses caused by Qatar's policies in recent years. The sum will be determined in coordination with Qatar.

9) Qatar must align itself with the other Persian Gulf and Arab states militarily, politically, socially and economically, as well as on economic matters, in line with an agreement reached with Saudi Arabia in 2014.

10) Submit all personal details of all the opposition members that Qatar supported and detail all support that Qatar has provided them in the past. Stop all contacts with the political opposition in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain. Hand over all files detailing Qatar's prior contacts with and support for those opposition groups.

11) Shut down all news outlets that it funds, directly and indirectly, including Arabi21, Rassd, Al Araby Al Jadeed, Mekameleen and Middle East Eye, etc.

12) Agree to all the demands within 10 days of it being submitted to Qatar, or the list becomes invalid.

13) Consent to monthly audits for the first year after agreeing to the demands, then once per quarter during the second year. For the following 10 years, Qatar would be monitored annually for compliance.

Interference in sovereignty

Al Jazeera's Hashem Ahelbarra said the list is "definitely going to be rejected by Qatar".

"Qatar has said it will only look into the demands once the sanctions are lifted," he said, adding that Qatar had already said that closing Al Jazeera was off the table.

"It is a matter of national sovereignty. Anything that is presented to the Qataris which it considers to be interference in its internal affairs is going to be dismissed," Ahelbarra said.

"Just yesterday the general sentiment we had was that perhaps the international community and PGCC will turn toward restoring ties. But at this particular moment, I believe that there will be further escalation, mounting tension because of these demands."

"Specifically, this demand on compensation takes the region into uncharted territory. To ask for compensation, you have to have the Qatari government say: 'Sorry, I've made mistakes', and look into every single instance where Qataris made mistakes."

"This is unprecedented in the Arab world. What if the Qataris say the Saudis have to pay compensation for every single civilian killed or innocent life taken all over the world. This is really surreal," Ahelbarra added.

Suicide car bomber kills at least 11 in Pakistan's Quetta: police

A suicide car bomber killed at least 11 people, including four police officers, in an attack near a checkpoint in the volatile southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta on Friday, officials said.

Abdul Razzaq Cheema, director general of police in Baluchistan province, told Reuters it appeared the bomber had detonated a car packed with explosives.

At least 11 bodies were taken to hospital, along with 19 wounded people, said Wasim Baig, a spokesman for the Civil Hospital in Quetta.

Four of those killed were police officers, while nine security officials were among the wounded, said Fareed Sumalan, a doctor at the Civil Hospital.

Jamaat ul Ahrar, a splinter group of the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack in a message sent to Reuters by spokesman Asad Mansur.

Baluchistan government spokesman Anwar ul Haq Kakar said the blast happened near the office of the inspector general of police when officers stopped the car to search it near a checkpoint.

"It's possible the IG office was the target, or the assailants were trying to enter the (army) cantonment which is close by," he said.

Television footage showed emergency services rushing to the scene, which was covered in debris, while security officials cordoned off the area.

The normally busy intersection - which lies between a girls' school, a girls' college, the police office and the entrance to the army cantonment - was relatively quiet because Friday was a public holiday ahead of the Eid celebrations marking the end of the holy Islamic month of Ramadan.

Quetta is about 100 km (60 miles) east of the border

with Afghanistan and is the capital of Baluchistan, which has been plagued by militant violence. The province is the base of a separatist movement as well as home to the Taliban and other militant groups.

It is also at the center of Chinese-backed "Belt and Road" development projects worth \$57 billion that first focused on Chinese firms building roads and power stations but is now expanding to include setting up industries.

Militants from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group abducted and killed two Chinese nationals in Quetta last month.

That attack prompted Pakistan to boost security around Chinese nationals and other foreigners in the province, which is already one of the most militarized regions in the country.

(Source: Reuters)

If the Iran deal is to survive, the West must change course

➔ This is especially the case if the national defense efforts of Iran - which are partly induced by this process - are simultaneously opposed and undermined. It would be unrealistic to expect Iran to remain indifferent to the destabilizing impact of such conduct.

The second principle concerns objective reality versus what are nowadays called "alternative facts". Establishing the objective reality on the ground bolsters the likelihood of positive engagement. Realistic recognition of the political, economic and cultural capabilities of countries, their regional stature, and a proper consideration of their particular needs and threat perceptions helps promote and strengthen an accurate understanding of the players and their conduct.

Conversely, alternative facts are bound to create unnecessary crises, and they also render positive, effective engagement impossible. Ideas such as the "clash of civilizations", "Sunni-Shia

conflict", "Persian-Arab enmity" and the "Arab-Israeli axis against Iran" are all examples of alternative realities fabricated for ulterior purposes.

A panoramic view of the unfortunate global situation, and particularly our violence- and crisis-ridden region, tells us that we all need to foster a culture of adherence to commitments. This is the third principle. In the absence of effective global governance, relying on this kind of culture would provide a workable basis for genuine engagement.

Neglect of or deliberate disregard for these principles will lead to chaotic behavior by various actors and further tension and conflict, with everybody ultimately losing.

Having, on behalf of Iran, conduct-

I helped negotiate the 2015 nuclear deal. Its success depends on constructive engagement, not the destabilizing policies currently being pursued.

ed the technical part of the JCPOA with the P5+1 countries, I can say with certainty that the fate of this hard-won deal depends, in the final analysis, on western resolve and adherence to the principles just mentioned. Disregard for Iran's genuine security concerns, either through deliberate changing of the military-security balance in the region, or by stoking Iranophobia in the region and beyond, would jeopardize engagement. So would a failure to honor the specific commitments set out in the JCPOA. We would all end up back at square one. Unfortunately, as things stand at the moment in the region, reaching a new state of equilibrium may simply be beyond reach for the foreseeable future.

If our partners in the nuclear deal had a serious commitment to the three principles I have set out, we would certainly see the expansion, deepening and institutionalization of mutually beneficial engagement. This would help promote the cause of regional and international peace and security.

The outcome of the recent presidential elections in Iran reflects the clear wish and will of the Iranian people to this end. It is, therefore, time that all our interlocutors appreciated the message as intended and acted accordingly. Engagement is not a one-way street and we cannot go it alone.

We have, so far, taken a number of solid steps towards a constructive engagement aiming at common goals and objectives. Those steps could be strengthened further by genuine reciprocal gestures and actions. The moment of truth has arrived.

(The article was first published in the Guardian)

Yemen cholera cases could pass 300,000 by September: UN

A cholera outbreak in war-ravaged Yemen could infect more than 300,000 people by the end of August, up from nearly 193,000 cases today, the United Nations said on Friday.

"Probably at the end of August we will reach 300,000" cases, UN children's agency spokeswoman Meritxell Relano told reporters in Geneva during a conference call.

Since the outbreak was declared in April, an estimated 1,265 people have died, she said.

"The number of cases continue to increase," Relano said, adding that all of Yemen's 21 governorates have been affected.

She said that children had been hit hard by the outbreak, accounting for half of the registered cases to date.

But only a quarter of the people who have died so far were children, she said.

Cholera is a highly contagious bacterial infection spread through contaminated food or water.

Although the disease is easily treatable, doing so in conflict-torn Yemen has proved particularly difficult.

Yemen is also on the brink of famine, with about 17 million people -- two-thirds of the population -- uncertain of where their next meal will come from, according to the UN's World Food Program.

"This is the largest humanitarian crisis happening in the world at the moment," WFP spokeswoman Bettina Luescher told reporters.

She said the agency was scaling up its response and aimed to provide food aid to 6.8 million people across the country this month alone.

But more than half of those people will receive reduced rations because of a dire funding shortage, she warned.

The ongoing Saudi regime war against Yemen has destroyed the country's health sector, making it difficult to deal with the epidemic.

Over two years of war and conflict have reduced Yemen's public healthcare capabilities by 55 percent. All operating hospitals and clinics are now over-burdened by the epidemic for lack of medicine, equipment and staff.

Nearly 3.3 million Yemeni people, including 2.1 million children, are currently suffering from acute malnutrition.

In March 2015, the House of Saud regime and its allies began the campaign against Yemen to reinstall its former government. The war has killed over 12,000 civilians. The invasion has been compounded by a Saudi regime blockade of the country.

International organizations, including the United Nations and the Red Cross, say the Saudi regime-led war and the embargo may be responsible for the cholera epidemic. The Saudi aggression has taken a heavy toll on the poor country's facilities and infrastructure, destroying many hospitals, schools, and factories.

(Source: AFP)

North Korea tests rocket engine, possibly for ICBM: U.S. officials

North Korea has carried out another test of a rocket engine that the United States believes could be part of its program to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile, a U.S. official told Reuters on Thursday.

The United States assessed that the test, the latest in a series of engine and missile trials this year, could be for the smallest stage of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) rocket engine, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A second U.S. official also confirmed the test but did not provide additional details on the type of rocket component that was being tested or whether it fit into the ICBM program.

One official said he believed the test had taken place within the past 24 hours.

North Korea's state media, which is normally quick to publicize successful missile-related developments, did not carry any reports on the engine test.

South Korean officials did not have details about the reported test and declined to comment on the possible nature of the engine.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said China opposed any action that violated United Nations Security Council resolutions and called for restraint from all parties.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who was elected last month on a platform of a more moderate approach to Pyongyang including dialogue to ease tension, inspected the test-launch of a ballistic missile on Friday that is being developed by the South's military.

"I believe in dialogue, but dialogue is possible when it's backed by strong defense and engagement policy is possible only when we have security ability that can overwhelm the North," Moon was quoted by his office as saying at the test site.

Moon's office did not disclose the details of the missile being tested, but South Korea has been working to develop ballistic missiles with a range of 800 km (500 miles), a voluntary cap under an agreement with the United States.

The United States has tried for years to discourage South Korea from developing longer-range ballistic missiles in keeping with the Missile Technology Control Regime, a voluntary international arms-control pact.

China pressed to exert pressure

The disclosure of the North's engine test came a day after the United States pressed China to exert more economic and diplomatic pressure on North Korea to help rein in its nuclear and missile programs during a round of high-level talks in Washington.

Moon told Reuters in an exclusive interview on Thursday that strong new sanctions would be needed if the North conducted a new nuclear test or an intercontinental ballistic missile test and that he planned to call on Chinese President Xi Jinping to play a greater role in reining in Pyongyang's arms program.

(Source: Reuters)

Spain prosecutor says not opposed to lifting prison sentence for Messi

The Barcelona state prosecutor said on Friday it was not opposed to substituting a 21-month prison sentence for a fine for tax fraud handed down to soccer player Lionel Messi, as long as the fine was the maximum allowed under law.



The maximum fine would be 255,500 euros (\$285,164), Reuters calculations showed, on top of a nearly 2 million euro fine handed down as part of last year's sentence.

Neither is the prosecutor opposed to suspending Messi's prison sentence, and that of his father, on proviso that they have no more brushes with the law for three years given that both have had clean criminal records up to now.

Messi and his father Jorge were found guilty by a Catalan court last July on three counts of tax fraud between 2007 and 2009 to the tune of 4.1 million euros on image rights.

The judge in charge of the case will make a decision bearing in mind the prosecutor's recommendations. Judges usually follow the state prosecutor's recommendations in Spain.

(Source: Reuters)

Community Shield proceeds to be donated to Grenfell Tower fire victims

Proceeds from the 2017 FA Community Shield will be donated to support those affected by the Grenfell Tower fire.

Arsenal will play Chelsea on 6 August at Wembley Stadium, and £1.25m could be raised from the match.

Football Association chairman Greg Clarke said: "We hope that in some small way through the Community Shield we can help.

"Football is for all, and we hope it can in its own way give something back to those who are most in need."

Seventy-nine people are missing or presumed dead after the blaze destroyed 150 homes in the Kensington tower block on 14 June.

Survivors, the families of the victims and emergency services personnel will be invited to the game as guests.

(Source: BBC)

Federer: Murray is tired and struggling with injuries

Roger Federer has said that world number one Andy Murray has struggled with injury since he achieved top ranking.

Federer was speaking after an 11-week break from Tour action, where he has returned to action in Halle to prepare for Wimbledon.



Federer qualified for the quarter-finals with a 7-6 6-4 win over the German Mischa Zverev.

Addressing Murray's drop-off in form having achieved number one status at the end of 2016, Federer said: "Andy was tired after getting to No1 at the end of last year and then has been struggling with injuries."

Murray crashed out at Queen's against 90th-ranked Jordan Thompson as he was

preparing himself for Wimbledon, and also failed to defeat Stan Wawrinka in the semi-finals of this year's French Open.

Murray, Wawrinka, Federer Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic are not the forces they once were in men's tennis, and 35-year-old Federer is now considered the favourite for Wimbledon by punters.

"I think the second part of the season will be really crucial for Andy, and Novak [Djokovic] as well," he added. "I think the second half of the season is going to be really, really interesting."

(Source: Eurosport)

River Plate duo Mayada and Martinez Quarta fail drugs test

River Plate duo Camilo Mayada and Lucas Martinez Quarta have failed drugs tests and the latter has been provisionally suspended by CONMEBOL, the Argentine club have confirmed.

A sample provided by Uruguay international Mayada after the Copa Libertadores match against Melgar on May 18 showed positive for the diuretic hydrochlorothiazide.

Martinez Quarta, a 21-year-old midfielder considered close to breaking into the Argentina set-up, was found to have the same substance in his system after the match against Emelec on May 10.

River do not believe the players knowingly used the substance and have requested for their B samples to be analysed.

"Faced with the situation of Camilo Mayada and Lucas Martinez Quarta, the club is working to understand the situation," said an official River statement.

"[The club] vehemently strengthens the assumption of a contamination in some of the products commonly used as supplements."

(Source: Soccerway)

Paris turns into Olympic park as part of push to host 2024 Games

High-divers plunged into the River Seine, trampoline athletes somersaulted inside the Petit Palais art museum and runners raced on a floating track as Paris turned some of its world-famous landmarks over to sports on Friday in hopes of wowing the International Olympic Committee.

With Paris competing against Los Angeles to host the 2024 Olympics, bid organizers hoped the two-day festival of more than 30 sports would help showcase the French capital's suitability for the games.

Divers demonstrate their skills from boards installed on the Alexandre III bridge that spans the Seine, as kayakers also paddled on the river.

In the Petit Palais, trampoline athletes bounced skyward toward the museum's ornate ceiling murals. Olympic judo champion Teddy Riner and other French sports stars raced for fun in a 100-meter dash on a temporary track floating on the Seine.

On Saturday, Parisians were also being given an opportunity usually reserved for Tour de France racers: to pedal around the Arc de Triomphe without its frenetic vehicle traffic, which will be stopped for three hours.

Elsewhere, a climbing wall was installed inside the Pavillon de l'Arsenal museum of Paris architecture, for free use by the public. Also planned were demonstrations of an array of Olympic sports, including fencing,



boxing, archery, gymnastics and others.

Paris' show comes ahead of a crucial IOC meeting in July that could decide to

pick the 2024 and 2028 Olympic host cities both at once - in a final vote in September in Lima, Peru. The only question would

then be which city gets which games. Paris says it is bidding only for 2024.

(Source: AP)

Ed Warner: Paula Radcliffe and Colin Jackson understand record wipe



Outgoing UK Athletics chief Ed Warner has backed plans to erase world records set before 2005, adding that athletes affected understand "the greater good".

European Athletics wants historic records rewritten because of a lack of credibility following a doping scandal.

"If that's what it took for the good of the sport then that's the way I would have to go," said Warner.

GB's Paula Radcliffe, who would lose her 2003 marathon world record, previously dubbed the idea "cowardly".

Britain's Colin Jackson would also lose his 1994 indoor 60m hurdles world record of 7.30 seconds.

Radcliffe said European Athletics' idea was "heavy handed", while Jackson said clean athletes "should not get caught up in this".

"They love athletics and understand the greater good is what matters, but we've got to get to a better defined set of proposals, and we're not there yet," Warner told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

Athletic's world governing body - the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) - will discuss the proposals at a meeting in August.

The proposals are a response to last year's McLaren report, which uncovered widespread doping in sport - and athletics in particular. Russian athletes are banned from international competition unless they can satisfy strict criteria to show they are clean.

Warner believes some of the records set prior to 2005 were "iniquitous", adding: "Today's athletes can't get close to them because they were drug-fuelled."

One key proposal from European Athletics is that blood samples must be stored for 10 years after a record is set.

The IAAF has stored blood and urine samples only since 2005 and current records that do not meet the new criteria would remain on an "all-time list", but not be officially recognised as records.

Warner, who took charge of UKA in 2007, also warned this summer's World Championships in London would not be "100% clean", stating the battle against doping was "an arms race".

He will leave UKA after 11 years immediately after the World Championships and has already handed over chairman duties to Richard Bowker.

(Source: BBC)

Olympics: NBC monitors Korea tensions as it preps for Winter Games



U.S. broadcaster NBC is monitoring the security situation on the Korean Peninsula and so far does not expect to change its plans to send a more than 2,000-person workforce to the Winter Games in South Korea, NBC Olympics president Gary Zenkel said in an interview.

Tension has been high for months over North Korea's nuclear and missile development, and due to fears it will conduct a sixth nuclear test and more ballistic missile launches in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Asia's first Winter Olympics outside Japan will see South Korea's alpine town of Pyeongchang and the coastal city of Gangneung host thousands of athletes and officials when the Games start in February.

"There are obviously geopolitical issues," Zenkel said, speaking by telephone. "I don't think there's an Olympics or any global sporting event without them."

"We're all aware of the issues facing that particular location and we're playing close attention and staying in touch with the different organizations and the experts we have access to," Zenkel said, adding the network gets information from the U.S.

State Department.

NBC is the U.S. exclusive broadcaster for the Olympics, and it usually uses the games to host its best advertisers and clients on site.

It hosted hundreds of clients in Sochi in 2014 and about 1,500 in Rio last year.

In South Korea, however, NBC would not be inviting guests to the Games and would instead be hosting them in the U.S. ski town of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Zenkel said.

Contrary to media reports, Zenkel said NBC made that decision as far back as 2014, and it was because of limited accommodations near the Olympic venues, unrelated to any security concerns.

NBC's priority was finding housing for its workers, many of whom are coming from abroad, Zenkel said. Clients who want to go can still be invited by sponsors which are doing hospitality at the Games, he added.

A 13-hour time difference between New York and South Korea could actually work to NBC's advantage for showing live events such as skiing and figure skating in U.S. prime time, Zenkel said.

(Source: Reuters)

Arsenal in danger of breaching Premier League wage control rules

Premier League rules limiting the extent to which a club's wage bill can increase year-on-year could result in Arsenal being forced to sell assets this summer.

The Gunners are trying to tie Alexis Sanchez and Mesut Ozil to new contracts at the Emirates but, should they be successful, they could breach the short term cost control (STCC) measures which restrict teams to £7million increases in total salaries each season.

Fresh deals for Sanchez and Ozil alone would take Arsenal's wage bill well beyond those restrictions, should both agree terms on £280,000-per-week contracts.

Sanchez currently earns £130,000 per week and Ozil £140,000, meaning both could double their money by staying in north London.

In that eventuality, their total pay rise would be in the region of £15m annually.

Premier League rules allow for overspend, should clubs be able to show that it comes as a result of increased commercial or match day revenue, or player sales.

However, Arsenal are unlikely to see a significant upturn in commercial or match day revenue - which includes TV money, ticketing and merchandise - given Arsene Wenger's side have missed out on a place in the Champions League.



Therefore, in order to facilitate Sanchez and Ozil staying, the club may need to offload players to increase revenue from player sales.

Several members of the Arsenal squad are attracting interest from elsewhere.

Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, whose current contract has only one year left to run, is being monitored by Liverpool, Chelsea and Manchester City and could raise as much as £25m.

Barcelona are known to be suitors of Hector Bellerin, while Olivier Giroud is reportedly on the radars of Marseille, West Ham and Napoli and there are a cluster of fringe players who could also be sold to raise the necessary cash.

The adjusted STCC rules, which came into play this season, previously only allowed clubs to up their wage bills by £4m but the threshold has been bumped up as a result of the recent £5.14billion TV rights deal.

STCC restrictions do not apply to clubs whose wage bills in 2016-17 were under £67m, while promoted teams are allowed to immediately increase their total salary packages to £67m immediately upon reaching the top flight.

Clubs could opt to use the 2012-13 season's wage bill as their base figure, but would only be permitted a £19m increase over the five-year period.

In Arsenal's case, this would be unmanageable. The Gunners' wage bill in 2012-13 was £151m but that had jumped to £191m in 2015-16, according to the most recent club accounts available via Companies House.

The STCC rules sit alongside the Premier League's 'profit and sustainability' guidelines, which state that clubs should not lose more than £105m over a three-year period.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Kimia Alizadeh aims for gold medal at World Taekwondo Championships

S P O R T S Olympic bronze medallists Kimia Alizadeh hopes to win his first senior gold medal at a taekwondo competition.

She won a gold medal at the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games and won two bronze medals at the 2015 World Taekwondo Championships in Chelyabinsk, Russia and 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro respectively.

After the Olympics, Alizadeh underwent left ankle and knee surgery that forced her to sit out for eight months.

Now, she is ready to participate at the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships and wants to win a gold medal in the prestigious competition which will take place in Muju, South Korea from June 24 to 30.

"I had bad days after surgery and I am fully-prepared for the competition at the moment. I want to win a gold medal in the tournament, that's why I will take part in the competition," the -62kg taekwondoka said.

"I put my trust in God in the competition. I know I have difficult task ahead of me but it's time to win a gold medal for me because I have been working very hard over the last three months," Alizadeh added.

"I certainly gained a lot of experience during the past editions and will focus on winning the gold medal at the world championship," the first Iranian woman to win an Olympic medal said.

Alizadeh has been also selected as flag-bearer for the opening ceremony of the competition.

"I am very happy and I can hold my head up as an Iranian Muslim woman," Alizadeh concluded.

The competition itself will be the largest ever in its 44-year history. The WTF said 969 athletes and 796 officials from 183 nations have registered to participate. The 2009 event in Copenhagen had previously been the largest with 928 athletes from 142 nations.



Future is bright for our young weightlifters: Ali Moradi

S P O R T S Head of Iran Weightlifting Federation Ali Moradi sees a bright future for the country's young weightlifters.

Iran claimed the title of the 2017 International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) Junior World Championships in Tokyo, Japan on Friday for the second year in a row.

"There are no doubts we have a bright future ahead as our youngsters will grow up. I am sure the young weightlifters could earn colorful medals in the future with the support of Iran's sports officials," Moradi said.

"We have so much work ahead of us since Iran



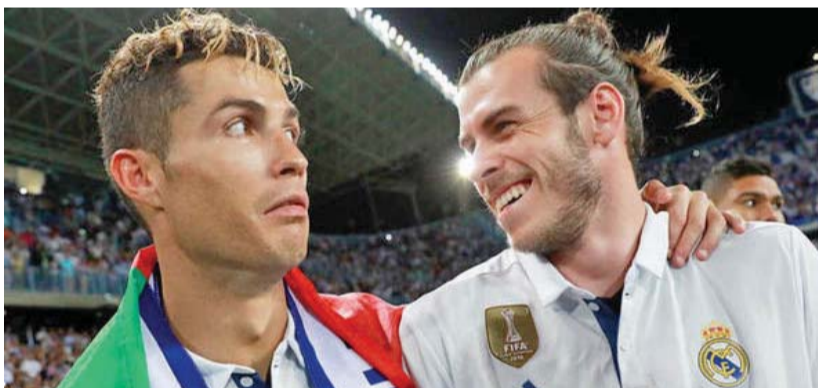
will participate at the 2017 World Weightlifting Championships and 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo as well. Our young weightlifters could shine in the upcoming prestigious events," he added.

"Our weightlifters did their best in the competition and made the Iranian people happy," Moradi concluded.

Iran won the title with 423 points. Host Japan finished in second place with 394 points and China came third with 391 points.

Iran's Reza Beiralvand won a gold medal in the 105kg while Rahman Ourameh claimed a bronze in the 94kg in the event.

Real Madrid star wants Cristiano Ronaldo sold so he can be main man



REAL MADRID star Gareth Bale reportedly wants Cristiano Ronaldo sold so he can be the club's main man, according to reports.

Not for the first time, Real Madrid star Ronaldo has been linked with a move away from the Bernabeu.

Reports have claimed the 32-year-old is unhappy with life in Spain after the authorities accused him of tax evasion.

The news has given Manchester United and Paris Saint-Germain supporters hope they could be about to sign the current Ballon d'Or holder.

And, though it has recently been suggested the veteran has changed his mind, reports coming out of Spain are saying it has not stopped players inside the dressing room hoping he will leave.

Diario Gol claim that Bale is among them, shockingly saying the former Tottenham star wants to be club talisman.

Despite signing for Real for a then world-record fee of £86million in 2013, the Wales international has spent his entire time at the club in Ronaldo's shadow.

He scored in the 4-1 Champions League final win over Atletico Madrid but Ronaldo did the same. And, though he converted his penalty in the shootout win over Diego Simeone's side in 2016, Ronaldo grabbed the headlines by scoring the decisive penalty.

The ex-United forward was again heralded by the footballing world after bagging a brace in Real's 4-1 Champions League win over Juventus earlier this month.

(Source: Express)

Iran to dispatch 80-strong delegation to World Transplant Games



President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Specific Patients and Transplant Sports Federation says her country plans to dispatch an 80-strong delegation to the forthcoming 21st edition of World Transplant Games, which will kick off in Spain later this month.

"Less than 40 athletes represented Iran in the previous edition of World Transplant Games. The number of Iranian sportsmen and women in addition to the sports that they will compete in shows a two-fold rise in the upcoming edition," Mahin Farhadizad said in Tehran on Wednesday.

She added, "The Iranian delegation will leave Tehran for Malaga, Spain, early on June 25, and comprises of 30 female athletes and 50 sportsmen.

They will be in action in 19 sports."

Farhadizad noted that 41 Iranian athletes are making their debut in the 2017 World Transplant Games, while the rest have already competed in international tournaments.

The 21st edition of World Transplant Games will take place between June 25 and July 2, 2017 in Malaga, Spain.

Iranian sportswomen will reportedly compete in athletics, road running, table tennis, badminton, darts, pétanque, bowling, squash and paddle tennis.

Male Iranian athletes will assess their chances in swimming, cycling, athletics, road running, table tennis, badminton, darts, pétanque, bowling and squash.

(Source: PressTV)

Sarmayeh Bank want to defend title at Asian Club Volleyball Championship

Vietnam will host the SMM 2017 "Binh Son Refining Petrochemical" Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship between June 28 and July 6 in Nam Dinh and Ninh Binh, with 13 teams vying for the top honor and the lone berth for the next year's FIVB Volleyball Men's Club World Championship.

The 13 participating teams have been split into four pools to contest the pool round-robin preliminaries in Pool A, Pool B, Pool C and Pool D.

Hosts Vietnam, Iraq's Al-Bahri and Sri Lanka Ports Authority Sports Club are in Pool A, while Pool B comprises defending champions Sarmayeh Bank of Iran and Taiwan Power from Chinese Taipei. Pool C consists of Qatar's Al Arabi Sports Club, Kazakhstan's Altay VC, Hong Kong's Yan Chai and Canberra Heat of Australia, with Japan's Toyota Gosei Trefuerza, China Beijing Baic Motor from China, Maldivian Sport & Recreation Club from Maldives and Thailand's Air Force VC in Pool D.

The pool preliminaries will take place in both venues from June 28 to July 30. July 1 will be the rest day, while the intense competition in the quarter-finals will resume on July 2 and run through July 6.

Only top two teams from each pool in the preliminary



round will advance to the quarter-finals in Pool E and Pool F, with teams finishing third and fourth from each pool in the preliminaries relegated to the 9th-13th classification round.

The top-flight tournament will kick off on June 28 with all participating teams joining the opening ceremony at 19:30 pm local time, followed by the curtain-raiser between hosts Vietnam and Iraq's Al-Bahri at 20:00 pm. The other matches on the opening day see Toyota

Gosei Trefuerza from Japan take on Thailand's Air Force VC, Altay VC of Kazakhstan play Hong Kong's Yan Chai, Qatar's Al Arabi Sports Club pitted against Australia's Canberra Heat and China Beijing Baic Motor meet Maldivian Sport & Recreation Club.

The final showdown including the awards presentation and closing ceremony will be held on July 6. The eventual winners of this prestigious tournament will represent Asia at the 2018 FIVB Volleyball Men's Club World Championship, with the host nation yet to be revealed.

Since the AVC got the tournament off the ground in Hefei, China in 1999, Iran have emerged as the most successful nation with their club teams capturing 11 titles altogether, followed by Korea with two titles. Qatar, Kazakhstan, China and Chinese Taipei took one title apiece.

At the previous edition in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar last year, Sarmayeh Bank Club handed Iran their 11th title following a hard-fought 3-1 win over Al Arabi of Qatar in the final clash. Japan's Toyota Gosei Trefuerza finished third place after edging past Shanghai Golden Age of China in an exhausting five-set thriller.

(Source: asianvolleyball)

Unranked Iran move up to 55th place at FIFA Women's World Ranking

Kuala Lumpur: Jordan are the biggest Asian movers in the latest FIFA Women's World Ranking released on Friday, while Japan continue to lead.

In the recent 2018 AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers, Jordan finished undefeated in a six-team Group A with five wins. Their impressive performance was rewarded by the previously unranked team moving to 50th in the FIFA World Ranking.



Come next April, host Jordan will square off against Asia's best for the continental title.

Despite not qualifying for the 2018 AFC Asian Women's Cup Finals, Islamic Republic of Iran's efforts at the qualifiers proved to be notable as they moved up to 55th place, who were also previously unranked.

Japan remained the top ranked Asian team at sixth place, with Australia following closely behind as the Matildas moved one rung up to seventh. DPR Korea and China PR's positions remained unchanged at 10th and 14th respectively.

Korea Republic, who finished second at the Cyprus Cup in March and beat DPR Korea to qualify for the 2018 Women's Asian Cup Finals, climbed one position up to 16th, to complete Asia's top five.

Asia's Top 10 (global rankings in brackets):

- Japan (6th)
- Australia (7th)
- DPR Korea (10th)
- China PR (14th)
- Korea Republic (16th)
- Thailand (29th)
- Vietnam (32nd)
- Uzbekistan (41st)
- Chinese Taipei (42nd)
- Myanmar (45th)

The next FIFA Women's World Ranking will be released on September 1.

(Source: AFC)

Iran crowned IWF Junior World champion

Iran finished in first place at the 2017 International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) Junior World Championships on Friday.

The Iranian eight-man delegation claimed the title for the second successive year.

The Iranian team won the title with 423 points.

Host Japan came second, earning 394 points and China finished in third place with 391 points.

Iran's Reza Beiralvand won a gold medal in the 105kg while Rahman Ourameh claimed a bronze in the 94kg in the event.

A Total of 265 (108 Women / 157 Men) athletes from 50 countries competed in the international weightlifting event in the capital city of Japan. Women represented 31 countries while the number was 45 for Men.

(Source: Tasnim)

The AFC wishes a joyous and blessed Eid Al-Fitr

Kuala Lumpur: The Asian Football Confederation wishes the Asian football family and its Member Associations a blessed Eid Al Fitr.

The celebration calls for a time of forgiveness, self-reflection, and contemplation, and as the month-long fasting comes to an end, we take this time to look back and appreciate the grace we have received as we look towards yet another fruitful year ahead.

May your reunion with friends and family strengthen the bonds of friendship, love, and peace. Once again, we wish everyone a joyful Eid Al Fitr celebration.

(Source: AFC)

Pejman Montazeri joins Iran's Esteghlal

Iranian football club Esteghlal have completed the signing of Pejman Montazeri.

The 33-year-old international defender has joined Esteghlal on a two-year contract.

Montazeri started his playing career at Foolad in 2005 and joined Esteghlal after two years.

He left Esteghlal in 2014 to join Qatar's Umm-Salal and signed a contract with Al-Ahli one year later.

The free agent defender joined Esteghlal Thursday night for an undisclosed fee.

Montazeri was a member of Team Melli in the 2014 FIFA World Cup and played full 90 minutes in all three matches against Nigeria, Argentina and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Iran was eliminated in the group stage.

Montazeri missed 2015 AFC Asian Cup due to injury.

(Source: Tasnim)

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Iranian shorts on screen at Portuguese film festival

A R T TEHRAN — A lineup of eight Iranian short films and animations are on screen at the 13th edition of the FEST New Directors, New Films Festival, which is currently underway in Espinho, Portugal.

The animations include "Ascribed Achievements" by Samaneh Shojaei, "The Little Boy" by Mona Shahi, "Junk Girl" co-directed by Mohammad Zare' and Shalaleh Kheiri, "The Tree" by Sareh Shafipur and "The Role of Each Tone" by Maryam Farahzadi.

Short films "Distorted Memories of a Lake" by Seyyed Vahid Hosseini-Nami and "Slaughter House" by Behzad Azadi are also on the lineup.

The festival will come to an end on Monday.



Tehran to host cartoon contest on Trump

A R T TEHRAN — The International Trumpism Cartoon and Caricature Contest will be held in Tehran's Art Bureau on July 3, Seyyed Masud Shojai-Tabatabai, the secretary of the event said on Friday.

Works focusing on U.S President Donald Trump by over 550 Iranian and international artists from around the world have been submitted to the contest.

The contest has been organized in collaboration with the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Sacred Defense Works and Values, and Tehran Municipality's Beautification Organization.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting

An exhibition of paintings by a group of artists including Nasim Shoja, Golsa Qasemi, Dena Nikzat, Hushang Peymani and Ehsan Aminai is underway at Atashzad Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Color and Colorless" runs until July 4 at the gallery located at 23 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St., near Vanak Sq.

Paintings by Hosseinali Zabehe are on display in an exhibition at Hoor Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until June 30 at the gallery located at 12 Naeimi Alley, North Mirza Shirazi Ave., off Motahhari St.

Delgosha Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Niaz Babatabar.

The exhibit named "Marigold" will be underway until July 4 at the gallery located at No. 30, Mohajer Alley, Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Ave.

Calligraphic painting

An exhibition of calligraphic paintings by Faramarz Pilaram, Mohammad Ehsai, Einodin Sadeqzadeh, Amirsadeq Tehrani and Kurosh Qazimorad is underway at Sohrab Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until July 5 at the gallery located at 142 Somayyeh St.

Sand sculpture festival brings super-heroes to Belgian beach

OSTEND, Belgium (Reuters) — A beach in Belgium has been transformed into a giant sandy gallery, featuring larger-than-life super heroes, cartoon characters and Cinderella's castle, for one of the world's biggest sand-sculpture festivals.

Working with 7,000 tonnes of sand, a team of 32 artists spent five weeks creating the 150 works for the Ostend Sand Sculpture Festival, which opens on Saturday and runs until September, providing rain does not wash away the exhibits.

Many of the artists work in other mediums, such as wood or marble carving, and said they found sand sculpting presented some challenges.

Abbas Kiarostami's collection of graphic designs exhibited at IAF

A R T TEHRAN — The desk exhibition of graphic designs by legendary Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami opened in the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) on June 22, the birth date of the master.

Entitled "In Praise of Life", the exhibit features a collection of 43 posters collected by the Iranian Graphic Designers Society and Vjeh Art School, a school dedicated to teaching graphic design in Tehran.

Speaking at the ceremony, director of the Iranian Graphic Designers Society Ebrahim Haqiqi said that Kiarostami was one of the members of the society.

"The bitter taste of the death of Kiarostami has not left me alone. Kiarostami used to try to teach his students how to live and how to make a film. His students have found their ways today and make films that are not artificial," he said.

"I learned more about his simple-appearing perspective when he designed the poster for his film 'A Wedding Suit' (1976). He placed all the information on the collar of the suit in his poster," he said.

"Kiarostami taught us to forget about all the educations we had about graphic design. That is, we do not need to make use of sharp colors in posters, for example," he added.

"He showed us that films do not possess only scenes about love or need to be action films," Haqiqi said.

Graphic designer Amrollah Farhadi also in his brief remarks said that the exhibit is a tribute to Kiarostami by his students in Karnameh and Vjeh art



Art enthusiasts visit an exhibition of graphic designs by Abbas Kiarostami in the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) on June 22, 2017.

(Mehr/Shahabeddin Qayyumi)

schools for all the efforts Kiarostami made throughout his life.

Painter Ali-Akbar Sadeqi next talked about his friendship with Kiarostami and said that he is one of his old friends.

"It was in 1959 that we got to know each other. I had an atelier named 'Seven' where Abbas began his graphic designs with me," he remarked.

The ceremony was followed by a short film containing part of Kiarostami's films selected by stage designer Amir Esbati including interviews Esbati and Managing Director of Nazar Publications Mahmudreza Bahmanpur had with Kiarostami at the Vjeh School in 2013.

The book "In Praise of Life", which also contains the interviews along

with a selection of Kiarostami's posters published by Nazar Publications, was unveiled at the ceremony.

Kiarostami who was suffering from a severe gastrointestinal disease, died at a Paris hospital on July 4, 2016.

The exhibit will be running until July 5 at the forum located on Musavi St., off Taleqani Ave.

"Freedom of Palestine" poster unveiled on Quds Day

A R T TEHRAN — The desk poster "Freedom of Palestine", containing images of the world leaders loyal to the freedom of Palestine, was unveiled during a ceremony at the Quds Cultural Center in Tehran on Friday.

The poster features an image of Palestine in 2040, in which 18 world leaders who have fought against the Zionist regime for the freedom of Palestine, have come together at al-Aqsa Mosque, Persian media have reported.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Hezbollah Secretary General Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Ramadan Abdullah, and Egyptian Muslim scholar Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi are among the world figures who are seen in the poster.

The unveiling ceremony was



A poster for "Freedom of Palestine"

concurrent with the International Quds Day rallies, which are held annually on the last Friday of the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

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.

Isfahan festival announces Iranian films at intl. lineup

A R T TEHRAN — Nine Iranian short and feature-length films and animations will go on screen at the international section of the 30th International Film Festival for Children and Youth, the organizers announced on Friday.

"The Skater" by Fereyduh Najafi, "The End of the Dreams" by Mohammad-Ali Talebi, "The Orangish Tree" by Amir-Hushang Moin and "Dreams in One Day" by Sadeq Javadi will compete at the festival.

Also included are "The Win Suddenly Rises" by Edris Samani, "Are You Volleyball?" by Mohammad Bakhshi, "Sweet Dream" by Maryam Abdoli, "Hi" by Mohammadreza Hajigholami, and "Sheyda's Homework".

The 30th International Film Festival



for Children and Youth will be held in Isfahan from June 30 to July 6.

Bahram Beizai receives Honorary Doctorate from University of St. Andrews

A R T TEHRAN — The University of St. Andrews in Scotland awarded an Honorary Doctorate (Doctor of Letters) to acclaimed Iranian director and playwright Bahram Beizai on June 22.

The director was honored along with eleven other distinguished individuals from different countries between June 20 and 23, the university has announced on its website.

Beizai's award ceremony was followed by a two-day workshop on June 23 and 24 to celebrate his unique, scholarly and creative contributions to Iranian culture, cinema and theater over the last 55 years.

The event includes the presentation of several academic papers on Beizai's cinema and theater, the screening of his first full-length feature film "Ragbar" (Downpour 1972) and a solo performance of the first part of his play "The One Thousand



Director and playwright Bahram Beizai in an undated photo

and First Night" (2003) by his actress wife, Mojdeh Shamsai.

The workshop has been funded by the School of Modern Languages (University of St. Andrews), Institute of Iranian Studies (University of St. Andrews), and the Honeyman Foundation.

The lectures and film screening session have been arranged by Saeed Talajooy, an Iranian lecturer in Persian Literature at the School of Modern Languages.

Beizai is an acclaimed Iranian film director and playwright. He has authored over seventy books in Persian, including plays and screenplays, histories and research works, as well as interviews and stories. His first feature film, "Downpour", is regarded as one of the most successful Iranian films ever made. Beizai is also an influential director and innovator of the Iranian New Wave movement of cinema.

Harry Potter still casts spell for fans 20 years on

LONDON (Reuters) — Dressed in a long black gown and holding a wand, George Massingham is keen for everyone to know he is a Harry Potter super fan.

If he isn't doing Professor Severus Snape, the mysterious potions master at Hogwarts School, the 27-year-old likes to dress in some other costume relating to J.K. Rowling's fantastical world of witches and wizards.

Massingham said of his colleagues: "They don't react as much now as they used to. They just sort of go 'oh, you're wearing that again.'"

Monday marks 20 years since the release of "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone", the first of seven Potter books in a series that sold 450 million copies in 79 languages and sparked a \$7 billion movie franchise.

Massingham is not the only super fan. Tracey Nicol-Lewis, 43, and her 15-year-old son Brenden like to dress up in Hogwarts uniform for trips to the supermarket in Cardiff, Wales.

Nicol-Lewis' obsession with Rowling's world of wizards started when her husband gave her one of the books, "Goblet of Fire", shortly before he died.

"We kind of clung to that," she said.

She has since spent around 40,000 pounds (\$50,600) on all things Harry Potter, putting together a collection of 2,506 pieces of memorabilia.

South Wales prop-maker Victoria Maclean, 37, has a similarly large collection of Potter memorabilia decorating her home in Cardiff.

She has a wizard-themed toilet, and her mother's ashes sit in a glass jar replica of Wolfsbane Potion — a magical substance from the Potter series that stops werewolves being dangerous.

"People are going to look at it and think I'm a complete freak," said Maclean, who named her children Harry and Daniel after British actor Daniel Radcliffe, who plays the wizard in the movie franchise.

For 29-year-old Luke Williams, the link to Radcliffe is even stronger. His dark hair, thin nose, brown eyes and even his voice bear a striking resemblance to Radcliffe, who first starred as Harry in the 2001 film version of "The Philosopher's Stone."

Plans to do a graphic design course were scrapped as Williams embarked on a 15-year career as a Potter impersonator. It has taken him around the world to parties, book launches and shows. But he longs for a



Cosplay fans (L-R) George Massingham, Abbey Forbes and Karolina Goralik travel by tube dressed in Harry Potter themed costumes, after a visit to one of the literary franchise's movie filming locations at Leadenhall Market in London, Britain, March 10, 2017.

(Reuters/Neil Hall)

different kind of attention.

"The girls still squeal when Harry Potter walks down the road ... but I'd rather be a Brad Pitt lookalike," Williams said.