



Iran's policy is to strengthen ties with Qatar, Rouhani says **2**



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German banks poised to finance projects in Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — German banks are ready to finance economic projects in Iran, Federal Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble announced in a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Berlin.

Underscoring the vitality of implementing Iran's nuclear deal with the six world powers - known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - Schäuble said that his country welcomes expansion of banking cooperation with Iran, Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday.

The Iranian foreign minister, who had traveled to Berlin to deliver speech in the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) Annual

Council Meeting, also visited German Economic Affairs and Energy Minister Brigitte Zypries, IRNA reported.

In this meeting, Zarif called Iran a reliable partner for Germany for manufacturing goods and exporting them to Middle Eastern countries.

Zypries, for her part, expressed content about the current annual three-billion-dollar bilateral trade between the two countries, saying that Germany is interested in boosting political and economic cooperation with Iran in all areas via fortifying insurance and banking ties.

During the meeting, Hermes, the official German export credit insurance agency, announced readiness to back investing projects in Iran, especially those in power and energy sectors.

Zarif urges Europe to help resolve Persian Gulf conflicts

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian foreign minister on Monday called on Europe to get involved in Persian Gulf conflicts more seriously, citing the positive role it played in a nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers.

"Europe has the capabilities and values to help resolve Persian Gulf conflicts," Mohammad Javad Zarif said in an address to the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) in Berlin.

"With the nuclear issue we had a

lose-lose game with the U.S. until we redefined the problem with Europe's active participation," the Iranian foreign minister added.

Europe played a key role in brokering the 2015 international nuclear deal, which removed all nuclear-related sanctions against Iran in exchange for Tehran placing limits on its nuclear activities.

The nuclear accord resulted from "positive-sum thinking," Zarif highlighted, noting that it was triumph for everyone. **→2**

Germany stands by nuclear deal, praises it as 'historic window'

POLITICS TEHRAN — German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said on Tuesday a nuclear deal with Iran has helped lower the risk of a major conflict in the Mideast and that Germany will do whatever is possible to hold all parties to it.

"Our clear position is we stand by this agreement," Gabriel told reporters after talks in Berlin with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Gabriel said the deal was "a great sign of hope" for the region and had opened a "historic window" for rekindling relations with Tehran.

The nuclear deal was sealed in Vienna in July 2015 after 18 months of negotiations led by former secretary of state John Kerry and diplomats from the other four permanent members of the UN Security Council - Britain, China, France and Russia - plus Germany and the European Union.

Under its terms, Iran agreed to curb its nuclear program in return for billions of dollars in sanctions relief.

U.S. President Donald Trump has condemned the agreement. Gabriel did not mention any other countries in his comments.

Zarif said he was "very happy to hear Germany takes it seriously."

Europe has been a strong supporter of the deal, urging hostile Trump to keep its side of the bargain.

Two weeks ago, European foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said she was confident the U.S. would stick to the nuclear accord, despite its protestations to the contrary, as the deal is working.

"In any case the European Union will guarantee that the deal keeps, that we stick to that ... and that our policy of engagement with Iran continues," she asserted.

On July 20, the Trump administration has to extend sanctions waivers against Iran as stipulated under the deal.

Iran, Turkey, Egypt must save Mideast from chaos and destruction: professor

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Farhang Jahanpour, part-time tutor on the Middle East in the Department of Continuing Education at the University of Oxford, tells the Tehran Times that Iran, Egypt and Turkey must set aside their differences in order save the region from "chaos and destruction".

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ It has just been announced that King Salman has deposed the Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayef and has replaced him with his 31-year old son Mohammed bin Salman. What are the reasons behind the Saudi King's decision to depose the sitting crown prince and replace him with his young son?

A: This is a very important and potentially a dangerous move. Ever since the establish-

ment of the Saudi Kingdom in 1902 by Ibn Saud there has been a fairly well established system of succession, with power passing from a reigning king to the oldest living male member of the family. Muhammad bin Nayef was appointed deputy crown prince by the former King Abdullah and confirmed by the so-called Allegiance Council to succeed King Salman, and he was also declared crown prince by King Salman when he came to power in January 2015.

Muhammad bin Nayef held a number of important posts, including interior minister and first deputy prime minister, and played a major role in counter-terrorism. Now, he has been abruptly relieved of all his duties by royal decree and Mohammed bin Salman has taken his place. The newly appointed

crown prince has also been named deputy prime minister and also maintains his post as defence minister, as well as overseeing the economy.

■ Should we think of the reshuffle as a soft coup d'état?

A: I believe it is a soft coup d'état, because it goes against the established norms in Saudi succession. Mohammed bin Salman is a young, ambitious and power-hungry prince who has been responsible for a number of unwise adventures, such as the war against Yemen that has killed and injured tens of thousands of innocent Yemenis, aggressive support for Jihadi militants in Syria and elsewhere, and lately the conflict with Qatar. He has also been the author of the over-ambitious development plan, the so-called "Vision 2030". **→13**

Three-quarters of world has little or no confidence in Trump, Pew study finds

by Patrick Wintour

More than three-quarters of the world has little or no confidence in Donald Trump's global leadership and his signature policies, with support for the American presidency collapsing fastest among America's traditional allies in Europe, according to new polling by the Pew Research Center.

In many countries, support for the U.S. president is now below that of George Bush in 2004, following the Iraq invasion. Globally, two-thirds of respondents describe Trump as "arrogant and dangerous".

The research conducted across 37 countries shows a median of 22% have some or a

great deal of confidence in Trump to do the right thing when it comes to international affairs. Almost three-quarters (74%) have little to no confidence in the Republican leader.

By contrast, in the final years of Barack Obama's presidency, a median of 64% expressed confidence in Trump's predecessor to direct America's role in the world.

■ The low level of support

The polling also shows that the low level of support for the president is leading to a decline in support for wider American values. Just 49 % expressed a broadly positive view of the U.S., compared with 64% in surveys

carried out 2015 and 2016.

For the first time in Pew research history, most Canadians no longer regard America as a force for good in the world.

Just 43% of Canadians have a positive view of their neighbor.

The two major countries expressing faith in Trump's ability to be a force for good are Israel and Russia.

The U.S. president has persistently low ratings across Latin America and Europe, where medians of only 14% and 18% respectively have confidence in his leadership. Only 5% in Mexico and 7% in Spain have confidence in Trump. **→6**



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2017 Formula 1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix

2017 Formula 1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix proved to be the most spectacular race of the season so far with lots of surprises, crashes and overtaking. Formula 1 drivers made a great show at the final day of Azerbaijan Grand Prix. Daniel Ricciardo from Red Bull Racing won the chaotic race at Baku but there was a controversial clash between the Sebastian Vettel and Lewis Hamilton.

Syrian army forces seize areas in Homs, Dayr al-Zawr

Syrian government forces, supported by allied fighters from popular defense groups, have continued to progress in the country's central provinces of Homs and Dayr al-Zawr, killing scores of foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants during their counter-terrorism operations.

A military source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Syria's official news agency SANA that Syrian soldiers and their allies could take full control of al-Dhaliyat region in the Humeima district, which lies on the border between Homs and Dayr al-Zawr provinces, on Monday.

The source added that scores of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists were killed and their munitions destroyed during the operation, noting that bomb disposal teams are now clearing the area of landmines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted by the terrorists.

The fighter jets of the Syrian Air Force also carried out a series of airstrikes against ISIL positions and supply routes across Dayr al-Zawr Province, leaving a large number of the Takfiris dead and injured.

Separately, Syrian army units struck ISIL positions in the vicinity of al-Maqaber and al-Panorama areas, killing 18 ISIL terrorists and destroying an armored vehicle as well as two pickup trucks equipped with heavy machineguns.

Elsewhere on the southern outskirts of the capital Damascus, Syrian soldiers, backed by artillery units and Air Force jets, engaged Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly known as al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra), militants in Beir al-Kassab and Rajem al-Sarikhi districts, killing many Takfiris.

Syrian government forces also repulsed a militant attack, killing a number of terrorists and destroying five pickup trucks equipped with heavy machineguns, two ammunition trucks and two rocket launchers.

Syria has been fighting different foreign-sponsored militant and terrorist groups since March 2011. United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura estimated last August that more than 400,000 people had been killed in the crisis until then.

(Source: SANA)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Majlis committee finalizing bill to confront U.S. measures

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The head of the Iranian **d e s k** Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has announced that the finalization of the bill to counter adventurous and terrorist acts of the U.S. in the region has been discussed in the committee.

“This bill has set some obligations for the government and the government should implement them,” Alaeddin Boroujerdi said, Fars reported on Tuesday.

He reiterated that the bill is ready and it will be submitted to the parliament's presiding board in the coming days.



Iran finds terrorists' large arms depot

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian minister of **d e s k** intelligence has said that security forces struck a terrorist group possessing large ammunition and arms.

Mahmoud Alavi said on Monday that following a timely measure by the security forces the terrorist group came under attack on Sunday, ISNA reported.

He made the remarks in an interview with reporters on the sidelines of Eid al-Fitr ceremony held on Monday in Tehran. He did not provide further details on the anti-terror operation.



Lavrov: Russia, Iran, Turkey to prepare document on de-escalation zones in Syria

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Russian Foreign Minister **d e s k** Sergei Lavrov has said that Moscow, Tehran and Ankara as initiators of the intra-Syria dialogue in Astana, will cooperate on preparing an agreement to create de-escalation zones in Syria.

“The new round of the Astana talks slated for July in Kazakhstan's capital will focus on creating de-escalation zones to reduce tensions in Syria with the support of the Syrian government and the country's armed opposition groups who have joined the peace process,” Lavrov told reporters on Tuesday, IRNA reported.



New Uruguayan envoy submits copy of credentials to Zarif

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — New Uruguayan **d e s k** Ambassador to Tehran Carlos Sgarbi Von Steinmann on Sunday submitted a copy of his credentials to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

According to a report by Foreign Ministry media department, the outgoing Ambassador of Finland Harry Kamarainen also met with Zarif on the same day to bid farewell as his mission in Iran came to an end.



Ignorance of majority will ignite sedition: ex-presidential candidate

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mostafa Mirsalim, a **d e s k** member of the Islamic Coalition Party who ran for the May 19 presidential election, has said any infringement of the rights of the majority will ignite a sedition and turn into “political disaster”.

Democracies have managed to observe this rule by help of powerful organizations, Mirsalim wrote in a commentary, ILNA reported on Tuesday.

In the meanwhile, he said political purgation and practical elimination of a minority should be avoided.



Ex-minister: Officials should settle debates via dialogue

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's former minister **d e s k** of defense has stressed that officials should settle down their variations in taste via dialogue.

Speaking to ILNA on Tuesday, Ahmad Vahidi said sowing seed of discord between the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and the Ministry of Intelligence is the will of enemies.

He went on to suggest that the high turnout of the Iranian public at various turns carries the message that all should unite behind the Supreme Leader.

Zarif urges Europe to help resolve Persian Gulf conflicts



Foreign Minister Zarif addresses the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) in Berlin on June 26, 2017.

When foreign policy becomes a commodity, then purchasing military equipment becomes your yardstick for measuring who is a terrorist or who isn't a terrorist.

trying to shun responsibility for their own failures in addressing the demands of their own people.

“One day it's Iran, today it's Qatar,” Zarif said, adding, “It's an attempt to evade responsibility, escape accountability for this very fundamental ... failure of the state system to address, to respond

to the demands of its population.”

In making the comments, Zarif was referring to Saudi Arabia, joined by the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt severing all political ties with Qatar on June 5, citing Doha's support for the Palestinian Hamas resistance group and the Muslim Brotherhood as well as good ties with Iran.

Earlier on Friday, reports emerged that the Saudi-led bloc had given Qatar 10 days to comply with 13 demands, which included shutting down the Al Jazeera Media Network, closing a Turkish military base and scaling down ties with Iran.

The foreign minister said no one can purchase its security from outside, and that foreign policy is not a commodity.

Also, in a reference to the hefty May arms deals between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. during President Trump's visit to the country, the top diplomat said: “Arms deals are not partnerships. [...] Too many are afflicted by the misconception that security can be purchased.”

“When foreign policy becomes a commodity, then purchasing military equipment becomes your yardstick for measuring who is a terrorist or who isn't a terrorist,” the Iranian minister added.

Zarif went on to say that the blame game promoted by Saudi Arabia is very much similar to that promoted by the ISIS terrorist group.

“Personal hope is the crucial ingredient for social and international stability. Hopelessness leads to hate,” he added.

The countries in the Middle East have failed to address needs of populace to participate in national life, and this leads to violent reaction of the youth, the top diplomat noted.

Middle East and North Africa region suffer from structural problems, including asymmetry in size, wealth, population, Zarif said.

“The discourse of hate and discourse of exclusion in our region can be exported worldwide creating disaster beyond what you imagine,” he stressed.

Unity will benefit all Muslim states: Leader



the Palestinians, who are Sunnis.”

Pointing to the occupation of the Muslim country of Palestine and the expulsion of its native inhabitants, the Leader, said, “According to Islamic jurisprudence, once faced with the domination of the enemy over Islamic territory, all Muslims are duty-bound to campaign and carry out jihad in whatever possible form and, therefore, fighting against the Zionist regime is incumbent upon and mandatory for the entire Islamic world.”

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic **d e s k** Revolution on Monday regretted “division and dispute” among Muslim nations, saying unity will benefit all Muslim countries.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made the remarks during a meeting with senior and mid-ranking officials, ordinary people and ambassadors of Muslim countries on the occasion of Eid-al Fitr, which marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

“Division and dispute are harmful to Islam and the Muslim Ummah, and conversely Muslim countries pulling closer to each other and refraining from pitting [their military] forces against each other conforms to divine wisdom and benefits all Islamic countries,” Ayatollah Khamenei said, according to the leader.ir.

The Leader added “the issue of Palestine as the foremost problem of the Muslim world” must never “forgotten”.

The Leader described the Quds Day rallies as an example of Islamic unity to be proud of, saying, “This is the very meaning of Islamic unity, in which fasting Shia people pour into the streets with such glory and greatness to voice their solidarity and sympathy for

Larijani urges Eurasian states to counter terrorism

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian **d e s k** Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Tuesday that it is necessary that countries in the Eurasia region also fight terrorism and address other common challenges.

Fighting terrorism, extremism, violence and countering unilateral sanctions that influence free international economic relations can lay the groundwork for multilateral cooperation among the Eurasian countries, Larijani said during a speech at the meeting of the parliament speakers of Eurasian countries in Seoul, South Korea.

Describing terrorism as an “international threat”, he said fight against the terrorist groups entails identifying and countering roots of their ideology and their supporters.

Larijani also said the strategy of the U.S. is “playing with terrorism” rather than fighting it.

Commenting on the Syrian crisis, the senior lawmaker said that the situation in the country has become more complicated due to foreign interferences.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran supports the Syrian government's actions in fighting terrorist groups and highlights the importance of the Syrian people's

role in determining the country's political structure and finding political solution to the conflict,” the parliament speaker stated.

He added it is essential that the international community help restore peace and security in Syria.

The Iranian parliament speaker also said applying military strategy to resolve the Yemeni crisis is “fruitless”, renewing Iran's call for inter-Yemeni talks in order

“The Islamic Republic of Iran supports the Syrian government's actions in fighting terrorist groups and highlights the importance of the Syrian people's role in determining the country's political structure and finding political solution to the conflict.”

Iran's policy is to strengthen ties with Qatar, Rouhani says

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani **d e s k** has said it is Iran's policy to expand ties with Qatar which been blockaded by some of its fellow neighboring Arab states.

Iran will stand beside the Qatari government and people, Rouhani said in a phone conversation with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani on Sunday.

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.

To stop boycotting Qatar, they have also issued 13 demands including closing Al Jazeera television, curbing relations with Iran, shutting a Turkish military base and paying reparations.

“We believe that exerting pressure and imposing sanctions are not right ways to bridge differences,”



Rouhani said, describing the siege of Qatar as “unacceptable”.

“The airspace, land and sea of our country will always be open to Qatar as a brotherly and neighboring country,” Rouhani stated.

Reiterating Tehran's support for “unity” and “integrity” among Muslim nations, Rouhani suggested that Iran and Qatar can help bring Muslims together through cooperation.

He also said that Iran seeks “moderation” and “wisdom” in its relations with the regional countries and is ready to help restoring peace in the region.

For his part, the Qatari leader said, “Qatar has open arms for interaction and cooperation.”

“Relations between Iran and Qatar have always been developing and powerful,” Aljazeera quoted the emir as saying.

U.S. Supreme Court agrees to hear Trump Muslim ban case

The Supreme Court of the United States says it will allow a partial enforcement of President Donald Trump's ban on travelers from six Muslim-majority countries and all refugees until it reviews it in October.

The action was hailed as a win by the right-wing leader, who has insisted the ban is necessary for national security, despite severe criticism that it singles out Muslims in violation of the U.S. constitution.

The justices at the highest U.S. court narrowed the scope of lower court rulings that had completely blocked Trump's March 6 executive order. They also agreed to hear the government's appeals in the cases.

Trump's executive order suspends new visas being issued to people from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen for at least 90 days. It also partly allows a 120-day ban on all refugees entering the U.S. to go into effect.

Both bans are now due to partly go into effect in 72 hours, based on a memorandum issued by the Trump administration on June 14.

In agreeing to hear the case later this year, the Supreme Court is allowing parts of the order to go ahead.

Specifically, the court said the executive order would be enforced on foreign nationals who did not have a "credible claim of a bona fide relationship" with a U.S. person or organization.

In effect, that means that individuals from the designated countries who have never been to the U.S. before, or lacked a relationship with an American or American organization could still have their visa denied during the three-month period.

But what a "bona fide relationship" exactly constitutes is a matter of dispute.

In a dissenting opinion, Justice Clarence Thomas warned that requiring officials to differentiate between foreigners who have connection to the U.S. and those who do not will prove "unworkable".



"Today's compromise will burden executive officials with the task of deciding - on peril of contempt - whether individuals from the six affected nations who wish to enter the United States have a sufficient connection to a person or entity in this country".

He added that the decision would result in a "flood of litigation" until the court issued its ruling.

Shortly after the court issued its opinion, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said on Twitter it would "head back into court to fight the fundamentally unconstitutional Muslim ban this October".

Omar Jadwat, the director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project who had argued the case in court, said in a statement the travel ban "violates the fundamental constitutional principle that government cannot favor or dis-

favor any one religion".

"Courts have repeatedly blocked this indefensible and discriminatory ban. The Supreme Court now has a chance to permanently strike it down," he said.

Lara Finkbeiner, from the International Refugee Assistance Project, which also sued the administration over the ban, said she was "incredibly disappointed with the decision".

"We are a nation that values acceptance and diversity, and in making this decision and putting this executive order back into effect, the Supreme Court is sending a very clear message and it's putting the executive's discriminatory policy back into effect."

But Trump praised the decision, saying in a statement it allowed his travel ban "to become largely effective".

"Today's unanimous Supreme Court decision is a clear victory for our national security," Trump said, adding that the ruling allowed him "to use an important tool for protecting our nation's homeland".

Al Jazeera's Kimberly Halkett, reporting from Washington, DC, said that Trump was portraying the decision as a clear victory - even though this was a view that was not shared by everyone.

"The president in his statement is celebrating a victory. The court really upheld the cracks of the government's case, although saying it will be looking at this case in October," she said.

"The court upheld a 1952 law that gives the president broad powers about immigration when there are concerns about national security."

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Court: Dutch partially liable for Srebrenica deaths

A Dutch appeals court has confirmed that the Netherlands was partly liable for the deaths of about 300 Muslims who were expelled from a Dutch United Nations base after the surrounding area was overrun by Bosnian Serb troops.

The ruling by the Hague Appeals Court upholds a 2014 decision that Dutch peacekeepers could have known that the men seeking refuge at the base in the village of Potocari would be murdered by Bosnian Serb troops if forced to leave - as they were.

The Muslims seeking shelter were among about 8,000 people killed in the July 1995 massacre, which the UN International Court for Justice, in a 2007 verdict, ruled a genocide.

Tuesday's ruling is seen as exceptional as the UN enjoys immunity from prosecution.

However, the Dutch case is almost unique in holding a state participating in a UN peacekeeping mission liable for its actions.

Many of the Muslim victims had fled to the UN-declared "safe zone" in Srebrenica only to find the outnumbered and lightly-armed Dutch troops there unable to defend them. They then headed to the nearby Dutch base.

Reading the complex ruling, Presiding Judge Gepke Dulek-Schermers said that Dutch soldiers "knew or should have known that the men were not only being screened ... but were in real danger of being subjected to torture or execution".

The ruling relates only to the 300 men who had sought safety on the Dutch-controlled base.

In a departure from the earlier ruling, it said the Netherlands should pay only 30 percent of damages, as it estimated the odds at 70 percent that the victims would have been dragged from the base and killed regardless of what the Dutch soldiers did.

The amount of damages is determined in a separate procedure unless the victims and the state can reach a settlement.

Dutch state lawyers left the court building without commenting on the ruling.

The Dutch government resigned in 2002 after acknowledging its failure to protect the refugees, though the Netherlands maintains that the Bosnian Serbs, not Dutch troops, bear responsibility for the killings.

Mladic is on trial for genocide with a verdict expected later this year.

The court rejected an appeal from relatives of other Srebrenica victims, who argued the Dutch government should be held responsible for the protection of thousands more Muslims who had gathered outside the base.

"This is a great injustice," said Munira Subasic of the 'Mothers of Srebrenica' group.

"The Dutch state should take its responsibility for our victims because they could have kept them all safe on the Dutchbat (Dutch battalions) compound."

(Source: Al Jazeera)

U.S. Senator to halt arms sales to Saudi-led states until Qatar dispute resolved

An influential United States Congressman has said he would try to stop the U.S. arms sales to the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) until several regional Arab states involved in a dispute with Qatar resolve their differences with Doha.

Republican Senator Bob Corker, the chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, made the remark.

The PGCC groups the House of Saud regime, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.

Three of those countries, plus Egypt, have severed diplomatic ties and cut all land, sea, and air contacts with Qatar. The four accused Qatar of supporting terrorism, an allegation denied by Doha.

"All countries in the region need to do more to combat terrorism, but recent disputes among the PGCC countries only serve to hurt efforts to fight ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Daesh) and counter Iran," Corker, who is known for his anti-Iran stances, wrote in a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Corker is on a congressional group



that reviews arms deals before they can go ahead.

An aide to the Republican senator, however, said his push would not affect the sales that had already been reviewed by Congress or non-lethal assistance, including training. The Congress has also already lent its blessing to the sale of \$350 billion in precision-guided munitions and other offensive weapons to the Saudi re-

gime.

The sum includes \$110 billion in weapons that U.S. President Donald Trump agreed to sell to the kingdom during a visit to Riyadh in May. The diplomatic rupture has been deemed an outcome of that trip, which analysts say Saudi Arabia took to be a sign of unconditional U.S. support for a more aggressive foreign policy. Former U.S. President Barack Obama had withheld

the sale of certain weapons that Trump approved for sale to Riyadh.

The U.S. has sent mixed signals regarding the dispute among the Arab states. While Trump himself has taken sides with the Saudi regime-led countries, Tillerson and other state officials have attempted to sound less direct, urging dialog.

Some U.S. officials have even seemed to contradict Trump. U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert recently cast doubt on the declared motives of the Saudi regime-led bloc of countries that have boycotted Qatar.

The U.S. has a military base in Qatar, its largest in the Middle East.

Qatar says its neighbors have attempted to punish it merely for its refusal to toe their line on matters of foreign policy.

During his trip to Saudi Arabia, Trump took part in a PGCC summit in which he called for Iran to be isolated.

A final statement of the summit included some anti-Iran articles. Senator Corker said, "Unfortunately, the PGCC did not take advantage of the summit and instead chose to devolve into conflict." (Source: Press TV)

U.S. threatens Syria over 'gas attack plan'

Russia urges U.S. to halt provoking Syrian army

The White House has accused Syria of preparing to stage a chemical attack in the country, threatening that the United States would make Damascus pay "a heavy price."

Press Secretary Sean Spicer claimed in a statement that the U.S. had "identified potential preparations" for an attack "that would likely result in the mass murder of civilians, including innocent children."

Spicer said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian military would "pay a heavy price" if they went ahead with the alleged plan.

■ **A familiar manner of ratcheting up tensions**

The Associated Press, meanwhile, cited anonymous U.S. State Department officials who would "typically" be consulted before such statements are made as saying that they had been caught "completely off guard" by Spicer's statement and that they had come to know about it only after it was released.

The AP report also said that the content of Spicer's statement "didn't appear to be discussed in advance with other national security agencies."

On April 4, over 80 people died in an incident involving chemicals in the town of Khan Shaykhun in the western Idlib Province of Syria. Western countries blamed the Syrian government for what they said was a chemical attack, and days later, the U.S. used it as a pretext to fire 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian airfield in the central province of Homs. U.S. officials claimed that the alleged Khan Shaykhun gas attack had been launched from that airfield.

This is while Syria and its ally Russia said the Syrian government had conducted a conventional airstrike on militant positions in Khan Shaykhun, which also targeted a chemical arms depot held and run by anti-Damascus militants, causing a leakage of the toxic substance and the deaths.

Veteran American investigative journalist Seymour M. Hersh recently confirmed the Syrian narrative. He said that U.S. President Donald Trump had ignored important intelligence reports before issuing the order for the missile attack against the Syrian airfield in reaction to the Khan Shaykhun incident.

According to Hersh, Trump turned a blind eye to reports by the U.S. intelligence community which warned that there was no evidence suggesting the Syrians had used a chemical weapon. The U.S. intelligence had found that the Syrians had on April 4 targeted a meeting site of militants, using a Russian-supplied guided bomb equipped with conventional explosives.

Following the U.S. missile strike, Russia said the U.S. could have prompted an all-out war as the projectiles could have hit Russian forces in the country.

■ **Another U.S. official threatens Iran, Russia, as well**

The developments follow as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley issued similar remarks on Twitter, saying, "Any further attacks done to the people of Syria will be blamed on Assad, but also on Russia & Iran."

Russia has been lending its airpower to Syria's counterterrorism operations since September 2015. Iran has also been providing the Syrian military with advisory military support. The collective support has helped Syria rid considerable territory of Takfiri presence and helped establish an all-out ceasefire in the country in late 2016.

Russia has already suspended a military hotline with the U.S. over another provocative incident that saw U.S. forces shoot down a Syrian fighter jet.

The ratcheting up of tensions by the U.S., including with the latest statement, now risks sparking a major confrontation between parties to the Syrian conflict and complicating efforts aimed at resolving it.

■ **The U.S. has unsanctioned presence in Syria**

Just hours earlier Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had called on the U.S. to prevent "provocations" against Syrian government forces.

In a phone call initiated by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Lavrov "called on Washington to take steps to prevent provocations against Syrian government forces carrying out operations against terrorists," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

The call was made some eight days after the U.S. Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet shot down a Syrian SU-22, which was conducting an operation against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists on the outskirts of the city of Raqqa.

On two other occasions in June and May, U.S. warplanes attacked a Syrian military position near At-Tanf, killing an unspecified number of people and causing some material damage.

■ **Syria denies U.S. allegation**

However, the Syrian government on Tuesday dismissed White House allegations that it was preparing a new chemical weapons attack, as activists reported an airstrike on an ISIL jail in eastern Syria that they said killed more than 40 prisoners.

The Britain-based so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said at least 15 militants were also killed in the airstrike that happened on Monday in the Deir al-Zor province. The activist-run Deir Ezzor 24 media outlet said at least 60 civilians were killed.

The two groups said the United States-led coalition was behind the strike. Russia and Syria also carry out airstrikes in Dayr al-Zawr, and it was not clear how the activists identified the aircraft responsible. The coalition could not immediately be reached for comment.

Ali Haidar, the Syrian minister for national reconciliation, meanwhile dismissed a White House statement on Monday that warned Syrian President Bashar Assad's government against carrying out another chemical attack. Haidar told The Associated Press the charges foreshadowed a new diplomatic campaign against Syria at the United Nations.

(Source: agencies)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Croatia eyes investing in Iran's power industry, making electric wagons

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Minister of Co-d e s k operatives, Labor and social Welfare Ali Rabiei said Croatia is willing to invest in Iran's power industry and also collaboration in making electric rail wagons in the country, IRNA reported.

The minister who visited the Eastern European country heading a trade-social delegation met with senior Croatian officials including Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts Martina Dalic, and Minister of Labor and Pension System Marko Pavic.



Iranian ports' loading, unloading capacity to reach 250m tons in 4 years

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran plans to increase the d e s k capacity of its ports to reach 250 million tons by four years, IRNA reported quoting an official as saying.

According to the Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) Mohammad Saeidnejad, the country's ports are currently operating at a capacity of 210 million tons.

The official noted that three major projects are underway at southern port of Shahid Rajaie which will be completed by the end of Iranian calendar year of 1398 (March 2020).

IMF approves \$666m extended credit facility for Cameroon

The International Monetary Fund has approved an extended credit facility of \$666 million for Cameroon.

The three-year program is expected to help the West African nation restore external and fiscal sustainability and lay the foundations for sustainable, private sector-led growth, the Washington-based lender said in an emailed statement Monday.

State revenue in the oil producer has plunged due to a fall in commodity prices since 2014 and attacks by Boko Haram in the northern parts of the country. While the government forecasts economic growth of 4.9 percent for this year, the IMF projects expansion will slow to 4 percent from 4.7 percent in 2016.

"The Cameroonian economy is now facing decelerating growth, declining fiscal and external buffers, and rapidly-rising public debt," IMF Deputy Managing Director Mitsuhiro Furusawa said in the statement. "The authorities' fund-supported program appropriately aims at addressing Cameroon's large balance of payments need and restoring fiscal and external sustainability."

About \$171.3 million will be available immediately and the remainder will be disbursed over the duration of the program pending semi-annual reviews, the IMF said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Europe's inequality highly destabilizing, ECB's Draghi says

Europe's growing inequality is highly destabilizing and needs to be tackled with education,

innovation and investment in human capital, particularly jobs for young people, European Central Bank President Mario Draghi said on Monday.

Income inequality has grown among euro zone countries since the global financial crisis and some measures also show divergence between the bloc's richer and poorer members, a source of tension for the 19-member currency bloc.

"Is this a seriously destabilizing factor that we should cope with?" Draghi said in a rare town-hall style meeting with university students in Lisbon. "Yes it is."

"We have to fight against inequality," Draghi in response to a student question.

Draghi, leading one of Europe's most respected institutions, has for years called on governments to enact fundamental reforms, arguing that the ECB is able to prop up growth, but only temporarily, giving governments a window of opportunity.

Eurostat data has shown that only a handful of countries have managed to shrink income inequality since the crisis while it has grown sharply in places like France or Spain. Figures also show the highest level of income inequality in the bloc's periphery, like Greece, Spain and Portugal, hit hardest by the crisis.

Calling convergence among euro zone members "fundamental," Draghi said the best way to fight inequality is by creating jobs, which comes from an increased investment in education, skills development and innovation.

He also called on governments to consider better income and wealth redistribution policies.

Defending the ECB's ultra easy monetary policy, Draghi said that super low rates create jobs, foster growth and benefit borrowers, ultimately easing inequality.

He also rejected calls to exit super easy monetary policy quickly, arguing that premature tightening would lead to a fresh recession and more inequality.

(Source: cnbc)

Iran's 5-month crude steel output up near 1m tons: WSA

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's d e s k production of crude steel stood at 8.159 million tons in the first five months of 2017, with 944,000 tons rise from 7.215 million tons in the same time span in 2016, according to the latest report published by the World Steel Association (WSA).

The country's production of crude steel stood at 1.620 million tons in May, with 8.8 percent rise from 1.565 million tons in April, the WSA reported.

According to a January report published by the WSA, Iran pro-

duced 17.89 million tons of crude steel in 2016, registering an 11 percent growth compared to the figure in 2015.

The country's crude steel output stood at 18.466 million tons in the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20), showing 11 percent rise from 16.656 million tons in 1394.

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

Iranian Steel Manufacturers Association's Secretary Rasoul Khalifeh-Soltan believes that while the

Inflation rate stands at 10.2% in Iran: CBI

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has announced that the inflation rate for the 12-month period ended in the last day of the third Iranian calendar month of Khordad (June 21) compared to the same period in the previous year hit 10.2 percent, IRIB news reported.

The Statistical Center of Iran previously put the country's

inflation rate at 7.4 percent in the urban areas and 8.5 percent in the rural areas for the 12-month period ended in Khordad, Tasnim news agency reported.

The center has put the country's inflation rate at 9.8 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20), showing 4.5 percent drop from its preceding year.

It is while the 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.

Curbing inflation was one of the major promises by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani during his presidential campaign. Under the previous administration, inflation skyrocketed to cross 44%.

Iran reluctant to make wheat tariff concessions within EAEU free trade zone

MOSCOW (TASS) — Iran is ready to make tariff concessions on a wide range of agriculture products, excluding wheat, refined oil, mineral water and cigarettes, within a free trade zone with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) that is being formed now, according to Russian Agriculture Ministry's report released after another round of consultations on a temporary agreement making for the creation of Iran-EAEU free trade zone attended by Deputy Minister Evgeny Gromyko.

"In its maximum proposal presented at

the round, Iran demonstrated its readiness to make concessions under the terms requested by member-states, in almost all items the EAEU is interested in, excluding wheat, refined oil, mineral water and cigarettes," the ministry said.

No agreements were made following the consultations as the sides failed to reach a "mutually acceptable compromise, the negotiations will continue," the report said.

Presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia approved the proposals on the launch of negotiations on a free

trade zone with Iran, Egypt, India and Singapore at the summit of the Eurasian Economic Union in December 2016. Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan said then that the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had expressed interest in signing an interim agreement with the EAEU, leading to the formation of a free trade zone.

On March 7, 2017, the intergovernmental committee of the Eurasian Economic Union made a resolution to start preparation of a relevant agreement. The document was approved following the results of the com-

mittee's meeting held in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is an international integration economic association of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. The EAEU came into existence from January 1, 2015 having superseded the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAaEC) that functioned from 2000 to 2014.

The Treaty on the establishment of the EAEU was signed by the presidents of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan on May 29, 2014 in Astana.

UK banks brace for £11.4b capital demand from BOE

The Bank of England plans to increase capital requirements for U.K. lenders by 11.4 billion pounds (\$14.5 billion) to tackle risks posed by consumer credit growth and prepare for the uncertain outcome of Brexit talks.

The BOE set the countercyclical capital buffer at 0.5 percent of risk-weighted assets for U.K. loans effective in June 2018. "Absent a material change in the outlook," the central bank will increase the level again to 1 percent in November.

Each increase of 0.5 percent will swell banks' cushion of common equity Tier 1, the highest-quality capital, by 5.7 billion pounds, according to the BOE's Financial Stability Report published on Tuesday. The BOE also proposed boosting the leverage ratio to 3.25 percent of exposures excluding central-bank reserves.

This "measured approach is likely to decrease the risk that banks adjust by tightening credit conditions, thereby minimizing the cost to the economy of making the banking system more resilient," the BOE said.

The countercyclical capital buffer is meant to guard against banks' tendency to boost lending in boom times and slash it in a bust, potentially exacerbating a slowdown. The regulation is meant to ensure banks have enough capital to weather losses and continue making loans to support the economy.

■ 'Rapid growth'

In the immediate aftermath of Britain's vote to leave the EU last June, the BOE reversed a planned increase in the buffer to help stave off the U.K. slump that was predicted by economists. Since the referendum vote, the economy has performed better

than expectations, leading BOE Governor Mark Carney to suggest the capital buffer could be increased.

The overall risks from U.K. exposures are at "neither particularly elevated nor subdued," according to the BOE.

By the time the BOE considers raising the buffer rate to 1 percent, it will be able to factor in the results of its 2017 stress test of major U.K. banks. Because of the "rapid growth" in consumer credit in the last 12 months, the BOE will bring forward an assessment of stressed losses on this lending to inform its November decision on the buffer.

The BOE previously said raising the buffer is likely to tighten credit, with bank lending spreads increasing by about 10 basis points in response to a 1 percent buffer level in a "stable" economic environment.

The increase of the minimum leverage ratio requirement to 3.25 percent from 3 percent is intended to restore the "level of resilience" delivered before the FPC decision to exclude central-bank reserves from the measure, the BOE said.

■ Stress test

The FPC also tightened standards for mortgage lending, requiring banks to stress test borrowers' ability to repay loans at three percentage points above the standard variable rate.

The BOE said asset valuations on some corporate bonds and U.K. commercial real estate "appear to factor in a low level of long-term market interest rates, but do not appear to be consistent with the pessimistic and uncertain outlook embodied in those rates."

(Source: Bloomberg)

China's Premier, Li Keqiang, praises free trade, in contrast to Trump

Premier Li Keqiang of China reaffirmed on Tuesday his country's desire to be seen as the world's new leader in globalization and free trade, but he offered no specifics on how China might lower its own trade barriers, which are among the steepest of any large country.

Speaking at the opening of a World Economic Forum conference in northeastern China, Mr. Li portrayed his country as deeply committed to a continued opening up to international competition. Without naming the United States or the Trump administration, he also said that it was wrong to blame free trade for economic or social problems.

"When we sprain an ankle when walking on the road, we should not blame the road and stop walking," Mr. Li said, later adding that "in international economic relations, one should not impose unilateral rules."

"Only in this way can we achieve free and fair trade."

President Trump vehemently denounced the state of trade with China and other countries during the election campaign, blaming it for widespread job losses among American manufacturing workers. That argument helped Mr. Trump win the White House and has gained some traction among economists who say the benefits of globalization have not been shared equally, though they point to other factors also eliminating jobs.

But since taking office, Mr. Trump has focused more on non-China subjects, such as withdrawing the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement among a group of Asian and Pacific nations that did not include China, and starting a renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. Li's stance nonetheless represents a clear contrast to the Trump administration's rhetoric, said Eswar Prasad, a Brookings Institution specialist in trade and monetary policy who is attending the conference. "There's really a cognitive dissonance coming from Washington to here," Mr. Prasad said. "Washington is all about tearing



down things."

Yet while Mr. Li briefly mentioned that China would open up its services and manufacturing sectors, a repeated Chinese promise over the past quarter-century, he offered no details. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has repeatedly accused China of being the most heavily protected large economy in the world.

World Trade Organization data shows that China has much higher tariffs on imports than the United States, the European Union or Japan, though its tariffs are lower than those of some developing countries such as India. China also has many regulatory barriers to imports and consistently runs large trade surpluses, particularly in manufacturing — a category that has created tens of millions of jobs in China as companies around the world have moved factories to the country.

President Xi Jinping of China started presenting his country as the new leader of globalization and free trade at the meeting last winter of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The forum's event in Dalian, informally known as Summer Davos, focuses on technology, innovation and potential disrupters to the multinational



country's steel industry's growth has been 5.7 percent on average in the recent years, the figure can reach 10

percent this year, given the promising condition the sector enjoys at present.

(Source: New York Times)

Iran's largest oil terminal boosts capacity to 8 million bpd

The Kharg oil terminal in Iran has increased its crude oil loading capacity to 8 million barrels per day (bpd), three times the current Iranian crude and condensate exports, the managing director of the Iranian Oil Terminals Company (IOTC) said over the weekend.

According to official data quoted by IRNA, Iran's exports are currently more than 2 million bpd of crude oil, plus another 600,000-700,000 bpd of condensates.

The Kharg oil terminal crude loadings account for 95 percent of Iran's crude oil exports, Pirouz Mousavi, the managing director of IOTC, was quoted as saying by the oil ministry's news service, Shana.

Vessel traffic at the Kharg has been rising since some of the Western sanctions against Iran were lifted in January 2016, according to the manager.

Energy giants such as France's Total, Italy's Eni, and Russia's Lukoil have also sent tankers for loading at the Kharg oil terminal, Mousavi said.

In the 2016-2017 Iranian year that ended in March, Iran shipped 780 million barrels of crude oil from the Kharg terminal, up by 80 percent from the previous year, IOTC said last month. Gholamhossein Gerami, director of operations at IOTC, said that Iran exported more than 230 million barrels of light crude oil, 480 million barrels of heavy crude and nearly 70 million barrels of Forouzan crude from the terminal.

A second gold rush is taking place on a small island few



people know about. There a small \$10 million miner... is sitting on \$560 million in gold. Our investor report looks at this opportunity in detail.

Iran, which was allowed to slightly raise output and keep it at 3.8 million bpd under the OPEC production deal, has repeatedly said that it is looking beyond what it says is a 'short-term' agreement, and aims to raise its crude oil production

and production capacity.

Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh has recently said that by 2021, Iran would add 700,000 bpd to its overall capacity, with a targeted total capacity of 4.7 million bpd. Zanganeh was hopeful that condensate production would increase from 600,000 bpd to 1 million bpd by March.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Oil up on weaker dollar, supply glut caps gain

Oil prices rose for a fourth consecutive session on Tuesday boosted by a weaker dollar and investors covering short positions, but worries over persistent oversupply capped gains.

Brent crude futures, the international benchmark for oil prices, had gained 25 cents to \$46.08 per barrel by 0901 GMT.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 23 cents at \$43.61 per barrel.

The gains mean the market is up slightly so far this week, after spending much of the last month in negative territory.

The dollar fell 0.1 percent against a basket of six major currencies, propping up oil, ahead of a speech by U.S. Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen.

"Short-term financial investors also significantly scaled back their net long positions in Brent on the ICE last week... and find themselves at their lowest level in a year and a half," Commerzbank said in a research note.

"Short positions have soared to a new record high, hav-

ing increased more than four-fold since the beginning of the year."

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its partners have been trying to reduce a global crude glut with production cuts. OPEC nations and 11 other exporters agreed in May to extend cuts of 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) until March 2018.

Despite the cuts, which started in January, markets remain well supplied due to rising output elsewhere.

OPEC members Nigeria and Libya are exempt from the cuts and have raised production. OPEC member Iran was also allowed a small increase to recover market share lost under Western sanctions over its nuclear program.

Libya's oil production rose to 935,000 bpd, up from 885,000 bpd last week, a Libyan oil source said on Tuesday. Meanwhile Nigeria's projected August exports are at their highest since March 2016 at around 2 million bpd.

Adding to the bearish supply outlook is an apparent glut in U.S. East Coast product supplies.

Colonial Pipeline Co said that demand on its main distillate line fell below capacity for the first time in nearly six years as the East Coast remained awash in fuel.

Meanwhile, U.S. shale oil output has risen about 10 percent since last year to 9.4 million bpd, with the number of U.S. oil rigs in operation at the highest in more than three years.

"Traders are also looking ahead to the EIA Energy Conference in Washington, where U.S. shale oil producers are expected to give their view of current market conditions," ANZ bank said.

Analysts at Bank of America-Merrill Lynch said demand was not growing quickly enough to absorb output, especially since imports in Asia are stuttering.

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.

(Source: Reuters)

Largest coal consuming countries increase appetite in first 5 months of 2017

Coal mining in the United States, India, and China – the world's three biggest coal consumers – has increased in 2017, reversing a downward trend in the use of carbon-heavy fossil fuel in recent years, according to the Associated Press.

Coal production through May is up by 6 percent, or 121 million tons for the trio year-over-year. The most dramatic change came in the United States, which saw a 19 percent rise in mining over the first five months of 2017, figures from the U.S. Department of Energy show. President Donald Trump campaigned on the promise of restoring coal sector growth. Prior to his inauguration, total tonnage mined globally in 2016 fell 6.5 percent—and the U.S. and China accounted for most of the production decline, BP reported.

Industry experts who spoke to AP said Trump's support of coal had little to do with its resurgence. Instead, the waxing popularity of coal had more to do with changes within American energy markets, new energy policies in China, and India's growing initiative to bring power to its most remote citizens.

And while coal mining has picked up in 2017 in the US, coal consumption "will continue to increase, mainly driven by Asian countries," Xizhou Zhou, of IHS Markit in Beijing, said. "We're seeing a recovery starting this year and an increase until the mid-2020s before you see coal plateau globally."

The U.S., China, and India produce two-thirds of coal worldwide, and the two Asian nations import additional supplies to meet demand. India's coal production has grown over the past few years as Prime Minister Narendra Modi furthers his plan to bring toilets and electricity to the entire country.

(Source: oilprice.com)

European gas shippers warn Nord Stream 2 talks could deter investment

Six European gas transmission operators have warned the European Commission that talks with Russia over the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project could create legal uncertainty for future pipeline projects and put infrastructure investments at risk.

The Commission this month asked the EU's 28 governments to give it the authority to negotiate with Russia to ensure EU laws are respected in building Nord Stream 2, a project which has divided member states.

The new pipeline, which will have capacity to pump 55 billion cubic meters of gas a year to a terminal in Germany, is expected to start operating in 2019.

Six companies – Austria's Gas Connect, Czech Republic's NET4Gas and Germany's Fluxys, ONTRAS, Gascade and Gasunie – said the negotiations with Russia could "trigger considerable adverse effects", in a letter to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker seen by Reuters.

(Source: Reuters)

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NATO can fight terrorism and help refugees

Saving lives in the Mediterranean would also help defeat Islamic State (ISIL).

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has now formally enlisted in the fight against ISIL. It can begin by helping to stem the flow of refugees trying to reach Europe from North Africa.

This would be more than a humanitarian exercise; it would be a counterterrorism operation. Wherever refugees gather in hopelessness, violent extremists have a fertile recruiting ground. And the number of refugees is staggering.

Nearly 200,000 people fleeing violence and poverty tried to cross the Mediterranean last year, and at least 5,000 died in the attempt. The UN estimates that there are more than half a million refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people in Libya alone. Neither the fractured Libyan government nor the European Union can cope with the numbers, leaving hundreds of thousands of people in makeshift refugee camps -- some of which are controlled by human traffickers and resemble concentration camps, according to a German government report.

Those who make it across the Mediterranean don't fare much better. Most end up in overcrowded camps in Italy where social services are lacking and applications for asylum languish. Those intercepted in Libyan waters are sent back. Sometimes the traffickers dump their human cargo in the sea to avoid capture.

So what can NATO do? With more than 700 ships at its disposal, a lot.

For starters, it can build on Italian-led Operation Sophia, which has saved thousands of lives but is woefully inadequate to the task. NATO's sophisticated surveillance capabilities, such as long-range patrol airplanes and satellite imagery, can monitor ports in Africa and the Middle East and aid in search-and-rescue efforts. NATO can also help the EU's efforts to professionalize the Libyan coast guard.

The alliance can foster far more naval cooperation and intelligence sharing among its members, and with intergovernmental entities like Interpol. This should also involve another underutilized asset: private shipping companies, which are obligated to respond to other vessels in distress. NATO could also encourage member states build more camps on Mediterranean islands and could aid with construction, perimeter security, health care and the like.

NATO patrols in the Mediterranean could also provide a more direct benefit in the fight against terrorists: stemming the flow of arms from the Middle East to terrorists in North Africa. ISIL already has a foothold in Libya and is trying to expand into Tunisia.

Two years ago, the civil war in Syria caused the exodus of millions, which set off a political crisis from Greece to the UK and created a lasting rift between Turkey and its NATO allies. That time, the alliance watched from the sidelines. Now, as fighting intensifies and conditions deteriorate in Syria, NATO can't afford to make the same mistake.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Three-quarters of world has little or no confidence in Trump, Pew study finds

➔ The survey also finds that Trump is personally disliked globally, with most seeing him as arrogant, intolerant and dangerous, while few think of him as well-qualified or as someone who cares about ordinary people.

Trump's supporters will argue his "America First" policies were never intended to make him popular globally, and some of his domestic approval ratings have shown a small increase. But such high levels of unpopularity are likely to make other world leaders believe there is no electoral downside in airing their differences with him -- or with the U.S.

The poll suggests that Angela Merkel has replaced the American president as the politician to whom the world's people look for leadership.

Forty-two per cent expressed confidence in the German chancellor, while 31% said they did not have confidence in her. A median of 60% in Europe have confidence in her, a rare achievement for someone who has been at the helm of Germany for more than a decade. Her support is especially strong on the centre-left, underlining how difficult it has become for the opposition German Social Democratic Party to land a blow upon her in the German election campaign.

In contrast, just 6% of Germans said they believed Trump was qualified to be president; 13% believe he cares about ordinary people; and 91% regard him as arrogant, 81% as intolerant, and 76% as dangerous.

In the UK, 89% see him as arrogant, 77% as intolerant and 69% as dangerous. Globally, 65% think Trump is intolerant and 62% that he is dangerous.

Unpopular policies

Most of his trademark policies are also unpopular, including his proposed wall on the Mexican border, his withdrawal from the Paris climate change treaty and his ban on immigrants from several mainly Muslim countries.

In Germany, hosts to the G20 summit of world leaders next month, only 9% support Trump's decision to pull out of the Paris climate change treaty. Globally, only 19% support the move.

In just four of 10 EU countries surveyed does the public feel positively inclined toward the U.S. as a country. The most widespread support is found in Poland (73%), Hungary (63%) and Italy (61%). In spite of the "special relationship" between the U.S. and the UK, only 50% of the British see the U.S. favorably.

The most negative views of the U.S. are in Germany (62% unfavorable), Spain (60%) and the Netherlands (59%). And in the past year, the share of the Spanish public that expresses a very unfavorable opinion has roughly tripled from 7% to 23%.

In more than half of the 37 countries surveyed, positive views of the U.S. experienced double-digit drops in 2017.

In Mexico, positive views of the U.S. have roughly halved, down 36 points from 66% to 30%.

(Source: The Guardian)

New clashes likely between Turkey, Europe

By Cengiz Çandar

Once again, Turkey and the European Union appear destined for a head-on collision in their relations, one that looks very difficult, if not impossible, to avert.

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament on June 20 adopted a revised, strongly worded draft of its Annual Turkey Report 2016, which angered the Turkish government. The committee showed formidable support for the report: Only three members voted against it, while 51 voted in favor and 14 abstained.

The committee emphasized that Turkey's pending constitutional amendments granting extraordinary powers to the presidency aren't in line with the Copenhagen criteria -- which are used to determine a country's eligibility to join the EU -- and called on member states to formally suspend accession talks with Turkey if the changes are implemented in their current form. The amendments aren't scheduled to take full effect until after the presidential and parliamentary elections in November 2019.

In a way, the committee is asking Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to declare the April 16 referendum results null and void. This is, naturally, unacceptable for Erdogan. Even though the validity of the election and the narrow margin of victory have been widely challenged, there isn't the slightest possibility that Turkey will refrain from implementing the referendum results or make changes.

After the committee accepted the report, Kati Piri, a Dutch Social Democrat and the European Parliament rapporteur on Turkey, said, "The continuation of [Turkey's] state of emergency has disproportionate negative effects on Turkish society, and the arbitrary arrest of thousands of citizens, including parliamentarians and mayors, is of utmost concern to us. ... We expect the Turkish government to take the Venice Commission recommendations seriously, as well as the fact that half the Turkish population voted against the changes in the referendum."

Commission's conclusions

Erdogan had dismissed the Venice Commission's conclusions in March, saying the commission "does not count for anything."

"You can write as many reports as you want. We do not recognize your reports. We will not recognize them in the future, either, for your information," he said.

The travel ban at the Supreme Court

Trump cares a lot about winning, or at least the appearance of it. So he was predictably quick to sound off in triumph after the Supreme Court announced on Monday morning that in October it would consider the legality of his revised travel ban and will allow the ban to take partial effect in the meantime. The justices' decision, he said, was "a clear victory for our national security." In reality, "victory" for anyone in this case is far from clear.

Trump, who had called during the campaign for "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States," issued his first travel ban in January, but it was quickly blocked by the courts.

A revised version, issued in March, barred visitors from six Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States for 90 days and suspended the refugee program for 120 days. Key parts of it were again struck down by two federal appeals courts. One of the two courts, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, recalled Trump's own incendiary campaign statements in ruling that the order violated the First Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion and that it "drips with religious intolerance, animus and discrimination."

On Monday, the justices agreed to review both appellate decisions, but their unsigned opinion did not address the merits of those cases. They ruled that until they hear the case in early fall, the ban will apply only to foreigners with no connections to America and not to those "who have a credible claim of a bona fide relationship" here.

Bona fide

What's a "bona fide" relationship? It's a good question, and one that will be litigated aggressively over the summer. The court provided general guidelines -- say, a family member of someone living in the country, a student admitted to a university or a worker with an employment offer



The committee emphasized that Turkey's pending constitutional amendments granting extraordinary powers to the presidency aren't in line with the Copenhagen criteria -- which are used to determine a country's eligibility to join the EU -- and called on member states to formally suspend accession talks with Turkey if the changes are implemented in their current form.

Turkish daily Cumhuriyet noted a nuance in the adopted text of the Foreign Affairs Committee: The earlier wording, "the accession talks should be suspended," was changed to "should be suspended without delay," thus hardening the European stand regarding Turkey.

The text adopted in the Foreign Affairs Committee will be put to debate July 5 at the European Parliament and will be voted at the plenary parliament meeting July 6. Given the significant support in the Foreign Affairs Committee, where all the diverse political groups and blocs of the Parliament are represented proportionally, Parliament is likely to suspend accession talks with Turkey.

Piri, in an interview with the Turkish edition of the BBC, articulated the European Parliament's position and said that despite the proposal's strong wording, it doesn't seek to end the accession immediately. "Without delay" refers to quick action Parliament should take if the constitutional amendments are implemented at the next elections in 2019. Yet she also reiterated that as fundamental human rights and supremacy of law are constantly violated in Turkey, it is impossible



in hand. Relationships that exist only to get around the ban are not acceptable -- for example, between refugees and the immigrant-rights groups that reach out to them as potential citizens.

That approach did not satisfy Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch, who argued in partial dissent that the "bona fide" standard was "unworkable" and will result in a "flood of litigation" in the lower federal courts. The dissenters would have allowed the ban to take effect in its entirety.

All the legal jockeying shouldn't obscure the fundamental foolishness of the policy itself. Despite Trump's groundless claim that the ban is necessary to protect national security, no one from the affected countries has been responsible for a fatal terror attack in the United States in the past two decades. This includes the past five months, during which the White House has repeatedly insisted on the ban's importance even as it has shown little urgency in filing its appeals.

Now the administration has the summer to conduct its vetting review, which was the original rationale for the travel ban -- the government needed time to "figure out what is going on," as Trump once put it. By October, the ban will have expired and the review should be complete. And by then Trump might conceivably have developed a factual basis for a policy that continues to bar people from certain countries, which would trigger a whole new round of litigation.

(Source: The NYT)

There's reason to doubt Saudi Arabia's charming new crown prince

Mohammed bin Salman, the 31-year-old who last week was named crown prince of Saudi Arabia, has been working assiduously to win friends and influence people in Washington. He's acquired a lot of admirers, including in the Trump White House, by outlining plans to reform and modernize the Saudi economy, loosen domestic social controls and -- not least -- undertake tens of billions of arms purchases in the United States.

Yet as Prince Salman formally takes position to succeed his 81-year-old father, King Salman, there is growing reason for doubt about his capabilities. His market-oriented economic reforms look stalled. Meanwhile, his aggressive initiatives in foreign affairs are proving self-defeating -- and damaging to the interests of the United States.

As defense minister, Prince Salman has been closely associated with Saudi Arabia's military intervention in Yemen, which began not long after his father ascended to the throne in January 2015. In every respect, the campaign has been a failure. It has not achieved the declared aim of driving Houthi forces from the capital, Sanaa, and it has led to severe casualties caused by the bombing of civilian targets. Human rights groups have accused the Saudis and their allies, including the United Arab Emirates, of war crimes.

The worst humanitarian crises

Worst, the Saudi coalition has helped create one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has seen in decades. Some 17 million Yemenis are at risk of famine. A cholera epidemic has infected more than 200,000 people since April, according to the United Nations. On average, according to UN reporting, a child dies every 10 minutes in Yemen due to malnutrition, diarrhea and other preventable causes.

Though it long ago became clear that the war is unwinnable, the Saudi leadership persists -- and has succeeded in persuad-

edly will grow. Two German halls, in Dortmund and Oberhausen, have already rejected Erdogan's request to deliver talks to Turkish audiences during his trip.

Turkish-EU skirmishes

Erdogan's visit, on top of the European Parliament's stand on Turkey's accession to the EU, will most likely exacerbate ongoing Turkish-EU skirmishes. The dismal human rights situation and violations of basic freedoms in Turkey drive increasing concern in Europe.

Turkish opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu organized a "March for Justice" from Ankara to Istanbul that began June 15. The 480-kilometer (300-mile) march is expected to take 23 days and is designed to galvanize the opposition, which is bitter over the allegedly fraudulent constitutional referendum, among other things. Thousands of opposition members could descend on Istanbul in mid-July if Erdogan allows the march to proceed. He would then likely send security forces to confront peacefully marching crowds.

Those marchers, participating in what could become the biggest public undertaking in recent Turkish politics, could very well arrive on the first anniversary of the July 15 coup attempt. The government is making preparations for mammoth demonstrations by Erdogan loyalists to commemorate "martyrs" and celebrate the "victory of democracy" -- meaning the consolidation of Erdogan's grip on power.

Imagine the turmoil that could arise if these two groups converge.

Adding to the tension are trials related to the failed coup. The main trial, in which Erdogan expected great fanfare in his favor and against alleged putschists, began to produce contrary results. Some testimony proved counterproductive for the Erdogan narrative, so the trial was postponed until Oct. 30.

However, the first trial involving prominent journalists accused of being associated with the Gulen movement, which is alleged to have instigated the coup, has begun. Many Turkish media outlets, strictly controlled by Erdogan, are muted, yet the trials aren't escaping international notice, and they add to Turkey's bleak human rights record.

The country's EU relations need a miracle. Now is the time to cross fingers, wait for July and pray that the situation doesn't get even worse.

(Source: Al Monitor)



ing the Trump administration to renew support, including bomb deliveries, that the Obama administration suspended. The Saudis say their Houthi enemies are a proxy for Iran, but many experts believe they overstate that case. Meanwhile, the war detracts from the U.S.-led fight against the Islamic State (ISIL), from which the Persian Gulf nations have withdrawn resources.

Then there is the blockade of Qatar by four Sunni Arab countries, another Saudi-led initiative, that began June 5. Saudi leaders said their purpose was to end Qatari support for terrorism -- a dubious claim that nevertheless won the support of President Trump. Yet not until last Friday, following public criticism from the State Department, did the block-aders present their demands. A number have nothing to do with terrorism: For example, Qatar is to close down the Al Jazeera television network, the Arab world's most popular news outlet, which provides an outlet for critics of the region's dictatorships. The Saudis further demand the closure of a military base in Qatar maintained by NATO member Turkey.

The largest U.S. air base in the Middle East is also located in Qatar and is a hub for operations against the Islamic State. Notwithstanding Trump's supportive statements, the boycott risks serious harm to U.S. interests. Like the Yemen war, it should give cause for care in embracing the new Saudi crown prince. Though he may be charming, his adventurism makes him a questionable ally.

(Source: The Washington Post)

How bizarre Saudi Arabia is behaving!

By Zahra Emamzadeh

I have been to Qatar three times; not for a trip as I was visiting my parents in their home, so I can say that I lived in Qatar for more than three months. Qatar is a very small but rich country in west of Asia with only eleven thousand kilometres area and almost fifty years of history. The Guardian has reported Qatar as the richest country in the world in terms of GDP per capita. Qatari people are one of the richest people I have ever seen. I have heard some of the people refer to Qatar as a small scale of New York city in terms of the engineering and the structure; the tall buildings across the Persian Gulf are one of the tourist attractions at nights. This small country with short history today has one of the biggest airlines in the world with almost 160 airplanes and 150 international destinations. Qatar is the second richest country in region.

What did happen in the politics that in less than a day many Arab countries in a region including Saudi, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, who were once close allies to Qatar, cut their diplomatic ties and closed their air, land and sea to a country? Today, after three weeks into the worst Qatar crisis, we still don't know the exact reason of all the unprecedented diplomatic and economic sanctions that were imposed on Qatar.

I have informally talked to Mr. Sohrabi, a former Iranian ambassador and Mr. Emamzadeh, a former Iranian cultural consul in Qatar about the new situation these days, the points and arguments are mentioned below.

According to Mr. Sohrabi this was at least the third time that Saudi Arabia and Qatar got in conflict and tension with one another, but why this time it seems different? He believes that is the effect of Donald Trump trip to Saudi Arabia. Mr. Sohrabi deeply believes that U.S. president's first trip to Saudi Arabia had two major reasons; one, to ensure Israel security and full support, and two, Donald Trump really wanted Palestine not to be the major concern in the region so by his indirect policy he took eyes off from the Palestine and directed attention to Qatar. Mr. Sohrabi wisely mentions that we also need to be aware of the 11,000 troops in U.S. military base in Qatar. After the explosion in Dhahran, American military were shifted to Qatar and since then one of the largest U.S. military bases in the region exists in Qatar and therefor all this hazard can't be without any cooperation.

In regard to the political situation of

the Middle East, Qatar had some vague and uncertain strategies in the last few years. Mr. Sohrabi said that Doha these days is considered as supporter of the terrorist groups by the United States and Saudi Arabia but we need to remember that it was Doha that cooperated with Iran in the "33-day war" in Lebanon and they helped the Lebanese to re-build the south of Lebanon with more than 500 million dollars. He as an observer of the "33-day war" in Lebanon directs us to the major impact that Qatar had had in those days.

Regarding terrorist attacks all around the globe and the question of the way ahead about these groups, Mr. Sohrabi made a thoughtful point; he stated that with the relative success of the Iraqi and Syrian government in fighting with terrorist groups it is not out of mind that the United States and Saudi Arabia are trying to put the blame on Qatar in this way. When Donald Trump said "Qatar must stop funding terrorism" it was a real shock to many. Does U.S. president forgot that the establishment of the Al-Qaeda and all these terrorist groups has rooted in the Saudi Arabia? ISI in Pakistan is founded by Saudi Arabia and unfortunately sometimes Qatar was among the fund-raising countries too. BBC once reported that "since 9/11, the United States-led global effort to disrupt terrorist financing has been relentless"! If it is so, what was the \$110 Billion weapons that were sold to Saudi Arabia by the United State? Do they forget that in 9/11 terrorist attacks there were eleven Saudi attackers among the terrorists? BBC reported that Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Adel al-Jubeir, told BBC that a list of "grievances" would be presented to Qatar, addressing its



Does U.S. president forget that the establishment of the Al-Qaeda and all these terrorist groups has rooted in the Saudi Arabia?

alleged support for terrorism and extremist groups destabilising the region! The question is that before a few days of cutting the diplomatic relations, all these countries had a very similar stance toward regional issues; what happened that now they are all standing against Qatar! There are many vague ideas, but who has the crystal-clear answer we don't really know.

After all, both Mr. Sohrabi who was serving in Iran's embassy in Saudi Arabia prior to his mission as ambassadors in Qatar and Mr. Emamzadeh who was commissioned in Syria before being cultural consul in Qatar, insist on the importance of stability in the region. They both said we are looking forward for an assembling of the Arab countries to

solve the problem, the tension in the region must be solved with negotiation. On June, the 10th CNN reported that President Trump has said he helped those countries make the decision to break off relations with Qatar during his trip to Saudi Arabia last month. The U.S. cannot solve the Middle East problems, as history has proved.

Mr. Emamzadeh pointed out that in his meeting with "Jaber al-Harmi" the then editor of Al-Sharq newspaper (one of the most significant Qatari newspapers), Jaber al-Harmi told him that, "my generation and our fathers only know Shiraz (Iranian close city to Doha) for their shopping, health care and entertainment!" Mr. Emamzadeh said that elderly Qataris considered themselves indebted to Iran. The former Emir of Qatar said that "I can remember those days that we were waiting for a ferry to come from Bushehr to bring us food and water! And we won't forget Iranian kindness ever". Mr. Emamzadeh told me that Iran-Qatar relation is based on cultural relations, Qatari people were always interested in Iranian culture. He directed us to Iranian attitudes toward others, although Qatar is among the countries which support Saudi Arabia and cooperate in fighting with the Syrian government and this is not in line with Iran's politics, now that a neighbour country is facing problem in providing its citizen with food in the Holy month of Ramadan, Iranians are supporting the Qatari citizens.

Turkish-Iranian emerging alliance

By Manish Rai

Iran and Turkey, the two non-Arab Middle Eastern states, are among the largest and most populous in the region. The former occupies a strategic location on the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, while the latter controls the Straits of the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, the Dardanelles that link the Black and Aegean Seas. The two nations descend from the most ancient civilizations in the world and have strong national identities. Turkey and Iran have been mirror images of one another, rarely seeing eye to eye but unable to part ways due to their geographical proximity. Turks were exposed to Persian culture on their move westward and inherited indelible political and religious legacies. Iran is home to a large Turkic minority, and historically, Persia was ruled by Turkish royal families such as the Safavids and the Qajars. In the modern times, as well there was always a cooperation between these two neighbouring nations. In the 1920s, a new Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and a new Iran under Shah Reza Pahlavi signed the Saadabad Pact for non-aggression and mutual defence against outside enemies. The two nations later forged the Baghdad Pact, which included the newly independent Iraq. Even the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 did not shake the solid foundations of mutual relations. While almost all nations quickly imposed or re-imposed visas for Iranians, Turkey kept its doors open to visitors and refugees from Iran.

But because of Syrian conflict the relations between two countries were at all-time low as Turkey and Iran have been on opposite sides of the conflict in Syria. But the unilateral strategic choices of both have not succeeded on the ground. Neither Turkey's choice to seek the toppling of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad

nor Iran's policy of restoring stability in a unified Syria has materialized. Moreover, Iran and Turkey have been targeted by ISIS hence both realised that they have common threat. The problem of Kurds also seems to bring Ankara and Tehran closer together. The Turkish government is currently waging an open and bloody war against Kurdish opposition led by PKK and Syrian Kurdish organisations are accused of cooperation with the United States and Israel which concern Iran. Therefore, Kurds are becoming a common problem for Ankara and Tehran hence both the nations are exploring avenues to formulate joint anti Kurdish strategy. Most recently Saudi-Qatar crisis

brought Turkey and Iran even closer. As both the nations are supporting Qatar. Turkey's parliament passed the bill for increased deployment of Turkish troops in Qatar for protection of Qatari Royal family and Iran had offered to send food to Qatar by sea.

Let's have a look on how the two nations are cooperating with each other on multiple fronts. Both sides have been exploring together diplomatic solutions to the Syria war. As Ankara and Tehran have agreed to speed up the Astana talks aimed at facilitating a political solution to the Syrian crisis. There is growing energy and commercial relations between Turkey and Iran. Turkish President on his recent

visit to Iran reaffirmed Turkey's determination to increase trade with Iran to \$30 billion annually, saying Ankara saw no obstacle to the development of its cooperation with Tehran. Another important area of cooperation is Iraq as Iraq will like to settle on a political condominium over the Kurds. Ankara wields influence over one of the KRG's two main rival factions (the Kurdistan Democratic Party) and Tehran maintains hegemony over the other (the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan). This suggests that Ankara and Tehran will also be the non-IS opposition's main sponsor in the north going forward.

Turkey and Iran have some areas of disagreement but still they have agreed to compartmentalize their relations on different fronts. For instance, while the two nations will continue to disagree on some aspects like there individual Syria policy (e.g., Assad's future), they would both cooperate on other areas like economic, Kurdish policy and anti IS strategy. In the longer-term Tehran knows that Turkey will play a key role in building potential bridges between Iran and the West. Ankara knows that if it seeks greater influence within all corners of the Arab world, including Shia populations, a cordial relationship with Iran is important. Thus, while the regional landscape remains complex and in motion, Turkey and Iran have more to gain than lose by continuing to build stronger ties. But one thing is very much clear that the closeness of these two players will create a strong political, security and economic bloc in the Middle East in coming times. These two important nations of the region should also realise that by forging a renewed alliance among themselves they also shared a greater responsibility to contribute for secure and stable regional order in which there is no place for extremism and sectarianism.



While the regional landscape remains complex and in motion, Turkey and Iran have more to gain than lose by continuing to build stronger ties, and the closeness of these two players will create a strong political, security and economic bloc in the Middle East in coming times.

The U.S. military bases abroad are disrupting the world order

By Masud Wadan

In years before 2014, the Afghan think tanks would opine that the U.S. may wind down the Afghanistan's conflict through the end of this year, inferring that the goal of founding the nine large military bases across the country is almost accomplished. Many would delightfully say that Afghanistan is phasing into a new chapter with the flames of war quelled as the U.S. government insisted on troop withdrawal.

Entrenching military headquarters in strangers' territories has no excuse or legal ground under any circumstances. The Afghan nation would cast aside objection to this permanent military foothold thanks in most part to the bitter reality that the U.S. operates about 800 enormous military stations and installations in more than 70 countries worldwide, and would embrace the approach of so many other host countries that are economically and militarily too powerful, provided that they are offered the same peaceful life the others enjoy.

Afghanistan's war, notorious for being protracted and the lengthiest in the U.S. history has spiraled into a state the U.S. calls "out of control". Even if the U.S. determines to end the war, commanding the very military bases in different region is quite a threat to human life there, an impetus to likely war with regional adversaries. The perpetuity of American bases in Afghanistan – and perhaps elsewhere – is substantiated with the comments of an American war expert made in an interview last year that Afghanistan's conflict and crisis is bound to last for at least another fifty years.

The largest U.S. military base by quantity of personnel is situated in Germany with over 9000 members. The world's challenging power claims that Europe-based military headquarters safeguard its allies in the continent against Russia; stations in the Middle East ensure the free flow of oil and contain Iranian influence, and bases in Asia including Afghanistan protect its Asian allies from a rising China and North Korea.

The reality is no country in the world is willing to bully the other to a measure that might require building up of as much huge and as many more bases. North Korea, for example, has been demonized in recent years through the lens of media, but indeed, after the brouhaha over threats from North Korea unexpectedly faded out, it unveiled the secret behind it which was the installation of THAAD defense system in South Korea's border with North. It elicited extensive reactions from South Korean communities. It also opened the mind that the North Korea's entire boasting of nuclear advances and test-firings were just seen as potato-small challenges that is overplayed to allow the U.S. place THAAD for objectives beyond the region – China and Russia.

The U.S. military seniors are reasoning that if they bring troops back home, they may be less safe. As a largest military operator abroad, hasn't there been any so-called terrorist attack in the U.S. or other European countries so far. Or the number of overseas servicemen still needs to mount to contain these risks.

In September 2016, the new Philippine president, who rose against American policies, told U.S. Special Forces to leave the southern Philippines, accused them of fanning the flames of conflict. Referring to recasting of its foreign policy towards the Washington, he says:

"For as long as we stay with America, we will never have peace in that land [Mindanao], we might as well give it up."

Even during the Cold War, as Robert Johnson has argued, the Soviet threat was subject to "undue alarmism" and even without American forces deployed in Western Europe; a Soviet attack was extremely unlikely. According to International relations scholar Robert Jervis:

"The Soviet archives have yet to reveal any serious plans for unprovoked aggression against Western Europe, not to mention a first strike on the United States."

In 2005, the Uzbekistan's government gave the U.S. a deadline of six months to quit its large military base in southern town of Khanabad which was also referred to as K2. The military station was opened weeks after 9/11 to supply logistical aid for the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Washington faced quandary and scrambled to renew the leasing agreement for the base, with U.S.\$ 15 million already paid to that date. The U.S. offered a hefty aid package to make this former Soviet stronghold accept the request. But the order remained firm to take effect.

The U.S. bases all over the world has back fired in many ways. Taking Iran as example, the Islamic revolutionary regime kicked off and beefed up its nuclear enrichment program due in main part to deter rising U.S. bases on the east and west. By the same token, North Korea solidified its offensive and defensive power, prompted to do so for the large-scale U.S. installations in South Korea and Japan.

Under present circumstances when the U.S. bases are overwhelming the jurisdictions of the enemy states [Russia, China or Iran], how would it react if one of rival states move its military base somewhere close to the U.S.?

Apart from Afghanistan which is under outright occupation, the rest of the world nations housing the U.S. military bases feel belong to colonial territory. In 1991, the Philippine Senate attacked on the U.S. military presence, calling it tantamount to colonialism and affront to Philippines sovereignty and then president Aquino ordered complete withdrawal.

Those U.S. military bases sitting somewhere between the extremes of the U.S. and a potential rival may play bulwark to the U.S. defense. That is to say, these military bases armed to teeth with advanced warfare are on the frontline and fire would initiate from the same points as instant response or preemptive strike on the opposite fronts. What is vague to mind is to what extent does the U.S. guarantee the safety of the accommodating states?

If Russia or China points one arm to the U.S. in the event the chances of a hot war come to a head, the other is targeted at Afghanistan or others. No inhabitant would be in security. This theory, thus, discredits the legality of military bases at all. If the U.S. goes to war with China over the South China Sea dispute, first it needs to deliver a security guarantee to Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines. The last country in row has already backed down from the U.S.-China strife by uttering "NO" to the U.S. military presence there.

Afghanistan is the most defenseless of all submitting states hosting the U.S. troops. The U.S., as alleged "custodian" of Afghan nation against foreign aggression [stated in Kabul-Washington Bilateral Security Agreement] has done the least for the dying nation in return for immense military bases it occupied. There is no modern defense system in place, other than something to protect the bases.

As a most destructive non-nuclear bomb, the use of MOAB on Afghan soil alerts the Afghan citizens about loads of such explosives behind the perimeters of the U.S. stations. If there can be MOAB in their camp, there certainly are other demolishing ordnance like those used in latest truck bombing in Kabul's diplomatic quarter that sent powerfully blowing shockwaves to surroundings.

(Source: Global Research)

Anne Morgan, an American hero

By Corinna Lothar

The United States was finally in the "war to end all wars." France had been ravaged since the summer of 1914. Villages and towns were obliterated. Women and children went hungry and homeless as the armies wrestled in futile combat in mud, blood and indescribable filth and disease. The British lost 20,000 dead in a single day at the Battle of the Somme.

"Somme," said a grim German officer at the end of the battle. The "whole history of the world cannot contain a more ghastly word."

But when the American doughboys got to France in the summer of 1917, thousands of Americans were already there, as volunteer soldiers, nurses, ambulance drivers and aviators, including the celebrated Lafayette Escadrille. Among them was a rich socialite, Anne Tracy Morgan,

youngest child of the Wall Street baron John Pierpont Morgan. Alan Govenar and Mary Niles Maack recount in their lavishly illustrated biography, "Anne Morgan: Photography, Philanthropy and Advocacy," that as a little girl Miss Morgan told her father that when she grew up she would be "something better than a rich fool." Something very much better she turned out to be.

A New Yorker profile in 1927 described her as some-

one whose "entrance seems to quicken the air of the room ... her energetic presence charges the atmosphere like an electrical disturbance ... she knows what she wants done and is concerned only with results." She was tall with a commanding presence and bright dark eyes. She raised money for relief in the ballrooms of New York, and she went to the Western front to taste German shot and shell to make sure the money would be well spent. ➔13

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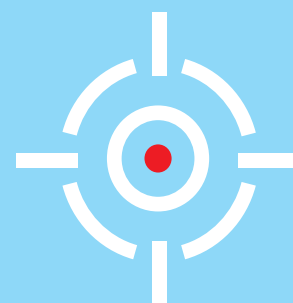
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What are my HIV testing options?

Next combo tests offer faster, more reliable results

By Dennis Sifris

When an HIV infection is suspected, it is most commonly diagnosed by tests that can detect cells called antibodies and/or antigens in either the blood or saliva.

An antibody is a type of protein secreted by white blood cells that can detect and destroy foreign bodies like viruses or bacteria. An antigen, by contrast, is any substance that can provoke an immune response in the form of antibodies (as happens with HIV).

The tests used to confirm HIV infection are designed to react with these agents. A “positive” result means that HIV antibodies/antigens have been detected and that an infection has occurred. A “negative” result means that no antibodies/antigens have been detected and that HIV infection has not occurred.

Conversely, a “false positive” is when a test incorrectly indicates an HIV infection, while a “false negative” is when the test incorrectly shows that no infection has occurred. Both of these are relatively rare are using current testing assays.

■ Understanding the window period

People will usually develop measurable levels of HIV antibodies within 30 days of infection, although some may take longer—up to three months in some cases. HIV antigens, by contrast, take between two to five weeks to develop.

Before this happens, there is a period wherein antibody/antigen levels are too low to be reliably detected.

This is called the window period. It is during this time that an infected person can pass HIV to others, but still have a negative result if given an HIV test.

If you believe you have been infected and suspect when you might have been accidentally exposed to HIV, it's important that you share this with your doctor or testing center.

They can then help determine if the HIV test falls within the window period or if it can be performed with reasonable levels of reliability.

■ HIV antibody tests

The HIV ELISA (enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay) is a highly sensitive test that changes color when HIV antibodies are present. Results are assigned a numeric value, with values below 1.0 indicating a negative result and values above 1.0 indicating a positive (or reactive) result. Although the ELISA offers a high probability of HIV infection, it is not used alone as in the detection of HIV.

When an ELISA test produces a positive result, a second antibody test, called the Western Blot, is used to confirm the results. Together, the ELISA and Western Blot are shown to have an accuracy of 99.9 percent in the general U.S. population, with a false-positive rate of about one out of every 250,000 tests performed.

Occasionally, the tests can return with an indeterminate or inconclusive result. This can happen for a number of



The window period is the time that an infected person can pass HIV to others, but still have a negative result if given an HIV test.

reasons:

- The infection may have been too recent to reliably detect.
- There may have been problems with the test sample or the testing procedure itself.
- Acute infections like syphilis ?or Lyme's disease can sometimes elicit a false positive result, as can autoimmune conditions like lupus or diabetes.

If a person has an inconclusive result, the tests should be repeated.

■ Combination antigen/antibody tests

On June 27, 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended a new strategy for HIV testing using 4th generation combination assays. These next generation tests are able to test for both HIV antibodies (Ab) and antigens (Ag) and can confirm an HIV infection up to four weeks earlier than ELISA/Western Blot assays.

There are two such tests approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for use in HIV screening: the Alere Determine HIV 1/2 Ag/Ab Combo and the Abbott ARCHITECT HIV Ag/Ab Combo.

Based on their high level of testing accuracy, the CDC recommends the following three-step approach:

- Conduct initial testing with Ag/Ab combo assays. If the result is negative, then no further testing is needed.
- If the first result is positive, conduct a second test to differentiate HIV-1 and HIV-2 antibodies, a step considered important in determining the course of therapy for the HIV-infected individual.
- If the second result is negative, a third test (called the HIV-1 NAT) would be performed to differentiate acute HIV-1 infection from an initial false positive result. The HIV-1 NAT is able to detect small quantities of viral RNA as is little as one to two weeks.

Due to the reliable combination of Ag/Ab testing, confirmation by way of a Western Blot is no longer considered necessary.

■ Rapid in-home HIV tests

Rapid in-home HIV tests are ELISA-based assays that can deliver results in as a little as 20 minutes (as opposed to standard ELISA/Western Blot assays that can take several days). The tests are performed using saliva samples, the results of which can either be “negative” or “preliminary positive.” Preliminary positives must be confirmed with a Western Blot performed in a lab.

In 2012, the FDA approved the first in-home rapid HIV test for direct sale

to consumers. While the products are easy to use and offer linkage to care for those who do test positive (via a 24-hour consumer hotline), some are concerned that the lack of face-to-face counseling and potential breaches in informed consent may undermine prevention efforts.

Furthermore, while the in-home tests offer the same sensitivity and specificity as point-of-care tests, clinical research has demonstrated a false negative rate of around seven percent (or roughly one out of 12 tests).

Another study published by the University of California, San Francisco has suggested that fourth generation rapid tests have a real-world accuracy of around 86 percent in correctly identifying HIV-positive cases but only 54 percent accuracy in confirming serostatus during the early, acute stages of HIV infection.

With mounting evidence suggesting that early diagnosis and treatment may prevent a number of long-term complications — including a possible reduction in the viral reservoirs where HIV can persist for decades — the need for accurate identification during acute infection is considered imperative.

(Source: [verywell.com](#))

5 simple steps to get the best night of sleep ever

By Kate Bayless

■ 1. Make the room dark.

First things first, appeal to your sense of sight. Things like your alarm clock, cellphone, streetlights or even a full moon have an impact on the quality of your sleep. These lights send a wake-up message to your brain, which suppresses your body's production of melatonin (the sleep hormone), making it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep. For some solid shut-eye, make your bedroom completely dark, says Robert Oexman, M.D., director of the Sleep to Live Institute. “Use blackout shades to block outside light. If the alarm clock has LED lights, it should be turned around and covered up.” This goes for cellphones too: Plug them in outside the bedroom or turn on the “Do Not Disturb” feature.

■ 2. Do a sound check.

Do you need music to soothe you to sleep? An audiobook? Maybe the television? Sound preference at night varies greatly from person to person. While you may love falling asleep to your favorite playlist or TV show, experts recommend against it. Your brain continues to register and process sounds while you sleep, so the slam of a car door, the changing volume of a song or late-night infomercials can disrupt your sleep. So aim for keeping nighttime noise levels constant. Ideally, this means creating a constantly quiet sleep environment. But for those who deal with partners who snore, freeway noise or a neighbor's barking dogs, a fan or white noise machine can provide a calming and consistent cover.

■ 3. Find the right room temperature.



While soft, comfortable bedding can lull you into a good night's sleep, another touch element is also important: temperature. In the evening, body temperature begins to slowly decrease, continuing to fall until the early hours of the morning, when the body begins to warm, helping to rouse you from dreamland. “A room temperature of 65 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit is optimal,” says Dr. Robert Oexman. But don't turn the thermostat down so low that you need heavy pajamas or stuffy bedding, which can have the same sleep-stealing effect. If you love to cozy up in bed, keep your head and feet out of the covers, says Dr. Oexman. Taking a warm shower before bed can

Study shows that smelling lavender oil caused a significant decrease in blood pressure, heart rate and skin temperature — all important for helping you fall asleep.

also help cue your body to start cooling off.

■ 4. Sniff a soothing scent.

Can you sniff your way to a better night's sleep? One 2012 Thai study found that smelling lavender oil caused a significant decrease in blood pressure, heart rate and skin temperature — all important for helping you fall asleep. Not into lavender? Choose a smell you like and stick with it even when you travel, says Dr. Robert Oexman. The body's scent-processing system is connected to your brain's emotional center, so any scent that makes you relax or brings up fond memories can help soothe you to sleep. Don't choose a scent you smell regularly during the day, though, says Dr. Oexman. Using the scent only at bedtime can help train your body and brain to connect it with sleep.

■ 5. Try a taste of tartness.

Of all the five senses, taste is often forgotten during bedtime routines. While warm beverages can play a soothing role in a nighttime routine, tart cherry juice is a natural source of the sleep hormone melatonin. One 2014 study from The FASEB Journal showed that drinking two 8-ounce glasses of tart cherry juice a day increased sleep by an average of 85 minutes compared to a placebo. According to the National Sleep Foundation, foods with tryptophan can also help make you drowsy. Turkey is a well-known source of tryptophan, but eggs, chicken, nuts and dairy all contain similar amounts. Pairing your favorite tryptophan-containing food with a carbohydrate will make it an even more effective snooze agent.

(Source: [livestrong.com](#))

More health problems reported from cosmetic products

By Victoria Knight

Complaints of adverse health events related to cosmetic and personal care products more than doubled from 2015 to 2016, according to a study published Monday in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine.

The majority of those complaints stemmed from hair care products.

Northwestern University researchers looked at complaints collected by the Food and Drug Administration from 2004 to 2016. The information came from the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition's Adverse Event Reporting System, which allows consumers or health care professionals to submit complaints about harm caused by using cosmetic products.

The study found that there were 706 related adverse events reported in 2015 and 1,591 in 2016. Compared with the average number of reports across the 12-year study period, that's a 78% increase in 2015 and a 300% increase in 2016.

However, the lead study author, Dr. Steve Xu, believes the number of adverse health events is probably much higher and more data are needed.

“These numbers are likely underreported. We need better reporting, from both consumers and clinicians,” Xu said. “Broadly, the hope of our paper was to continue this discussion to modernize and expand the collection of data about personal care products. If you can't measure it, you can't manage it, was our key point.”

The study authors largely attribute increases in reported adverse health events to WEN by Chaz Dean hair care products. In 2014, the FDA announced that it was investigating WEN by Chaz Dean Cleansing Conditioner products because it had received complaints of hair loss, hair breakage, balding, itching and rash. As of November, the FDA had received 1,386 complaints of adverse health events from these products.

In the course of the investigation, the FDA discovered that Chaz Dean Inc. and parent company Guthy Renker LLC had received more than 21,000 complaints. However, under current regulations, the companies are not required to report these complaints to the FDA.

Although the FDA investigation is ongoing, the WEN conditioning products have not been pulled from the market. The FDA has no authority to recall cosmetics products, although it can recommend recalls.

Manufacturers also do not have to receive approval from the FDA before cosmetics go on sale.

In an email, the FDA said that “The law does not require cosmetic companies to share their safety information, including consumer complaints, with the FDA. FDA's data on cosmetic adverse events are limited because reporting is voluntary. The FDA may take regulatory action against cosmetics on the market that do not comply with the laws we enforce, if we have reliable information indicating that a cosmetic is adulterated or misbranded.”

Xu said he still thinks most cosmetics are OK to use.

“When it comes to cosmetics on the shelves that are dangerous, it's very hard to prove,” Xu said. “In general, cosmetics are a very safe product class.”

The Personal Care Products Council said in a statement that it “believes that mandatory adverse event reporting is critically important, which is why we have long advocated for it on Capitol Hill.” The council is a national trade association representing the cosmetic and personal care products industry.

“Nevertheless, despite the recent increase in reporting, the fact remains that only a very small percentage of cosmetics products on the market are associated with adverse events. And of those, a fraction are listed as ‘serious,’” the council said. “In other words, even with the increase, adverse reactions associated with cosmetics and personal care products are extremely rare.”

Dr. Robert Califf, former head of the FDA, said the root of these complaints lies in the FDA's limited ability to regulate cosmetics.

“For cosmetics -- and for dietary supplements -- the FDA's oversight authority remains stuck at the levels established in 1938, nearly 80 years ago,” Califf said in an editorial accompanying the study in JAMA Internal Medicine.

Sens. Diane Feinstein, D-California, and Susan Collins, R-Maine, introduced a bill in May that would require further regulation of personal care products. If passed, the bill will require the FDA to test certain ingredients. It would also give the agency authority to issue recalls and require more complete product labels and warnings from manufacturers.

Kim Harley, associate director at the University of California, Berkeley's Center for Environmental Research and Children's Health, said this kind of regulation, if enforced, could help the FDA learn more about the long-term health effects of cosmetics, which still remain largely unknown.

“When you think about harmful chemicals, you can think of two levels,” Harley said. “You can think of acute harm and chronic exposure. Acute would be ‘I use a cosmetic product, and I get this rash that's almost immediate, or hair loss, or something like that.’ It's an extreme reaction that's happening so close in time to when you use the product, it seems it's linked to the use of this product.”

Harley, who emphasized that most cosmetics are not harmful, says acute events are most likely the kind reported in the Northwestern study.

“On the other hand, there are chemicals that might, if we use them every day over a long period of time, have small, long-term impacts on our health,” said Harley, who conducts research on the effects of chemical hormone disruptors in cosmetics but was not affiliated with the new study.

“These effects may not be obvious on a day-to-day basis, but you know if you've been using this product for 20 years of your life, maybe it would have some sort of health impact over the long-term. And this is why we need more research. With these long-term health impacts, there's so much we don't know.”

In the meantime, the FDA encourages consumers and professionals to report any adverse events.

(Source: [CNN](#))

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 Wikileaks: The CIA can remotely hack into computers that aren't even connected to the internet.
new documents published by WikiLeaks on June 22 suggest that even when such extreme measures are taken, no computer is safe from motivated, well-resourced hackers. The 11 documents describe a piece of software called "Brutal Kangaroo," a set of tools built for infiltrating isolated, "air-gapped" computers by targeting internet-connected networks within the same organization.

2 HMD Global's latest Nokia-brand smartphone will arrive on Amazon for \$229 next month.
The device is a perfectly reasonable mid-range Android device, packing a 5.5-inch HD display and a body hewn from aluminium, or aluminum, now that it's being sold in the US. Tucked inside is a Snapdragon 430, 3GB RAM, 32GB storage and space for a microSD card, running Android Nougat.

3 Augmented reality studio castAR reportedly closes its doors.
The remaining employees are apparently trying to sell its existing technology.

4 Twitter on Android automatically enters 'night mode' after dark.
Now the only thing keeping you awake is outrage.

5 Microsoft wants OneNote to be the go-to classroom app.
Microsoft has been quietly focusing on the education market with its OneNote app for some time now. It's offered free Office 365 subscriptions for students, an integrated math tutor and a classroom-centric add-on called One-Note Class Notebook.

6 Facebook won't release data on political ads to researchers.
The company's policy is the same for political and commercial advertising.

7 Google gives students interactive tools for STEM and internet safety.
The company is also offering more Voyager stories and guided curriculum.

8 Google officially kills Gchat in favor of Hangouts.
Google Talk, also known as Gchat, has officially been put out to pasture and replaced with Hangouts. The tech giant has been threatening to do so since March, so you've only yourself to blame for holding on to an internet messaging services from days gone by.

9 Not that long ago, there was a report that the on again/off again merger talks between T-Mobile and Sprint had resumed, but the Wall Street Journal reports they're on hold. That's apparently due to Sprint negotiating exclusively with the combined unit of Charter and Comcast. An unlikely result could be an acquisition of the fourth largest wireless carrier, or the two cable companies could invest in it to help improve the company's network, which they could then use to offer their wireless services instead of Verizon.

10 Nintendo announced that the Super Nintendo Entertainment System Classic Edition will hit retail on September 29 for \$80. It will come with 21 games on its hard drive, including classics like Super Mario World, The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past, and Super Metroid.

It's now easier to get Purism's security-focused laptops

Purism is nowhere near as well-known as other PC makers, but you may want to keep it on your radar if you're becoming increasingly concerned about security and privacy. The company, which only used to sell made-to-order machines, has just announced the general availability of its security-focused Librem 13 and Librem 15 laptops. That means you don't have to wait months in a waiting list just to be able to buy one -- you'll now get your computer within "a few weeks after purchase."



Another kill switch disables their WiFi and Bluetooth in an instant to prevent unauthorized connection to your computer in public. Librem 13, 15 and the brand's other computers also run the company's own PureOS that's a derivative of Debian GNU/Linux.

Take note that the Librem laptops aren't cheap, though: based on what we've seen from the manufacturer's website, the 13-inch laptop will set you back at least \$1,699, while the cheapest 15-inch configuration costs \$1,999.

(Source: Purism)

From braille to Be My Eyes – there’s a revolution happening in tech for the blind

By Alex Lee

"Connected to other part," my iPhone says to me as I stand somewhere in London's Soho, trying to decipher the letter on the top of a bus stop.

"Hello?" says an American woman, reminding me of Scarlett Johansson's disembodied artificially intelligent character from the sci-fi film Her.

"Hey, er ... can you give me a hand by reading the letter on the bus stop?" I ask.

"Sure ... can you move your phone a bit more up, and to the left ... Ya! It says ... F."

Result. I thank her, end the session, pull up Citymapper and navigate my way onto the 453 going to New Cross.

I have a little bit of vision, but only enough to see motion and movement.

I am using an app called Be My Eyes, an app that connects blind and visually impaired people to sighted volunteers via a remote video connection. Through the phone's camera, the blind person is able to show the sighted individual what they are looking at in the real world, allowing the volunteer to assist them with any of their vision-related problems.

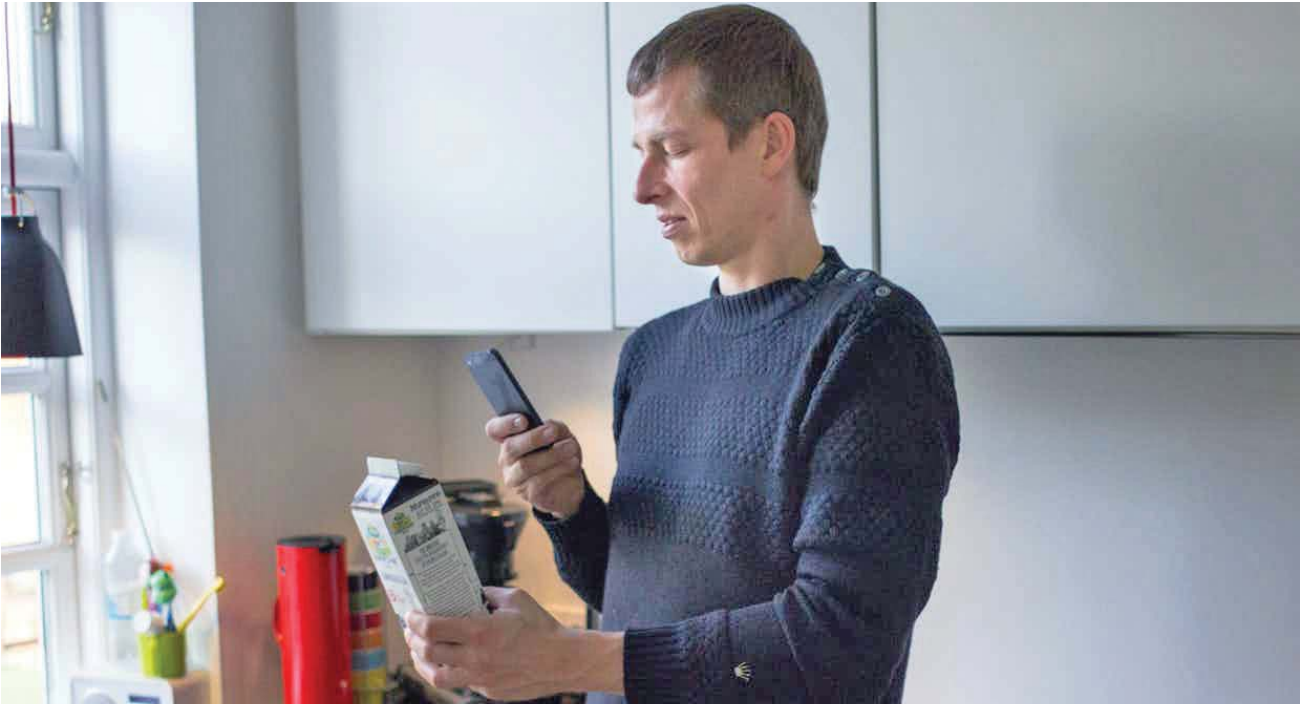
I began to lose my sight in the summer of 2013 to a rare genetic mitochondrial disease called Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy and was soon registered blind. I consequently found myself relying on an assortment of assistive technologies to do the simplest of tasks.

Be My Eyes has just over 35,000 visually-impaired users registered for the app and over half a million volunteers. Whenever a visually impaired user requests assistance a sighted volunteer receives a notification and a video connection is established.

Its benefits are obvious. Jose Ranola, a 55-year-old from the Philippines who works in construction and has retinitis pigmentosa, said: "I use it to help me identify medicine and read printed materials and also to describe places and objects." He adds: "All my experiences were good. The volunteers were very helpful."

James Frank, a 49-year-old counsellor in Minnesota, US, who has severely damaged optic nerves, is also a fan. "The response has been favorable and the volunteers are always polite," he says. "The longest I have waited is maybe a minute."

Brenda Smith, 51, who lives in Brisbane, Australia, has the same condition as I do.



She says she uses Be My Eyes for day-to-day tasks like reading instructions on food and telling apart the white bread her son eats from the brown bread she does. She says she also used it recently to guide her to which switch had thrown in the electricity box.

In the UK there are over 2 million who have some form of sight loss and an estimated 285 million people registered blind or visually impaired worldwide. Technology has long been playing a role in improving their lives. In the mid-1970s Ray Kurzweil, a pioneer in optical character recognition (OCR) – software that can recognize printed text – founded Kurzweil Computer Products and programmed omni-font, the first OCR program with the ability to recognize any kind of print style. He went on to make the Kurzweil Reading Machine, the first ever print-to-speech reading machine for the use of the blind.

Now, there's a new booming age in the field of accessibility, driven in part by smartphones and high-speed connectivity. Screen readers have developed to such an extent that braille is no longer taught.

All the time, companies are finding new ways to improve accessibility and Be My Eyes isn't the only assistive

technology company taking advantage of the real time human element, building technology that is based on the creation of dialogue with its users.

In May, startup Aira, the first product out of AT&T's Foundry for Connected Health raised \$12m in funding. Aira's platform takes advantage of pre-existing wearable smart glasses, like Google Glass, and uses the mounted camera.

Earlier this year, Aira helped Erich Manser, who has retinitis pigmentosa, run the Boston marathon. Through the glasses, Aira's agent, Jessica, was able to give him all the information that he needed regarding his surroundings. The two had been working together since Jessica first became an Aira agent the previous summer. By developing code words and short commands, Jessica, with the assistance of a sighted guide, was able to direct Erich past any obstacles, onto specific routes and onto the finish line to pass it safely. This was Erich Manser's eighth Boston marathon, but his first with the assistive technology.

It's not just in linking sighted people with visually impaired users that technology is able to help. The Sunu band, partially funded through Indiegogo, is trying to help improve people's ability to perceive their surroundings. Based in Boston and

Mexico, Sunu is a technology start-up creating a bracelet that uses ultrasonic sonar technology to detect the user's surroundings and send haptic feedback whenever an obstacle comes into proximity. The ultrasonic waves emitted from the band's transducer bounce off obstacles and are translated into vibrations that get increasingly more frequent the closer the user gets to the obstacle.

The next generation of tech advancements can go even further to help blind people. Autonomous vehicles, if built with the kind of intuitive AI voice-enabled assistive solutions like Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri that are already helping in the home, will give blind people increased independence. It is just a matter of making these solutions integral to design when developing the vehicles.

It's not just for the blind. Autonomous vehicles will have the capability to revolutionize access and liberate people who have limited mobility, while assistive technologies are being developed for all kinds of other impairments. From the stair-climbing Scewo wheelchair, to grip-adjusting bionic arms, technology is offering the biggest leaps forward in accessibility for years and has the ability to significantly improve the lives of so many.

(Source: Guardian)

Your smartphone makes you stupid, study shows

Researchers at the University of Texas find the "mere presence" of a phone reduces our ability to think and concentrate even when it's off.

Looks like the word "smartphone" may be a misnomer. Sure the phone may be smart, but just having it around makes us dumber, according to a study of nearly 800 phone users conducted by the University of Texas at Austin.

Researchers at the university's McCombs School of Business asked participants to takes a series of computer-based tests that needed their full concentration. Before they began the tests, geared to measure "the brain's ability to hold and process data at any given time," people in the study were randomly asked to either place their phone facedown on the desk, in their pocket or in another room. All were told to mute the sound.

The study found that people with their phones in an-



other room "significantly outperformed" those who had their phones on the desk, and did slightly better than those who had their phones in a pocket.

"Your conscious mind isn't thinking about your smartphone, but that process -- the process of requiring yourself to not think about something -- uses up some of your limited cognitive resources," said McCombs Assistant Professor Adrian Ward, who headed the experiment. "It's a brain drain."

Researchers found just having a phone within view or easy reach reduces a person's ability to focus and perform tasks, because our brain's are actively working to not pick up the phone. "The mere presence of their smartphones was enough to reduce their cognitive capacity," Ward said.

(Source: CNET)

Volvo is working with NVIDIA to develop self-driving car tech by 2021



NVIDIA and Volvo announced that they are redoubling their self-driving system efforts by teaming with a number of other companies to develop and distribute a proprietary autonomous AI platform by the start of the next decade.

First off, Volvo has gone in halvesies with Autoliv to create a new software development subsidiary called Zenuity. Volvo and NVIDIA have announced that they're teaming up with Zenuity to develop the next generation of self-driving vehicle systems which will be built on

NVIDIA's Drive PX AI module.

This is the same module that Tesla already uses and which both Audi and Toyota have begun developing on. The system stitches together data from its camera and radar inputs, then compares what it senses to a known high-definition map to automatically plot a safe course around oncoming obstacles. Volvo hopes to have its production vehicles using these self-driving systems available for sale by 2021.

(Source: engadget)

Apple acquires German eye tracking firm sensoMotoric instruments



At its Worldwide Developers Conference earlier this month, Apple made clear it's serious about the augmented reality biz with the release of ARKit, a platform for creating AR experiences on the iPhone and iPhone.

The iPhone maker has acquired SensoMotoric Instruments, a German maker of eye-tracking glasses as well as technology for virtual reality goggles. Apple confirmed the acquisition in an email to CNET.

SensoMotoric develops technology for a variety of uses, including clinical research, linguistics, physical training and AR, which mixes digital and real-world images. The company's Eye Tracking glasses can record a person's natural eye movements, potentially useful for athletes working to improve their eye-hand coordination. Its technology for virtual reality handsets could help reduce motion sickness.

(Source: MacRumors)

Carbon in atmosphere is rising, even as emissions stabilize, scientists say

On the best days, the wind howling across this rugged promontory has not touched land for thousands of miles, and the arriving air seems as if it should be the cleanest in the world.

But on a cliff above the sea, inside a low-slung government building, a bank of sophisticated machines sniffs that air day and night, revealing telltale indicators of the way human activity is altering the planet on a major scale.

For more than two years, the monitoring station here, along with its counterparts across the world, has been flashing a warning: The excess carbon dioxide scorching the planet rose at the highest rate on record in 2015 and 2016. A slightly slower but still unusual rate of increase has continued into 2017.

Climate crisis

Scientists are concerned about the cause of the rapid rises because, in one of the most hopeful signs since the global climate crisis became widely understood in the 1980s, the amount of carbon dioxide that people are pumping into the air seems to have stabilized in recent years, at least judging from the data that countries compile on their own emissions.

That raises a conundrum: If the amount of the gas that people are putting out has stopped rising, how



can the amount that stays in the air be going up faster than ever? Does it mean the natural sponges that have been absorbing carbon dioxide are now changing?

Scientists have spent decades measuring what was happening to all of the carbon dioxide that was produced when people burned coal, oil and natural gas. They established that less than half of the

Scientists have spent decades measuring what was happening to all of the carbon dioxide that was produced when people burned coal, oil and natural gas.

Do we have to worry about an asteroid strike?

The asteroid Apophis seems like a friendly rock speeding through the space near Earth for now, but later on in its relationship with our planet, it might strike down to the surface with devastating results.

It may never happen, but it's not out of the realm of possibility, according to a report on Astrowatch.net.

After all, scientists were briefly worried in 2004 about that asteroid striking Earth, before further calculations showed there was nothing to be alarmed about. It has passed through our space neighborhood since then without incident, but Apophis has future flybys scheduled and while the next couple are going to go pretty smoothly, others may not be as pleasant.

NASA projects that Apophis will come by in 2029 and will return again in 2036. In the former journey, the closest the asteroid may get to Earth a little less than 20,000 miles, which is closer than some of our satellites. That's a pretty close pass to the planet, and will put it into the record books as the closest one of its size. It will appear "to the naked eye as a moderately bright point of light moving rapidly across the sky" over the mid-Atlantic area.

The latter flyby, in 2036, will be from much farther

out, several million miles away. NASA scientists finalized calculations a few years ago that showed there was no danger during that pass.

Impact odds

The "impact odds as they stand now are less than one in a million, which makes us comfortable saying we can effectively rule out an Earth impact in 2036," Don Yeomans, manager of NASA's Near-Earth Object Program Office at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, said at the time. "Our interest in asteroid Apophis will essentially be for its scientific interest for the foreseeable future."

"We can rule out a collision at the next closest approach with the Earth, but then the orbit will change in a way that is not fully predictable just now, so we cannot predict the behavior on a longer timescale," Alberto Cellino, of the Observatory of Turin in Italy, told Astrowatch.net.

Apophis is between 700 and 1,100 feet long, more than large enough to do substantial damage if it were to crash down onto the Earth. But even without Apophis, our planet is still vulnerable to a deadly asteroid. They pass by Earth all the time, sometimes more than



one in a day. Usually they are relatively small and far out, but there are exceptions. For example, NASA is predicting an asteroid between 800 and 1,800 feet across flying by on June 27, from a distance that is equivalent to about a tenth of the distance between the Earth and the sun.

(Source: Raw Story)

Greenland now a major driver of rising seas: study

Ocean levels rose 50 percent faster in 2014 than in 1993, with meltwater from the Greenland ice sheet now supplying 25 percent of total sea level increase compared with just five percent 20 years earlier, researchers reported Monday.

The findings add to growing concern among scientists that the global water-mark is climbing more rapidly than forecast only a few years ago, with potentially devastating consequences.

Hundreds of millions of people around the world live in low-lying deltas that are vulnerable, especially when rising seas are combined with land sinking due to depleted water tables, or a lack of ground-forming silt held back by dams.

Conservative projection

Major coastal cities are also threatened, while some small island states are already laying plans for the day their

drowning nations will no longer be livable.

"This result is important because the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)" — the UN science advisory body — "makes a very conservative projection of total sea level rise by the end of the century," at 60 to 90 centimeters (24 to 35 inches), said Peter Wadhams, a professor of ocean physics at the University of Oxford who did not take part in the research.

That estimate, he added, assumes that the rate at which ocean levels rise will remain constant.

"Yet there is convincing evidence — including accelerating losses of mass from Greenland and Antarctica — that the rate is actually increasing, and increasing exponentially."

Greenland alone contains enough fro-

zen water to lift oceans by about seven meters (23 feet), though experts disagree on the global warming threshold for irreversible melting, and how long that would take once set in motion.

"Most scientists now expect total rise to be well over a meter by the end of the century," Wadhams said.

The new study, published in Nature Climate Change, reconciles for the first time two distinct measurements of sea level rise.

The first looked one-by-one at three contributions: ocean expansion due to warming, changes in the amount of water stored on land, and loss of land-based ice from glaciers and ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica.

Satellite altimetry

The second was from satellite altimetry, which gauges heights on the Earth's

gas was remaining in the atmosphere and warming the planet. The rest was being absorbed by the ocean and the land surface, in roughly equal amounts.

Natural sponges

In essence, these natural sponges were doing humanity a huge service by disposing of much of its gaseous waste. But as emissions have risen higher and higher, it has been unclear how much longer the natural sponges will be able to keep up.

The record increases of airborne carbon dioxide in 2015 and 2016 thus raise the question of whether this has now come to pass. Scientists are worried, but they are not ready to draw that conclusion, saying more time is needed to get a clear picture.

Many of them suspect an El Niño climate pattern that spanned those two years, one of the strongest on record, may have caused the faster-than-usual rise in carbon dioxide, by drying out large parts of the tropics. The drying contributed to huge fires in Indonesia in late 2015 that sent a pulse of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Past El Niños have also produced rapid increases in the gas, though not as large as the recent ones.

(Source: The NYT)

Night shift work may stop body repairing daily damage to DNA and trigger cancer

Night shift work may stop the body repairing daily damage to DNA and raise the risk of mutations which lead to cancer, a new study suggests.

The link between working at night and poor health has been known for several years, with those who work after dark more likely to suffer diabetes, obesity, poor fertility, heart attacks and tumors.

Scientists believed that disruption to the body's natural body clock was responsible for the increased risk of chronic illness, but could never pinpoint the mechanism.

Now US researchers have discovered that when people work nights they produce 80 per cent less of a chemical which is a by-product of DNA tissue repair. They say it indicates that the body is not carrying out the crucial restoration to cells which should happen naturally overnight.

They believe the effect could be caused by a lack of melatonin, the sleep hormone, which is far lower among people who sleep in the daytime.

Dr. Parveen Bhatti, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, Washington, USA, said if awake at night the body has 'reduced capacity to repair and clear oxidative DNA damage.'

"Over time, this accumulation would likely increase the risk of cancer across multiple sites as has been observed among shift workers," she added.

The study tested 50 night shift workers for levels of 8-OH-dG - a chemical which is produced when DNA is repaired. They then tested them again when they were working days, and found levels jumped by 300 per cent.

They believe that shift workers may need to take sleep hormone supplements to allow DNA to carry out repairs as they sleep in the day.

(Source: The Telegraph)

World's biggest shark was wiped out during a global extinction of ocean's megafauna

The biggest shark to have ever lived was wiped out during a previously unknown global extinction event that saw 36 percent of the world's marine megafauna disappear.

Carcharodes megalodon could reach up to 60 feet in length and had jaws measuring 9 feet wide. It lived from 23 million years ago up until the end of the Pliocene Epoch, around 2.6 million years ago. What caused its extinction has been the matter of debate for many years — shifting environmental conditions, a decline in prey and the emergence of new marine predators all appear to have played a role.

However, in a study published in Nature Ecology & Evolution, scientists found the demise of the megalodon was part of a larger extinction event that affected huge swaths of marine life during the Pliocene (5.3 million to 2.6 million years ago).

The end of the Pliocene saw huge changes to the world's climate. Global temperatures and sea levels fell dramatically, leading to widespread changes to Earth's flora and fauna. In the ocean, many individual species were known to have gone extinct as others began to emerge. But to what extent this was happening was not known.

Scientists led by Catalina Pimiento from Switzerland's University of Zurich, carried out a meta-analysis in which they gathered all of the published fossil records from this period.

The previously unknown extinction event included marine mammals, seabirds, turtles and sharks, with species being lost at a rate of around three times higher than during the Cenozoic Era — the geological period to which the Pliocene belongs.

(Source: Newsweek)

Neuron-integrated nanotubes to repair nerve fibers

Carbon nanotubes exhibit interesting characteristics rendering them particularly suited to the construction of special hybrid devices - consisting of biological issue and synthetic material - planned to re-establish connections between nerve cells, for instance at spinal level, lost on account of lesions or trauma.

More specifically, researchers have investigated the possible effects on neurons of the interaction with carbon nanotubes. Scientists have proven that these nanomaterials may regulate the formation of synapses, specialized structures through which the nerve cells communicate, and modulate biological mechanisms, such as the growth of neurons, as part of a self-regulating process. This result, which shows the extent to which the integration between nerve cells and these synthetic structures is stable and efficient, highlights the great potentialities of carbon nanotubes as innovative materials capable of facilitating neuronal regeneration or in order to create a kind of artificial bridge between groups of neurons whose connection has been interrupted.

"Interface systems, or, more in general, neuronal prostheses, that enable an effective re-establishment of these connections are under active investigation" explain Laura Ballerini (SISSA) and Maurizio Prato (UniTS-CIC BiomaGUNE), coordinating the research project.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Objects in the distant universe appear small and difficult to see — unless they're sitting behind a cosmic magnifying glass. That's exactly the case for MACS 2129-1, a galaxy lensed by a massive foreground galaxy cluster. Using the Hubble Space Telescope, astronomers have managed to catch a glimpse of this unusual object, which appears to be an old, "dead" galaxy that's already stopped making new stars just a few billion years after the Big Bang. Not only is this galaxy finished with its star formation earlier than expected, it's also shaped like a disk, rather than the fuzzy ball of stars that astronomers assumed they'd see.

The results, which appear in the June 22 issue of Nature, describe a galaxy half the size of the Milky Way, but three times as massive. Its compact disk of old, red stars is spinning rapidly, over two times the speed of the stars

orbiting the center of our own galaxy.

Gravitational lensing

Astronomers were able to spot it via a phenomenon called gravitational lensing, which occurs when a massive object, such as a galaxy cluster, bends the light from a distant object as it travels to Earth, magnifying the image we see on the sky. This allows researchers to probe very early epochs of the universe that are otherwise unresolvable with today's current instruments.

Based on archival data from the Cluster Lensing And Supernova survey with Hubble (CLASH), the team that discovered the galaxy was able to measure the ages of its stars, its total stellar mass, and its rate of star formation.

In our current picture of galaxy formation, disk-shaped galaxies (like our own Milky Way) in the early universe make stars throughout their youth, appearing

across the country with the aim of facilitating necessary conditions for talented children and young adults to study in less developed and disadvantaged regions of the country, the issue of which was put atop agenda at the bank.

It should be noted that ground was broken for the construction of these schools on Sept. 12, 2016 concurrent with the Feast of Sacrifice in the presence of a number of people of region, members of Board of Directors, deputies and senior managers of the bank, officials in charge of Organization to Renovate and Equip

Schools and also authorities at the governor-generalships.

Construction operations of these schools are underway in the provinces of Hormozgan, Bushehr, South Khorasan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Kordestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman and Ilam, the report added.

Of the other projects of the bank, it should be referred to the completion of construction operation of a sports stadium in Khomeyn. This project will be put into operation in the presence of city officials during Feast of Sacrifice.

“Future Hope” Schools to Be Inaugurated at Initiative Taken by AYANDEH Bank

“Omid-e Ayandeh, Future Hope” Schools will be inaugurated across the country concurrent with the Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice), Public Relations Dept. of Ayan-deh Bank reported.

Construction of schools dubbed “Future Hope” was put atop agenda of AYANDEH Bank. With the coordination made in this regard, these schools will be opened across the country concurrent with the Feast of Sacrifice, the bank added.

In line with living up to its social responsibility, the bank started constructing a number of eight schools

The 81-year-old woman inspiring a nation to recycle

An 81-year-old who set up an all-woman rubbish collection team in her village in Lebanon now has a stream of visitors asking how she did it. For nine months in 2015 and 2016 rubbish piled up on the streets of the capital, Beirut, and even now a lack of landfill sites means some of the city's waste is being thrown in the sea. Zeinab Mokalled has shown that when government fails, do-it-yourself local initiatives can work.

"There used to be dirt everywhere and the kids were filthy," Zeinab Mokalled tells me.

She is remembering the 1980s and 90s, when Israel occupied part of the south of the country for 15 years, and waste collection came to a halt in her village, Arabsalim.

As the years went by, it piled up, and Mokalled went to the regional governor to ask for help.

"Why do you care? We are not Paris," he told her.

"I knew that day that I had to take it upon myself," she says.

Mokalled called on the women of the village to help, not the men - partly because she wanted to empower them, and partly because she thought they would do a better job.

It would also have been up to the women to sort the recycling, and probably to put out the rubbish. So Zeinab needed volunteers to go door-to-door to get the message to the women in every house - and for this job, men would have been inappropriate.

They had no equipment, and no infrastructure. So how to begin?

Mokalled's friend Khadija Farhat bought a lorry out of her own pocket. Mokalled herself turned her back garden into a storage area for recyclable waste.

It didn't seem likely that the 10,000 villagers would pay to have their rubbish collected, so the volunteers paid for it themselves. Nineteen years later they still do, each of 46 members putting in about \$40 each year.

"Household recycling was the best way forward," says Mokalled, who named the organisation Call of the Earth.

To begin with they recycled glass, paper and plastic. Recently they started collecting electronic waste and have employed a researcher to find the best way of making compost in the hot and dry conditions of southern Lebanon.

The only help the waste collectors received from the local authorities, after three years' work, was a gift of 300 plastic bins and a piece of land, which enabled Mokalled to get her garden back.

At the same time they started renting a lorry to work alongside Farhat's, and hired a male driver - though they continued to accompany him to ensure he was not alone when approaching women.

After 10 years they received a grant from the Italian embassy to build a warehouse, which is where Mokalled now receives visitors - schoolchildren, students and activists - who come to study how Call of the Earth works. And the numbers have increased since the closure of Beirut's main landfill site in 2015 led waste to pile up around the city, and the surrounding area of Mount Lebanon. ➔13

LEARN ENGLISH

The Office - Sorry I'm Late

Maggie Gao: Okay everyone, shall we begin?

Bill: Sorry Maggie, but we are missing a few people. Can we **hang on a sec**?

Maggie Gao: Well, I did say eleven o'clock sharp, and it's now five past so....

James: Hi everyone, I'm so sorry I'm late. It's raining cats and dogs outside and I had to **wait ages** for a taxi.

Maggie Gao: Okay James, take a seat quickly please. Right, the subject of the meeting is.

Sally: Hi guys. Please excuse me, I was **held up** in traffic.

Maggie Gao: Right, as I was saying the subject of the m...

Bruno: Hi Maggie. **I'm terribly sorry**. The traffic is murder out there.

Maggie Gao: Sit down Bruno! Okay now, as you are aware, the topic for this meeting is 'The importance of being punctual'. Who would like to start?

■ Key Vocabulary

hang on a sec: hold on

wait ages: wait for a very long time

hold up: stuck

I am terribly sorry: Very sorry

■ Supplementary Vocabulary

late: A occurring, coming, or being after the usual or proper time

absent: not in a certain place at a given time

excuse: to offer an apology for; seek to remove the blame of

slack: negligent; careless

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Choleric temperament: Specifications and suitable lifestyle



ARTICLE

By Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, PhD

part 1

Temperament or Mizaj is referred to four different conditions differentiating individuals physically and mentally and as a result, proposing different preventive measures for their diseases or wellbeing.

Temperament of a person is mostly related to identifying the most proper lifestyle (diet, sleep, activity, psychiatric conditions, etc.) for health promotion.

In the Iranian-Islamic traditional medicine the excess or less of warmth and humidity define four essential temperaments of "Warm and Wet (sanguine or Damawiy)", "Warm and Dry (choleric or Safrawiy)", "Cold and Dry (melancholic or Saudawiy)" and "Cold and Wet (phlegmatic or Balghamiy)" respectively. The terms in the parentheses refer to four groups of material in the body (called "humors" or 'Akhlāt') including blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm respectively. Words written in italic show original Persian terms in the ancient literature.

■ Choleric: warm and dry

People with choleric temperament are usually tall and thin. They have a small frame, for instance, their fingers, lips, and other body parts are not much big and they are unlikely to get overweight.

They have a dry and warm skin color with yellow and sometimes peachy undertone.

They have rapid pulse, are exuberant, quickly finish what they are supposed to do -usually perfectly and carefully- and speak fast.

People with warm and dry Mizaj mostly feel hot and have naturally high body temperature.

Due to the dryness of their Mizaj they might suffer



constipation and waste matter (urine, sweat, and feces) discharged from their bodies usually has strong odor and color.

Burning in the anus and urinary tract can be common among this group.

Due to the warmth in their body they soon digest food and as they don't have adequate amount of nutrient supply to provide the energy needs of the body they soon get hungry and irritated if they don't get enough food timely.

Normally their mouth gets dry soon.

Due to the warmth in their body which moves upward to the head their hair grow faster. They have coarse thick black hair. Premature graying and hair loss is prevalent among these people.

As they're able to think fast and act fast, they might lose concentration to some extent, in other words they may undertake multiple tasks at the same time and give



up some of them halfway through them. Accordingly they might be pegged as hyperactive.

They have keen senses and can easily notice the smallest changes in smells, voices, taste, color, etc.

They are overly sensitive and will be easily upset or offended by events or things that people say and must be treated delicately.

They don't need much sleep and actually seem fine and ready for work with a little amount of sleep. They are not very sound sleepers and are prone to suffer stress, anxiety, and sleep deprivation.

They are idealist and fond of efficiency. They are also in favor of punctuality as well. Once they make an appointment they are always worried not to get there on time.

In the next article the suitable lifestyle that fit people with choleric temperament will be explained in detail.

Why a baby's connection with a parent matters

In pediatrics, attachment is the emotional connection that develops between a young child and a parent or other caregiver.

Attachment theory was developed in the mid-20th century by a British psychiatrist, John Bowlby, whose own upper-class British upbringing included the loss of a beloved nanny, and an early trip to boarding school.

Mary Ainsworth, his student and later collaborator, devised what is known as the strange situation procedure, in which a 1-year-old is briefly separated from the parent or caregiver, and then reunited, and the behavior during reunions is closely observed.

These experiments, which stressed the child briefly, but then immediately ended the stress, were correlated with

in-home observations of parent-child relationships, and researchers built a kind of taxonomy of attachment, reading children's behavior in the strange situation as an index to the quality of the bond with the parent.

"The reason the strange situation is so important is because early research and repeated studies showed that what parents did at home or in various situations predicted how children behaved in the strange situation," said Virginia M. Shiller, an assistant clinical professor at Yale University Child Study Center and author of the "The Attachment Bond: Affectional Ties Across the Lifespan."

A child who has the general sense that the parent is likely to be responsive, she said, is going to ask for attention when the parent comes back in. The child may be

upset, but calms down quickly, comforted by the parent, and thereby demonstrates what is called "secure attachment."

Attachment, said Susan Berger, a developmental psychologist who is associate professor of pediatrics at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, is about "being sensitive to your child in times of stress so they know if they're upset, hurt, bothered, somebody will come make them feel better so they can move away and be back in their world again."

On the other hand, children who have not learned to expect comfort and reassurance when they are distressed will demonstrate what is considered insecure attachment.

"When mom or dad come back in they actually turn away, they might crawl

away, they might barely look at mom or dad," Dr. Shiller said. But that's not because they're calm. Studies have shown that these children are also feeling the stress of separation, with high heart rates and elevated levels of stress hormone. In other words, she said, "while one might say, 'well, that's just an independent child,' we have other information that this child is stressed and saying, 'I'm going to somehow manage this on my own.'"

As they grow up, children need to explore the world in a widening circle of strange situations, experiencing what is new and by definition somewhat stressful. They need to move gradually further and further away from their parents, but they need to know they can come back for reassurance and comfort.

(Source: nytimes.com)

Indian toilet charity renames village after Trump

A toilet charity has renamed an Indian village after U.S. President Donald Trump as part of a promotional push to raise cash and support for better sanitation.

Aid group Sulabh International, which says it has built 1.5 million toilets across the country, has set up "Trump Village" signs around the small community in the northern state of Haryana, each bearing a grinning portrait of the president.

Neither the White House, nor the Trump family's commercial empire, has given permission for the rebranding of the village, still better known locally as Marora, the charity said.

But founder Bindeshwar Pathak said he hoped the gesture would win enough publicity and good will to at

least raise awareness of a major social problem.

"Such a step might spur rich people, companies and other donors to come forward and donate money," he said.

"Once basic infrastructure is built here, the popularity of this village will grow and it will act as a motivational factor."

The change is purely symbolic - the name Marora will continue to appear on maps and signs.

But locals said they were prepared to embrace the new title, Trump Sulabh Village in its full form, and any good things it brought with it.

"All our problems such as electricity and water will be addressed by renaming," said resident Mohammed Joharuddin.

Village head Shaukat Ali also played along, saying

he was grateful for the charity's work. "A toilet is being constructed, a road is being built and community hall will also be built in the village," he said.

The event was organized as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi prepares to fly this weekend for his first meeting with Trump in Washington. The U.S. embassy in New Delhi said it was aware but referred further inquiries to Washington.

Fewer than a third of India's 1.3 billion people have access to sanitation.

The United Nations estimates that half the population defecates outside - putting people at risk of cholera, diarrhea, dysentery, hepatitis A and typhoid.

(Source: Reuters)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ ع

Iran, Oman discuss confronting dust storm

Iran's cultural attache to Oman Mohammadreza Nouri Shahrودي and Oman Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs Mohammed bin Salim bin Said al-Toobi discussed combating dust storms during a meeting in Muscat on Tuesday. Iran is combating dust storms in different ways, however it is a common problem in the region, Shahrودي said during the meeting. Omani minister also stressed on regional cooperation to protect environment and abate dust storms.

Sand and dust storms mostly originated from hotspots in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia are adversely affecting Iranian cities adjacent to the aforesaid areas and causing great discomfort for the poor dweller.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Wonders will never cease!

■ **Explanation:** expresses surprise at an unexpected pleasure or event

■ **For example:** Lynda actually managed to get up before ten o'clock. Wonders never cease!

PHRASAL VERB

yield to

■ **Meaning:** surrender

■ **For example:** The hijackers refuse to yield to demands to release the passengers.

ENGLISH IDIOM

You don't know the half of it

■ **Explanation:** When you want to tell someone that they know some of the facts but they don't know how bad the situation is

■ **For example:** You don't know the half of it! He was beating her and terrifying the children. That's why she left him.

Mosul battle to end in days as troops advance in Old City: Iraqi Gen.

An Iraqi military general says the military operation to regain complete control over Mosul and purge the country's second largest city of ISIL (Daesh) terrorists will come to an end within the next few days as government troops are combing the last areas still held by the extremists.

"Only a small part remains in the city, specifically the Old City," Lieutenant General Abdul Ghani al-Assadi, commander of the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS), said.

He added, "From a military perspective, Daesh is finished. It has lost its fighting spirit and its balance. We are making calls to them to surrender or die."

Assadi further noted that Iraqi army forces thwarted Daesh militants' offensive to return to neighborhoods outside the Old City late Sunday, stressing that Mosul will be liberated from the grip of Takfiri terrorists "in very few days, God willing."

Commander of Nineveh Liberation Operation Lieutenant General Abdul Amir Yarallah also said forces with the CTS had captured al-Farouq neighborhood in western Mosul, and raised the



national Iraqi flag over several buildings in the area.

Meanwhile, Iraqi forces are searching liberated neighborhoods of western Mosul in the wake of a surprise Daesh attack in the Tanak and Yarmouk neighborhoods of west Mosul, which claimed the lives of several civilians.

"The group came with the displaced people and settled in the Tanak district. They regrouped and launched counterattacks," Staff Lieutenant General Abdulwahab al-Saadi of the CTS stated.

"Yarmouk is being searched house to house," Saadi said, adding that two

groups of Daesh extremists are still believed to be hiding in the area.

A CTS medic, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the attack had caused several victims but he did not provide an exact figure.

The medic noted that between 15 and 20 Daesh extremists were killed in skirmishes with Iraqi army soldiers.

Iraqi army soldiers and volunteer fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units, commonly known by their Arabic name, Hashd al-Sha'abi, have made sweeping gains against Daesh since launching the Mosul operation on October 17, 2016.

The Iraqi forces took control of eastern Mosul in January after 100 days of fighting, and launched the battle in the west on February 19.

An estimated 862,000 people have been displaced from Mosul ever since the battle to retake the city began nine months ago. A total of 195,000 civilians have also returned, mainly to the liberated areas of eastern Mosul.

(Source: Press TV)

Germany: Demands from Qatar 'very provocative'

Germany says the demands made by four Arab states in a dispute with Qatar are "very provocative."

The House of Saud regime, Bahrain, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) severed diplomatic ties and cut all land, sea, and air contacts with Qatar on June 5. The four countries accused Qatar of supporting terrorism and destabilizing the region, allegations denied by Doha.

The Saudi regime-led bloc of states later issued a list of demands for Qatar to meet in return for a normalization of ties. Among them was that Qatar sever ties with Iran.

Speaking alongside Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif at a forum in Berlin on, German Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel called the demands "very provocative" and said that some of the items on the list challenged Doha's sovereignty.

Qatar was also asked to close down Al Jazeera, a media network that has reportedly been critical specially of the absolute monarchy in Saudi Arabia, shut a Turkish military base, and pay up "compensation" for "damages" from purported terror sponsorship.

The four countries also gave Doha ten days —

starting Friday — to meet those demands.

Qatar says its neighbors have attempted to punish it merely for its refusal to toe their line on matters of foreign policy. Doha has also denounced the ultimatum as unreasonable and an infringement of its sovereignty.

Early after the dispute erupted, Turkey threw its support behind Qatar, deciding to send more military forces to the base there. That decision seemed to irk the Saudi regime-led bloc of countries even as Ankara attempted to look impartial by offering to build a military base in Saudi Arabia, too. Riyadh said no such military base was necessary, and later came the demand among others that Qatar close down the Turkish base it has been hosting.

Iran has called for dialog among the feuding countries but has also been shipping food to Qatar on humanitarian grounds. So have Turkey and Oman.

Gabriel said efforts were underway to define which conditions Qatar could accept and which it viewed as problematic.

He was due to hold a meeting with Iran's Zarif in Berlin on Tuesday.



Zarif said at the forum that Europe had to use its influence to defuse tensions in the Persian Gulf region, arguing that those countries that blamed Iran or Qatar for terrorism were trying to avoid taking responsibility for their own failures.

(Source: DPA)

Iran, Turkey, Egypt must save Mideast from chaos and destruction: professor

At a time when a large number of foreign nationals have been made redundant and expelled, some with huge unpaid arrears, and when many ordinary Saudi citizens are suffering the consequences of austerity, Muhammad bin Salman has adopted a very extravagant lifestyle, completely out of character with the Puritanical Wahhabi ideology. For instance, while holidaying in the south of France a few months ago, he saw a super yacht belonging to a Russian tycoon, fancied it and bought it on the spot for 500 million euros, more than three times its original price. He also owns luxurious private jets and many other accretions of the super-rich.

■ Does this family coup have the support of the U.S. and the UK?

A: I do not believe that this was necessarily planned with the collusion or even advance knowledge of the United States and the United Kingdom. After the recent rift between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, although President Trump openly took the side of the Saudis and accused Qatar of supporting terrorism, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson offered to mediate between the two.

In fact, on 20th June, only one day before the reshuffle, the State Department's spokesperson Heather Nauert issued a rather strange statement. In a part of that statement we read: "Now that it has been more than two weeks since the embargo started, we are mystified that the Gulf States have not released to the public, nor to the Qataris, the details about the claims that they are making toward Qatar. The more that time goes by the more doubt is raised about the actions taken by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. At this point we are left with one simple question: were the actions really about their concerns regarding Qatar's alleged support for terrorism or were they about the long, simmering grievances between and among the GCC countries?"

This is a clear rebuke to Saudi rulers for not having produced any evidence for their claims against Qatar. I believe that the only other country that might have had a hand in this reshuffle is the UAE, or at least some UAE princes, because UAE Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan is a close friend of Mohammed bin Salman and they seem to share many views and ambitions.

■ What will be the effect of the reshuffle on the rest of the GCC?

A: As you know, there has already been a major rift between Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain on the one

hand and Qatar on the other, with Oman and Kuwait playing a neutral role.

President Trump's visit to Riyadh and his impetuous rush to embrace the Saudis as the leaders of the war against extremism, which resulted in more than \$400 billion of promised spending on weapons and other American goods, gave the Saudis the false hope that they could dominate the Arab world, and certainly the GCC. However, far from uniting the Arab world under Saudi leadership, President Trump's visit proved to be the kiss of death to the GCC.

The GCC was formed shortly after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iraq in order to bring the small Persian Gulf countries together in support of Iraq. They contributed tens of billions of dollars to Saddam Hussein, which ironically led to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait when the GCC members demanded the repayment of their loans. However, the GCC never managed to unite all the Persian Gulf littoral states, partly due to the fact that there is an imbalance between Saudi Arabia with a population of over 23 million nationals and over eight million non-nationals, and Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE with less than one million native populations each.

Recently, Saudi Arabia has not been content with being the leading member of the GCC, but has demanded total subservience from others. The aggressive Saudi and UAE siege of Qatar has gone beyond a mere tribal feud, has backfired and is already leading not only to the disintegration of the GCC, but also to a rift between Saudi Arabia and other Arab states.

On June 19, the electronic Rai al-Yaum daily newspaper carried the following report: "The honeymoon between Morocco and the Gulf States mainly Saudi Arabia and the UAE has ended on the backdrop of these countries' conflict with Qatar." It went on to say that Morocco has distanced itself from Saudi Arabia in fear of a military adventure against Qatar.

■ What will be the effect of this reshuffle on Saudi Arabia's standing in the Islamic world?

A: Despite the pretensions of Saudi leaders, Saudi Arabia does not possess the historical, religious, intellectual or political clout to act as the leader of the Islamic or even the Sunni world. Its significance to the world has been due to its vast reserves of oil, which is a dwindling asset, as with greater use of renewable energy, oil will soon lose the significance that it has enjoyed over the past century, and just like coal a lot of it will have to be left in the ground.

In the same way that after the conversion of Emperor Constantine, Christianity moved out of Palestine, the centre of the Islamic world also moved away from Arabia shortly after Prophet Muhammad's death. After the short-lived period of the Rashidun Caliphate, three of whom were assassinated, under the Umayyads the mantle of Islamic leadership moved to Damascus, a major centre of Byzantine culture. Then, under the Abbasids, who came to power with the help of Abu Muslim in Khorasan, the centre of Islamic civilization moved to

Baghdad (which is a Persian word meaning God-given) near Ctesiphon, the former capital of the Parthian and the Sasanian Empires. Then, under the Shi'ite Fatimid Caliphate, it moved to Cairo; and finally to Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

Cairo, especially the ancient Al-Azhar University, has always been regarded as the main centre of Arab Islamic culture. At the same time, Iran has served as the centre of Persian Islamic culture, which stretched from Iran to the Sub-Continent and even to the Far East. Persian was the lingua franca of the Mughal Empire, and Iranian merchants and Sufis were mainly responsible for taking Islam to the East.

In all those centuries, Arabia played no role in the Islamic world, except being the centre of the hard and arduous Hajj pilgrimage. Therefore, the Saudi claim to the leadership of the Islamic world lacks any merit. In recent centuries, Arabia has been responsible for the most fundamentalist and militant form of Islam that has been behind the rise of terrorist groups, from the Al Qaeda, to the Taliban, the al-Nusra Front and ultimately ISIS.

■ What will be the repercussions of these changes in the rest of the region?

A: The disarray in the GCC and the scourge of jihadi terrorism, often supported by Saudi Arabia, must act as a wakeup call to the leading countries in the region. As the heirs of the Iranian, Arab and Turkish cultures and civilizations, Iran, Egypt and Turkey, have some serious differences with each other. However, the situation in the Middle East is so precarious that these countries must set aside their differences and must unite in order to save the region from chaos and destruction.

Clearly, all of them need to make some compromises, but the alternative is extremely dire for all of them. If ancient enemies in Europe could set aside their differences and could establish the European Union, there is no reason why these three ancient cultures that have lived together for centuries and millennia mainly in peace and harmony cannot find a way of getting along and bringing the rest of the region with them.

The modern world does not tolerate leadership by any country. Therefore, any idea of sole Iranian, Egyptian, Turkish or Saudi leadership is an illusion. The only solution is for all of them to cooperate with one another to create a Middle East that is worthy of its ancient culture and civilization.

In recent centuries, Arabia has been responsible for the most fundamentalist and militant form of Islam that has been behind the rise of terrorist groups, from the Al Qaeda, to the Taliban, the al-Nusra Front and ultimately ISIS.

Anne Morgan, an American hero

8→ Miss Morgan — she never married — is far better known in France than in the United States, though The New York Times included her in a list of the 12 greatest American women in 1922. She credited Elizabeth ("Bessie") Marbury, a high-society theatrical agent, as nurturing her sense of social obligation. She was a founding member of the Colony Club, the first private social club for women in New York City, which, reflecting the era, admitted no blacks or Jews and few Catholics. But she marched with union workers during the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory strike in 1909, and joined the suffragettes working to win the vote for women.

■ In love with France

She sailed to Europe with her parents when she was a four-year-old, and fell in love with France. She later accompanied her father to Europe, and spent summers in France, joining Bessie Marbury and her companion, actress and interior designer Elsie de Wolfe, at their Villa Trianon in Versailles. The three became the "Versailles Triumvirate."

When the war broke out in 1914, Anne and Elsie de Wolfe offered the villa to the French for a convalescent home for wounded soldiers. She returned to New York to raise money for French war relief and became the treasurer of the American Fund for French Wounded. She eventually visited the battlefields at Verdun and the Somme region to make sure the hospitals got the money she raised.

She sailed to France again when America went to war, together with Anne Murray Dike, a Canadian doctor, and eight women volunteers to care for the wounded and to begin their relief work in earnest. They were sent to the ruined village of Bleancourt northeast of Paris, which had been liberated after three years of German occupation and destruction. They organized a community center for 25 regional villages, planting trees, seeding the land, restoring the battered houses, even opening a dairy. This was the phenomenon of the American volunteer that had so impressed Alexis de Tocqueville when he visited America 85 years earlier.

■ German offensive

Following the German offensive in March 1918, the women used their relief trucks to evacuate civilians, feed refugees and care for the wounded. Battlefields were not so organized for relief as they are now. With Dr. Dike, she founded the American Committee for Devastated France to provide housing, food, clothing, and child care, and stayed behind after the armistice in November to establish schools, libraries, public health centers and physical education programs. Once more, she raised the money to pay for it.

A year later she bought the heavily damaged 17th-century Bleancourt chateau as a place to call home, and she and Dr. Dike restored it as a museum of French-American history, to thank France for supporting the American Revolution. She gave the chateau and museum and its beautiful garden to the town. After years of renovations, the National Museum of Franco-American Co-operation will reopen next Sunday. The museum has an extensive collection of paintings by French artists working in America and American painters in France.

Anne Morgan continued to raise money for French relief, persuading her rich friends to rent their mansions to movie producers and give half the money to relieve civilian suffering in France, and even persuaded the two boxers fighting for the lightweight championship in 1921 to send part of their purses to France. She bought the ringside seats and auctioned them to the rich and famous and sent the proceeds to French relief.

Volunteer duty called again with the outbreak of World War II, and she was back to France to set up relief stations for refugees. She and a small group of volunteers kept calm and carried on under bombing and before the advancing German Army. She barely escaped capture, and subsequently persuaded German authorities that her work evacuating and feeding refugees was in their interests, too. She was eventually forced home for good, and died in New York in 1952 at age 78, at the end of an extraordinary life well lived.

(Source: The Washington Times)

The 81-year-old woman inspiring a nation to recycle

12→ Attempts to find a new home for the city's waste quickly descended into farce. The Not-In-My-Backyard syndrome was amplified by the country's sectarian divisions — no communities wanted to host the dump. Then the government said it would export the rubbish only to reverse the decision months later.

The waste had to go somewhere, though, so it was dumped near the airport, but this attracted flocks of seagulls, which became a hazard for aircraft. Attempts to shoot the gulls brought howls of protest, so machines were brought in to play loud music that would frighten them away. A court has now ordered the closure of this site, though seagulls continue to circle.

More worryingly, an old waste dump has been re-opened. As well as taking in new waste, lorries can be seen carrying old waste — much of it reportedly contaminated with chemicals — from the mountain and tipping it into the Mediterranean.

In the long term, the government says it wants to burn the waste and generate electricity from it. But critics fear it won't be properly sorted, and that plastics and other materials capable of creating toxic fumes will be buried along with cleaner organic waste.

So perhaps it's not surprising that Zeinab Mokalled's simple community recycling scheme is now attracting attention.

The women of the nearby village of Kaffaremen have recently set up their own initiative, which is similar, except that it is funded by the villagers, rather than the volunteers. The nearby town of Jaarjouna has also decided to follow suit.

(Source: BBC News)

I believe King Salman's deposing of Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayef and replacing him with his 31-year old son Mohammed bin Salman is a soft coup d'état, because it goes against the established norms in Saudi succession.

Serena hits back after McEnroe ranks her 700th on men’s tour

Serena Williams has asked John McEnroe for “respect” after the seven-times grand slam champion said his fellow American would be ranked “like 700 in the world” if she had to play on the men’s circuit.

In an interview with National Public Radio on Sunday, McEnroe said 23-times grand slam champion Williams was “the best female player ever” but declined to label her the best overall.



“If she played the men’s circuit she’d be like 700 in the world,” he said.

“That doesn’t mean I don’t think Serena is an incredible player. I do.

“And on a given day, Serena could beat some players... But if she had to just play the circuit -- the men’s circuit -- that would be an entirely different story.”

Former world number one Williams, who has taken time off to have a baby, responded testily on Twitter.

“Dear John, I adore and respect you but please please keep me out of your statements that are not factually based,” she wrote.

“I’ve never played anyone ranked ‘there’ nor do I have time. Respect me and my privacy as I’m trying to have a baby. Good day sir.”

Williams has won the most grand slam singles titles in the professional era, five more than Swiss Roger Federer, the most prolific winner in the men’s game.

She is one short of Australian Margaret Court’s overall record of 24 grand slam titles, which were split between the professional and amateur eras.

(Source: Reuters)

Murray pulls out of Wimbledon practice match with sore hip

World Number One Andy Murray pulled out of an exhibition match at London’s Hurlingham Club on Tuesday with a sore hip, less than a week before the start of Wimbledon.

“His hip is a bit sore,” said a spokesman for the Scot, who had been due to face Frenchman Lucas Pouille.

Murray’s withdrawal was precautionary and the two-time Wimbledon champion intended to play at the club on Friday, the spokesman said.

Murray added the two matches at the Aspal Tennis Classic to his schedule to gain grass court practice after a surprising first-round exit from last week’s Aegon Championships at Queen’s Club.

Murray’s form has been patchy during a 2017 season that has been disrupted by shingles, an elbow injury and influenza.

Wimbledon begins on July 3.

(Source: Reuters)

Calhanoglu waiting for ‘final talks’ as AC Milan move nears

Hakan Calhanoglu will move to AC Milan once the Italian giants reach an agreement with Bayer Leverkusen, according to the midfielder’s agent.

Turkey international Calhanoglu has not played since January due to a FIFA ban relating to contract dispute with Trabzonspor, whom he is said to have agreed to join before pulling out in 2011, being upheld by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

The 23-year-old waived his wages for the duration of his four-month suspension and reportedly opted against an appeal in order to be available for a transfer in the off-season.

It appears that Milan could well offer him that move, with Calhanoglu’s representative Bektas Demirtas suggesting the player has agreed personal terms with the Serie A club.

“We held good talks with AC Milan,” Demirtas told Kicker.

“It’s now important the clubs reach an agreement. Once they have reached an agreement, we can enter final talks with AC Milan.”

Calhanoglu has two years remaining on his contract at Leverkusen, who are reportedly holding out for a fee of between €20million and €30m.

Milan have already completed the signings of Franck Kessie, Ricardo Rodriguez, Mateo Musacchio and Andre Silva as they attempt to build a squad capable of Champions League qualification.

(Source: Soccerway)

Mourinho’s father dies

Jose Mourinho’s father, former Portugal goalkeeper Jose Manuel Mourinho Felix, has died at the age of 79.

Manchester United manager Mourinho posted a black and white picture of him as a child with his father without making any comment on his Instagram account on Sunday.

Portuguese club Vitoria Setubal, who Mourinho Felix played for and managed during his career, confirmed the news on their website and said that his funeral will take place on Tuesday morning.

The statement read: “Vitoria FC regrets to announce the death of its former player, coach and director Jose Manuel Mourinho Felix and expresses its solidarity and deepest condolences to the bereaved family.”

Belenenses, who Mourinho Felix played for between 1968 and 1974, added in a statement: “At this particularly difficult moment, the football club sends all his family and friends, especially his wife and son Jose Mourinho, the deepest condolences.”

(Source: The Portugal News)

German paper reveals secret FIFA report into Qatar 2022 corruption allegations

Qatar’s successful bid for the 2022 World Cup looks set to become mired in fresh controversy after the leaking of a secret FIFA report into the 2010 bidding contests.

That highly controversial process saw Russia beat several European bids, including England’s, to win the right to host the 2018 World Cup and the tiny but wealthy Gulf state overcome the likes of the United States for 2022.

After repeated claims about corruption in the run-up to those votes, FIFA asked its then-chief ethics investigator Michael Garcia to compile a report into the bidding nations for both World Cup, which he produced in 2014.

His 430-page investigation has never been published before – FIFA, instead, put out a 42-page summary which Garcia promptly disowned – but now German newspaper Bild has obtained a copy of the original.

It is understood that its contents will be published in two parts but the lead journalist Peter Rossberg began releasing extracts via social media on Monday night – the early indications are that his scoop will heap more suspicion on Qatar’s bid, in particular.

Among the early revelations from the Garcia report are claims that the Qataris flew three members of FIFA’s executive committee to a party in Rio on a private jet shortly before the December 2010 vote on the 2018/2022 hosts, the Qatari bid used access to its state-of-the-art Aspire sports academy to influence voters and £1.6million was sent to a bank account belonging to the 10-year-old daughter of another ExCo voter.

That last allegation was first made by the Daily Telegraph in 2014 and there is a sense from what has emerged so far that much of this has been heard before – Rossberg himself wrote on Facebook that



there are “no surprises” for anybody who has followed this story closely. In fact, he goes on to write that “the report does not provide proof that World Cup 2018 or 2022 has been bought”.

But he then accurately describes the Garcia report as another piece in the puzzle and suggests that only when all those pieces are put together will the complete picture be obvious.

The Bild exclusive also reveals how world football’s governing body sanitised Garcia’s findings in the summary of his report by FIFA ethics judge Joachim Eckert.

In a section on how the Qatari bid used Aspire, which had satellite operations in five countries with FIFA voters, to

“curry favour with executive committee members”, Garcia wrote “those actions served to undermine the integrity of the bidding process”.

But Eckert translated this as “potentially problematic facts and circumstances” which “were, all in all, not suited to compromise the integrity of the Fifa World Cup 2018/2022 bidding process as a whole”.

It is little wonder that an indignant Garcia returned to the US accusing Eckert of making “numerous materially incomplete and erroneous representations”.

Whether the appearance of his complete work will correct any of those representations enough to threaten Qatar’s staging of the World Cup is debatable,

as the once-incredible project has withstood everything that has been thrown at it so far and there appears to be little appetite at FIFA to revisit its most contentious decision.

That does not mean, however, Qatar 2022 is out of the woods, though, as criminal investigations into the bid, some fuelled by Garcia’s early work, continue in France, Switzerland and elsewhere, while the country’s diplomatic row with its Gulf neighbours will raise serious questions about its suitability to stage a major global event if it is not resolved in the coming months.

FIFA has been contacted for comment.

(Source: BT Sport)

Hamilton challenges Vettel to settle their argument ‘out of the car’



Furious Lewis Hamilton branded Sebastian Vettel a “disgrace” and challenged him to settle their argument “out of the car” as the Formula One title race turned ugly in Baku.

The Brit was left raging after Vettel drove into the back of him under the safety car. The German driver then pulled alongside the Mercedes racer and bumped him, accusing Hamilton of braking erratically.

Vettel has later hit with a 10-second stop-go penalty.

“I didn’t brake check him at all,” Hamilton said.

“For him to pretty much get away with driving into another driver, is a disgrace. I think he disgraced himself today.

“If he wants to prove he is a man we should do it out of the car, we should face to face.

“Imagine all the young kids watching today, seeing that kind of behavior from a world champion.

“I think it’s just not driver conduct.



It’s dangerous driving and to get a 10-second penalty for that... I don’t need to say anything else.”

Vettel protested his innocence and added: “Nothing happened, did it? He brake checked me as well, so what do you expect?

I’m sure he didn’t do it on purpose but for sure it was not the right move. If I’m struggling, people at the back struggling even more, so I don’t think it was necessary.

“I got damage, he risked damage. He’s done something similar in China at the restart a couple of years ago so it’s not the way to do it, I think.

“I passed him because he pitted it. After the incident, we were side by side. I raised my hand and told him, well I didn’t say anything, but showed him that I wasn’t happy with that.”

The incident dominated a race which saw Red Bull’s Daniel Ricciardo with 18-year-old Lance Stroll in third.

(Source: Mirror)

Chile are ready to counter Ronaldo – Pizzi



Chile boss Juan Antonio Pizzi is confident his side are fully equipped to deal with the threat of Cristiano Ronaldo.

The Portugal captain scored twice and registered one assist in three group games at the Confederations Cup to help his side reach the semi-finals.

The European champions will play Chile in the last four in what will be their second match at Kazan Arena, after the Copa America holders finished second in Group B behind Germany.

Pizzi believes Ronaldo can only be a danger when Portugal are playing well as a united team but he has faith his own players know how to handle him.

“Of course, we analyze our opponents every time we play. It doesn’t matter who we’re playing,” he told a news conference.

“Ronaldo is part of the team and of course we’ll have to watch him and try to counter his strengths. He’s got many. But we’ll do nothing special, really, just what we do every time we play a game.

“Portugal have to play as a team as well, even if they have a player like Ronaldo. He needs team-mates to develop his style and his game.

“I can only repeat what I’ve said before: we always analyze the teams we play so we’ve analyzed Portugal as a whole. We need to know what Ronaldo’s skills are but I think we all know; he’s been showing what he can do for 10 or 12 years now. He might get his fifth Ballon d’Or.

Chile finished behind Germany in their group after a surprise 1-1 draw with Australia on matchday three saw them surrender top spot to the world champions.

However, they remain many people’s favorites to win the tournament and they have a clean bill of health for the last four, with Pizzi confirming that Gary Medel and Claudio Bravo are both fit.

Yet Pizzi does not feel that being considered favorites will have any impact on his side.

(Source: Soccerway)

Oklahoma City Thunder Russell Westbrook named MVP after historic season

Oklahoma City Thunder point guard Russell Westbrook put the finishing touch on a magical season by being named the Most Valuable Player of the 2016-17 campaign at the NBA’s inaugural awards show.

Westbrook, who became only the second player and first in 55 years to average a triple-double for an entire season, won the award over Houston Rockets guard James Harden and San Antonio Spurs forward Kawhi Leonard.

Westbrook averaged a mind-boggling 31.6 points, 10.4 assists and 10.7 rebounds over 81 games, making him the first player to average double-digits in three major categories since Oscar Robertson first did it in 1961-62.

After Westbrook was presented with the Maurice Podoloff Trophy by NBA Commissioner Adam Silver, he promptly called his team mates to the stage.

“These guys sacrificed so much for me throughout



the year,” said Westbrook. “It was obviously an amazing season for me but without these guys and the rest of our guys that are not here, none of this would be possible.

“So this award is not for me. This is for all you guys and I am very thankful to have you guys in my corner. You

guys are my brothers for life.”

The 28-year-old American was on a mission from the start of the season as he silenced critics who doubted whether he could thrive without Kevin Durant, who left the Thunder last July and won an NBA title with Golden State two weeks ago.

Westbrook carried the Thunder on a nightly basis, setting the new standard by recording 42 triple-doubles, one better than the former single-season mark set by Robertson.

Despite the loss of Durant, a four-times scoring champion, the Westbrook-led Thunder recorded 47 wins, just eight fewer than the previous campaign.

The first-ever NBA Awards show followed years in which the league announced individual honors separately throughout the postseason.

(Source: Eurosport)

Iran's Khaled Shafiei joins FC Seoul

S P O R T S Khaled Shafiei is set to become the first Iranian to appear in the K League Classic after signing a deal with FC Seoul. The 30-year-old defender has joined the K League Classic side from Tractor Sazi.

Shafiei, 29, joined Fajr Sepasi in 2010 after spending the previous season in Kowsar. He then went to Naft Tehran and after a short period he moved to Tabriz to play for Gostaresh Foolad and Tractor Sazi respectively.

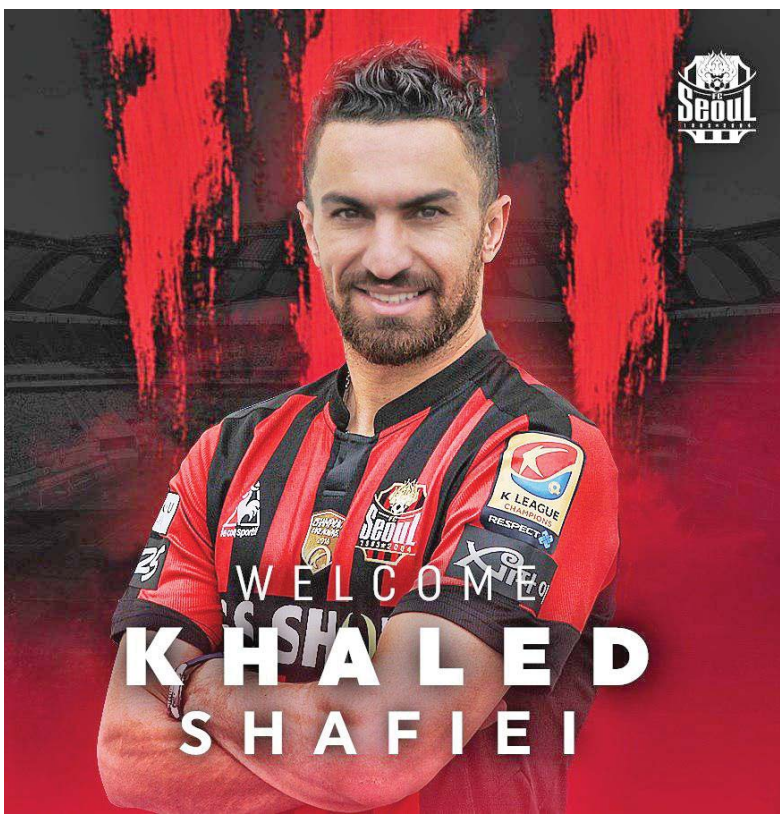
Shafiei then joined FC Seoul on 25 June

2017, becoming the first Iranian player in the K League.

With Khaled Shafiei as the central defender, FC Seoul will be able to build a stronger shield with the existing defenders.

Shafiei had been also linked with a move to Iranian giants Persepolis and Esteghlal.

The K League Classic is one of South Korea's professional association football leagues. At the top of the South Korean football league system and currently contested by 12 clubs, it is the country's highest level of football competition.



Iranian athletes lift own medal tally to 13 at XXVI Kosanov Memorial

Iranian sportsmen have maintained their fine performances at the 27th edition of Gusman Kosanov Memorial in Kazakhstan, and earned four more medals to lift the Islamic Republic's medal tally to 12 at the multinational sports event.

On Sunday, Iranian runner Behzad Mostafavi clocked 14:39.08 minutes in the finals of men's 5000-meter run at the Central Stadium in the Kazakh city of Almaty, and collected the bronze medal.

In the men's 800-meter finals, Moslem Niadoust set the time of 1:50.26 minutes and snatched the yellow

metal. Mostafa Ebrahimi, another representative from Iran, finished in the second spot and struck the silver medal with 1:50.80 minutes.

Moreover, Sobhan Taherkhani took part in men's long jump competitions, and leapt 7 meters and 76 centimeters to receive the silver medal.

Earlier in the tournament, Iranian athletes had managed to collect nine medals, a third of them gold.

The 27th edition of Gusman Kosanov Memorial started in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on June 24 and finished the next day.

The tournament brought together tens of athletes from 13 countries, namely Afghanistan, Bahrain, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Gusman Kosanov was a Soviet athlete, who competed mainly in the 100 meters. He competed for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in the 4 x 100 meter relay competitions, and won the silver medal with his teammates Leonid Bartenev, Yuriy Kononov and Edvin Ozolin.

(Source: Press TV)

Four Iranians get four-year ban for doping violation



S P O R T S Iran National Anti-Doping Organization (NADO) has confirmed that four sportsmen have been suspended from all sport for four years following the anti-doping rule violation.

Iranian football player Habib Gordan has been banned for four years after testing positive for banned substance.

Iran's Machine Sazi's captain was banned after testing positive for the an-

abolic steroid metanolon during competition in Iran Professional League.

Furthermore, water polo player Ar-yan Pejman has been banned four years for the anabolic steroid metanolon.

Basketball player Mohsen Rezaei was banned four years after tested positive for stanozolol.

Handball player Hamed Soleymani has been also banned four years for testing positive for stanozolol.

Iran's Ebadipour reaches agreement with Skra Belchatow: report



Iranian international outside spiker Milad Ebadipour has reportedly reached an agreement with Polish volleyball club Skra Belchatow.

The 24-year-old player, who currently plays for Iranian top-flight Sarmayeh Bank, is set to join the Poland's vice-champion, Sport.pl reported.

Ebadipour was one of Iran national volleyball team in the 2017 FIVB World

League.

On the other hand, Mostafa Karkhaneh, head coach of Sarmayeh Bank, has ruled out the transfer and said Ebadipour will remain in the club.

Iranian outside hitter Mohammadjavad Manavinezhad had been already linked with a move to Italian Serie A1 volleyball club BluVolley Verona.

(Source: Tasnim)

Russia rubbish "nonsense" report their entire squad at the 2014 World Cup is being investigated for doping

They have come out fighting - again - but Russian football chiefs are battling to deal with another blow to their suitability to host next summer's World Cup.

Less than a year before the tournament kicks off there, claims have emerged that their entire squad for the 2014 competition were involved in state-sponsored doping.

All 23 players on the Russia team that crashed out at the group stage three years ago in Brazil are reportedly being looked at as part of a broader scandal.

Russian deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Mutko - the man who claimed the country has already cleaned up racism and hooliganism - has gone on a similar offensive over the doping claims.

"There have never been and will never be any problems with doping in our football," he said. "Our team are permanently being tested, they undergo doping tests after every match."

"They have written some sort of nonsense. Don't bother reading the English newspapers in the morning."

FIFA, however, are carrying on with their investigation into the McLaren report which claims at least 30 sports, including football, covered up samples involving more



than 1,000 athletes between 2011 and 2015.

So far, the organisation insist, nobody from the World Cup has returned a positive test.

But, a spokesman said: "FIFA has simply confirmed that, in close collaboration with Wada [World Anti-Doping Agency], it is still investigating the allegations involving football players in the so-called McLaren report."

"However, FIFA did not refer to any particular players, since it cannot comment on the status of ongoing investigations."

The FA were staying tight-lipped about the matter on Sunday night as they wait for the outcome of FIFA's investigations.

For the Russians, however, the latest controversy follows several others for the country within sport.

Most of their track-and-field team was banned from last year's Olympics in Rio over doping. Their entire Paralympics squad was also excluded. The spectre of doping also lingered over their 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

Claims of bribery persist.

In addition, few are convinced that the Russians have the hooliganism issue, which threatens to flare up next summer, under control.

Five of the players from the 2014 squad are in the team that have been competing at this week's Confederations Cup there. Russia were eliminated on Saturday, after losing to Mexico.

FIFA added: "As far as the FIFA Confederations Cup is concerned, every participating player has been tested through blood and urine in unannounced controls."

"Both the results of the unannounced and the post-match tests have been negative so far."

(Source: Mirror)

Iran taekwondo fighters clinch 2 medals in World Championships

Iranian taekwondo practitioners have demonstrated amazing displays of prowess and kicking techniques at the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships in South Korea, and received two medals, including one silver.

On Sunday, Armin Hadipour got the silver medal in the men's minus 54-kilogram weight division after he could not overcome his South Korean opponent Kim Tae-hun 6-10 in the final encounter of the category at T1 Arena in South Korea's

southwestern county of Muju.

Furthermore, Masoud Hajizavareh could not show up for the last contest of men's minus 74-kilogram category due to injuries he had sustained earlier in the tournament, and settled for the bronze.

The 2017 World Taekwondo Championships, which is the 23rd edition of the world taekwondo championships, opened in Muju, South Korea, on June 24 and will run through June 30.

A total of 973 athletes from 183 nations

have reportedly taken part in the prestigious international tournament.

The Iranian men's national taekwondo team consists of Armin Hadipour, Farzan Ashourzadeh, Mirhashem Hosseini, Abolfazl Yaghoubi, Masoud Hojizavareh, Pourya Erfanian, Saeid Rajabi, and Sajjad Mardani.

They will be in action in the minus 54-kilogram, minus 58-kilogram, minus 63-kilogram, minus 68-kilogram, minus 74-kilogram, minus 80-kilogram, minus

87-kilogram and over 87-kilogram weight categories.

Nahid Kiani, Tayebah Parsa, Kimia Alizadeh, Melika Pourhosseini, Zahra Poursmaeil, and Akram Khodabandeh are the members of the Iranian men's national taekwondo team, who will vie for top honors in the minus 49-kilogram, minus 57-kilogram, minus 62-kilogram, minus 67-kilogram, minus 73-kilogram and over 73-kilogram sections.

(Source: Press TV)

Lionel Messi keeping eye on Cristiano Ronaldo's situation at Real Madrid

BARCELONA star Lionel Messi is reportedly monitoring Cristiano Ronaldo's situation at Real Madrid because he wants more money than his La Liga rival.

Ronaldo's future at Real Madrid is currently uncertain beyond this summer, with the 32-year-old supposedly ready to quit Spain after being accused of tax fraud by Spanish authorities.

The forward has been sensationally linked with a move to Manchester United, while Express Sport understands Chelsea chief Roman Abramovich would love to see Ronaldo plying his trade at Stamford Bridge next term.

Ronaldo and Messi have longed vied for the individual awards football has to offer, sharing the Ballon d'Or award between them every year since Kaka won it in 2007.

While they have a professional respect for each other, both players are always aiming to outdo the other by firing Barcelona and Real Madrid to silverware along the way.

And Spanish outlet Don Balon claims Messi is ready to demand more money from Barcelona if Ronaldo ends up signing a Real contract extension.

The Argentina international's own time at the Nou Camp is uncertain with his current contract expiring in 12 months time.

The report claims that, while Messi intends to stay at Barcelona, he is ready to throw a spanner into the works by requesting a higher salary than Ronaldo if the Portugal star stays put.

It is said the 29-year-old is still smarting at missing out on La Liga and the Champions League to Ronaldo and wants to outdo him behind the scenes as a result.

Somewhat sensationally, Don Balon also suggest Ronaldo's strop could be because he fears Messi is about to financially outdo him.

Speaking earlier this month, Real chief Florentino Perez admitted he was determined to prevent his star asset quitting the Bernabeu.

"Ronaldo is a Madrid player, we're delighted with him, [but] there was a story in the paper that said he was annoyed with the treatment given to his tax issue," he said.

"I think the best thing for him and Madrid is for him to stay: we'll see what happens."

"Right now, Cristiano is a Real Madrid player and something very strange would have to happen for him not to be, and I am not [even] contemplating that."

(Source: Express)

WADA permits Russia anti-doping body to plan and coordinate testing

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) said on Tuesday it permitted the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) to plan and coordinate testing.

RUSADA is authorized to do so, using its trained doping control officers (DCOs), under the supervision of WADA-appointed international experts and the British Anti-Doping Agency (UKAD), WADA said in a statement posted on its official site.

In 2015 RUSADA was branded non-compliant, and WADA said in May Russia would remain an outcast until four key demands are met, chief among them Yelena Isinbayeva's removal from RUSADA and her replacement with an independent chair and vice-chair.

(Source: Reuters)

Jose Mourinho steals Andy Murray's Wimbledon trophy

Jose Mourinho was eager to claim he had scooped a treble in his first season at Manchester United, and now he will be toasting a historic quadruple.

After winning the Community Shield, EFL Cup and the Europa League, the United boss has added another piece of silverware to the cabinet - the Wimbledon trophy.

Andy Murray may be the current holder of the All England Club's prestigious cup, but he appears to have fallen foul of the Portuguese's lust for success.

In a video, released to promote the new Jaguar XF Sport-brake, the world No 1 bids farewell - 'bye bye poppet' - to the trophy he won with a straight sets win over Milos Raonic on Centre Court last July.

But the Scot does not realise that his prized possession is heading into the arms of Mourinho, via the helping hands of a pair of scheming schoolchildren.

As Murray hits a few balls in practice ahead of the start of the 131st edition of the SW17 tournament, his trophy is whisked away to a school in nearby Richmond.

While a group of young children are tasked with constructing their own replica of the famous trophy, two kids take it upon themselves to take home the real thing.

As they secretly swap it for their own version, wrapped in a Wimbledon towel, they whisk it away into the car park where Mourinho is waiting.

The United boss gives the youngsters a thumbs up before declaring 'Game, Set, Match' as he safely stores the silverware onto the passenger's seat.

Meanwhile, back at the All England Club a bemused Murray is left to examine the paper mache version of his trophy.

(Source: Daily Mail)

10th Regional Music Festival kicks off in Kerman

A R T TEHRAN — The 10th d e s k Regional Music Festival was inaugurated in the southern Iranian city of Kerman on Tuesday.

Bam, Baft, Sirjan, Zarand, Rafsanjan and several other towns in Kerman Province are hosting music groups from across Iran as well as different countries during the festival this year, the organizers have announced.

Kerman's Madar Park is the main venue for the performances taking place during the event.

Master musician of Kyrgyzstan Kutman Sultanbekov, Mohammad Wali Khalaj from Afghanistan, and German scholars Lisa Gaupp and Lutz Dollereder from Leuphana University of Lueneburg are among the foreign musicians attending the festival.

The German musicians are due to hold workshops during their stay in Iran, as well.

The Iranian musicians are coming from Bushehr, Hormozgan, Lorestan, Kordestan, West Azarbaijan, East Azarbaijan, Fars, Sistan-Baluchestan, South Khorasan and many other regions of Iran.

The organizers have also arranged a number of open-air performances, which are expected to entertain over 2500 aficionados of regional Iranian music during the event running until June 30.

“Yellow” wins Grand Prix at Shanghai film festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian d e s k director Mostafa Taqizadeh's debut film “Yellow” won the Jury Grand Prix of the 20th Shanghai International Film Festival, which was held in the Chinese metropolis from June 17 to 26.

The film also brought its lead Sareh Bayat the award for best actress.

“Yellow” tells the story of a group of close friends who try to pay for a lifesaving liver transplant.

“Pedicab”, directed by Paolo Villaluna from the Philippines received the Golden Goblet trophy for best film at the festival, while “I Am a Killer” by Maciej Pieprzycza



A group performs during the 9th Regional Music Festival in Kerman in a file photo in May 2016.

(Shabestan/Meysam Ahmadi)

established the secretariat of the festival in 2015 based on an agreement with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

The 9th edition of the event was held during May 2016 after an eight-year hiatus.

Karlovy Vary Festival to screen Abbas Kiarostami's “Take Me Home”

A R T TEHRAN — The d e s k 52nd Karlovy Vary International Film Festival will screen “Take Me Home”, Abbas Kiarostami's final work that is a characteristically playful tour of the alleys and stairways of southern Italy, with a soccer ball as our guide.

The film is due to go on screen in the “Out of the Past” section of the festival running from June 30 to July 8 in the Czech Republic, the organizers have announced.

Kiarostami's close friend Seifollah Samadian's montage film “76 Minutes and 15 Seconds with Abbas Kiarostami” will also go on screen in this section.

“76 Minutes and 15 Seconds with

Kiarostami” is a montage film made by Samadian himself. The title of the film refers to the duration of Kiarostami's life, 76 years and 15 days, and shows a picture of Kiarostami as a filmmaker, photographer, poet, graphic designer, video artist and even a carpenter.

Film expert Mohammad Atebbai and Samadian are expected to attend the screening programs as guests from Iran.

Abbas Kiarostami chaired the Karlovy Vary jury in its 35th edition in 2000.

A winner of the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997 for his “Taste of Cherry”, Kiarostami died last July at the age of 76.

Box Office: “Transformers: The Last Knight” Opens to Franchise Low \$69.1 Million

LOS ANGELES (Variety.com) — It seems the “Transformers” franchise is rusty.

As of Sunday morning “Transformers: The Last Knight,” the fifth installment directed by Michael Bay, looks to bring in \$69.1 million from 4,069 domestic locations during its five-day opening weekend. That's a franchise low for the sequel from Paramount and Hasbro, behind the first in the modern series, which earned \$70.5 million in 2007. “The Last Knight” carries an estimated \$217 million production budget.

This makes “Transformers: The Last Knight” the latest summer blockbuster to bank on overseas ticket sales to have a shot at turning a profit. In China, the big-budget action sequel made \$41 million in its opening day alone. The projected international come through Sunday is \$196.2 million, powered by \$123.4 million in China.

“The Last Knight” comes at a time when Paramount could have used an all-around hit, following recent misses “Baywatch” and “Ghost in the Shell.” While the latest “Transformers” movie has been advertised as “the final chapter” and Bay's last go-around, the franchise will continue -- Paramount has at least two more movies slated, including a spinoff that could star Hailee Steinfeld. The franchise has historically been massively profitable and seen solid multiples for the studio. Together, the first four earned over \$1.3 billion domestically and well over \$3.5 billion worldwide.

The latest take on the series centers on an alliance between Bumblebee, Cade Yeager -- who Mark Wahlberg also played in 2014's “Age of Extinction” -- and roles played by franchise newcomers Anthony Hopkins and Laura Haddock. Together, the team



Actor Mark Wahlberg arrives for the U.S. premiere of the film 'Transformers: The Last Knight' in Chicago, Illinois, U.S., June 20, 2017.

works together to save the world. Audiences have earned the film a B+ CinemaScore, while critics have mostly dismissed it -- it currently holds a 15% fresh rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

“The Last Knight” was uncontested at the box office this weekend, but a few indie releases showed traction. Sofia Coppola's “The Beguiled” remake from Focus Features played at four theaters this weekend, and should gross \$240,545 with a strong per screen average before it expands to over 500 locations next weekend.

“We're thrilled by this opening,” said Lisa Bunnell, Focus Features' distribution president. “This is Focus' third collaboration with Sofia and she's created an entertaining, atmospheric thriller featuring strong female representation in front of and behind the

At platform 9-3/4, Harry Potter fans mark 20 years of magic

LONDON (Reuters) — Twenty years to the day after the first book in the Harry Potter series was published, fans gathered online and in the real world to express their enduring love for J.K. Rowling's magical creation.

Since “Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone” came out in 1997, with a first print run of just 500 copies, the series of seven novels has sold 450 million copies worldwide in 79 languages and spawned a blockbuster movie franchise.

The book appeared in the United States a year later as “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.”

On Monday, some fans took the day off work to celebrate the anniversary, heading to significant locations such as King's Cross train station in London, which in the stories is one of the gateways into the world of witches and wizards.

The real-life station features a mock-up of Platform 9-3/4, the departure point for trains to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The mock-up is a bustling spot where tourists and fans queue to pose for photos wearing Potter-themed scarves or costumes.

“Harry Potter I think still means so much to so many people even though it's 20 years now,” said Clara Carson, whose job at the nearby souvenir shop involves taking photos of the fans and holding up the scarves to achieve a windswept effect.

“I'm a fan myself so it's really nice to come in and be with people that are all into the same things that you're into,” she said. “Whether they're kids or my age or even adults, they're always just so excited.”

Childhood friends Charlotte Keyworth and Joanne Wylie, both 26, had come down to London from northern and eastern England for the occasion.

They were part of the first generation of Potter fans, having read the first volume as young girls and then endured the agonizing wait for each new episode as they were published over a period of 10 years.

“We've grown up with it, with Harry Potter,” said Keyworth, who was sporting a Hogwarts t-shirt. “We're planning on going to the studio tour this afternoon and celebrating in

camera.”

And Kumail Nanjiani's critically adored romantic comedy “The Big Sick” should earn \$435,000 during its opening weekend in five locations -- that would give the Lionsgate and Amazon Studios release the highest per screen average of any film that has opened this year so far.

“Kumail and Emily's true story provided audiences of all ages a much-needed alternative to the summer blockbusters,” said Bob Berney, Amazon Studios' distribution chief.

Otherwise, “Wonder Woman” continues to post impressive numbers, and holds onto second place during its fourth weekend in theaters. This weekend, it should earn an additional \$25.2 million, bringing its domestic total to \$318.4 million. Earlier this week, the film became the highest-grossing live-action movie to be directed by a woman -- a major distinction for Patty Jenkins.

Disney and Pixar's “Cars 3” also looks to earn \$25.2 million domestically during its second weekend. Some estimates have the film slightly lower, just below \$25 million. The family film, which won last weekend's box office, is expected to pass the \$100 million mark in North America by Monday.

“Transformers: The Last Knight's” performance is a tough break for the summer box office's bottom line domestically. For the past two years, this weekend has seen monster grosses for “Jurassic World” and “Finding Dory.” Now, attention is turned toward a trio of releases next weekend, as the box office hopes for a shot in the arm from “Despicable Me 3,” “Baby Driver,” and “The House.”



A girl waves a wand at the Harry Potter trolley at Kings Cross Station, in London, Britain June 26, 2017. The first Harry Potter book, “Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone” was first published 20 years ago.

(Reuters/Eddie Keogh)

our own little way,” she said, referring to the studios where the Potter movies were shot.

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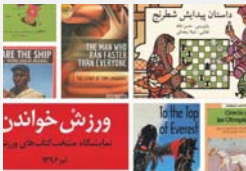
■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari
■ Editor-in-Chief: Hassan Lasjerdi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
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NEWS IN BRIEF



IIDCYA hosting book fair on children's sports

CULTURE TEHRAN — An exhibition of books on d e s k children's sports is currently underway at the library of the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) in Tehran.

The exhibit entitled “Sports Reading” is showcasing a number of Persian and foreign books with the central theme of sports.

The book fair will run until July 22 at the library located at No 24, Khalid Islambouli St., Shahid Beheshti Ave.



“Immortality” on screen at Ischia Film Festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian d e s k director Mehdi Fard-Qaderi's “Immortality” is on screen at the official section of the 15th edition of the Ischia Film Festival, which is underway on the Italian island.

“Immortality”, which is a one-shot feature film, tells the story of some strangers who have to spend a rainy night together on a train.

Iranian short film “Red Season” by Hassan Najmabadi will also go on screen at the festival, which will run until July 1.

“Retouch” wins first at Palm Springs festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian d e s k Kaveh Mazaheri won the Best Live Action Short over 15 Minutes award at the 23rd Palm Springs International ShortFest, which was held in the U.S. city from June 20 to 26.



A scene from “Retouch”

“Retouch” was competing in the non-student category and all the first place winners in the non-student categories may be eligible to submit their films to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for an Oscar.

“Retouch” is about a young woman whose husband is trapped under a barbell during a workout, but she declines to save him and, consequently, he dies.

The film won the Silver Dragon for best short at the 57th Krakow Film Festival early June. It also won the Best Narrative Short at the 16th Tribeca Film Festival in New York City in April.

The Grand Jury Award went to “The Head Vanishes” (France/Canada) by Franck Dion, the organizers have announced on the website.

The 2017 Palm Springs International ShortFest, the largest short film festival and only short film market in North America. 338 short films screened throughout the Festival along with more than 4,200 filmmaker submissions available in the film market. More than \$115,000 in prizes, including \$20,000 in cash awards were awarded in 21 categories.

Facebook in talks to produce original TV-quality shows: WSJ

NEW YORK (Reuters) -- Facebook Inc (FB.O) is in talks with Hollywood studios about producing scripted, TV-quality shows, with an aim of launching original programing by late summer, the Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday.

The social networking giant has indicated that it was willing to commit to production budgets as high as \$3 million per episode, in meetings with Hollywood talent agencies, the Journal reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

Facebook is hoping to target audiences from ages 13 to 34, with a focus on the 17 to 30 range. The company has already lined up “Strangers”, a relationship drama, and a game show, “Last State Standing”, the report said.

“We're focused on episodic shows and helping all our partners understand what works across different verticals and topics,” said Nick Grudin, Facebook's vice president for media partnerships.